

GiveWell Metrics Report – 2019 Annual Review

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How much charitable giving did GiveWell influence?

GiveWell is dedicated to finding outstanding giving opportunities and publishing the full details of our analysis to help donors decide where to give. In this report, we review what we know about how our research impacted donors last year. In 2019, GiveWell influenced charitable giving in several ways. The following table summarizes our understanding of this influence. The sections that follow provide more details and discuss the uncertainty involved in producing this estimate.

Type of donation influenced	Amount
Money moved to traditional charity recommendations:	
Grants from Open Philanthropy	\$54,745,100
Donations from other donors who gave \$1 million or more	\$18,739,368
Donations from donors who gave under \$1 million	\$64,567,343
GiveWell Incubation Grants	\$13,960,512
Headline money moved	\$152,012,323
Additional donations we guess were due to our recommendations	Estimated at \$15-25 million
Donations where our research played an important role	\$4,104,625
Best guess of total money directed to charities	\$172,164,635

Headline money moved

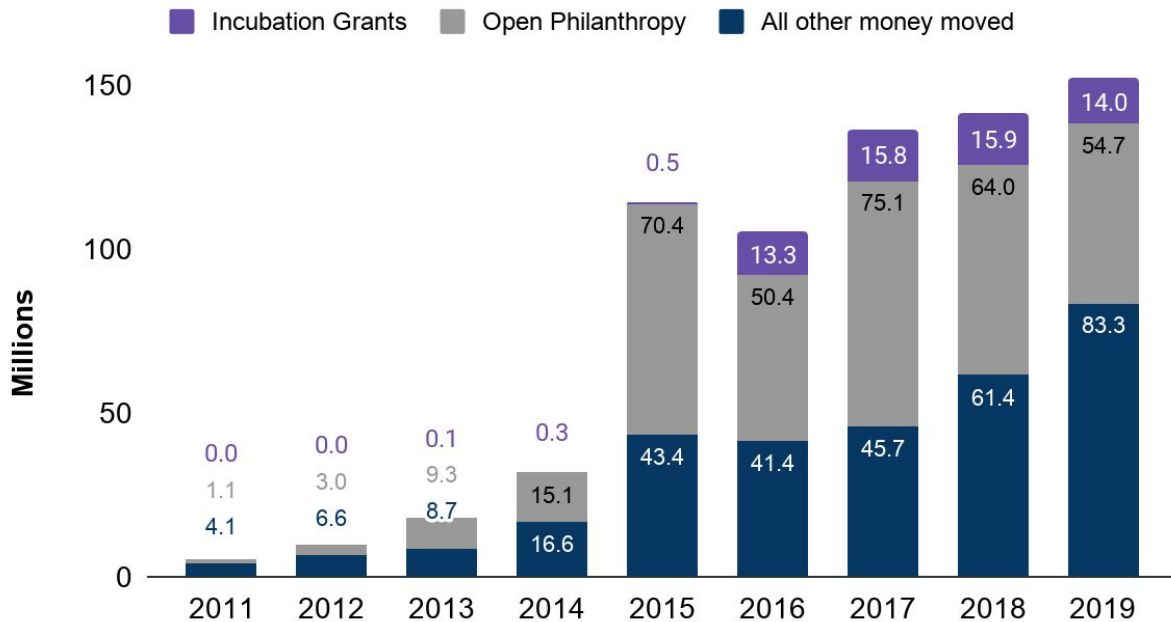
In 2019, GiveWell tracked \$152 million in money moved in donations to our recommended charities or through our Incubation Grants program.¹ This total includes \$54.7 million in Open Philanthropy grants to our recommended charities,² \$14.0 million in Incubation Grants funded largely by Open Philanthropy,³ \$18.7 million in donations from several donors each giving more than \$1 million, and \$64.6 million in donations from donors each giving under \$1 million. As described in the [appendix](#), we only include donations that we are confident were influenced by our recommendations.

¹ For more on GiveWell Incubation Grants, see <https://www.givewell.org/research/incubation-grants>.

² For more on Open Philanthropy, see <https://www.openphilanthropy.org>.

³ A \$1 million grant to J-PAL's Innovation in Government Initiative made in December 2018 is included in this figure because the funds did not reach the charity until after March 2019.

