

Refugee aid at the speed of tech

How USA for UNHCR found clarity on
the cloud





Call for change

No time to waste when crisis hits

Life's circumstances can change in an instant—sometimes for the worse. More than 100 million people around the world have been [forcibly displaced from their homes](#) due to persecution, violence, human rights violations and [even climate change](#). Children, doctors, poets, engineers—anyone can become a refugee through no fault of their own. Although [foreign aid alone](#) won't solve this problem, [cash donations](#) do offer direct relief to refugees and power emergency response efforts. The challenge, however, is quickly turning donations into essential assistance.

[USA for UNHCR \(U4U\)](#), the US-based national partner of the UN Refugee Agency, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), specializes in fundraising and delivering critical supplies like medicine, clean water, fuel, heating stoves, food, tents and other essentials to children and families in need. Toward the end of 2020, the nonprofit felt that it could be doing more for refugees from Syria, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other crises around the world. But issues with disbursement made getting aid to those in need more difficult.

U4U leaders determined that speeding up funding would only be possible if their technology got a serious update. It consisted of a legacy constituent relationship management (CRM) platform, a separate database of customer data, as well as a content management system (CMS). The disconnects between these systems made collaboration among staffers challenging and regularly delayed outreach to donors, new and old alike.

For the 50-plus U4U employees, jumping between platforms to pull data and insights about their active donors and prospects (which numbered in the millions) was time-consuming, inefficient work—and a logistical headache. Complicating matters further was administrative bloat. U4U managers sometimes had to rely on external partners to maintain their technology suite, forcing delays in both outreach and publishing.

U4U envisioned a simplified architecture that would offer staffers a more holistic, 360-degree view of partners and pledges and ultimately enable them to drive more impactful fundraising campaigns.



When tech meets human ingenuity

A tech stack built for action

Accenture and U4U share a commitment to refugees and have enjoyed a longstanding partnership since 2015. Together, they developed a biometric tech system for registering and verifying the identities of displaced persons around the world. The system reduces abuse and fraud in benefits distribution and resettlement procedures, while providing refugees with a confirmed identity.

The system has been so successful it earned recognition in *Fortune's* 2016 "Change the World" rankings. U4U and Accenture also answered a White House call to action designed to help refugees integrate into new communities and take back control of their lives. With Accenture's leadership in digital transformation and Salesforce specifically, U4U and Accenture hit the ground running in January 2021 on this new initiative.

After an exploration phase and candid discussions with U4U staff, the team agreed on a full migration to Salesforce Nonprofit Success Pack (NPSP). Designed for nonprofits, NPSP delivers in a single package all the digital tools, services and apps a team might need. This helps to manage contacts and households, track donation payments, create personalized content that stands out in an inbox and more.

Accenture drove additional value by guiding U4U to focus on the data that really mattered, cutting the clutter and rewiring the rest. Discovery sessions began in the first half of the year, with U4U staff split into half a dozen teams. Accenture captured stories of broken processes and day-to-day roadblocks. Workshop sessions not only onboarded U4U to new NPSP tools and features across various use cases, but also invited feedback. Every challenge expressed by the U4U team was answered by a tailored solution.

Active users were integrated by way of five issue-specific onboarding sprints, each three weeks long. Working in this way allowed staffers to get hands-on with reimagined workflows and more quickly realize proof of impact. An NPSP add-on called Chargent simplified and automated payment processing. Along the way, U4U gained a unified and responsive project management suite. The data model itself became manageable in-house and in real-time: the team decluttered and consolidated nearly 90 tables to just 10 within Salesforce—simplifying more than 212 million records to 13 million.

The full migration was completed by August 2021—and not a moment too soon. The following week, President Joe Biden announced that the United States would withdraw troops from Afghanistan. The ensuing instability in the country displaced 700,000 Afghans, 80% of whom were women and children who U4U was now better positioned to help.



A valuable difference

Fundraising fast and with a purpose

The transformation enabled U4U to more efficiently mobilize US dollars to deliver urgent aid around the world. The team successfully set up a full-service fundraising platform for Afghanistan relief the same weekend as the US withdrawal. In August 2021 alone, that program raised nearly \$1.5 million. And by the end of 2021, U4U was able to raise nearly \$65 million for refugee aid everywhere, a 4.7% uptick from 2020 totals.

Staff is better able to build allyship with refugees and drive advocacy around humanitarian causes with impact storytelling and data-driven insights sourced from the UN's innovation team. Smarter analytics and cleaner data streamlined constituent management, a boon for U4U's major donor and high-touch teams. NPSP also enables the easy integration of additional fundraising tools, allowing teams to further improve their workflows.

Because outreach to existing and prospective pledges via email, phone and social media can be better personalized, U4U's fundraising efforts are more effective than ever before.

Tragically, humanitarian work is never finished—nearly 13 million people (refugees and internally displaced persons) have fled violence in [Ukraine](#). In our uncertain world, U4U's improved operations make a meaningful difference to those forced to flee due to persecution, war or violence.



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