

## **A conversation with Alix Zwane, September 4, 2014**

### **Participants**

- Alix Zwane – Executive Director, Evidence Action
- Elie Hassenfeld – Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director, GiveWell
- Timothy Telleen-Lawton – Research Analyst, GiveWell
- Rebecca Raible – Research Analyst, GiveWell

**Note:** These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Alix Zwane.

### **Summary**

GiveWell spoke with Dr. Alix Zwane of Evidence Action and Deworm the World Initiative (DtWI) to receive an update on DtWI. Conversation topics included DtWI's room for more funding and other charities that GiveWell may be interested in researching.

### **Funding**

Good Ventures granted \$1.5 million to Evidence Action in 2013. DtWI had spent or committed almost all of the funds by the end of 2014. The grant was used for programmatic expenses, with portions going to programs in Vietnam and Ethiopia.

### **Overhead vs. program-specific costs**

Evidence Action supports three main programs:

1. Deworm the World Initiative
2. Dispensers for Safe Water (DSW)
3. "Beta testing" evaluations for new, promising charities

Because of these multiple programs, it can be difficult for GiveWell to know how donations to Evidence Action support DtWI. Evidence Action attempts to divide its expenses according to its different programs, but there are some resources that are hard to divide. For example, Christina Riechers, the Director of Strategic Initiatives at Evidence Action, does work that supports every one of Evidence Action's programs. This year, Evidence Action considers some of Ms. Riechers's salary as DtWI costs because she worked on things such as the DtWI strategic plan. However, most of her salary is considered general Evidence Action overhead.

Generally, for any employee that works in Evidence Action's "back office" (as opposed to working for one of Evidence Action's particular programs), Evidence Action will attempt to allocate that person's salary to the various programs based on the extent to which his or her activities clearly supported a specific program. To the extent that the employee's activities supported every one of Evidence Action's programs, the employee's salary will be considered general overhead. For 2014, Evidence Action's overhead rate has been about 12.1%.

Evidence Action's back office includes such functions as:

- Executive Director/ strategy team
- Finance, Admin, HR
- Communications and knowledge management

### **DtWI's funding gap**

DtWI's funding gap for 2015 will be small because DtWI recently received a large grant from CIFF. The CIFF grant will cover DtWI's expenses in India, even with the large growth that DtWI is planning.

DtWI is seeking \$800k in 2015 to scale up its program in Vietnam and to explore opportunities for scaling up deworming in the Philippines, Indonesia, or Pakistan.

Dr. Zwane suspects that over the next several years, during which the CIFF funding will continue in India, DtWI will have roughly the same need each year for supporting current programs and developing new ones. Significant funding gaps will develop in the event that DtWI is successful in starting programs in new countries. Funding for these programs from institutional donors may arise, but that is hard to predict. GiveWell-directed resources are catalytic in helping develop new programs and fill gaps in existing ones, Dr. Zwane believes.

### **Unrestricted funds**

The unrestricted funds that Evidence Action receives do not only support overhead. Rather, these funds also allow Evidence Action some flexibility to conduct other activities. For example, Evidence Action used some of its unrestricted funds in Vietnam for early fieldwork; those unrestricted funds were included in the DtWI budget. Similarly, as an example, Evidence Action would like to hire a consultant for DSW to help resolve institutional barriers in Kenya; Evidence Action will use unrestricted funds for the consultant's salary.

Evidence Action expects to receive about \$500K in unrestricted funding from several individual donors. Retail fundraising also generates unrestricted funds. Profits from the sale of carbon credits are also unrestricted, but existing debt finance deals for dispensers effectively put limits on how those resources are used.

### **Scaling up in India**

With National Deworming Day and the CIFF grant approved, DtWI has a large amount of new work to do in India. DtWI currently operates in several Indian states, including Bihar, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh. Expansion to other states is expected, and support from DtWI for the national deworming day means that over 125 million kids will be dewormed with a contribution from DtWI in 2015.

DtWI would welcome partnering with organizations willing to do similar deworming consultation work in other states.

### **WASH Benefits study**

The WASH Benefits study is an RCT looking at the benefits of hand washing, sanitation, and nutrition interventions. The study will last for several years; currently researchers are trying to enroll pregnant women for the study. They will continue the study until the women's children are 2 years old, at which point they will examine the children's gut absorption and weight-for-height ratios. The researchers will likely look at some other outcomes as well, such as diarrhea rates. The working paper for the study probably will not be released for several years.

## **Other organizations GiveWell should consider**

### **Young 1ove**

Young 1ove is an organization scaling up an HIV education program based on rigorous evidence.

Prof. Pascaline Dupas ran a study looking at the effects of providing a classroom session to adolescent girls (aged 12-16) that informs them about the relative risks of sexual partners of different ages. Older partners are much more likely to have AIDS than younger partners; however, many young women believe the reverse to be true. These young women actively seek out older "sugar daddies," expecting both financial benefits and safer sex. While these students already have a Sex Ed class, that class is typically focused on preventing AIDS through abstinence or the use of condoms. Her study found that the young women who went through this educational session were more likely to have their first sexual experience with a younger man. They were also less likely to become pregnant from early sexual experiences, because most women do not want to have a child with a man who cannot support the child. Many young men do not have much money yet, so the young women having sex with them are more vigilant about birth control. The study also found that the reduced pregnancy rate lowered school dropout rates. Finally, Prof. Dupas found that the women who had gone through the session had lower HIV rates.

Young 1ove is now trying to provide this classroom session more widely in Botswana. Young 1ove has some funding and has already started its operations. Young 1ove is partnering with Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and Evidence Action to evaluate this program and improve the business model.

For the randomized evaluation, there will be two treatment arms. In one arm, NGO workers will run the educational sessions. In the other arm, Young 1ove is going to train teachers to run the sessions, because it would be easiest in future scale ups if already-established teachers could execute the program.

The sessions for the evaluation are beginning in the fall of 2014, and Dr. Zwane believes the results will be ready after one year. Dr. Zwane also believes that in 6-12 months Young 1ove will be a significant program and possibly ready to scale up to other countries in southern Africa (like Zimbabwe and Swaziland). Evidence Action and JPAL would like to support this replication and further strengthening Young 1ove the program and the organization. She recommends that GiveWell consider

researching Young 1ove and this proposal soon. Dr. Zwane believes that GiveWell should also consider funding Young 1ove as a promising organization similar to New Incentives, in part because Young 1ove currently has funding gaps.

### **Thrive Networks**

DtWI is working with Thrive Networks in Vietnam. East Meets West runs school health programs there, and DtWI was able to add deworming to these programs for a low cost.

### **BRAC**

Dr. Zwane suggested that GiveWell could attempt to work through BRAC to support its “ultra poor graduation” programs, which are firmly grounded in rigorous evidence.

BRAC also has a migration program that helps Bangladeshis who are going to work in the Middle East. Dr. Zwane thought this might be of interest to GiveWell.

### **Decentralized organizations**

Dr. Zwane notes that it is sometimes difficult to work with organizations that are decentralized. Some offices may pursue cost effective evidence based programs, but donors can struggle to direct funds to those programs by giving money to the central hub. She gave some illustrative examples from her time at the Gates Foundation to support this point.

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