

# Annual Report 2020



The Life You Can Save

# Helping donors and effective charities transform lives for the better, together.

In a year that challenged so many across the world, we were honored here at The Life You Can Save to help effective charities and donors transform lives for the better, together.

## What readers and supporters are saying

*“The world’s problems overwhelmed me. This book empowered me.”* – Kelsey Piper, Vox

*“Thank you for providing a clear case for giving generously, a helpful guide for targeting an amount to donate, and valuable recommendations for effective charities to support. Before I found Peter Singer and his books, I was a bit lost in terms of how/what to give to charity, and as a result, I tended to be frozen. If I couldn’t choose where to give, I simply didn’t. Now, I can simply trust the experts to do the research that I’m frankly too busy (lazy) to do myself, and I am*

*confident that my donations can make a real difference. Thank you for all the hard work you do!”* – Anne, The Life You Can Save supporter

*“The new edition of The Life You Can Save has inspired over 200 people to take the 10% Giving What We Can Pledge, and I think it’s one of the best ways to introduce new people to the core principles of Effective Altruism.”* – Luke Freeman, Executive Director, Giving What We Can

## What our charities are saying

*“The new free edition of The Life You Can Save has generated significant interest in Against Malaria Foundation and led to an increase in donations”* – Rob Mather, CEO, Against Malaria Foundation

*“The Life You Can Save is one of the main ways new supporters find Fistula Foundation”* – Kate Grant, Executive Director, Fistula Foundation

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## 2020 In Numbers

Donations to effective charities	Net impact	Total books distributed*	3-year leverage ratio
<b>US\$18.2 million</b>	<b>US\$17.5 million</b>	<b>~40,000</b>	<b>17:1</b>

\* Includes free downloads, giveaways and sales of the ebook, audiobook and paperback editions of the 10th Anniversary Edition of *The Life You Can Save*; estimated number of book plays from the free podcast version of the book; and content based on the book (e.g. Blinkist’s 15-min version of the book)

## Breaking Down Your Impact

Impact examples based on The Life You Can Save’s Impact Calculator

Recommended Charity	Total Amount Donated Through The Life You Can Save (US\$)	Possible Interventions These Donations Could Fund
Against Malaria Foundation	\$2,253,868	Purchase 1,126,934 anti-malarial nets. 1 net can protect 2 people for up to 3 years.
Sanku-Project Healthy Children	\$329,032	1-year supply of micronutrient food fortification for 620,815 people
The Fred Hollows Foundation	\$250,387	5,007 cataract surgeries
Village Enterprise	\$306,650	Seed capital for up to 2,044 small businesses

# Message from the Board: 2020 year in review

2020 was nothing short of a watershed year for The Life You Can Save. The COVID-19 pandemic brought unforeseen challenges and impacted our work at every level. Travel restrictions forced us to reimagine how we support our charities and connect with our donors. Global shortages in medical supplies and other logistical disruptions threatened the vital operations of many of our recommended charities. Above all, the risk of severe illness and death made life even more precarious for those already suffering under extreme global poverty.

Yet, through it all, you — our supporters — continued to give generously. This year, you helped raise over US\$18 million for our recommended charities, and

your generosity allowed our charities to continue to make life-saving interventions despite many obstacles. In short, in a year marked by many drastic and difficult changes, you helped our charities transform thousands of lives for the better.

To be sure, not everything went as we might have hoped. We had to put our plans to expand in India on hold. Our marketing trial with Amazon intended to distribute the book to a wider audience was not as fruitful as we hoped. But we still have much to celebrate. We saw a steady stream of downloads as we continued to offer free versions of *The Life You Can Save* across multiple formats and platforms. We experimented with exciting new virtual fundraising formats, including two crowdfunding events and a live-streamed concert featuring world-renowned musician and The Life You Can Save supporter José González. And, finally, we celebrated the accomplishments of our co-founder and former Executive Director Charlie Bresler as he “leaned back” from his role at the Life You Can Save and welcomed our new Executive Director, Rickard Vikstrom.



© Against Malaria Foundation

# Message from the Executive Director: Looking ahead



**“The world’s problems overwhelmed me. This book empowered me.” That’s how Vox journalist Kelsey Piper described our founder Peter Singer’s book *The Life You Can Save* in a recent article.**

Her statement perfectly encapsulates the profound impact *The Life You Can Save* had on me when I first read it 10 years ago. And it’s a sentiment I hear repeated time and time again in conversations with you, our supporters. Some have even described the book as life-changing. I’ve heard more than one joke that it’s the “most expensive” book they’ve ever read — referring, of course, to how much more they were inspired to donate after they read it.

