

A conversation with Living Goods, May 31, 2017

Participants

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Note: These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Living Goods.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Living Goods to get an update on its activities. Conversation topics included updates on Living Goods' second randomized controlled trial, strategic plan, program expansion, budget, and room for more funding.

Second randomized controlled trial

Living Goods' second randomized controlled trial (RCT) will conduct surveys at baseline, midline, and endline.

Baseline survey

Baseline data for the RCT was gathered between January and June of 2016. The baseline report was completed in November 2016.

Midline survey

Midline data collection will begin in October 2017 and conclude in April 2018. The study is designed to begin at least 18 months after Living Goods commenced program implementation. A report will likely be completed by July or August 2018.

The midline will consist of fairly short surveys (15-20 minutes) that ask households behavioral and knowledge-based questions related to key drivers of mortality. The primary goal is to measure the degree to which the control group has been receiving services from community health promoters (CHPs), which would weaken the statistical power of the study and reduce the measured effect size. The midline could also provide an indication of whether mortality rates are falling as a result of Living Goods' program, but it's not powered to detect a statistically significant effect on mortality.

Endline survey

Endline data will be collected in 2019, and a report will be written in mid-2020. Since it is now operating at a much larger scale, the data gathered at endline will be compared to data from the first RCT to see if Living Goods can still deliver similar rates of mortality reduction. This information is significant for advocacy and funding goals as well as for Living Goods' personal learning.

Strategic plan

Living Goods has created a three-pronged strategic plan to guide future development:

1. Growth and scaling
2. Evolving the model
3. Working with partners and policy

Growth and scaling

Living Goods wants to scale up its program to demonstrate that it can be successful at the district, county, and national level.

Evolving the model

CHP activities

Living Goods is increasing the breadth of family planning education that CHPs will receive. Previously, CHPs were only educated about condoms and birth control pills (although there was never significant uptake for either). Living Goods now plans for CHPs to undergo an additional week of training on an expanded set of family planning methods, including:

- **Emergency contraception (also known as the “morning-after pill”)** – Living Goods is piloting delivering emergency contraception in Uganda, where the legal environment is conducive and demand is high.
- **Sayana Press** – Sayana Press is being piloted with 60 CHPs at Living Goods-managed programs through the end of 2017. Based on results gathered from the initial pilot, Living Goods plans to organize a larger roll out—including at BRAC branches.
- **Referrals** – For long-acting family planning methods, CHPs will refer people to health facilities.

The family planning initiative will not be reflected in the results of the second RCT being conducted. However, Living Goods will monitor CHPs to see if the increased time spent on family planning education causes variation in any key performance indicators (KPIs).

Living Goods is also interested in placing more focus on nutrition activities for CHPs.

CHP tools

CHPs can become more effective not only through additional training but also through changes in the way they do their jobs. Some of the options Living Goods is exploring include:

- **Creating a risk score** – In order to improve its program, Living Goods is asking how it could better provide services to high-risk populations

(including children, pregnant mothers, or individuals unlikely to seek care). Living Goods is working with data scientists to analyze household data, find variables that predict risk, and compile those variables to create a score that identifies at-risk households.

- **Building an app** – Living Goods created an application for branch managers that will help them more effectively supervise and direct CHPs. Using the supervision app and related dashboards, supervisors can quickly visualize CHP performance against KPIs in real time. This app is beginning to be rolled out across all branch managers but is not yet operating at full scale.
- **Updating its SmartHealth app** – Within the next several months, an updated version of Living Goods' SmartHealth app will be rolled out at all Living Goods branches. It will be disseminated to BRAC later on in the year; by the third quarter of 2017, BRAC should have all of its CHPs on the mobile app. As a result of the app and the real-time data it provides, Living Goods has been able to refine its program. For example, it learned that CHPs were being incentivized to register more pregnant women than they could likely support and visit. Living Goods corrected the issue by adjusting its incentive structure to link pregnancy registration with newborn visits. Data from the app has also improved metrics. For example, Living Goods can now calculate how many newborn visits actually occur relative to the number of visits that should occur. Previously, it could only calculate how many of the visits that occurred took place at the appropriate time.

Working with partners and policy

The third component of Living Goods' strategic plan—to work more with partners and craft policy—is designed to be a longer-term goal. Some of the specific areas Living Goods is working in include:

- **Government capacity** – Living Goods believes that to sustain community health over time, government capacity must be increased. Currently, it is in the process of creating dedicated staff positions that will act as technical community health advisors for government. Living Goods is interested in this type of policy and advocacy work both at the global and country level.
- **Innovative financing** – In an effort to build a larger pool of money for community health work, Living Goods is experimenting with various financing mechanisms—including performance-based financing.

Expansion of the program

Living Goods will continue to scale in Uganda and Kenya, and it is actively looking to expand to new countries. The strategic plan accounts for expansion to a third country by 2019. An increase in capital would help Living Goods expand more quickly.

Living Goods would likely set up direct operations in the country and/or help partners and government build up capacity. It does not expect to grow a program in a new country to national scale; rather, it would set up a demonstration site and then work with partners to achieve goals. The type of work Living Goods would undertake also depends highly upon the country, government capacity, and other external circumstances. For example, it may decide to enter into a public-private partnership—in which Living Goods becomes a contractor for government.

Living Goods staff are currently conducting scoping and immersion visits with two interested countries to decide whether or not they could be potential partners.

Budget and room for more funding

Update on 2016 fundraising and spending

Living Goods raised about 90% of its fundraising goal for 2016. The gap in funding did not cause problems, however, as Living Goods spent less than was expected and regularly maintains six months of reserves.

Update on fundraising strategy

Most of Living Goods' funding does not come from bilateral and multilateral funders, although this could be a potentially promising source of funds. Since many of these funders are decentralized and provide funding at a mission or country level, Living Goods has hired a staff member based in East Africa to oversee the fundraising process there.

2017 budget

Terminology

Living Goods defines “funding committed” fairly conservatively, only including funds that have already been received or guaranteed from grant agreements. “Pipeline” funds are only those that represent a real opportunity and are actively in the proposal or letter of intent (LOI) stage.

Changes to composition of funds

Living Goods has been receiving slightly fewer grants in number, but for larger sums of money. This is causing slight volatility in its projections for the budget.

Room for more funding

The fundraising target in the budget accounts for a conservative amount of growth, but its ambitions for scale go far beyond the base case projected in the budget. If Living Goods received less funding than its target, it would likely still pursue the same goals—just at a slower pace.

If Living Goods received more funding than its target, that would allow it to grow more quickly—both by scaling up operations as well as investing more in advocacy and research. Living Goods could double its implementation budget fairly quickly. It

would have to hire many more people, but Living Goods believes the program model has a strong track record and is robust enough to successfully scale quickly.

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