

COVID-19 and Giving Tuesday Messages from Around the World

Host: *Ted Hart, President and CEO, CAF America*

Guests: *Gabrielle Kirstein, Founder and Chief Executive, Feeding Hong Kong (Hong Kong) | Alanna Wallace, Head of Development, Planeterra (Toronto) | Angela Frigo, Secretary General, European Food Banks Federation (Brussels) | Carla Nóbrega, Director of Development, Habitat for Humanity Brazil (São Paulo) | Carlos Lejniaks, President and CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson, & Union Counties (NY)*

Announcer: Learn how to take your caring and giving farther with the Caring and Funding Podcast powered CAF America. CAF America, America's leader in cross border philanthropy, helps corporations, foundations, wealth advisors and individuals who wish to give internationally and with enhanced due diligence in the United States. Through its industry leading grants management [00:00:30] program and philanthropic advisory services, CAF America helps donors amplify their impact and ensure their gifts are made in a safe and effective manner. This Caring and Funding Podcast is dedicated to these donors and the charities they support.

Our guests are leaders in their field who join us to share tips for success and stories that inspire. Our host is Ted Hart, the CEO of CAF America. After the show, you can find all our podcasts at cafamerica.org, on [00:01:00] iTunes, and now, just say, "Alexa, play C-A-F America," on TuneIn. Now, welcome the host of CAF America's Caring and Funding Podcast, Ted Hart.

Ted Hart: Thank you for joining us today for the special Giving Tuesday edition of the Caring and Funding Podcast. Giving Tuesday is an impressive global movement that unleashes the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world. Created in [00:01:30] 2012, today is the day that we encourage all people to do good, make someone smile, help a neighbor, give to your favorite charity, every act of generosity counts and everyone has something to give. I don't have to tell you, our listeners, that this has truly been a year for history books.

As we gather today to celebrate the good in the world and those who do good for the world, we are reminded that has now [00:02:00] been nearly 11 months since the world reported the first instance of COVID-19 virus in Wuhan, China. It's now been eight months since the World Health Organization declared this new virus a global pandemic. It's now been a little over a month since CAF America released volume five of our COVID-19 report series, *The Face of Charities During COVID-19 Worldwide*. Sharing the stories of thousands of charities responding [00:02:30] to our survey series.

The data has brought the global picture into focus. Nonprofits around the world have struggled to meet increased demands for their services while their funding has been decreased, costs have skyrocketed and now many fear they won't survive. Yet through the fog, through the haze, through the late nights and long hours, stress and concern, strategies have emerged. Charities around the world are showing resilience. They are showing determination. They're showing [00:03:00] creativity and donors are stepping forward as never before. 2020 is

blessedly nearing its end it, but sadly it does not appear that we are safe from the ravages of this pandemic.

More than 51 million people worldwide are confirmed to be infected and over one in a quarter million men, women, and children have died. Many countries around the world are facing a second regional or nationwide lockdown. Here in the United States, about 30 million people remain unemployed. **[00:03:30]** For many, their benefits have run out and their financial position is becoming more precarious by the day. Businesses are closing in alarming rate. COVID-19 continues to challenge humanity and in every town, in every country around the world, there are volunteers and nonprofits struggling to meet the needs of their community.

This day, Giving Tuesday, has never been more needed. This year, the need for your generosity and giving has never seemed more acute. **[00:04:00]** Today, we have invited leaders from around the world to tell their story of COVID resilience and to reflect of the need for Giving Tuesday 2020.

First up, it's my pleasure to welcome Gabrielle Kirstein, the Chief Executive Officer of Feeding Hong Kong. Feeding Hong Kong is a registered charity with a mission to fight hunger in Hong Kong and reduce the amount of quality food sent to landfills. **[00:04:30]** Feeding Hong Kong achieves this by collecting high quality food that would otherwise be thrown away and redistributed to frontline charities feeding people in need.

Gabrielle started her career at the international advertising agency Bates and their integrated communication consultancy 141 London. She moved to Hong Kong in 2003 and in 2011, she founded Feeding Hong Kong. Gabrielle, **[00:05:00]** thank you for joining us here today on the Caring and Funding Podcast.

Gabrielle Kirstein: Thank you, Ted.

Ted: Gabrielle's Feeding Hong Kong has had an incredible journey during this COVID-19 global pandemic. It has really in our eyes been a story of resilience, can you share with our listeners your story?

