The UN Refugees Agency's Global Donations Platform

Centralized, online donations platform, dedicated to saving lives, and building a better future for refugees around the world.

www.vardot.com | October 2022

About The Project

UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency provides protection and assistance to forcibly displaced people worldwide. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

Donations are sought every year for UNHCR's Annual Program Budget. But the agency also launches supplementary appeals throughout the year, seeking extra donations for new emergencies that cannot be forecast in advance. With this in mind, UNHCR realized that they needed a custom-built e-commerce platform to support fundraising activities, both online and offline, for Private Sector Partnership markets globally. This aims to boost online contributions to UNHCR globally to deliver long term sustainable solutions that provide security, dignity, and a future for refugees.

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Success in Numbers

The system needed to be robust, easy-to-use, error-free, flexible, and has the potential to substantially increase conversion rates and number of donations across 9 countries and 10 languages while providing them with seamless software integrations. This, of course, was not an easy feat to achieve.

3.5+ Million USD Processed Using the Drupal Fundraising Platform

400+ Published Campaigns in Different Regions at Different Times

63% Less Time to Build, Design, and Publish Campaigns

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The Blueprint

To achieve this, UNHCR needed to build one web platform that supports online fundraising in more than one market with a centralized admin experience.

Today, UNHCR uses a Drupal-based donations platform, utilizing a powerful suite of modules and services used to achieve these objectives of speed and versatility with a multinational application including Varbase, Drupal Commerce, and Layout Builder.

Let's tackle some of the problems mentioned earlier and examine how Vardot enabled UNHCR to overcome them.

Thank you for your Support!

Jessica, Thank you so much for your donation.

Please will you do one more incredible thing for those who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, conflict or natural disasters?

As humanitarian crises continue to escalate around the world we need more amazing people like you to help us reach more and more of those impacted, if you could take a few moments to use the share icons below to spread the word amongst your family.

Friends and colleagues this will make your already generous act if kindness go even further.

Our sincerest thank you

The UNHCR team

Simplified and Centralized Admin Experience

To allow multinational teams to work quickly and for all their data to be consolidated, a customized central donations platform, that manages multiple markets and multiple regions, was developed by the Vardot team. Since each market had its own users, Vardot utilized Drupal's permission system to facilitate the delegation of responsibilities. Since the UNHCR team uses Salesforce, all data on the donations platform had to be synced with information on the team's Salesforce account.

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This meant that users assigned to certain markets only had access to those markets and were able to manage their own campaigns. In addition, each market was linked to its own group of languages and currencies independently.

These features, combined, allowed site admins to manage users and campaign creation permissions while having a bird' eye view across all regions and campaigns. At a more granular level, the campaigns and donations dashboards were tailored to suit the specific needs of the different UNHCR departments. The result was that a single, multipurpose, but centralized platform was serving 9 countries, 4 regions, 56 currencies, and 10 languages.

Advanced Campaign Creation Using Drupal Commerce and Layout Builder

People displaced by crises often need aid fast. UNHCR needed an intuitive admin UX that allowed different departments to manage, create, and edit campaigns in a very quick format, especially in times of crisis. Vardot solved this by implementing a suite of solutions to streamline the campaign creation workflow for the UNHCR team.

Campaign Information

Since every campaign is unique, Vardot developed an easy-to-use system that gave editors amazing flexibility when creating campaigns. On the most basic level, editors were able to customize form field options by specifying which fields to include and whether they were required or not. They can also further customize the campaign by specifying the possible donation types (monthly, one-off, or both) in addition to their minimum amounts, currency options, and a fee amount, if available. Users also had the ability to add different media configurations to different campaigns.

For every campaign, Vardot developed a campaign ID field that directly integrates with Salesforce to sync campaign information across the two platforms, providing the UNHCR team with up-to-date data constantly.

