

A conversation with Dr. Wendy Harrison and Najwa Al Abdallah, February 17, 2016

Participants

- Dr. Wendy Harrison – Managing Director, Schistosomiasis Control Initiative
- Najwa Al Abdallah – Finance & Operations Director, Schistosomiasis Control Initiative
- Natalie Crispin – Senior Research Analyst, GiveWell
- Andrew Martin – Research Analyst, GiveWell

Note: These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Wendy Harrison and Najwa Al Abdallah.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Dr. Wendy Harrison and Najwa Al Abdallah of the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) as part of our 2016 charity review process. Conversation topics included changes to SCI's accounting system, its budgeting process, and fundraising.

Accounting

New accounting software

SCI plans to implement a new, standalone accounting software package starting April 1, which will allow SCI to be more flexible and to rely less on Imperial College London's accounting system. SCI only plans to use this system for financial data collected going forward (not for past data).

SCI is also in the process of evaluating its internal financial controls, including determining the best system for auditing its accounts.

Cashbooks

In 2015, SCI implemented the use of cashbooks by its country programs to report monthly spending. Countries where SCI receives funding from the Department for International Development (DFID) implemented this system first, and it has now been rolled out to all of SCI's country programs. A few countries are currently delayed in submitting cashbooks to SCI because of limited capacity.

These cashbooks are currently used by Imperial College in its "Value for Money" analysis of SCI. In the future, SCI plans to input data from the cashbooks into its own accounting software.

Budgeting process

SCI's annual budgeting process occurs in March. Each of SCI's country programs produces a plan predicting its treatment numbers for the next three years. (These projections are later refined annually based on more up-to-date epidemiological

data.) Each program submits a detailed work plan and budget request based on these projections. SCI holds a series of allocation meetings to match programs' funding requests with its available funds from different sources, including both unrestricted and restricted funds (e.g. from DFID and the END Fund).

SCI has also performed an internal process review and has produced a detailed Gantt chart outlining timelines for its programs (e.g., Preventive Chemotherapy Treatment plans), deadlines for budget and work plan submissions, and timelines for funding allocation.

SCI has also finalized its reserves policy.

Fundraising

SCI has signed agreements with the END Fund for support in Yemen and Ethiopia. The UBS Optimus Foundation is considering supporting SCI in Madagascar.

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