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The GiveWell Blog



[Draft] Review of GiveWell's work in 2018

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April 24, 2019 (updated on: April 24, 2019) | by [Catherine Hollander](#)

2018 was a successful year for GiveWell. We achieved most of our goals, our money moved (donations made to our recommended charities due our research) increased significantly, and, GiveWell raised more money for our operations than we spent; we remain in a strong financial position.

Each year, we look back at the goals we set the previous year and reflect on how our progress compared to our expectations.

This post will briefly discuss our key achievements and failures in 2018. **We describe in detail our progress on the goals we outlined in 2018 [here](#).**

In 2018, we:

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- Added senior hires in operations and outreach: a Director of Operations (Whitney Shinkle) and Head of Growth (Ben Bateman).
- Continued to improve and expand our core research product, completing new intervention reports, deepening our analysis for several key inputs into our cost-effectiveness model, and providing more transparent explanations for how we decided to allocate funds between top charities.

Key achievements

Outreach and operations

We made two key senior hires in 2018: (1) Whitney Shinkle, who joined us in April as our new Director of Operations, and (2) Ben Bateman, who joined us in June as our first-ever Head of Growth.

We expect Whitney and Ben to play critical roles in laying the foundation to increase the amount of funding we can direct to our top charities. Whitney's team, for example, is responsible for processing donations to our recommended charities, and for preparing GiveWell to increase the size of its staff. Ben is leading experiments to evaluate different ways we might increase the amount of funding we direct to our top charities via marketing and outreach.

Full details of our performance against our 2018 outreach and operations goals are [here](#).

Research

We completed several projects that improved the quality of our cost-effectiveness estimates and how we write about them, and

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that we believe led to better decisions about where to allocate funds. For example, we made a major change to how we **calculate worm intensity** in the areas where our top charities work.

We also improved our transparency about these decisions, breaking our blog posts announcing our top charities into component parts to make them easier to follow (see [1](#), [2](#), and [3](#)) and delving into more detail on our **principles** and **funding gap analyses**.

We published five new intervention reports, two of which were on the evidence for **community-based management of acute malnutrition** and **syphilis screening and treatment during pregnancy**, and recommended five new GiveWell Incubation Grants and two grant renewals. Two of our new grants supported **Evidence Action Beta's incubator** and **J-PAL's Innovation in Government Initiative**, respectively.

Full details of our performance on our 2018 research goals are **here**.

Key failures

Outreach and operations

We took a number of steps to improve our outreach to GiveWell's existing donors. We had hoped this would lead to material improvements in retention of our donors as well as the amount of funding we were able to direct to our top charities from our donors. We haven't completed a careful assessment of this work, but our belief at this point is that the steps we took last year are unlikely to have had a significant impact on donor retention.

Research

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ISABEL ARJMAND
COMMENTED ON

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MILAN GRIFFES
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We made relatively little progress in exploring new areas of research (i.e., policy-oriented causes).

Conclusion

[This page](#) has more details on our progress toward the goals we laid out in early 2018.

We plan to publish a post soon detailing our plans for 2019.

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