The customizability does not stop there. Although there are existing thank you messages associated with each of the market's campaigns by default, users had the ability to override this feature to define custom thank you messages on a market level or campaign level.
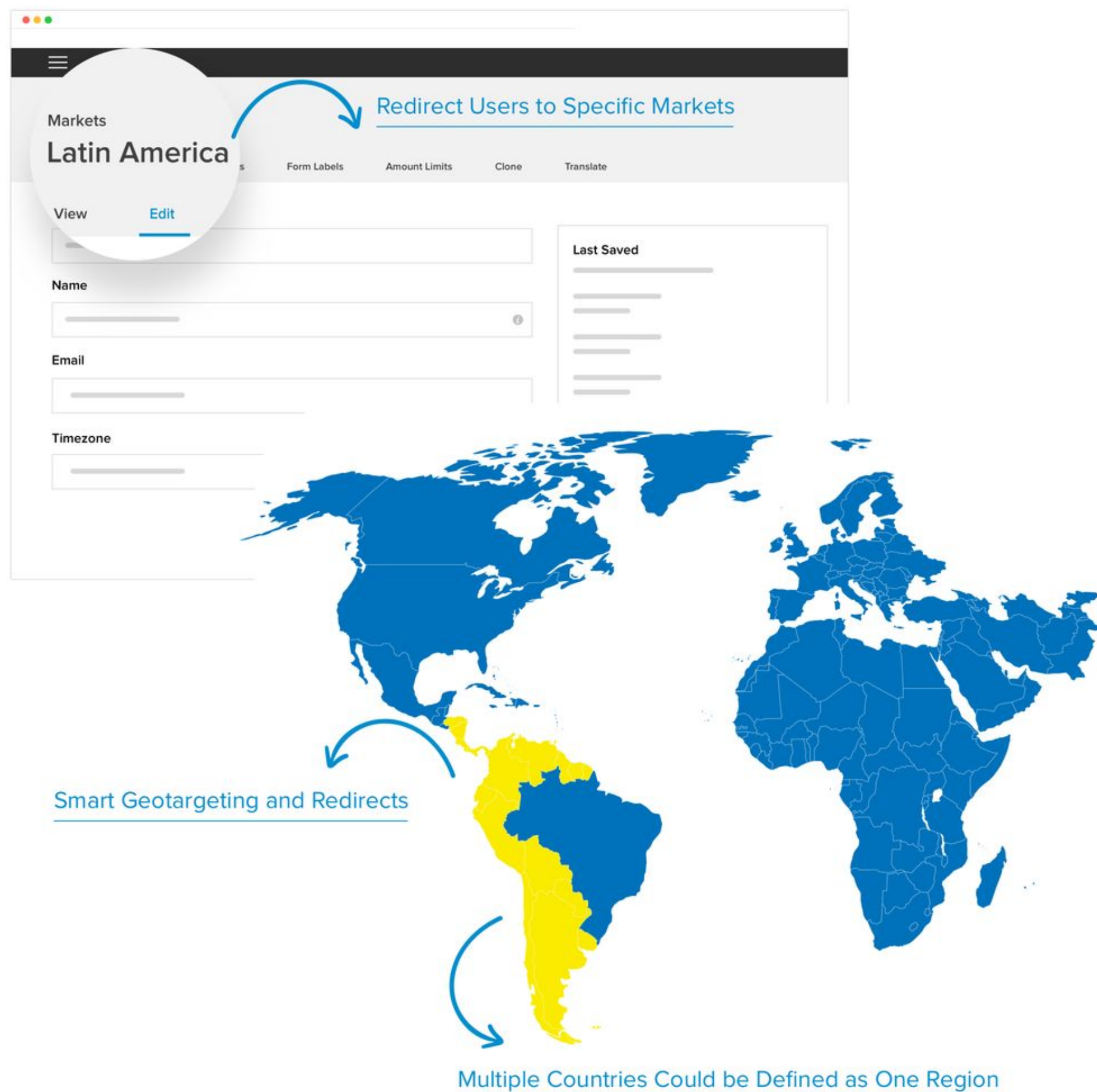
Campaign Layout

After all campaign information is set up, users would choose which page layout they wanted to use from a drop-down list of predefined layouts developed for the most common applications that the team might encounter. If, however, users needed a more customized design, they had the ability to edit the existing layout using Varbase's powerful Layout Builder. Users have the ability to rearrange elements, edit available blocks, and add new blocks. Some block types include image blocks, text blocks, HTML code blocks, and much more.