Gabrielle: I can, of course. Firstly, thank you, Ted, for inviting me. It's a real pleasure to be here and have **[00:05:30]** this chance to share as you describe what's been a journey over this year. In Hong Kong, we faced the first wave of COVID way back at the beginning of the year with late January. We were just coming to the end of Chinese New Year. Quite frankly, within the space of two weeks, it felt like everything had changed. We were facing a series of disruptions **[00:06:00]** across all of our organization.

I could really summarize it by giving you an insight into the disruptions that we were facing with our food supply, the disruptions that we were facing with our logistics and then the disruption we're facing about distribution. It was all about taking a step back and going, "How do we ultimately keep our doors open? And how do we keep food flowing from where it's surplus to where it's needed and **[00:06:30]** where it's needed more than ever before?"

I'd love to just share a few examples of those disruptions. If we look at the food, what really happened overnight with the programs that previously had been regular, had been reliable just changed. Our retail program where we're picking up from bakeries, where we're picking up from supermarkets, quite literally overnight stops. Then if **[00:07:00]** you cast your mind back to the early days of when we had a lot of panic buying. The steady source of food suddenly disappeared.

Then another program that was massively impacted was our airport program, this wasn't quite as dramatic and unlike the retail it wasn't overnight, but what we saw was that in February, donations from that program fell by 14%. By March, they were down by 35%. By **[00:07:30]** April, just in tandem with reduction in global flights, donations from that program were down by 90%. In that case, we don't anticipate the recovery of that program within, not just this year, but we're looking at 2021.

At the same time, we are facing new struggles, there was also an opportunity that arose and that was with wholesale programs. We had warehouses, we had distributors **[00:08:00]** that were calling us up with pallets and pallets of food to donate which helps us offset volumes, but we're creating another challenge because it was a completely different set of logistics that were required. Which brings me along to the logistics and the disruptions we were seeing there. Because of that shift in food supply, our warehouse was struggling, our manpower wasn't set up to accommodate this change in food, our fleet wasn't set up for this change in food supply. **[00:08:30]**

We were getting stock that was bottlenecks in the warehouse. I think one of the biggest challenges we faced, particularly right there at the beginning, with our volunteer support. Traditionally, we had these wonderful partnerships with corporate groups that come down and volunteer in our warehouse. Typically, every single day, we will have a group that comes down. Again, overnight as social distancing kicked in, as work from home **[00:09:00]** policies implemented, our corporate volunteering stops and so on manpower, dramatically reduced.

Then the final challenge, I mean there were many more but just going on that flow, our charity distribution. In normal times, pre-COVID, we were serving over 140 charities across the city. We had a steady flow of food in and out. In those first two weeks, 75% of our **[00:09:30]** charity partners closed, which meant we had food, we knew the need was still there in the community, but we were struggling to get it out to the people that needed it.

Even as the situation evolved, we stayed with the third wave here in Hong Kong in July and August and that situation happened again. At that point, we had 50% of our charities that closed. Those were some of the challenges we faced. What did we do? **[00:10:00]** I think just to sum it up, it was about pivoting and it was about partnerships. If we look at food, what did we do? We basically took a step back. We shifted our focus from our airport and retail programs to wholesale because wholesale had doubled, so it was really about that reallocation of resources.

Then we did another thing. We found that with the wholesale program, we were getting large donations of single products, but we were losing **[00:10:30]** variety. We reached out to our supporters. We ran campaigns to promote food drives, to get individual donations of key

staples. Then we launched a purchase program, which was something we really haven't done in the past, but we really recognized the need in the community. The need was for more food, the need was of a consistent supply, constant supply of food, so we launched an emergency food box program to really supplement and that surplus food. **[00:11:00]**

Then how did we keep that food moving? This is firstly by partnerships came in, we reached out to other logistics companies, to warehouses, to transportation companies to see if they could help us overcome those bottlenecks. I think those moments were very early on, we just recognized the generosity of the community to step up in times of need.

Then we volunteered, we didn't have the corporate groups anymore. **[00:11:30]** What we did is we shifted our recruitment towards individuals. We now have a situation where if we open up a volunteer shift, it is full within 24 hours and it is these passionate, committed individuals that are coming down and helping us every single day, keep that food moving.

Then with the charities, it was really about clear communication within the early days, finding out who was still open, which were those charities that **[00:12:00]** still were receiving food, were still distributing food. What did they need and how could we help them? Then as the situation evolved, it was how could we evolve our service?

Before we were delivering typically pallets of food to these charities, which was this food box program where we could put together a tailored family box, a tailored senior box, which required minimum handling then with our receiving charities and they could focus just on the safe distribution, the **[00:12:30]** door-to-door distributions households of families that needed that support.