Money moved by category



Additional donations we guess were due to our recommendations

We asked three of our top charities—Against Malaria Foundation (AMF), GiveDirectly, and SCI Foundation (SCI)—to share data on the total revenue they received in 2019, which we used to help us assess how much our money moved estimate might be an undercount.⁴ We focused on donations to these three groups because they accounted for the majority of the additional donations we guessed were due to our recommendations in 2018. Our best guess is that we played a significant role in influencing an additional \$15-25 million of donations to these groups that we are not counting in our headline money moved figure.⁵ Details on how we arrived at this estimate are available in the [appendix](#).

⁴ Our true money moved may be somewhat higher than we have recorded since some donors who gave directly to our recommended charities (not through GiveWell) may have been influenced by our research but not reported this to the charities (for example, they might not have reported any source of influence or might have listed “from a friend” or “in the media”).

⁵ This estimate only includes additional donations to AMF and GiveDirectly. We ultimately excluded SCI from our calculation because it received a very small amount of unattributed donations in 2019.

Donations where our research played an important role

Our research has played a significant role in the decisions of The Life You Can Save,⁶ which makes charity recommendations and has cited our research. While we believe our research played an important role in this group's recommendations, it was not the only input into the process, and we therefore include it in a separate category from our headline money moved. Donations from two other donors are also included in this category: a \$600,000 donation to Evidence Action's iron and folic acid supplementation program to which we have previously recommended funding and a \$300,000 donation to support our Grants for Global Health and Development in Southeast Asia and Bangladesh.⁷ We only count 50% of the donations where our research played an important role in our best guess of total money directed to charities because we believe that GiveWell is only partially responsible for this funding.

There are several other groups that promote effective giving and accept donations to support GiveWell's top charities: EA Funds (formerly Giving What We Can), Effective Altruism Foundation, Effective Altruism Australia, RC Forward (formerly Charity Science), Founders Pledge, One for the World, Norway Effective Altruism, effektiv-spenden.org, and various other Effective Altruism organizations. We have included donations made to these groups to support our top charities in our headline money moved. Our understanding is that GiveWell's research is the sole input into these groups' recommendation of our top charities.

⁶ The Life You Can Save describes its process for selecting recommended charities at <https://www.thelifeyoucansave.org/where-to-donate/selection-methodology>. Archived copy from February 2019 at <http://web.archive.org/web/20190228074738/https://www.thelifeyoucansave.org/where-to-donate/selection-methodology>.

⁷ For more on Evidence Action's iron and folic acid supplementation program, see <https://www.givewell.org/research/incubation-grants/march-2019-evidence-action-beta-iron-folic-acid-impact-evaluation>. For more on GiveWell Grants for Global Health and Development in Southeast Asia and Bangladesh, see <https://www.givewell.org/research/grants-southeast-asia-bangladesh-2019/report>.

Group	Funding directed by GiveWell's recommendation	Amount we have counted in our headline money moved
EA Funds	\$5,487,444	\$5,487,444
The Life You Can Save	\$3,204,625	\$0
Effective Altruism Foundation	\$2,048,599	\$2,048,599
Effective Altruism Australia	\$1,378,416	\$1,378,416
RC Forward	\$686,280	\$686,280
Founders Pledge	\$617,252	\$617,252
One for the World	\$329,278	\$329,278
Norway Effective Altruism	\$190,020	\$190,020
effektiv-spenden.org	\$33,030	\$33,030
Other Effective Altruism Groups	\$27,660	\$27,660
Total	\$14,002,605	\$10,797,979

GiveWell Incubation Grants

Our work on GiveWell Incubation Grants involves considering organizations for support at any point in their development, with the hope of identifying additional future top charities to recommend to our donors. In 2019, on GiveWell's recommendation, Incubation Grants were made by Open Philanthropy (\$11.7 million), EA Funds (\$2.1 million), and a private donor (\$0.2 million). For a full list of grants, see <https://www.givewell.org/research/incubation-grants>.⁸ Prior to 2018, we excluded these grants from our headline money moved figure. We have included them for the past two years because Incubation Grants are now an ongoing, major part of our work to move money to outstanding charities.

Money moved by charity

Our eight top charities received the majority of our money moved (\$126.9 million). Our eight standout charities received a total of \$10.7 million, and other charities received a total of \$0.1 million.⁹

Evidence Action runs two programs we recommend: Deworm the World and Dispensers for Safe Water. In 2019, Evidence Action reported \$0.3 million in donations that were not

⁸ There is often a lag between when we recommend a grant and when we complete a write-up on that grant and publish it on our website, so this list may not be fully up to date. Additionally, a \$1 million grant to J-PAL's Innovation in Government Initiative, dated on the website as December 2018, was not received by the charity until after March 2019 and is therefore included in our 2019 money moved.