Finally, once a user spends enough time creating a campaign, they can just clone it and create a new campaign with all the previous edits. This decreases the time required from editors to build multiple campaigns drastically. And all of this is possible without the requirement of any technical expertise. Bypassing the need for technical support meant that the core team could build, design, and publish evergreen and crisis campaigns, in less than 30 minutes!

This was paired with highly customizable user permissions, allowing different departments to manage only the campaigns based on their regions, languages, and currencies.

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Markets
Latin America

Redirect Users to Specific Markets

Smart Geotargeting and Redirects

Multiple Countries Could be Defined as One Region

Smart Geotargeting and Redirects

As a donation platform that targets multiple markets and countries, the UNHCR web platform has users visiting from all around the world. In addition, dozens of geo-regions were defined on the platform. UNHCR needed a way to manage what campaigns are displayed to which regions/countries and at different times.

This is where we implemented Geotargeting

When users visit a particular region, the platform should display that region's language, currencies, campaigns, etc. To achieve this, Vardot built custom integration features for Geo regions and Geo retargeting, utilizing smart IP detection. Using a combination of forced redirect and popup suggestion redirects, the new web platform automatically served the correct region and campaign based on the user's location.

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Popup Suggestions

Forced redirects meant that users were directed instantly to the target region/campaign based on their visitor IP. Popup suggestions, on the other hand, are basically customizable modal popups suggesting to users to navigate to the relevant market (optional redirect).
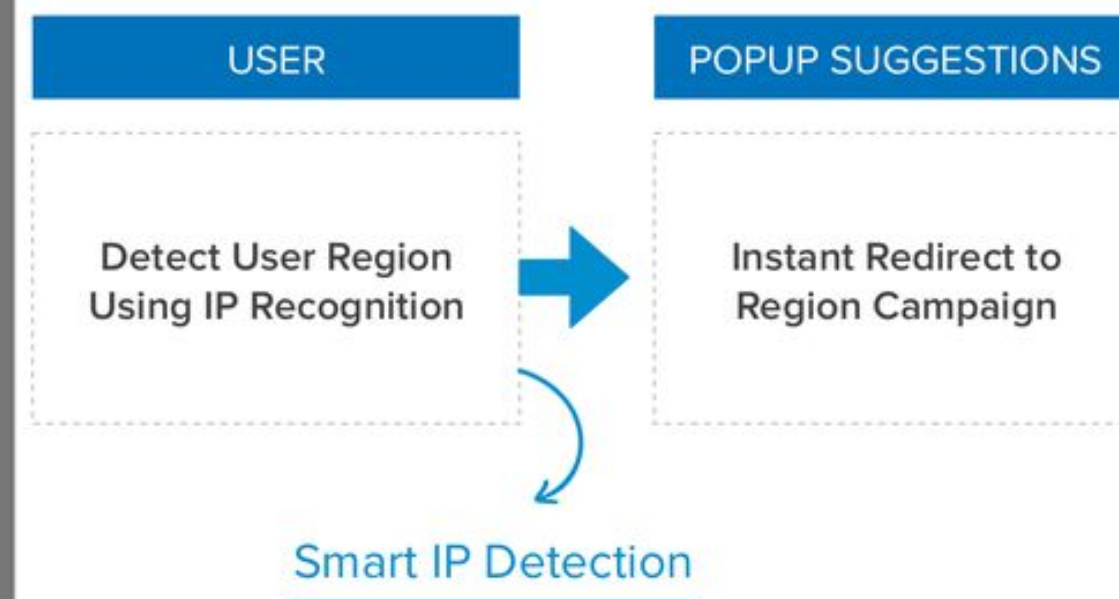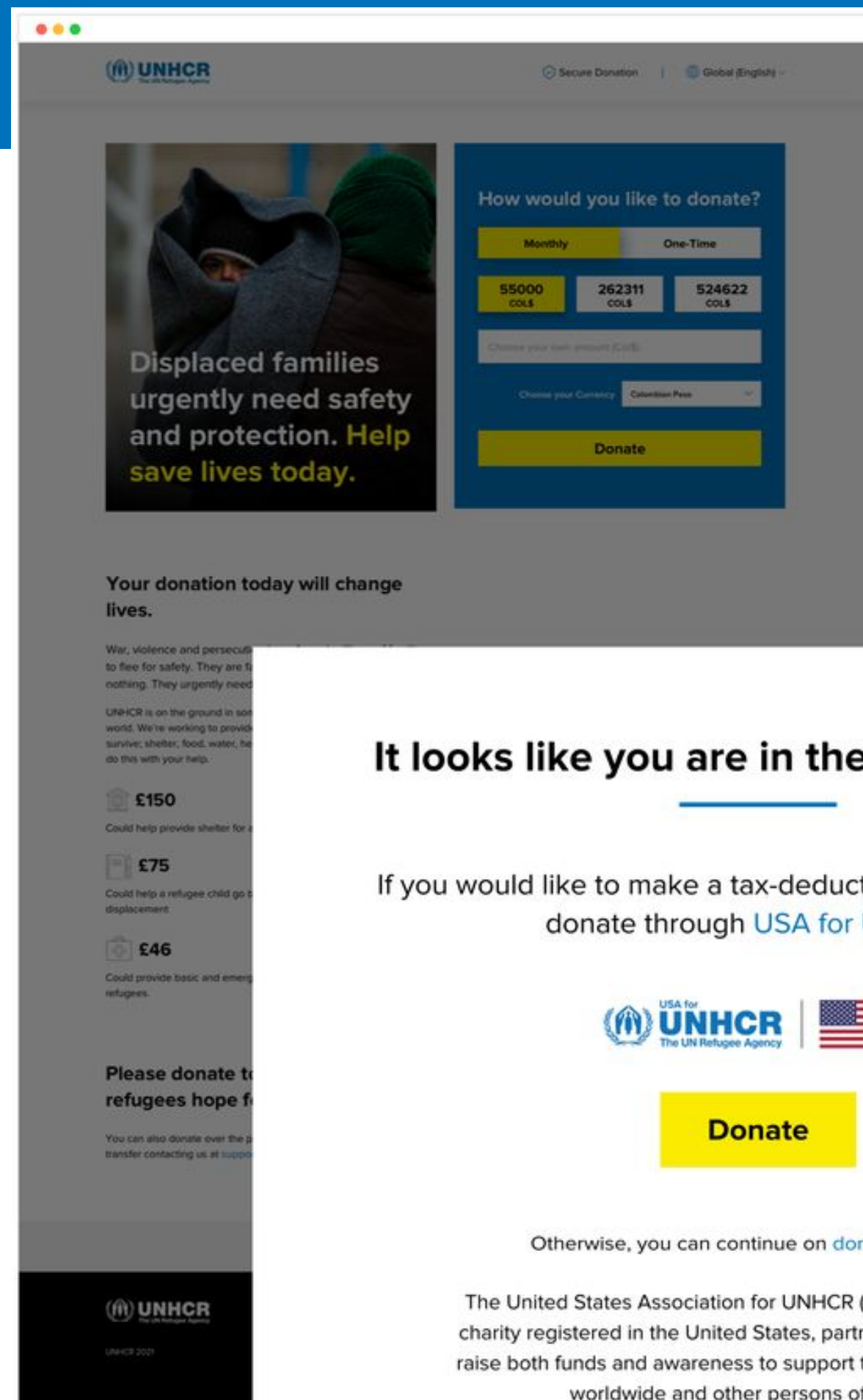
Configurations on the Region Level

Single or multiple countries could be defined as one region, specified by admins. While configuring redirects, admins would choose the geo-region they would like to redirect from, and the market they would like to redirect users to. They also have the option to choose whether that particular redirect was a hard, or soft redirect. And other configurations such as the pop-up message in the case of a soft redirect.