To sum up, what have we learned? I think it's that being prepared to pivot to be agile. I think what I'll stress is over the 10 months now that we've been doing it, we've had to pivot multiple times. Being agile, being ready to change and adapt, the importance of scenario planning, **[00:13:00]** we've learned a lot last year in Hong Kong, we face a lot of challenges due to the social situation here. We've started scenario planning then for logistics disruption and it was really in February taking that to the next level.

Now, what were the worst-case scenarios, which I think we never thought would come to play when we start doing it in February, and so what would happen if there were no more flights? Then when several **[00:13:30]** months later we were down by 95%, the fact that we had gone through that worst-case scenario really helped us.

At the end of the day, what do we do at Feeding Hong Kong where a connection between the community and frontline charities that are directly helping people in need? We are quite unique in our warehouse that are in our set-up, in our transportation abilities, in our knowledge of food sourcing and supply. Even though **[00:14:00]** the surplus was changing, we've incorporated the purchasing, it was really going, how do we use the strengths that we have to keep supporting the community at a time when, what we do when food assistance has never been more vital.

Ted: Gabrielle, this is truly an amazing story of resilience and agility. Moving on to our next guest. I want to welcome Alanna Wallace. **[00:14:30]** Alanna Wallace is the Program and Communications Manager at Planeterra in Toronto, which is a leading community tourism organization working to reduce poverty and is passionate about finding new ways to engage travelers and making positive lasting impact on communities across the world.

Today, it's my pleasure to welcome here at Alanna Wallace. Alanna, the story of Planeterra **[00:15:00]** as we just heard from Gabrielle, your story is truly a story of adaptation, can you help us learn from your experience?

Alanna Wallace: You're right, Ted. Thanks for having me join the podcast, and thanks to Gabrielle for her wonderful explanation about how her organization really pivoted and adapted.

Certainly, you're right Planeterra is directly tied to the travel industry. When the pandemic **[00:15:30]** started in March and travel really ground to a halt, we had no idea how long we'd be. In that type of situation, all around the world in more than 50 countries, our partners, all community tourism enterprises who host international travelers for the most part, for things like community tours, cultural experiences, meals, overnight stays at community-owned guest houses, handicrafts demonstrations, **[00:16:00]** all the like, suddenly had zero income. As international tourism dried up pretty much overnight countries closed their borders, airlines stopped their flights.

We knew we had to do something to help our partners through. Most of or all of the majority of their income came from these international travelers, and truly the majority of Planeterra's fundraising came from travelers on the ground, experiencing **[00:16:30]** our network of projects and being compelled to give to Planeterra to support these kinds of initiatives around the world.

Immediately we realized that although emergency relief is not Planeterra's mandate, we provide funding to community tourism enterprises to help them strengthen their business, access local training and resources so that they can increase their income or increase their access to international tourism **[00:17:00]** and keep tourism dollars in the hands of local people. Emergency relief is not part of that mandate, but we knew because of the pandemic, we had to do something to support our communities that we work with.

We pivoted, that's the buzzword of 2020, I think. We launched the turn travel into impact from home campaign, which was an online fundraising campaign to support our 85 community partners at the time, **[00:17:30]** back in March, those partnerships are always growing. For this campaign, we sent out a needs assessment survey and managed to touch base with all 85 partners within a few days of really the global halt of travel. Mostly we were able to, through a needs assessment identify what they needed in the short-term and long-term in terms of support.

Mostly, in the beginning when we collected **[00:18:00]** funds and donations through the turn travel into impact from home campaign from our wonderful global network of travelers who were now stuck at home, but still felt a connection to the communities they visited on their travels. Those initial grants that we gave out were for things like medicine that maybe a

community tourism organization supported at risk or needy people in their community with things like medicine or food in the form of food parcels **[00:18:30]** that were bought locally and distributed locally by our partners.

Interestingly enough, we discovered that an incredible ripple effect of these small grants who were giving for emergency relief, because those funds were being used locally to buy food parcels from local markets or farmers. It actually had ripple effects in the local economy which were really a benefit that we didn't really see coming in the quick pivot that we did.

As partners, we're also **[00:19:00]** able to maybe pivot and make plans to earn income locally, whether that was through subsistence farming or selling a different product or service to the local domestic market. It's been more recently the funds that we've gathered from that campaign have gone towards more long-term sustainability and resiliency kind of projects like food gardens. To date, we've provided 30 communities in 24 countries with emergency funds and we're still working on growing **[00:19:30]** our network.

