

Phone Conversation between GiveWell (Wendy Knight) and
Blood:Water Mission (Katherine Andrews, Development Manager and Barak
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GiveWell: What role does Blood:Water Mission play in implementation of programs? With partner organizations?

Blood:Water Mission: Our role with our partners varies depending on the needs of the organization. We choose partners based on the unique opportunity they present and on their unique need. About 80% of our partners are grassroots organizations, the other 20% international NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Within that portfolio there are a diverse range of core competencies and missions. Many of our partners are water centric (by water we mean water, sanitation and hygiene), while some are more community empowerment focused. Some communities will identify water as a core issue while some are more HIV/Aids focused, but with water as a core need.

We do an assessment of an organization's core competencies and gaps in order to determine what their capacity building needs are. We then try to develop a 2-5 year proposals with them, which gives our partners a planned source of funding. I would say that about 10% of a project is usually technology and the other 90% is the human element.

Longer-term proposals allow us to make capacity investments and we are generally very involved in the proposal development process. More pointedly, we focus on capacities within the organization that directly impact the project. Our partners allow us to do good evaluations, both a midterm and end of project evaluation, which provide lessons learned for future initiatives. Our partnerships are long-term investments; there are both technical and programmatic aspects, but our goal is to not create dependency.

In addition, we see the value of African partners and we want to grow our work in grassroots organizations.

GiveWell: What criteria do you use in determining who to partner with?

Blood:Water Mission: Our criteria include a combination of qualitative and quantitative aspects. On the quantitative side, there are a few parameters, such as our partners have to be registered NGO's (this provides safeguards and accountability) and the Board of Directors has to be diverse (to avoid conflict of interest issues).

There is also a certain degree of contextualization in each case. We look for several core competencies, which we see as foundational for capacity building –

we need to be confident in the results we will get back - but we work within the organization's framework. For example, we look at whether they use a community approach, what their technical competencies are, and their willingness to do full the spread of WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene). We look for the degree to which these are present, what the quality is, as well as the organization's willingness to work on these. We also look for organizations that are doing something unique or that have a unique value add in order to learn from their approach.

GiveWell: How do you prioritize where you will work? Does it depend on the accessibility to water at the start of a program?

Blood:Water Mission: The initial challenge of finding good organizations is often more difficult so we start from there and then prioritize the higher need areas after that. There is enough of a need for water in Africa that this is less of an issue, but we do try to prioritize marginalized people groups.

GiveWell: You mention several indicators, such as decreased distance to a water source that you use to determine program impact. Are these applied universally?

Blood:Water Mission: This is done on a case-by-case basis depending on the project partner. For example in a desert situation you want to reduce the distance, in another case, water quality can be the issue so the indicators will have to do with contamination loads (such as when using bio-sand filters).

We are currently working with 5 partners and don't have a template that we use with all partners. In general, we do try to monitor maintenance, for example pump maintenance and how well the community is collecting cost recovery fees. In Zambia, I believe there is a monthly follow up with bio-sand recipients. We are just beginning to monitor health outcomes, but are moving in that direction.

GiveWell: How do you determine whether an organization is in a good position to continue with a project once the partnership proposal expires?

Blood:Water Mission: After our initial plan we work with the organization on the life cycle of the project. For example, we are winding down one project in Northern Uganda now and are trying to get a 10-month jump on that. They are doing an assessment on what is coming up next.

In addition, we are relocating a staff member to Rwanda. This will provide more access to our partners and allow us to innovate with them on a more regular basis.

GiveWell: Do you have budget information you can share that indicates how much of your budget is spent on various program activities, such as training,

hardware, etc.?

Blood:Water Mission: Our partner proposals have fairly extensive breakdowns in 5 main categories:

- 1) Direct project expenses (i.e. hardware, community related training, personnel costs related to program implementation, etc.)
- 2) Training related capacity building
- 3) Equipment related capacity building for what we call non-consumables (i.e. drill rigs, motorcycles, etc.), those items that extend beyond the life of the project.
- 5) Administration costs

GiveWell: If you were to receive additional funding how would that result in more water programs? For example, if you were to receive an additional \$100k, \$500K or \$1m, what would you spend it on?

Blood:Water Mission: The question for us is, “how can we constantly fund longer term commitments?” Longer-term proposals only comprise 60-70% of our total program budget right now.

We also have other opportunities in the pipeline that we can develop on an annual basis with that 30% remaining in our budget. With additional funding we might do additional trainings or might partner with additional organizations that we have already vetted.