

## Conversation with GiveDirectly, July 24, 2014

### Participants

- Carolina Toth -- Manager, People and Partnerships, GiveDirectly
- Eliza Scheffler -- Research Analyst, GiveWell
- Ben Rachbach -- Research Analyst, GiveWell
- Andrew Martin -- Summer Research Analyst, GiveWell

**Note:** This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by GiveDirectly.

### Summary

GiveWell spoke to GiveDirectly as part of its process of staying up-to-date on the progress of top charities. This conversation covered GiveDirectly's rolling model of enrollment in Kenya, planned technology improvements from the Segovia product, staff management, and the rationale behind its scheduled pausing of enrollment in Uganda.

### Rolling model in Kenya

GiveDirectly has implemented a "rolling model" in Kenya that enables all three steps of enrollment to occur simultaneously in different villages. Field staff now work continuously, year-round as long as funds are available to distribute, rather than in discreet campaigns as before. GiveDirectly told us that it is pleased by the pace at which new recipients have been enrolled under the rolling model, and that field staff appreciate that this model has enabled them to have much longer-term employment. GiveDirectly said that the main challenge of the rolling model has been data management, because there is now a higher volume of data being entered and it is more complex, given that it is coming in all at once from villages at different stages in the process. GiveDirectly is building automations and scripts to help manage the data flow. Eventually, GiveDirectly is planning to improve its technology by using the product that Segovia is building, which should fully automate data management. (More on Segovia: <http://blog.givewell.org/2014/06/20/update-on-givedirectly/>).

### Segovia and planned technology improvements

Segovia is developing an end-to-end digital data management system for GiveDirectly's operations. Currently, field data is collected digitally using smartphones and payments are sent digitally using mobile money systems, but the steps in between require manual

exporting and processing of data. GiveDirectly said that the Segovia product will fully automate the data management from enrollment to payment.

GiveDirectly expects that this technology product will result in significant efficiency gains and quality improvement. Currently, Field Directors spend much of their time downloading tables and manipulating them in Excel as well as producing rosters of work to email to Field Officers. The process of producing rosters of work is one example of a step that can be fully automated. The time savings achieved will allow Field Directors to spend more time on designing and piloting process innovations and other structural improvements.

Carolina Toth is the GiveDirectly staff person who works most directly with Segovia. Ms. Toth's role is to provide Segovia with input on GiveDirectly's requirements for field technology and to vet the product in development and provide ongoing feedback. Ms. Toth spends about 15% of her time on technology for GiveDirectly, which includes working with Segovia, 15% of her time on recruitment and organizational culture, and 70% of her time on partnerships, which mainly involves relational fundraising and maintaining relationships with partners such as academics and organizations like GiveWell.

Segovia is visiting GiveDirectly's field operations soon. Once a product is ready to be piloted, additional GiveDirectly staff members will be involved in piloting and providing feedback.

## **Staff management**

### **Field staff**

GiveDirectly had previously stated that the rolling model in Kenya increases the risk that field staff on different teams could work together to falsify enrollment information, because they will be stationed in the same places at the same time and can therefore communicate more easily. GiveDirectly told us that it is not aware of any such issues so far, and it feels confident in its field staff managers, who have shown a high degree of commitment and have been working with GiveDirectly for a long time, and in its methods of process and data control. GiveDirectly plans to continue to monitor field staff activity.

### **Domestic staff**

Paul Neihaus, GiveDirectly Co-Founder and President, recently started traveling to New York every other week to work out of GiveDirectly's U.S. office. (Professor Niehaus is

usually based in San Diego; at the time of this conversation, he was in New York for the second week). Ms. Toth said that this has been beneficial so far, because staff are able to conveniently work with Professor Niehaus in-person and there are positive social aspects for the team.

## **Pausing enrollment in Uganda in August**

Going into 2014, GiveDirectly decided to enroll an additional 2,000 households in Uganda as part of a second campaign, beyond the approximately 900 households included in the first Uganda campaign. GiveDirectly expects to complete enrollment for the second campaign in August, after which point it will pause its enrollment of new recipients in Uganda. GiveDirectly told us that this has been its plan since before starting to make the second round of transfers. GiveDirectly said that it decided to conduct a second campaign this year, despite knowing that it would end up pausing enrollment afterwards, to take advantage of its presence in Uganda to build out the organizational structure and operations there, which were not as formally established as those in Kenya. (GiveDirectly was already going to have a presence in Uganda because staff would be there to conduct follow up on the initial campaign.)

GiveDirectly also said that it can be a useful skill for development organizations to be able to scale up and down quickly, and its experience in Uganda would help build this skill. GiveDirectly plans to maintain its core staff in Uganda to complete follow up with recipients in the second campaign. These core staff would be available for a future campaign if GiveDirectly decides to scale up in Uganda again.

In August, GiveDirectly plans to begin baseline data collection for its study of general equilibrium effects of cash transfers in Kenya. All households in Kenya that receive their initial transfers after baseline data has been collected will be included in the study until funds for the study's transfers have been exhausted. Households that receive transfers before baseline data collection is complete will not be included in the study's sample. One reason to pause new enrollments in Uganda is for GiveDirectly to direct all transfers to Kenya to increase the sample size for this study.

*All GiveWell conversations are available at <http://www.givewell.org/conversations>*