At the moment, we're really helping our latest grants. The latest being one for our community home state partners in Nepal have gone towards reopening protocols and safety protocols things like cleaner, sanitizer and assisting them in safely reopening for domestic travel, at the moment but international travel soon thereafter, we hope. Support from our partners came in different forms, not just monetary, like these grants. **[00:20:00]** This included the launch of the Planeterra Learning Hub which was 2020 goals for end of year, which we were expected to complete by end of year, but we fast-tracked this project and launched it in June. It's an online website for our partners who asked in the needs assessment survey for more access to training and resources to strengthen their businesses.

To there's online hub, which is accessible for them in both Spanish and English, the two main languages that Planeterra works in. It has **[00:20:30]** all sorts of videos, instructional training, online workshops, 50 worksheets and templates for them to fill out, to strengthen their business. We've been running actually online webinars and workshops online to help them build their resilience and the mentorship that they received from our staff.

Outside of this emergency relief as the month grew on, we planned a community building event for our supporters around the world who are stuck at home. Leaning into **[00:21:00]** that virtual world once again like we did with the Planeterra Learning Hub and giving a little nod to traveling while most of us are stuck at home.

We launched the Planeterra Trek challenge, which was an invitation to the travel industry, individuals who missed to travel. Our existing network of supporters to join a virtual trek to Everest basecamp with a step count and a week-long event online, all virtual, all connecting everyone via social media. Really **[00:21:30]** putting communities at the heart of building back better with the message that we were sending to the over 500 participants that raised over US \$80,000 for our work being able to support communities as they built back and really being able to pivot.

We have a very small team at Planeterra. We are a non-profit here in Canada. We're also, a registered charity in the US but we have a very small team. That made us very nimble

[00:22:00] and we were really able to move because we're so virtual, so global already, leaning into the digital space, leaning to a virtual space for fundraising. Also, to support our partners through this difficult time really helps set us up for success.

Our team was willing to take some risks and really be innovative and go virtual with our programs and with our fundraising. It really helped us make **[00:22:30]** the most of this challenging time that all charities are finding ourselves in.

Ted: Alanna, thank you so much for sharing your story. Truly one of adaptation, but we're learning, it's important to be nimble and innovative. I want to welcome here to the Caring and Funding Podcast, Angela Frigo who is the Secretary General of the European Food Banks Federation. Angela has been working in the EU field dealing with food, agriculture and social affairs since 2010. **[00:23:00]**

Angela currently serves as the Secretary General, as I mentioned, for the European Food Banks Federation, which is a European non-profit organization that works in collaboration with 24 members and five associate members in European countries. Her native language is Italian. She's fluent in English, Spanish and French and most importantly, she's here with us today.

Angela Frigo, the story of what the European Food Banks **[00:23:30]** have done and have had to do is really a story of growth through adversity and hunger really has a new face during COVID. Walk us through your experience and the lessons that we can learn.

Angela Frigo: Yes, thank you very much, Ted. I'm really grateful for the possibility to participate in this podcast on the occasion of Giving Tuesday and to share our story, the story of our organization, and **[00:24:00]** of our members.

I'll start saying that when COVID-19 started to hit Europe, we made a choice. Because this challenge and situation that we were experiencing in February and March, but that we are still experiencing today with a second wave in Europe could be seen from our point of view as a threat leading to despair. Or as an **[00:24:30]** opportunity that could take us back to the roots of solidarity in Europe and also to the roots of our mission, of our daily activity in Europe.

We believe that this situation is putting the person with all his or her needs and also weaknesses back at the center of our community. We can shift the focus also our activity back to what it is really **[00:25:00]** essential. We decided to make this choice and to consider the COVID as an opportunity.

If I may quote Pope Francis and the words that he addressed to our petition last year, Pope Francis said that, "Your work, so the work of the food banks is like that of trees, which breathing pollution and give back oxygen, **[00:25:30]** and like trees you do not keep the oxygen but you distribute the quantity required for living so that it can reach those in need."

I think that the food banks are like the trees and I think that this is a beautiful image. The activity of the food banks is made possible by tens of thousands of people every day. In Europe, we have more than 27,000 of volunteers **[00:26:00]** and they are growing the food

banks through adversity, as you said, because they are giving back to the community more than what they are receiving. I think that this is a real example of circular economy with a social purpose and with a broader result, a broader goal than the starting points.

As Gabrielle, said at the beginning, in Hong Kong, also in Europe, we faced a similar situation **[00:26:30]** so the food banks are operating in a new and increasingly complex environment. We are experiencing an increase for demand up to 30% at European level with a range going from 6% to 90%, so it's really a huge increase in some countries.