The true power of the argument in *The Life You Can Save* becomes even more evident when we consider the real-world impact its readers go on to make. Simply put: by embracing effective giving and donating to effective charities, they help transform lives for the better. They help prevent needless suffering and improve

livelihoods. They do good that also makes them feel good.

Every day, we hear from supporters who have been inspired by the principles of effective giving presented in *The Life You Can Save*. Still, relatively few people have heard of or considered the idea of effective giving. In other words, we have work to do!

I’m honored to have the opportunity to lead our team at The Life You Can Save



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in 2021 and beyond as we redouble our efforts to spread our message even wider and inspire even more people to give effectively. To achieve these goals, we will

- Create exciting campaigns designed to reach new audiences
- Produce inspiring content in new accessible formats including video and short versions of the book
- Establish fruitful partnerships with like-minded organizations and companies in the technology, media and book publishing space
- Translate *The Life You Can Save* into other languages (ex. our new Hindi translation)

**You can help by:**

- Sharing *The Life You Can Save* and other resources we create with friends and family
- Donating to The Life You Can Save itself so that we can expand our work
- Connecting us with organizations and companies interested in partnering with us to help spread our message to more people in all corners of the world

I am truly grateful for your support. It's what makes all this possible.

**Rickard Vikstrom**  
Executive Director



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# Supporting Effective Charities

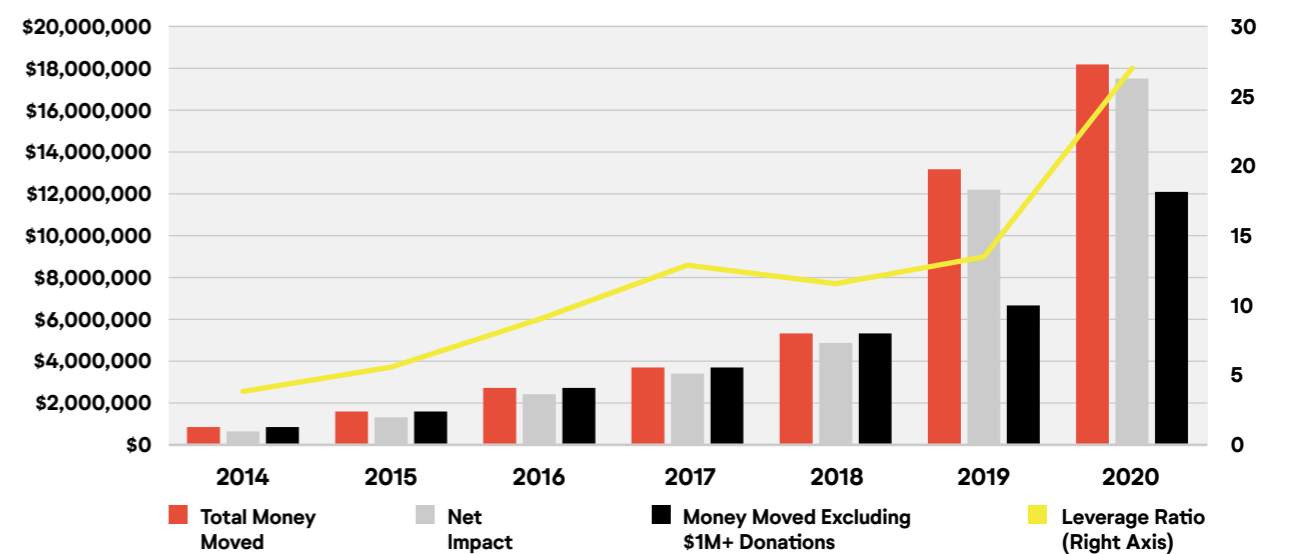
In this section, we take a closer look at the impact of your donations to our recommended charities in 2020 and the many ways your support enabled those organizations to continue making life-saving interventions despite the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2020—The Year in Numbers