Configure Redirects on the Campaign Level

After a user visits from a particular region, admins would like to hard or soft redirect them to the campaign relevant to that region. Similar to how this can be configured on the region level, admins can customize it similarly on the campaign level. And all redirects can be managed very easily from one centralized dashboard showing all active redirects. This meant that the team had the ability to manage and change which campaigns users from the same region see based on the urgency of each campaign.

These powerful configurations were possible due to the smart IP detection by customizing the Drupal GeoIP module to detect user IPs once they enter the platform. These solutions resulted in a single-page donations platform having more than 400 pages published for its different campaigns in different regions at different times.

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Tailored Integration

To optimize the overall experience, Vardot's team had to consider the various integrations already relied on in the existing tech stack. External services like Salesforce, iRaiser, Google Tag Manager, and Google Analytics were integrated with all the web platform core functionalities, which further enhanced the centralized and streamlined admin experience.

Robust Hosting

Vardot partnered with Platform.sh to provide the UNHCR Donation platform with a reliable hosting platform to maximize engagement and fundraising. This hosting solution would provide support at times of peak, quick deployments, and acts as a reliable platform for continuous growth and scalability. It also provided resiliency for the site, with 99.99% uptime, and 24/7 support.

Leading Security

Using it allowed the team to view all platform's transactions at a granular detail-oriented level. It also logged each transaction with an ID, then sent all this information to Salesforce. This functionality meant that high levels of security measures, including two-step authentication, were implemented to protect their sensitive data.

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From Campaign Creation to Donation

Now, with the new donations platform, the process starts with news about an urgent campaign that needs to be published. The UNHCR team user with the assigned role for the specific country or region can easily create the campaign by configuring the settings for the targeted countries, languages, and currencies. The user can then choose the required fields and the donation options.

Afterward, the user moves on to designing the page, equipped with a fleet of predefined templates that can easily be edited using Varbase Layout Builder. The user can then choose pictures and content and just click to publish on the spot.

From start to finish, this took 30 minutes.

The user experience available on the front, public-facing side of the updated web platform is just as important as ease of use is for the internal UNHCR team. The team wanted the customer's digital experience to be as streamlined and straightforward as possible.