This is a new poverty, so it didn't exist at the beginning of the year. We are speaking of people who **[00:27:00]** have lost their job due to the COVID or families who were relying on schools for the meals of their children, and also elderly people living alone and also feeling more lonely due to the social distancing.

Food banks are also experiencing a new daily routine. They have increased the amount of food distributed and they have also suffered a fluctuation of the supply. **[00:27:30]** They have established new partnerships, so recovering a lot of food, surplus food from the food service sector, but also from restaurants.

We faced, as you can imagine, a shortage of volunteers because most of our volunteers are over 65, so they are still a group at risk. We also faced a drop in financial resources due to unexpected **[00:28:00]** expenses like for protective equipment. At the same time, our members have expressed their full creativity and professionalism so recovering foods from restaurants, from airline companies, from cruise ships. Also, reorganizing the activity so, for example, preparing food parcels for the charities.

As European Food Bank Federation, the organization is based in Brussels **[00:28:30]** and I just want to highlight that a small team, we are a team of five people, five women. We decided to fully support our members since the beginning and also to call for solidarity. We still are overwhelmed by the outcome, so we decided to keep on going with all the activities that were planned at the beginning of the year, but **[00:29:00]** we decided to organize all the activities, obviously in virtual mode.

We organized weekly meetings with our members to share information and to know what was happening in the different countries. In this way, we have the possibility to avoid any kind of disruption of relationship with our members, and we also reinforced the dialogue with them but also with our partners and stakeholders. **[00:29:30]** In this way, I'll say that virtual meetings at the beginning we were a little bit afraid. Because digital tools, especially our members were not so familiar with digital tools but at the end I will say that these virtual meetings have reduced the gap created by social distancing so they have really valuable.

At the same time, we also decided to launch a call for solidarity **[00:30:00]** open to public authorities, businesses, and also citizens. We established these social emergency funds to ensure and to secure the activity of our members. Again, we were overwhelmed by the response. We raised more than €4.3 million that were then redistributed to our members to respond to their needs, so like purchasing **[00:30:30]** vans or paying additional warehouses, so for very concrete expenses.

I would say just to conclude that really the pandemic is an adversity for all of us especially for our organization and for our members, it has shed the light on positive initiatives, such as the food banks, but not only the food banks. **[00:31:00]** The tests proven that we can improve our communities even during these very challenging times.

Ted: Thank you very much. It's an incredible story, again, growth through adversity. We're going to take a very quick break here. When we come back, we're going to be joined by Carla Nóbrega, the Director of Development at Habitat for Humanity, Brazil, and we'll be right back.

Audio Recording: Remember our podcast and archives **[00:31:30]** are always available 24 hours a day at cafamerica.org on iTunes, or just say, "Alexa play C-A-F America," on TuneIn. Now back to the Caring and Funding Podcast and our host Ted Hart.

Ted: We're back here on Giving Tuesday with Carla Nóbrega, the Director of Development at Habitat for Humanity, Brazil, who has had 26 years of experience working in resource development at non-profit **[00:32:00]** organizations. She has been with Habitat for Humanity since 2007. She's a founding partner and former vice president of the Brazilian fundraising association.

Carla has received the 2019 ABCR America fundraising award, and recognition for her volunteer service dedicated to promoting and strengthening professional fundraising in Brazil for the last 20 years. **[00:32:30]** We've been looking forward to getting a chance to chat with you, Carla, because Habitat for Humanity, Brazil, has really shown the strategy of redirecting your expertise in brand new ways to help us learn from the experience of Habitat for Humanity of Brazil.

Carla: Hi, Ted. It's been a pleasure to be here to share our experience with colleagues. I'm speaking from **[00:33:00]** São Paulo, Brazil and it was the second country with the highest number of the death of COVID right now. This is not a good record, it's the very bad. The pandemic arrived here in our country, very strongly especially because with the lockdown many people here in Brazil **[00:33:30]** live in very bad situation and could not stay at home, or they don't have water every day, in their home to do the hygiene and the protection.

Also, they couldn't go out to work. The pandemic had also a very strong effect on the income. I'm talking about the poor people **[00:34:00]** that we serve through our housing programs in Habitat for Humanity, Brazil. At the beginning in March, when the pandemic arrived in Brazil, we started to work in home office and we had to suspend our field operations. However, we realized that there was an urgent need for sanitation and food relief, and we could not cross our **[00:34:30]** arms and do nothing.

We decided to raise funds for a big emergency food and hygiene kit distribution. We did the crowdfunding and we raised funds from corporate, and then we were able to distribute 6,000 emergency kits all over the country. It's been a very successful campaign **[00:35:00]** and we call these the first days of our COVID attention activities.