All \$ amounts referenced below are in USD

Metric	2020	2019	1 yr % change	Compound annual growth rate since 2014
Net Impact	\$17,503,713	\$12,176,516	44%	76%
Money Moved	\$18,177,826	\$13,161,224	38%	68%
Money Moved Excluding \$1M+ Donations	\$12,077,826	\$6,637,793	82%	57%
Expenses	\$674,113	\$984,708	-32%	21%

### Impact Over Time



## Thank You Notes From a Few of Our Best Charities

*“On behalf of our US Board of Directors and the beneficiaries of Malaria Consortium’s seasonal malaria chemoprevention program, I want to extend our deepest gratitude to The Life You Can Save and your donors. In 2021, we plan to reach over 17.2 million children in six countries and your contribution will make a significant difference.”* — **Madeleine Marasciulo-Rice, Malaria Consortium**



*“Your support [for One Acre Fund] is fueling our impact and will enable us to serve over 1 million farm families in 2021. With the average farmer achieving a 40% increase in income on activities supported by our program, your gift is an investment in a more prosperous future for every community we serve. Thank you for your generosity!”* — **Andrew Youn, One Acre Fund**

*“2020 was Living Goods’ most impactful year, EVER! Thanks to the swift program modifications we were able to make in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, community health workers (CHWs) involved in our directly managed operations saved an estimated 17,000-20,000 lives — nearly double the estimate for 2019... We were able to accomplish all of this because of donors like you who supported us throughout the pandemic. Thanks to you, CHWs and governments are equipped to provide high-quality health care to those in need.”* — **Ashley Brekke, Living Goods**

## The COVID-19 Fund

When the coronavirus pandemic first struck, The Life You Can Save established a special COVID-19 Fund designed to help our recommended charities respond rapidly and effectively to the many different challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our supporters donated a total of US\$283,183 to this

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special fund, with over US\$240,000 of gifts coming in the first 3 months. Gifts to the COVID-19 Fund were divided among ten of our recommended charities that developed special projects to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you so much for donating to this special fund and helping our recommended charities sustain their vital operations and meet new, unforeseen needs in the communities they serve.

## Live Virtual Crowdfunding with The Funding Network

While the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our normal approach to networking and forced us to reimagine how we connect with our donors, it also allowed us to experiment with innovative virtual fundraising formats. In June and

December 2020, we partnered with the experts at The Funding Network Australia (TFN) to host Live Virtual Crowdfunding Events featuring three of our effective charities: The Fred Hollows Foundation, Sanku Project Healthy Children and GiveDirectly. At these two events, supporters from across the world came together to hear these three pioneering charities share stories about their evidence-based, cost-effective, and high-impact work. In a wonderful outpouring of generosity, our supporters pledged a total of A\$218,400 at our June 2020 event and US\$169,170 at our December 2020 event. We were inspired by the global network of organizations and supporters that united to make these events not only possible but great successes. They were not only much-needed expressions of community in a time of social distancing. They were truly testaments to the creativity, unity, and resolve of our supporters and partners.



# Spreading Our Message and Inspiring Action

**In 2020, with your generous support, we were able to distribute more resources across more formats than ever before and expose thousands of people to the concept of effective giving.**

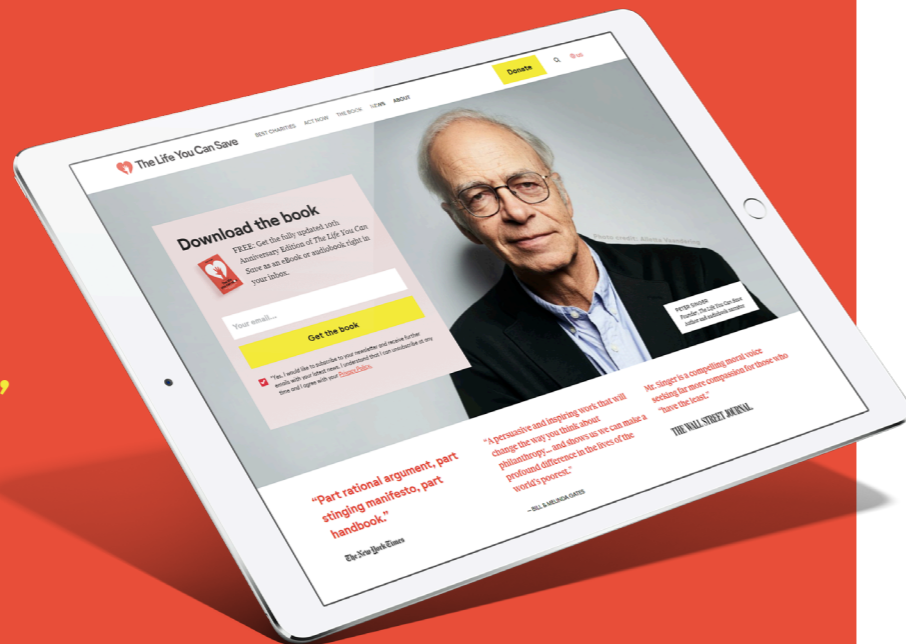
## Distributing Peter Singer's *The Life You Can Save*