⁹ This amount primarily consists of a \$100,000 participation grant we made to Fistula Foundation (see <https://blog.givewell.org/2020/01/02/update-on-our-work-on-fistula-foundation/>).

restricted to those recommended programs but were attributable to GiveWell. We include these unrestricted donations in our money moved because we believe these donors were acting on the basis of our recommendation, possibly without the knowledge that we only recommend specific programs run by Evidence Action.

Organization	Open Philanthropy	Other donors	Total	%
Malaria Consortium (SMC program)	\$33,926,000	\$19,020,634	\$52,946,634	38.4%
Against Malaria Foundation	\$2,500,000	\$27,458,925	\$29,958,925	21.7%
GiveDirectly	\$2,500,000	\$14,858,258	\$17,358,258	12.6%
Helen Keller International (VAS program)	\$9,709,000	\$5,513,729	\$15,222,729	11.0%
Development Media International	\$100,000	\$8,928,197	\$9,028,197	6.5%
Sightsavers (deworming program)	\$2,710,100	\$285,905	\$2,996,005	2.2%
END Fund (deworming program)	\$2,500,000	\$441,175	\$2,941,175	2.1%
SCI Foundation (Schistosomiasis Control Initiative)	\$0	\$2,856,298	\$2,856,298	2.1%
Evidence Action (Deworm the World)	\$0	\$2,661,630	\$2,661,630	1.9%
Iodine Global Network	\$100,000	\$420,846	\$520,846	0.4%
Evidence Action Unrestricted	\$0	\$342,904	\$342,904	0.2%
Evidence Action (Dispensers for Safe Water)	\$100,000	\$150,561	\$250,561	0.2%
Project Healthy Children	\$100,000	\$144,238	\$244,238	0.2%
Living Goods	\$100,000	\$106,260	\$206,260	0.1%
GAIN (Universal Salt Iodization)	\$100,000	\$59,829	\$159,829	0.1%
Food Fortification Initiative	\$100,000	\$35,265	\$135,265	0.1%
Zusha! Road Safety Campaign	\$100,000	\$12,478	\$112,478	0.1%
Other/previously recommended charities	\$100,000	\$9,577	\$109,577	0.1%
Total	\$54,745,100	\$83,306,711	\$138,051,811	100.0%

Money moved by program

The majority of our money moved was directed to malaria prevention programs (Malaria Consortium's seasonal malaria chemoprevention program and AMF's program to distribute long-lasting insecticide-treated nets). 13% of our money moved was directed to cash transfers (GiveDirectly), 11% to vitamin A supplementation (Helen Keller International), 8% to deworming (SCI Foundation, Sightsavers, END Fund, and Evidence Action's Deworm the World), and 7% to mass media campaigns (Development Media International). Other programs each received less than 1% of our total money moved.

Program	Open Philanthropy	Other donors	Total	%
Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention	\$33,926,000	\$19,020,634	\$52,946,634	38.4%
Mass Distribution of Long-Lasting Insecticide-Treated Nets	\$2,500,000	\$27,458,925	\$29,958,925	21.7%
Cash Transfers	\$2,500,000	\$14,858,258	\$17,358,258	12.6%
Vitamin A Supplementation	\$9,709,000	\$5,513,729	\$15,222,729	11.0%
Deworming	\$2,810,100	\$6,224,679	\$9,034,779	6.5%
Mass Media to Promote Behavior Change	\$100,000	\$8,928,197	\$9,028,197	6.5%
Other	\$2,600,000	\$591,736	\$3,191,736	2.3%
Salt Iodization	\$100,000	\$378,169	\$478,169	0.3%
Food Fortification Programs	\$200,000	\$118,737	\$318,737	0.2%
Decontamination of Drinking Water	\$100,000	\$144,238	\$244,238	0.2%
Community Health Promotion	\$100,000	\$59,829	\$159,829	0.1%
Road Safety	\$100,000	\$9,577	\$109,577	0.1%
Total	\$54,745,100	\$83,306,711	\$138,051,811	100.0%

Money moved by donor size

Note: In this section, we exclude donations from Open Philanthropy.

The data in this section is less thorough than in metrics reports prior to the 2018 report. Charities and organizations promoting our recommended charities are unable to share as much donor level information with us as they were in previous years, primarily as a result of a new European Union data privacy regulation called the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).¹⁰ Donations for which we do not have donor level data account for roughly 23% of the total value of our money moved, excluding Open Philanthropy. This makes comparing 2019 to previous years difficult. We believe this analysis provides important insight into how our recommendations influence charitable giving, so we continue to present this data in our metrics report despite the limitations.