Then we realized that the lack of access to water in the communities was also a big issue for them to protect themselves from the virus. We started our second phase of **[00:35:30]** COVID

attention. We developed a program to install hand washing station in the community. People were close to both stations and close to the entrances of the favela. People could wash their hands with water and soap and protect themselves for the virus.

We launched a second crowdfunding campaign. We raised funds from corporate for the **[00:36:00]** second phase as well. We were very successful because our initial goal was to build 300 community hand washing stations. We have already set up 420 hand washing stations so far in south state, and 112 communities in the country.

Also, for the third phase of our attention to the COVID that started now **[00:36:30]** in September, when our experts were able to go to the communities and do the technical assistance for the home repair. We changed the shift of our home repair that were focused in main home improvement before, and now we are doing wash program sthat are connecting to the protection. **[00:37:00]** There are faster home repairs and we are in different bedrooms. Also, installing water tanks in the homes, so people can have water every day in their homes.

When I see now what we've done, that was very important for us to be successful in very **[00:37:30]** tough challenges that we faced this year. I think that we were very quick in our response. Very quick in thinking about other ways of doing our work, social work, that would be very helpful for the communities to overcome all the difficulties that we are facing this year.

We are glad **[00:38:00]** now that we are serving much more people than we used before the pandemic. I'll give you a number, each hand washing station can serve 300 to 1,000 people per day washing their hands. That's it. I think that our teams and volunteers, we showed **[00:38:30]** creativity to think about new ways to serve people and to our mission here in Brazil.

Ted: You certainly did bring a lot of creativity, and again, redirecting your incredible expertise to the needs of your community during a very difficult time. Thank you very much for sharing that with us, Carla.

Now joining is Carlos Lejniaks, President and CEO of Big Brothers, Big **[00:39:00]** Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties. Welcome here. Carlos is the immediate past chair of Big Brothers, Big Sisters of New Jersey. He took over the organization when it really needed a boost of energy and has grown that organization tremendously during his time, and has received numerous awards from local and national entities for his work, including a formal recognition by President **[00:39:30]** Obama.

Thank you for joining us here, Carlos. I think it goes without saying that much of the New York and New Jersey area has been hit very hard early on in the pandemic and is now in another wave of COVID. The service that you've provided in the eye of the storm has really inspired many of us. I'm hoping that you can share your experience, but also **[00:40:00]** help our listeners learn from that experience.

Carlos Lejniaks: Thank you so much, Ted. It's an honor to be alongside so many great, leaders around the world doing essential work in this critical period of time. I'm also grateful, Ted, for the platform you are affording us to manifest good energy into the world. We can't take this for granted. As we entered January and February, we had a trip **[00:40:30]** to China as it

turns out we are the only Big Brothers, Big Sisters agency that has an international component. It's a capstone to our program for our high schoolers; we have an exchange with a university there.

It became increasingly clear, we had to pivot that trip not knowing that it would be a part of the story of the year. We thought it was just an isolated moment. In February, when **[00:41:00]** I described this to our children and to the families, I will be honest I was confronted with tears, express disappointments.

The eye of the storm hit us twofold early on for that trip and then as it continued to ripple into our operations in February and March when we fully went to remote work. **[00:41:30]** The reason why I say that is because regularly in my work with young people who they're born into demographics that are stacked against them and we're trying to offer them love and support and a critical caring adult to mentor in their life to help blossom their own voice into this world.

Whenever we find these moments of challenge, I often encourage our young people **[00:42:00]** to offer a perspective that this too shall pass. Then secondly, that they are not alone. Frankly, as an organization in March, I saw myself trying to see those same points as an organizational leader. The markets were down. My lead funders had businesses where they were projecting 75%, 80%, 90% loss of revenues. **[00:42:30]** Layoffs were pending for the philanthropic world for people that were supporting my organization.

I'm a small social sector organization that is disproportionately reliant on philanthropy. These were cautions for our organization and operations. As we confronted that and the world was unclear in March, I heeded those points and we were not going at it alone. We talked to key friends, I talked to two key funders and key **[00:43:00]** organizations expressing that we will do our part organizationally to pivot, to reduce costs that we want to express certain kind of values.

We hire from the community, 80% of our staff are diverse leaders from our community. As well, programmatically, we didn't want to close up shop. We didn't want to have the pandemic, us, **[00:43:30]** to be a casualty as an organization. We language that to our key funders and friends, even as they were facing financial uncertainty and they bought in. You are not alone, is what we were telling our kids. As we started to communicate to our key funders and friends, they made us as an organization feel like we weren't alone.

