



Empowering Children to Rewrite their Future

Our Big Give Christmas Challenge Case Study

Executive Summary

Target:	£10,000
Total raised:	£14,420
Percentage of target:	144%
Total with Gift Aid:	£15,973*
Final percentage of target:	160%
Number of donations:	74
New donors	42 (57%)[†]

We successfully used the Big Give Christmas Challenge 2025 to raise funds for our ongoing work supporting access to education in developing world countries.

We wanted to experiment with using the Big Give to improve our Christmas fundraising and to assess whether it could become an annual appeal. Both of these objectives were met, and we intend to use the Big Give Christmas Appeal again, having learnt many lessons in 2025.

* After fees and including Gift Aid. [†] New donor classified as anybody who wasn't a current regular donor, major donor, trustee or member of staff.



About Us

Mission Direct is a small charity with less than £1 million turnover and only 5 employees. We currently work with about 100 volunteers a year. This was our first Big Give campaign.

Mission Direct has empowered over **275,000 children** to rewrite their future by building **49 schools** over 2 decades, as well as providing school meals, building housing, and supporting girls rescued from child marriage and FGM.

Education is a powerful tool offering pathways out of poverty. We want to expand our reach, providing more children opportunities to succeed and in turn impacting their entire community.



Achievements in 2025

In 2025, Mission Direct worked with **17 schools** in seven countries (Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Our work benefitted **3,284 children** and over the next 20 years, the classrooms that we built this year will be used by **46,000 children**.

In Uganda we reached the amazing milestone of serving our **1 millionth bowl of porridge for school children**. Providing nutrition at school has been shown to improve learning.

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Christmas Giving

As a small organisation, Mission Direct lacks a dedicated fundraising or marketing person. Aspects of these roles are shared across the small team and there is often a lack of capacity to organise larger campaigns.

In recent years, our Christmas fundraising had not been very successful. This was largely down to them lacking substance and problems with scheduling comms effectively due to our limited capacity.

It was recognised that we needed to start organising a Christmas fundraising campaign much earlier in the year and that we needed to ensure competing demands did not take away staff time to focus on this.

Although someone in Mission Direct had once created a Big Give Account and processed a single test donation in 2012 – the Big Give Christmas Campaign 2025 was the first time we ran a Big Give campaign.



Why the Big Give?

The Big Give Christmas Challenge seemed to be the perfect solution to our challenges with organising a successful Christmas fundraising campaign.

Firstly, the Big Give is a recognised fundraising platform and brand with a good reputation – hopefully, it would attract new donors.

Secondly, the schedule that we would need to follow would help us to stay on track during the year and avoid pinch points or a need to try to catch up.

Thirdly, the defined time to make donations might help to create urgency for the donors and give us as an organisation a shorter campaign period – we won't need to keep promoting it for the whole month of December.

Fourthly, and possibly most importantly, the match funding element will be very attractive to all donors.



Target Setting

As we had never run a Big Give campaign before, we set the target of £10,000 because we believed it was achievable with our existing capacity constraints.

This meant that we needed to get £2,500 in pledges and £2,500 in commitments from champions and then raise £5,000 during the campaign week.

The modular design of the Big Give meant that we could focus on pledgers and donors at different times.

Pledges	£2,500
Champions	£2,500
Donations	£5,000
Total raised	£10,000



Planning the Campaign

Being a small team, we wanted to strike the balance between being effective and not creating an unsustainable burden of too much work for our small team – we wanted to work smartly.

We combined the creation of promotional and informational materials with another campaign we planned to run in the last four months of the year. This meant that videos, case studies, testimonials and photos could be used for both campaigns.

Mission Direct does not have a big profile. A large proportion of our supporters and volunteers come from word of mouth. Personal communication were seen as key to spreading the message, while we also wanted to gain new supporters through social media and the use of the Big Give website.

Objectives were set for each month from September onwards, after the initial application and target setting had been achieved.

The CEO and senior admin officer led the campaign together, ensuring senior authority and leadership and also mutual support to maintain momentum and avoid pinch points.



Summer	Research, discussion, agree targets, review internal resources and application.
September	Internal buy-in with staff and trustees; identify and contact potential pledgers; use Big Give resources; add case studies and videos to the Big Give donation page.
October	Contact key supporters; add BG to email signature; lightly promote on social media.
November	Treasure map; promote with supporter emails and social media; personal contact to key supporters.
December	Daily promotion until 9 th December; thank all donors afterwards; BG questionnaire, pledge payment evidence.
January	Complete the case study.

Internal resources and assets

Mission Direct maintains information about interested parties within databases that are GDPR compliant. We can segment contacts based on different criteria, including donors, volunteers, trustees, and those generally interested etc.

We were able to use this data to decide who we wanted to promote different aspects of the Big Give to.