As the reader testimonials in this section show, Peter Singer's groundbreaking *The Life You Can Save* remains our most valuable asset for spreading the idea of effective giving and inspiring action. Since we launched the free 10th anniversary

edition of *The Life You Can Save* in December 2019, getting the book to as many people as possible has remained a top priority. In 2020, we distributed approximately 40,000 copies of the book in complete and abridged formats. While we continued to see sales of the book across bookstores and major online book retailers such as Amazon and Kobo, we were able to distribute many of these copies for free, either on our website,

**“In 2020, we distributed approximately 40,000 copies of the book in complete and abridged formats.”**

**Download the book**



or on ebook platforms, or through promotional campaigns. Our three-month trial campaign with Amazon KDP Select for instance, allowed us to give away free copies of the book for five days, over which we generated roughly 4,200 downloads on Amazon.

Although our total book distribution in 2020 was significantly lower than we had hoped, we laid the groundwork for what we expect to be much better distribution in the future as our marketing campaigns help us discover and connect with new audiences. We also saw increased engagement with the book's core ideas through alternative formats like our audiobook, podcast, and Blinkist summary (all described below).

*Help Us Spread Our Message!* We are still learning what works best with book distribution. If you or your organization has experience in the book industry and would like to help us increase our book distribution (across any and all formats), please contact us via [partnerships@thelifeyoucansave.org](mailto:partnerships@thelifeyoucansave.org).

## Publishing Our Audiobook As a Podcast

Podcasting has become an increasingly important format for spreading ideas in a way that is both accessible and engaging. Since we believe that

information about effective giving should be as easily accessible as possible, in 2020 we looked for ways to capitalize on this widely popular format. In October 2020, we made our celebrity-read audiobook of *The Life You Can Save* available on all major podcasting apps for free. Since our initial launch, we have seen different chapters of the book downloaded ~63,000 times.

We remain incredibly grateful to our audiobook narrators for their continued support and for sharing the podcast release on their platforms:



## Teaming Up with Blinkist

While we strive to get the full text of *The Life You Can Save* in the hands of as many readers as possible, we also understand the importance and value of offering shorter, condensed formats that convey the book's core ideas in a quick and accessible manner for people

short on time. In 2020, we teamed up with Blinkist, a subscription-based book-summarizing service, to develop a “book-in-blink” — or 15-minute audio and text summary — of *The Life You Can Save*. Founded in 2012 and based in Berlin, Blinkist currently has over 16 million subscribers and offers English and German-language summaries of more than 4,000 bestselling nonfiction books. Blinkist released its short take of our book in mid-December, and nearly 10,000 people read or listened to it that month alone.

## Reaching New Audiences Through Media

Media appearances such as journalistic profiles and podcast interviews have proven to be some of the most effective ways to reach new audiences, spread the word about effective giving, and

inspire action. In 2020, The Life You Can Save received prominent media features in *Vox*, on Boston-based radio station and *National Public Radio* affiliate *WBUR*, and in *The Daily Princetonian*. Our founder Peter Singer spoke about effective giving and helping the extreme poor on a number of podcasts including *Crazy Money with Paul Ollinger*, *Australian Investors Podcast*, *Conversations With Coleman*, *The Lex Fridman Podcast*, *Ferg Goes Live*, and *EconTalk*. It is common to see spikes in donations of all sizes after media appearances. For instance, Peter’s appearance on *Australian Investor* inspired one listener to donate A\$10,000 to Helen Keller International, and his interview with Coleman Hughes on *Conversations with Coleman* inspired another listener to donate US\$200,00 to our new 90/10 Fund.

