

A Conversation with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation about Deworm the World on September 10, 2013

Participants:

- Faith Rose – Investments, CIFF
- Sasha Zoueva – Investments, CIFF
- Timothy Telleen-Lawton, Research Analyst, GiveWell
- Elie Hassenfeld – Co-Founder, GiveWell

Note: This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by Ms. Rose and Ms. Zoueva.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) about Deworm the World (DtW).

Background: CIFF and Deworm the World

CIFF has funded a deworming project in Kenya with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) as the technical partner. CIFF has had a positive working relationship with IPA and has been happy with the organization's support of the government's deworming program in Kenya. The Kenya deworming program is now part of DtW, but CIFF is starting over with its due diligence process because it views DtW's India programs as distinct from their Kenya program.

CIFF spoke with Alissa Fishbane about possibly funding DtW's programs in Bihar around March 2012. At that time, DtW needed funding faster than CIFF could provide it, so DtW ultimately raised unrestricted funds to support Bihar. In November 2012, DtW received significant funding from USAID to scale up in a few states in India. At that time, Ms. Fishbane told CIFF that DtW didn't have absorptive capacity for an additional grant, but would get back to CIFF in 2013 regarding further funding.

CIFF began conversations with DtW about a possible investment in deworming in India in May or June 2013. These conversations are still at an early stage, but CIFF is considering providing DtW with funds to catalyze evidence-based government deworming programs in 3-4 more states in India, with the goal of encouraging further deworming through advocacy.

In general, CIFF funds specific programs, so would not consider providing unrestricted/core funding to DtW outside of agreed upon overhead costs.

CIFF's perspective on Deworm the World's India program

DtW's past work

DtW has worked in Delhi, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh (AP).

- In Bihar, according to documentation provided by DtW, the program began because of previous Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) work in Bihar. DtW also noted that Rajasthan approached them because of the success (as highlighted in the media) of the Delhi program. DtW supported a pilot program and prevalence survey in AP, and though DtW didn't continue to engage with AP, the AP government seems to have recently conducted a school-based deworming program.
- More recently, Punjab approached DtW, but DtW didn't have the funding to move forward with Punjab, and Punjab is now implementing deworming on its own.

It's not possible to be certain whether or not DtW has caused deworming to happen that otherwise would not have, but it's important to note that DtW took the opportunities presented to help run better programs where possible as well as improve data quality and did so on a limited budget. They are also widely acknowledged by the deworming community to be the only technical assistance available in India.

The state of deworming in India

India is an appealing place to implement a deworming program because the Indian government has policies in place mandating deworming and makes money available to states to implement deworming programs, but many states don't have the background or the expertise to implement deworming programs effectively. It is possible that DtW brings its expertise to the table and leverages these available resources.

There's limited data available on current access to deworming in India because very few prevalence surveys have been done and because the deworming that does occur is not always reported, or, if it is, state-wide data is difficult to access. The poorest states are unlikely (in CIFF's view) to have the capacity to implement evidence-based statewide deworming programs on their own. CIFF notes that many parts of India are extremely poor with high percentages (60%) of the population practicing open defecation; limited access to sanitation services makes it likely that deworming is needed.

CIFF's potential support of DtW's India programs

Long-term, CIFF hopes that DtW influences the Indian state and national governments to create evidence-based deworming programs that don't require outside support. A risk is that DtW may not be able to convince the Indian governments to rely on high quality data for its programs.

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