We receive photos and videos from our projects and partners in different formats and varying levels of quality. We can edit these in free software like iMovie and Canva and can also produce graphics to support our promotional work in Canva.

The involvement of the CEO ensured the Big Give Campaign was seen as a priority within the team.

Early buy-in from trustees helped us secure early pledges from some of them.



Internal resources and assets

(continued)

In the course of our work, Mission Direct encourages supporters and volunteers to visit our projects and partners to see first hand the impact of the work that they are contributing to. After completing the relevant orientation and screening they can get involved in-country, which creates a wonderful opportunity for cultural exchange and learning from each other. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, including retired people, families and groups from secondary schools.

These volunteers are very good at collecting photos, videos and stories that can complement our more formal monitoring and data collection processes. With relevant permissions, we combined some of these images and videos with our own outcomes data.

We also sought interviews with school heads, and current and former pupils, to explain in their own words and with their own voice, the impact of the work that Mission Direct achieves in partnership with them.

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Big Give resources

Big Give provided lots of useful information and resources that helped us in the following ways:

1. Case studies provided examples of how other organisations participated in the Big Give. These helped us to decide to try the Big Give and provided templates for how to approach our planning.
2. Digital resources like logos and sample email signatures meant we did not need to reinvent the wheel.
3. Online discussion groups provided us with a place to get answers to our questions.
4. The application process forced us to think clearly about what we wanted to say.
5. Our page on the Big Give website prompted us to get a wider range of supporting information and materials than we would have attempted otherwise.
6. Being accepted by the Big Give made us eligible to receive funding from a Champion – a new funder, subject to achieving our pledge goal first.
7. The video with Prue Leith etc communicated trustworthiness.



Promotional materials

We initially reviewed our stories, photos, videos and monitoring data and discussed what was missing to tell a compelling story simply for the campaign. We decided that video would be important and wanted our partners and beneficiaries to **tell their own stories**.

We chose schools in Zambia as examples of our work and interviewed Dorothy, the founder and head of Crown of Life School. We also interviewed current pupils about their hopes and aspirations and interviewed former pupils who explained how much attending Crown of Life had changed their lives.

These interviews provided us with short quotes we could also use, like, *“Crown of Life is changing lives, changing minds and changing generations,”* from a former pupil.

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Promotional materials

(continued)

Once we had clarified resources we needed to generate, we looked at the templates and assets that Big Give were providing so that we could create social media posts and images for our email signatures.

Initially, these images promoted 'save the date' and the concept of one donation being doubled.

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Promotional materials

(continued)

As our campaign was about empowering children to rewrite their future, we made a large pencil with the slogan, 'let's rewrite futures,' on it that we could take to events and presentations. We photographed the pencil with people and in odd locations to share on social media to generate interest and to demonstrate support for our work.



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Promotional materials

(continued)

From November we promoted the Big Give to all our supporters who receive email updates and newsletters. Initially, we were just informing people so they understood when the campaign would take place and that their donations could be doubled. We also added a pop-up on the website to direct people to our Big Give page so people would be familiar with the concept and campaign.

We experienced a negative dip in donations in November and think some people held back so they could double their donation.

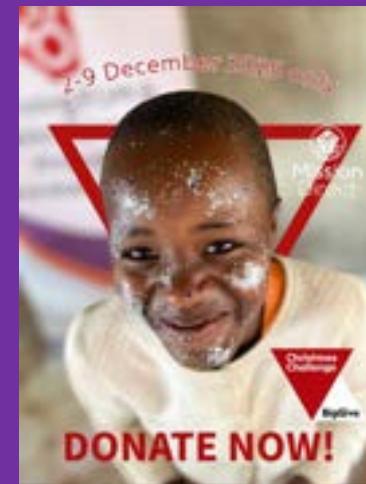
With a week to go we ramped up the frequency of social media and emails with a countdown clock for when the donations would open, and for when the ability to donate would end. We used the Big Give video featuring Prue Leith for credibility.

We scheduled regular social media for the campaign week to urge people on towards our goal. Unexpectedly, we met our goal on the second day and needed to change our focus to, 'please continue to give even though we met our target.'

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Gaining Pledges

We compiled a list of people who we thought might be most likely to pledge. These consisted of current and former trustees, regular donors, major donors, ambassadors and regular volunteers.

We then chose how to contact these based on the relationship. Current trustees were informed at a trustee's meeting in September. Some people were contacted by email, others by phone.

The pledge target of £2,500 was met by ten people as follows:

- 1 x £1000
- 1 x £500
- 2 x £200
- 6 x £100

These came from 1 trustee, 1 former trustee, 1 employee and 7 supporters.

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Securing Champions

We hoped that a champion would choose to support our campaign. We had read that a high percentage of campaigns did secure a champion, but this part of the process seemed a bit out of our control.