This year, we have decided to only report money moved by donor size for donations that we can attribute to individual donors, instead of attempting to estimate how the 23% of unattributed donations would break down across our donor size buckets.¹¹ While these figures are less comparable to those in our previous annual metrics reports, we believe

¹⁰ For information on the GDPR as it pertains to charities, see <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/in-your-sector/charity/charities-faqs/>.

¹¹ Figures for donors giving \$1 million or more are not estimates. We believe we have data on 100% of donors giving amounts of this size.

including unattributed money moved and estimating the breakdown by donor size does not significantly improve our analysis.

In 2019, we saw growth in the amount donated by donors in each size category that we reviewed, from donors that we can identify. Donations from donors giving between \$100,000 and \$1 million increased the most, by 107%. Similar to past years, the vast majority of our money moved came from a small number of donors giving large amounts. In 2019, we estimate that 93% of our money moved, excluding unattributed donations and Open Philanthropy, came from donors who gave \$1,000 or more. 31% of that 93% came from donors who gave \$1 million or more.

Amount donated by total amount given per donor in each of the last three years, where unique donors are known (excluding Open Philanthropy):

Size buckets	Amount donated		
	2017	2018	2019
\$1,000,000+	\$8,460,401	\$18,630,495	\$18,739,368
\$100,000 - \$999,999	\$7,340,083	\$6,316,985	\$13,091,844
\$10,000 - \$99,999	\$11,126,392	\$11,893,787	\$14,942,353
\$1,000 - \$9,999	\$11,014,755	\$10,691,256	\$13,020,439
\$100 - \$999	\$3,465,665	\$3,277,539	\$4,101,956
\$0 - \$99	\$320,157	\$297,460	\$431,650
Total (from known donors)	\$41,727,454	\$51,107,522	\$64,327,610

Percentage of money moved by total amount given per donor in each of the last three years, where unique donors are known (excluding Open Philanthropy):

Size buckets	Percentage of total amount donated for each size bucket		
	2017	2018	2019
\$1,000,000+	20.3%	36.5%	29.1%
\$100,000 - \$999,999	17.6%	12.4%	20.4%
\$10,000 - \$99,999	26.7%	23.3%	23.2%
\$1,000 - \$9,999	26.4%	20.9%	20.2%
\$100 - \$999	8.3%	6.4%	6.4%
\$0 - \$99	0.8%	0.6%	0.7%
Total money moved (from known donors)	\$41,727,454	\$51,107,522	\$64,327,610

Unrestricted funding

In 2019, we used unrestricted funds primarily for operating costs, with one exception. In August 2020, GiveWell's Board of Directors voted to restrict \$1.7 million of an \$8 million unrestricted donation (from January 2020) to making grants to top charities. This \$1.7 million will be counted as 2020 money moved.¹²

All other unrestricted funding was used for operating costs. GiveWell's total operating expenses in 2019 were \$5.9 million.¹³ Note that this figure refers to GiveWell's fiscal year (January-December) rather than metrics years (February-January).

We do not count funds we use for our operating costs in our money moved but share a breakdown of them to give more context on the overall level of funds supporting GiveWell and our research. GiveWell raised \$17.3 million in unrestricted funding in 2019, compared to \$12.4 million in 2018.¹⁴

The following table shows donors by size of unrestricted donation. The 14 largest individual donors, plus Open Philanthropy, contributed about 66% of GiveWell's operational funding in 2019, down from 70% in 2018.

¹² We previously decided to cap the amount of operating support we use from a single donor at 20% of our operating expenses, in order to avoid overreliance on any individual source of operating support. We previously retained 20% of the current year's board-approved budget. However, now that GiveWell's operating budget is larger, we voted to retain 20% of subsequent years' operating costs as well. In August 2020, we voted to retain 20% of our projected 2021 and 2022 operating expenses (i.e. \$6.3 million of the \$8 million donation). The restricted portion of this donation will be counted as money moved in 2020.

¹³ This includes our estimate of the replacement value of donated office space (we estimate that we would have paid \$345,759 for office space in 2019), and it excludes an in-kind donation of Google AdWords (valued at \$109,539), which we would not purchase at close to the same level if it were not donated.

¹⁴ These figures include an estimate for the replacement value of donated office space (estimated at about \$346,000 in 2019 and \$393,000 in 2018).