Of course, we had to trim our costs. We reduced our operating costs by 13% **[00:44:00]** immediately on non-staff related expense drivers. We pivoted to work from home, which initially was just temporary has been now the case consistently. We haven't gone back to the office. As we evolved our program, we have successfully had our bigs and littles consistently lean on each other.

We have seen the need of our littles **[00:44:30]** be expressed to their caring adult mentors in ways that we never would have predicted. They're telling our mentors the subtle things that are going on in their lives when the inability to socialize and have other watchful eyes, their social workers, the therapists, the guidance counselors in schools would normally be those additional eyes on our children's development. Since those **[00:45:00]** typical supports for our young

people's development are no longer as present the primacy of their big brother or big sister has increased.

As policy leaders and philanthropists were grappling with what to do when we were seeing this in the New York, New Jersey region, a fair amount. We saw a lot of the focus on internet passion, and the need for technology. That was **[00:45:30]** absolutely right, but it wasn't sufficient. We became an additional voice to ensure that key decision-makers understood that while internet connection was important, the human connection was equally important.

We saw that emerge in our programs whenever we offered online opportunities for virtual sessions, virtual workshops, and then also the one-to-one interactions between our bigs and our littles. **[00:46:00]** Our young people needed that outlet. They needed that caring adult to just express themselves. In those moments too, we saw them express things that were not obvious to others as well. Depressive articulation unfortunately was manifesting itself.

Whenever we had that big who is keenly aware to what the littles are going through, the subtle things that are being expressed, we then were able to support **[00:46:30]** the additional wraparound services that our young people needed that. Frankly, maybe a parent or guardian may have seen, but disproportionately a lot of our families were labeled essential workers. They were trying to make ends meet on their own and our young people just didn't have the level of eyes on them like they normally would have. It became an all hands-on-deck and the **[00:47:00]** central entity, the central person in that became the mentor.

We pivoted a lot of our programs go online. Then also just challenged our young people to communicate in ways, not only verbal to our bigs and also to our staff, but also to start journaling as a habit to create a habit of having regular check-ins with themselves, writing journal prompts on a regular basis, on a daily basis. Then we've **[00:47:30]** pivoted this into the power of stories and our narratives from our communities.

The pandemic is one way of the storm, but concurrent waves have been on social justice and racial injustice and equities, frankly, our young people have been confronting all their lives. We've been channeling that energy around the need for storytelling, having our children feel that they have a voice, **[00:48:00]** capturing that voice and sharing that with us and their bigs.

That, us, has been a real blessing to hear the power of their narratives emerge through this regular journaling practice, which frankly, we had not focused on in the past. Even the world that we live in today, it allowed us to get back to basics and just putting pen to paper and letting our young people express their voice. **[00:48:30]**

In these moments, we've challenged our kids, who's going to be the next Maya Angelou? Who is going to be the next James Baldwin? In our midst, we have powerful stories of our young people shining and elevating their voice in some very dark times. The power of mentorship and having someone in their corner encourage that and love that and care for that has allowed us to see a lot of positivity **[00:49:00]** emerge even in the face of some of this darkness.

Ted: Let's go around in the same order you had before. Please provide your reflections on Giving Tuesday 2020. How should Giving Tuesday 2020 become successful? Why is this important especially this year? Let's go back to Gabriele, please.

Gabrielle: Sure. [00:49:30] 2020 is without a doubt going to be remembered as a year of unprecedented challenge, a year in which so many people have suffered, so many people have struggled. I think today is going to reflect what I've seen every day since COVID hit and that this is a year of generosity. A year which is really bringing out the very best in so many people [00:50:00] whether that's a gift of food, the gift of time, or financial donation.

Quite honestly, I've had moments when I thought, "Will we make it through this year? Will I be able to keep the doors open and food flowing to where it's needed? Will I be able to keep and pay all of my staff?" Due to the amazing generosity of the community and not only at Feeding Hong Kong have we been able to keep our doors open, but we've been able to increase the food that has flowed through to those [00:50:30] that need it by 25%.

Not only have we kept all of our staff but we've actually been able to hire more people to keep food flowing. Creating jobs at a time when unemployment is at its highest in Hong Kong in years and that's because people have been so generous. They've signed up for monthly pledges. They've donated their government handout. They used their family in quarantine to run marathons and climb up Everest virtually, of course, and in the process raised thousands of dollars. [00:51:00]

To go back to the question, I am so hopeful that this Giving Tuesday is going to be a standout that today is going to be a day when people give, and people give generously. I'm so grateful to CAF for creating a platform to support that generosity.

