

2017 GiveWell cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) — Version 1

Release notes

1. Removal of the UBI program

What changed? The universal basic income (UBI) program was dropped from the GiveDirectly CEA.

Why did we make this change? We do not expect GiveWell-directed funding to be used for GiveDirectly's UBI program. Removing the UBI program substantially reduced the complexity of the GiveDirectly CEA. We expect this change will make the model easier to understand and maintain. A copy of the UBI model is preserved in previous versions of the CEA and could be added back into the model if we anticipate GiveWell-influenced funding being used for the UBI program in the future.

How does this change affect the results? This change caused the median cost per life saved equivalent for GiveDirectly to fall from \$6,971 to \$6,790.

2. Changes to how we present subjective values judgments

What changed? Subjective values judgments were moved from the "Parameters" tab to a new "Moral tradeoffs" tab and mentions of disability-adjusted life years (DALY) as the units of value for various outcomes were removed.

Instead of noting that outcomes are worth a certain number of DALYs, each outcome is simply assigned a value in arbitrary units, and results are based on how different outcomes are valued relative to one another. For example, in a CEA accounting for only two outcomes—infants saved and adults saved—assigning a value of 1 to an infant death averted and a value of 2 to an adult death averted would give the same results as assigning a value of 10 to an infant death averted and a value of 20 to an adult death averted. In both cases, preventing an adult death averted is valued at 2x averting an infant death.

With this change, we replaced uses of "Cost per life saved equivalent" in the "Results" tab with a drop-down menu. On that drop-down menu, users can select what outcome they want results displayed in terms of. For example, "Cost per outcome as good as: averting the death of an individual under-5 — AMF" or "Cost per outcome as good as: doubling consumption for one person for one year" may be selected.

In addition, a tab was added to the CEA, titled "Values explorer," that can be used to view how the values assigned to different outcomes stack up relative to one another.

Why did we make this change? In previous versions of the CEA, we assigned DALY values to different outcomes in an unorthodox way. We think the new structure makes our subjective values judgments more transparent while also making the CEA easier to understand and maintain.

How does the change affect the results? On its own, this change is purely presentational. No final estimates were affected.

3. Inversion of the inputs for the development benefits of ITN and SMC coverage

What changed? The inputs in the seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) and insecticide-treated nets (ITN) models accounting for development benefits were restructured. Prior to this change, we accounted for the development benefits of deworming relative to the development benefits of malaria control. Now the inputs capture the expected development benefits from malaria control relative to the development benefits of deworming. Each existing input for this value was replaced with its reciprocal. See row 46 and 55 of the Parameters sheet.

Why did we make this change? This change makes the SMC and ITN development effects inputs more intuitive.

How does the change affect the results? This change is purely presentational. No final estimates were affected.

4. Changes to the workbook design and structure

What changed? The structure and visual design of the CEA workbook were simplified. Several unnecessary columns and rows were removed. The number of different colors used in cell backgrounds was reduced. The "Bednets-IR" tab was removed from the CEA and the "YLL per Death" tab was moved to a separate workbook which is now linked to in the "Sources" tab.

Why did we make this change? These changes make the CEA easier to maintain and easier on the eyes. The "YLL per Death" tab was not a core piece of the CEA model, so we decided it would be better to keep it separate from the CEA workbook. The "Bednets-IR" tab was not being referenced in the CEA, so we decided to remove it altogether.

How does the change affect the results? No change in results.

5. Addition of new "intuition checks" and a section labeled "Contribution of each outcome to overall cost-effectiveness"

What changed? A few "intuition checks" were added, and there is now a section showing how different types of benefits modeled in each of our interventions' CEAs contribute to our final cost-effectiveness estimates. These additions are at the bottom of each intervention tab and the "Results" tab.

Why did we make this change? These additions may make it easier to understand what's going on within our CEA model.

How does the change affect the results? No final estimates were affected.