What do you get when you unite 85 organizations under one umbrella to focus on the needs of individuals and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa? The answer- **Aid for Africa**. The nonprofit began in 2004 with 19 members, all registered in the U.S. and working on the ground in Africa, in hopes of making their voices louder together.

“The idea behind Aid for Africa was to help small, effective nonprofits working to overcome poverty in the 55 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa by shining a light on their work,” said Barbara Rose, executive director for Aid for Africa.

Rose added, “By working together, these organizations are able to address the complex, interrelated challenges facing African people in order to create and maintain long term changes to their quality of life”.

Aid for Africa is primarily supported through workplace giving and is featured in the Combined Federal Campaign (the federal government’s workplace giving program) and the employee-giving program at The World Bank. Aid for Africa also supports the efforts of its member organizations through fundraising, education and outreach, primarily in the United States and to individuals worldwide.

“Ultimately, we would like to be the organization to visit if you want to give to a cause in Africa but don’t know which organization to choose,” said Rose.
Challenge
Unifying Systems and Simplifying the Donation Process

With 85 partners providing a variety of support from health care to arts and culture and even wildlife protection, Aid for Africa had the challenge of unifying lots of supporter information and processing donations more efficiently.

“Before Salsa, we had separate platforms for sending email, managing supporter data and accepting donations,” said Brett Gerstein, outreach specialist. “The systems didn’t talk to each other, which was frustrating and made things like sending segmenting emails very unrealistic.”

It also made donor management more difficult, without an easy way to look up a supporter’s profile, previous giving or communication history. In addition to the multiple systems, the programs Aid for Africa was using were not helping them truly achieve their mission.

“We were seeing a lot of traffic on the fundraising pages but there were relatively few resulting gifts,” said Gerstein. “We thought it might a problem with the actual donation process, which was cumbersome.”

To test this theory, Aid for Africa signed up with an online company that processed donations in a more streamlined fashion and almost immediately saw a significant improvement in donation follow through. However, with 85 member organizations and a charge for maintaining each one in the new system, the cost was too high.

“We knew that our new supporters were primarily finding us online, and with donors from around the world, we needed to make sure we had strong online fundraising capabilities,” said Rose.

With a goal of further developing their supporter base beyond workplace donors, it was the right time to put a reliable, efficient system in place that would allow for growth, and a focus on attracting and engaging supporters, making donating easy, and not spending valuable resources on administrative tasks.
In July 2012, Aid for Africa began the process of consolidating their different systems into one place- Salsa. Additionally, they were able to create a unique donation page for each member organization, 85 in total, allowing them to process donations for the specific member while still tracking the information in the larger database.

“One of the reasons Salsa was such a good fit for us was that we could account for each of our members but we weren’t being charged for them individually,” said Rose.

Aid for Africa was also able to establish a series of trigger emails linked to the donation pages, cutting back on the cumbersome administrative task of confirming the donation with the donor, notifying Aid for Africa and alerting the member organization that the donation had been received.

For the first time, we’re able to learn more about our supporters- top donors, lapsed donors, those who have never given and those who are new to our organization. Not only that, but we’re also able to develop the relationship and better target our potential donors.”

- Brett Gerstein, outreach specialist for Aid for Africa

To their delight, Aid for Africa could also streamline the process of notifying those who had a gift made in their honor, or the appropriate contact for gifts made in memory of an individual. Gerstein added, “For the first time, we’re able to learn more about our supporters- top donors, lapsed donors, those who have never given and those who are new to our organization. Not only that, but we’re also able to develop the relationship and better target our potential donors.”

Aid for Africa wasn’t the only one happy with the new system. “What I’m hearing from our members is that they are happy with the transition,” said Rose. “They like getting the notifications of donations right away so they can initiate their own thank you process.”
Results
The Girls Education Fund and Beyond

In Fall 2012, Aid for Africa was able to use Salsa to launch its first online fundraising appeal, which opened the lines of communication with supporters and introduced them to the Aid for Africa Girls Education Fund. A new effort by Aid for Africa, the Girls Education Fund seeks to provide scholarships to African girls. Donations given to Aid for Africa for the fund are disbursed among 14 member organizations who have existing scholarship programs designed to help girls achieve their schooling goals.

“The fact that we were able to start doing appeals [for the Girls Education Fund] in the fall was fantastic,” said Rose. “We were able to use the tracking features to see the success of the appeal, and we hope to be able to do more, and expand our support base, in the future.”

We have increased donations this year over last at this time,” said Rose. “Ease of donation is part of it, finding us and coming to us is part of it. We feel like we have to the tools in place so as we increase our exposure to people, they feel comfortable with giving on our site.”

Salsa helps nonprofits and political campaigns ignite action and fuel change around the world by growing and engaging a base of support online. Salsa provides more than technology; it offers strategic best practices, training, highly rated support and a strong online community, so its clients can focus their energy on their mission.