Ted: Gabrielle, thank you. Again, we're in our lightning round here, so if we could ask Alanna Wallace your quick thoughts on Giving Tuesday and its importance to this year. Alanna.

Alanna: Yes, thank you, Ted. I really love how Gabrielle is saying that 2020 is the year of generosity, I think that [00:52:00] was so eloquently put. We think Planeterra's community and people around the world are showing that they care about other families, communities around the world while they're stuck at home without the ability to travel. Maybe it's right on time people tend to really reflect and often realize that we're going through this common struggle in different ways, but in our own unique ways, but still facing global pandemic [00:52:30] with those around us.

At Planeterra we've seen through our emergency campaign. Like, Gabrielle mentioned our virtual trek to Everest, and people coming together while they're in lockdown or dealing with COVID. People are looking at community and a network and purpose. Today, on Giving Tuesday gives those with the ability to give the opportunity to be a part of something bigger than ourselves to join with missions of organizations and [00:53:00] help them achieve their goals.

I can tell you as a small non-profit every single dollar that comes to Planeterra account makes a difference. We watch funds rolling donor by donor and we're so grateful for each and every one, and for that community that we build today and every day.

We're really hopeful that today we can encourage people who love to travel to think of those communities that you have visited in the past where you ate a local meal or learned about weaving or traditional art [00:53:30] or a language or history from a local community and support travel coming back better when travel resumes in a more responsible way and ensure local people benefit every time they go abroad. [00:54:00]

Ted: Thank you very much. Angela Frigo your quick thoughts on the importance of Giving Tuesday 2020.

Angela: Thank you very much, Ted. I really agree with the previous speakers. What I would like to add is that, as they said I think that today we should say, first of all, thank you. Because in this period, generosity has been evident [00:54:30] so many people they have given food, funds, time so we have received a lot and also a lot of new collaborations have been established.

What I would like to add today is that we still need your help. We still need the help of everyone and everyone can make the difference, and can give a contribution and can support [00:55:00] the daily activity of many, many charities that are helping people in need worldwide. I think that today we have the possibility to share this strong message so saying thank you, but also, we still need your help today and also in the coming months and years.

Ted: Well said, thank you very much, again, Angela Frigo. Carla Nobrega, [00:55:30] please share with us your thoughts on Giving Tuesday 2020.

Carla: Hi, Ted. Yes, I believe my colleagues. Also, I would like to add that Brazil is a country that needs to improve its cultural donation, strategic philanthropy is relatively new here. However, during the pandemic, we saw an amazing volume of donations coming from corporate and individuals. Solidarity [00:56:00] is stronger than ever now and not only here in Brazil.

The Giving Tuesday is a day to celebrate donation in generosity now more than ever. We are developing new fundraising strategies as personal contacts must be avoided in these days. I'm sure that supporters and volunteers are sensitive to the Giving Tuesday global movement today, and together we [00:56:30] will overcome challenges to build stronger programs and help more people. Thank you so much for your support and contribution to a better world.

Ted: Thank you, Carla. Carlos Lejniaks, please help us with your thoughts on today, Giving Tuesday 2020.

Carlos: Sure, sir. I hope that the listening audience are filled. Let's not let our inability to do everything prevent us from [00:57:00] doing something. There are so many wonderful organizations in the world that need this critical level of support, Giving Tuesday is as transformative, so many of our organizations doing incredible work.

Frankly, it's easy to get caught up in the big moments, and seeing, watching it all play out on television and throwing up our hands saying, "We can't solve it all," but we can do something. Those contributions add up and **[00:57:30]** it's contribution's financial. Also, in other ways too and that's the power of the platform Big Brothers, Big Sisters people can mentor and manifest their own intention in that way as well.

I hope that this year, as it has been said, is the year of generosity that we can end the year strong. Make sure that social sector organizations like so many that are on this call and **[00:58:00]** many others are not only surviving but thriving into the next year.

Ted: Thank you, Carlos. Thank you to all of our partners and collaborators from around the world specifically today coming through us from Hong Kong, Toronto, Brazil, Brussels, and New York, New Jersey celebrating today Giving Tuesday 2020.

We hope that all of you can take away from this podcast some **[00:58:30]** of the really terrific stories of adaptation of innovation. Certainly, the word pivot has been alive and well on this podcast. The bottom line for Giving Tuesday 2020 is please give, collaborate, and let's celebrate generosity around the world. Thank you for being our guest here today on the Caring and Funding Podcast.