## Connecting with People Through Music and Film

We are fortunate to have many talented artists among our supporters, and in 2020 we were delighted to partner with several of them to raise awareness about effective giving and reach new audiences. In September, we partnered with Swedish singer-songwriter José González for a free live streaming concert event and fundraiser broadcast on Facebook and Instagram from José’s home in Sweden. Between musical sets, José

had a virtual sit down with our co-founder and Executive Board member Charlie Bresler to discuss the impact Peter Singer’s ideas had on him as a young man and his passionate support for The Life You Can Save. Around 2,500 live viewers tuned into the event, which remains available on Facebook, where it has been viewed over 133,000 times. In total, the event raised roughly US\$19,000 for our All Charities Fund, attracted new subscribers, and inspired book downloads. We extend a big thank you to José and his team for volunteering their time and talent to support our mission.

## Book Testimonials

Many of our existing and new supporters have been deeply impacted by the book. Here are some of their stories:

*“I could not put that book down. I love the articulate, thorough approach to the psychology behind giving and how systematically [the book] acknowledges and covers any counterpoints - it’s so powerful. It put things in sharp perspective. I am recommending it to all of my nearest and dearest and getting into interesting conversations with friends about it, one of whom already donates 2% of her salary yearly because of the book. It’s wonderful work. Thank you to*

*your entire team and to Peter for the time, effort and research it took to write the book and start the charity. It kind of made me feel hopeful that there are people like you all out there doing so much good!”*

— Sarah Watts, Australia

*“This is one of the most important books of our generation — one that makes us think of global poverty in very new (and personal) ways.”*

— David Frossard, USA



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*“I stumbled across this book randomly while browsing the Internet and decided to read it on a whim. I thought it presented very thought-provoking and persuasive arguments as to why most people in affluent nations should give (or give more) to effective charities specifically aimed at reducing the suffering of those in extreme poverty. It made clear to me some of the psychological and illogical barriers that were in my mind with regard to charitable giving, and it convinced me that even if I personally*

*perhaps am not willing to go as far as some of the people mentioned in the book, I should be doing more than what I’m doing now (which is basically nothing). I really admire the work that your organization and others around the world are doing to help those in need, and I hope that by giving to and through your organization, my contribution will really make a difference in at least some people’s lives around the world.”*

— Leonard Hua, USA



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# Measuring Our Impact, Multiplying Yours

**In this section, we explain some of the primary metrics we use to measure our impact and how donating to The Life You Can Save itself helps you multiply your impact.**

## Measuring Our Impact

At The Life You Can Save, we strive to be as data-based, cost-effective, and impactful as the charities we recommend. We focus on four primary metrics to help us evaluate our overall impact.

### Total Donations to Effective Charities: **US\$18.2 million**

In 2020, our supporters donated a total US\$18.2 million to our recommended charities either directly through the donation platforms on our website or as a direct result of our outreach.

### Net Impact: **US\$17.5 million**

We measure our “net impact” by subtracting our total annual expenses from the total “money moved” to our recommended nonprofits. In 2020, we spent less than US\$700,000 on our operations globally and raised US\$18.2 million for our recommended nonprofits,

which resulted in a net impact of US\$17.5 million.

### Our 3-Year Leverage Ratio: **17:1**

If you take all the money we raise annually for our nonprofits and divide that number by the money we spend operating our organization, you get what we call our “leverage” for that year. To gauge our impact over time, we rely on a “3-year leverage ratio” which is simply the average annual leverage over the past three years. From 2018-2020, our 3-year leverage ratio was 17:1. That means that for every \$1 we invested in spreading our message and helping others discover and donate to effective charities over the last three years, we raised \$17 for our recommended nonprofits.

### Total Books Distributed: **~40,000**

We use analytics from our website and other platforms to calculate our “Total Books Distributed,” or the number of people who access Peter Singer’s *The Life*



*You Can Save* or its related resources, either through views or downloads. In 2020, we estimate that approximately 40,000 people engaged with core ideas of *The Life You Can Save*, either through the book itself, or through one of its alternative formats, or through other book-related resources offered on our website.

## Multiplying Your Impact by Donating to The Life You Can Save Itself

Our work at The Life You Can Save is made possible by individuals who choose to donate to The Life You Can Save itself. We use these funds to print more books, promote our free ebook and audiobook,

secure media opportunities and keep our website and donations platforms running — all to make it easy to support great charities.