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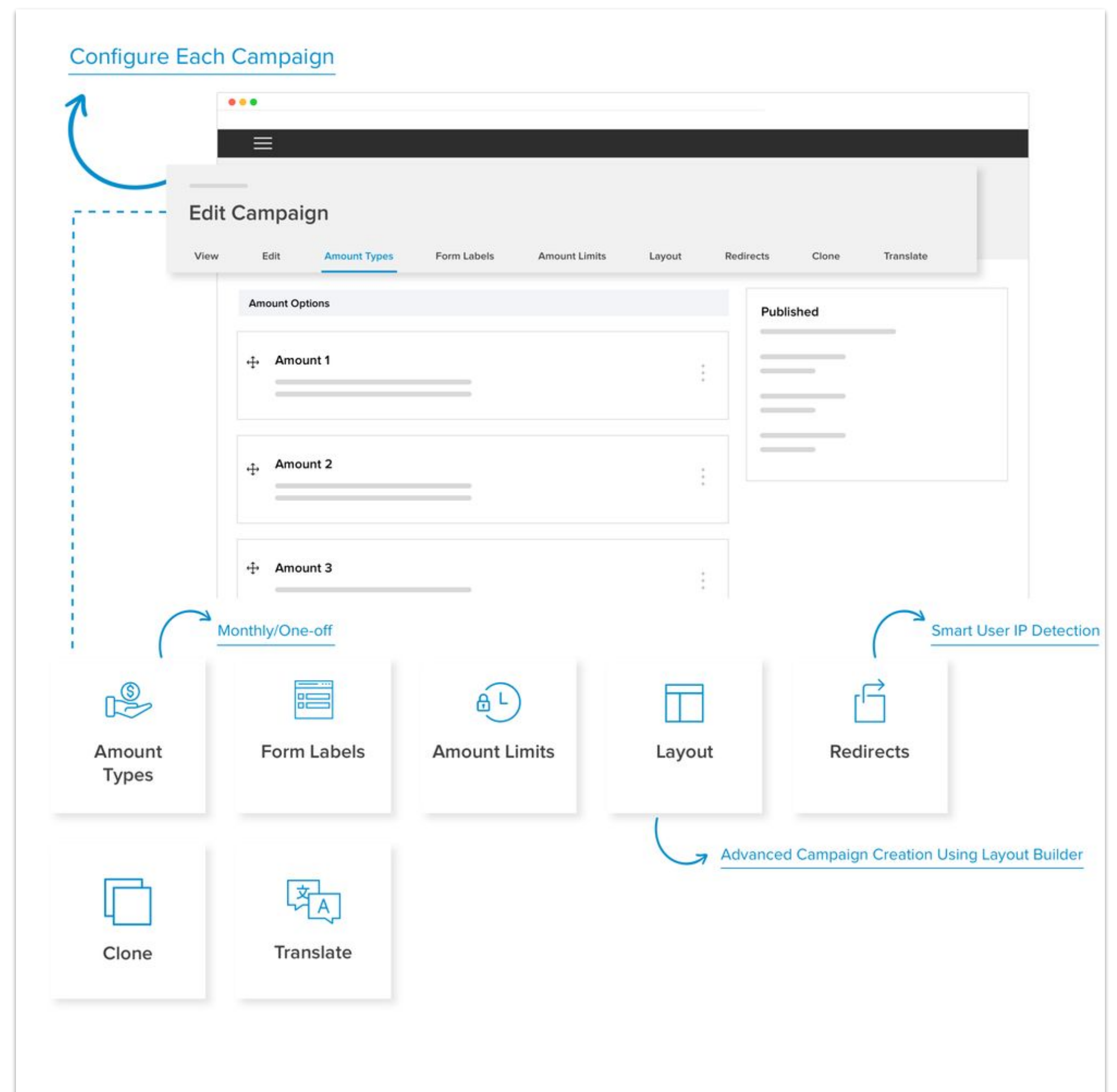
Empowering Through Data

Currently, to track the success of campaigns and optimize journeys, the UNHCR team uses Google Analytics to unify the various groups of data into a single dashboard. Having all this data in one place, including behavioral and real-time information, means they can crunch the numbers to find instant insights. The results can inform near real-time improvements where needed and longer-term changes based on broad sample sizes over time.

UNHCR can quickly test campaigns and designs to constantly improve online experiences. All these efforts combine to land the customer on the right campaign, which means they are not getting lost during the journey.

And it's working. Today, Approx US$3.5m has been processed using the Drupal Fundraising Platform and approx. 74k donations were processed successfully.

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Final Results

Empowering a global organization like UNHCR through advanced donations platform facilitates helping millions of displaced people with much-needed funding. For the UNHCR team, success means enhanced cross-collaboration across multiple departments and geographies. For donors, success means finding the right campaign at the right time with minimal effort.

Today, nearly 26% percent of all donations are done online. The UNHCR web experience has come a long way since the early days of the internet and is now genuinely delivering a seamless online experience for everyone who uses it.

" *Vardot's **technical knowledge**, understanding, experience, and **dedication** are impressive. They're very dedicated to their work, and they strive to deliver **quality products**.*

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Moving Forward. Together.

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