We felt that the best we could do was ensure that the information on our campaign page contained enough information that a Trust might want to see, while also providing enough content to motivate individual donors during the campaign week.

Of course, we also needed to ensure we had secured enough pledges before we could gain any champion.

We were grateful when we were notified that The Together Fund had chosen to be our champion for the full £2,500 needed.



Getting donations

During November we found the treasure mapping guidance on the Big Give website so conducted our own treasure mapping exercise with our whole staff team. This created a list of people we wanted to contact to either donate, or to promote the campaign to their networks.

We delegated the task of contacting these people based on our free capacity and the connection we have with these individuals. We asked people if and how much they were willing to donate. This gave us some sense of how much we could raise in advance.

Everyone who receives update emails from us was contacted multiple times in the lead up to the campaign week, and during it. We were able to monitor whether people were showing an interest if they clicked links in the emails.

Social media was also ramped up just before and during the campaign week, using similar messaging as the supporter emails. For the week before, and during the campaign week, we had a pop-up on our website directing people to the campaign page.

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Campaign Results

Our fundraising goal was met on the second day. One donor gave exactly what was needed to top up what had been given so far to meet the target. Afterwards, we experienced a significant reduction in donations because the attraction from match funding was over.

The speed of meeting our target, and subsequent reduction in donations caught us by surprise, and all our scheduled comms had the wrong message.

We pivoted towards promoting the cause more rather than the match funding element and started to raise further donations on 4th and 5th days before they slowed down again.

We were aware that some of those who had told us they would donate had not done so yet. We asked if they were still willing even though their donation would not be doubled, and this contributed to more donations again on the last day.



Target	£10,000
Total raised	£14,420
Percentage of target	144%
Total with Gift Aid after fees	£15,973
Final percentage of target	160%
New donors	10 †



Campaign Results

(continued)

We received 74 donations broken down as follows:

- 72 donations from individuals
- 1 donation from a corporate
- 1 donation from a trust

Of these

- 43% existing regular donors
- 57% new donors*

Although a large percentage were not regular donors, the majority were known to Mission Direct as either a former donor, or a former volunteer, or as someone who received remail updates from us.

90% of donations were £100 or less, which amounted to £3,160 or 22% of the overall total raised before Gift Aid. This meant that 10% of donations were worth 78% of the final amount.

* New donor defined as not a current regular donor, major donor, trustee or staff.



Post Campaign

The first priority after the completion of the campaign was to thank all donors and celebrate with them. The CEO sent an email to every donor (pledger and campaign week donor) thanking them and celebrating the successful outcome of the campaign. He also sent a thank you email via the Big Give website to the champion.

The Big Give post campaign questionnaire was completed, and proof that all pledged amounts had been paid was submitted.

The analytics from the Big Give website were reviewed and the team discussed what had gone well and lessons learned.

These lessons were discussed with trustees and decisions were made to participate in the Big Give Christmas Challenge again in 2026 but with a bigger target.



Reflections and Learning

The experience of running a Big Give Christmas Campaign in 2025 taught us many lessons. The following list are some examples of these:

1. We need more case studies, testimonials and interviews of partners and beneficiaries. We are in the process of rectifying this.
2. The template resources provided by Big Give need to be adapted to conform more with our own branding colours so people know they are seeing communications from Mission Direct. We will address this in the next challenge.
3. Some pledgers got confused and donated during the campaign week. This confusion could have been anticipated and avoided if we had communicated more with our pledgers.
4. We might have achieved more donations overall if we had set a larger target because once we reached the target the match funding incentive ended and donations slowed down significantly.

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Reflections and Learning

(continued)

5. We raised enough through pledges and donations to have set a higher goal. If we had set a target of £15,000, and if the champion had therefore committed to donating £3,750 instead of £2,500, we could have raised £17,223 with gift aid and after fees, instead of £15,973 – an extra £1,250.
6. Normal donations dipped in November – we think this was caused by people holding back donations for the Big Give.
7. If we can find a well-known person to appear in a video for us, maybe we would reach a wider audience.
8. Our champion was a consortium of donors who wanted to remain anonymous, so we can't easily build a new relationship with this funder and could only thank them.
9. Achieving our target on the 2nd day gives us confidence to set a larger target next time.
10. The staff team and trustees were inspired by achieving our goal and by the Big Give experience.
11. New donor stewardship journeys have been started.
12. We successfully ran our campaign without significantly disrupting our main work.



Thank You

We want to extend our thanks to all those who pledged, championed and donated to our Big Give Christmas Challenge in 2025 – and to all those who spread the message.

missiondirect.org
info@missiondirect.org
facebook.com/missiondirect
instagram.com/missiondirect

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