Donor buckets	Number of donors			Amount donated		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Open Philanthropy	1	1	1	\$530,764	\$3,204,727	\$2,245,570
\$1,000,000+	0	1	1	\$0	\$3,646,528	\$6,345,693
\$100,000-\$999,999	7	10	13	\$1,979,095	\$1,481,660	\$2,501,817
\$10,000 - \$99,999	63	87	115	\$1,601,136	\$1,847,532	\$2,741,380
\$1,000 - \$9,999	308	398	539	\$815,998	\$1,058,597	\$1,542,009
\$100 - \$999	852	935	1184	\$248,502	\$270,351	\$341,126
\$0 - \$99	2,919	3155	3816	\$61,757	\$68,367	\$83,632
Anonymous donors	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$212,825	\$468,654	\$1,166,922
Total	4,150	4587	5,669	\$5,450,077	\$12,046,418	\$16,968,150
Rent replacement value (rent donated by the Open Philanthropy Project LLC)				\$299,625	\$393,432	\$345,759
Total with rent replacement value				\$5,749,702	\$12,439,850	\$17,313,909
% of total from \$100k+ donors				49%	70%	66%

Appendix 1: Methodology notes

Reporting period: This report covers February 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020 and, for simplicity, refers to this period as "2019." For comparison, it presents data for the same period in previous years, e.g. "2018" is February 1, 2018 to January 31, 2019. We have reported this way since 2012 because donations tend to be clustered in late December and early January, so this provides a more accurate picture of annual growth.

Criteria: "Money moved" refers to donations to our recommended charities that were influenced by our research as well as grants made via our Incubation Grants program.¹⁵ Prior to 2018, we excluded Incubation Grants from this figure, but we have since decided to include them because we believe this more accurately measures the impact of our research.

We aim to be conservative in calculating our money moved by including only donations that we are confident that we influenced. Our data include only donations that (a) donors made to GiveWell to support our recommended charities, (b) donors made directly to our recommended charities and reported to us, (c) donors made directly to our recommended

¹⁵ Top charities and standout charities, listed here: <http://www.givewell.org/charities/top-charities>. For a list of Incubation Grants, see <https://www.givewell.org/research/incubation-grants>. There may be a delay between when grants are made and when they are added to that page due to the time needed to write up our reasons for making the grant and to have the grantee review our write-up.

charities and reported to the charities as due to GiveWell's recommendation (being cautious not to double count donations reported to us by the charity and the donor), and (d) donors made to our recommended charities and were reported to us by other effective giving groups (detailed in the “Donations where our research played an important role” section of this report).

On the other hand, we expect that most donations that we count in our money moved are the result of a complex decision making process, influenced by many factors in addition to our research. Furthermore, we do not attempt to quantify the impact of GiveWell's research compared to the counterfactual of GiveWell not existing (though we are interested in understanding how our research influences donors' behavior).

Appendix 2: Method for estimating unattributed money moved

For each organization, we looked at a) how much funding it received in the form of donations where we do not know why the donor decided to make the donation, and b) the portion of its total revenue, excluding donations from Open Philanthropy, that we track as being due to GiveWell. We do not expect that the latter is representative of the amount of the former that we influenced, but we believe it provides a reasonable ballpark estimate.

We estimate that AMF received \$12.2 million in donations with unknown attribution in 2019 and that we influenced 69% of this funding. GiveDirectly received about \$27.3 million in donations with unknown attribution, and we estimate that we influenced roughly 35% of this funding.¹⁶ SCI received a very small amount of donations with unknown attribution (under \$10,000), and we therefore decided not to estimate the percentage of these donations that we influenced. In total, we very roughly estimate that we influenced an additional \$18.1 million that is not included in our headline money moved figure. Intuitively, our best guess is that we are undercounting money moved by \$15-25 million.

Appendix 3: Reallocation of funds from No Lean Season

Evidence Action's No Lean Season, a former GiveWell top charity and GiveWell Incubation Grant recipient, shut down in 2019 with \$7.1 million in unused funding recommended by GiveWell—including donations from Open Philanthropy. We asked Evidence Action to redirect these funds to its Deworm the World Initiative (a GiveWell top charity). See more about the shutdown of No Lean Season and the reallocation of its funds here: <https://blog.givewell.org/2019/06/06/evidence-action-is-shutting-down-no-lean-season/>

¹⁶ Due to the information we had available and our view on the likely quality of the information, we estimate unattributed money moved as a percentage of the total revenue that the charity does not attribute to *GiveWell*, instead of as a percentage of revenue that the charity does not attribute to *any source*.