At The Life You Can Save, we always put our recommended charities first, and 100% of every donation you make to our recommended charities goes directly towards saving lives, reducing unnecessary suffering, and empowering livelihoods among people living in extreme poverty. However, to continue our work, it is critical that we find donors willing to support The Life You Can Save itself.

We often hear from supporters who have been inspired by *The Life You Can Save* or our resources and wish to “pay it forward” by making a contribution to The Life You



Can Save itself so that we can continue to share these resources with others. But perhaps the best argument for supporting our organization is how we can help you multiply your donation’s overall impact on our effective charities. In concrete terms, our 17:1 leverage ratio means that for every \$1 you donate to The Life You Can Save, we can generate an average of \$17 for our recommended charities.

We are very proud of our leverage ratio, and we believe it’s one of the main reasons that we’ve seen the number of voluntary contributions to The Life You Can Save itself more than triple in 2020. We are especially humbled to see more and more supporters choose to donate to our new 90/10 Fund, which divides 90% of your donation equally amongst our recommended charities and allocates 10% of your donation to The Life You Can Save itself.

Above all, we are deeply grateful for your continued support of The Life You Can Save itself. The more we can grow our organization effectively, the more money we can raise for our recommended nonprofits and the more widely we can

spread Peter’s message. Thank you so much for supporting us so that we can help you and our recommended charities save and transform lives, together.

*“The book The Life You Can Save impacted me profoundly and changed how much I donate and which organizations I support. On an emotional level, I donate to The Life You Can Save itself because it truly saddens me to see human beings suffer. But knowing that each dollar invested in their work over the past three years has generated \$17 makes supporting The Life You Can Save’s mission not just an emotional decision to me but a rational one as well. The incredible compounding effect of donating to The Life You Can Save allows me to magnify my impact in making the world a better place.”*

— Nathan Savundra–Shepherd, The Life You Can Save donor

**Support The Life You Can Save**

**“ I welcome your support in helping us achieve our objectives by donating to support The Life You Can Save itself, as I do myself.”**

— Peter Singer, Founder

# Appendix

## The Life You Can Save Entities

Organization	2020 Metric Year*	2020 Calendar Year	2020 Expenses (USD)
	Money Moved (USD)	Money Moved (USD)	
The Life You Can Save US (92.4%)	\$15,886,341	\$16,051,118	\$598,200
The Life You Can Save Australia (7.2%)	\$2,274,134	\$2,200,428	\$75,913
The Life You Can Save UK (0.3%)	\$17,350	\$19,743	Included in US numbers
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,177,826</b>	<b>\$18,271,290</b>	<b>\$676,113</b>

\*Our 2020 “Metric Year” spanned from Feb 1, 2020 – Jan 31, 2021. We calculate the “Metric Year” along with the standard “Calendar Year” (Jan 1, 2020–Dec 31, 2021) because January giving typically reflects donations made as a part of the previous year’s “giving season.” As such, the “Metric Year” often provides a better picture of our annual performance than the Calendar Year alone.

**Note:** our expenses only reflect our operating expenses and do not include donations we regrant to our recommended charities.



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## 2020 Money Moved – Donations to our recommended charities

The table below provides a representative snapshot of the “money moved” — or amounts raised — for each of our Recommended Nonprofits (RNPs) in the 2020 metric year. This table excludes donations made by foundations and individuals that have requested that the designation of their contributions remain confidential.

Organization	Money Moved (USD)
Fistula Foundation	\$3,394,848
Against Malaria Foundation	\$2,253,868
GiveDirectly	\$1,046,353
Oxfam	\$690,684
Development Media International	\$610,084
Malaria Consortium	\$605,446
Evidence Action	\$471,283
Sanku–Project Healthy Children	\$329,032
Equalize Health	\$324,714
Village Enterprise	\$306,650
Living Goods	\$250,415
The Fred Hollows Foundation	\$250,387
Population Services International	\$231,420
Seva	\$225,529
One Acre Fund	\$207,905
Helen Keller International	\$179,599
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition	\$163,179
Innovations for Poverty Action	\$152,235
Schistosomiasis Control Initiative	\$114,308
Iodine Global Network	\$99,585
Possible	\$70,666
Zusha!	\$53,878
New Incentives	\$45,758
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,077,826</b>

 **The Life You Can Save**

**MAKE A DONATION**