

## Tactical plan: 11/10/2008 through 6/1/2009

### Introduction/summary

GiveWell's ultimate vision is of a world in which:

- Individual donors can easily find actionable information about what charities do and whether it works.
- A large amount of money from these donors flows systematically to the charities with the most proven, cost-effective, scalable ways of helping people.
- This dynamic – charities competing for funding based on demonstrated impact – leads to an ongoing public dialogue about how to help people, and to constant improvement in the way charitable resources are allocated.

Our vision document lays out the specific assets we feel we'll need to reach this vision:

1. Staff capacity (and the operating funds to pay for it)
2. Depth, breadth, and presentation quality of research
3. Money moved
4. High-credibility/high-visibility supporters
5. Brand value / name recognition

We feel that the appropriate focus for our next year is on #1 and #2 because:

- We are unlikely to make significant progress on #3-5 given the current state of #1-2.
- We may make more progress on #3-5 if we had significantly deeper and broader research.
- Serious progress on #1-2 is well within our reach, and is unlikely to be affected much by #3-5.

Our priorities for the coming year, in order, are as follows.

**Priority 1: hire a Research Analyst** in order to improve our ability to accomplish our other goals (below).

**Time allocation:** approximately 5 hours per week devoted to recruiting (prior to the hire) and management/review (after the hire is made).

**Deliverable:** hire one Research Analyst by Jan. 1, 2008. Complete thorough review of hire by Mar. 30, 2008.

**Priority 2: Complete an in-depth research report on developing-world aid, while systemizing as much as possible of the research process.** Doing so will add greatly to our understanding of the time and resources necessary to reach the level of research laid out in our vision document; it will also improve our appeal to donors and high-credibility/high-visibility supporters interested in this cause.

**Time allocation:** approximately 40 hours per week of Holden's and Elie's time, and 25 hours per week of the Research Analyst's time.

**Deliverable:** in-depth research report on developing-world aid completed by 6/1/2009. See below for details on the contents of this report.

**Priority 3: Continue to pursue customers** in order to a) measure demand and b) get substantive feedback on the materials we produce.

**Time allocation:** approximately 10 hours per week of Holden's and Elie's time.

**Deliverable:** none as of now. Progress on metrics (directly below) will be monitored and assessed after the fact.

**Metrics:**

- Money moved (defined as the to the sum of Clear Fund grants, GiveWell Pledges, and all other donations that are directly attributable to GiveWell's research).
- Money moved through donors who know us only from GiveWell.
- Number of donations moved through donors who know us only from GiveWell.
- Links from other blogs and websites (taking into consideration the significance, as measured by Alexa and Technorati rank, of these blogs and websites).
- Mentions in mainstream media.
- Traffic to website and blog.
- Subscribers to blog and email list(s).
- Partnerships with donor advised funds, wealth advisors, and online donor resources.

**Priority 4: Pursue important relationships** including:

- Successful supporters to serve as mentors and members of the Board of Directors
- Partners who can help us reach potential users of our research
- Donors who can increase our money moved and continue to build our network
- High-credibility supporters for our Advisory Board

**Time allocation:** approximately 15 hours per week of Holden's and Elie's time.

**Deliverable by 6/1/2009:**

- A total of three experienced entrepreneurs who serve as mentors to us on a regular basis. (We currently have one.)
- A total of five highly credible and/or visible figures who serve on our Advisory Board and endorse our research. (We currently have two.)

Total hours per week add to 70, out of our average of 80. The remaining 10 are allocated to miscellaneous tasks such as accounting and legal issues and Board-related communications.

Below, we lay out specific plans for pursuing these priorities.

## **Goal 1: expand our staff**

We aim to **hire one Research Analyst by Jan. 1, 2008**. In hiring, we will start with our existing base of volunteers, and seek the following qualities:

- Strong analytical abilities.
- Strong interest in GiveWell.
- A good work ethic.

The Research Analyst will be paid a salary of **\$35,000 per year plus health benefits**. Including employer payroll taxes and the cost of health benefits, the total cost to GiveWell of the Research Analyst will be approximately **\$41,500 per year**.

The responsibilities of the Research Analyst will primarily be:

- Examining the websites and annual reports of over 800 charities and summarizing their activities.
- Examining and summarizing the academic literature on 15 categories of developing-world interventions.
- Examining and summarizing the academic literature on a set of other relevant questions such as the relationship between health and economic growth, and the possible negative effects of international aid.

More on what the Research Analyst will do and how we will evaluate and manage him/her will be written up in our Research Analyst Hiring Document.

We believe that the nature of our research plan and the clarity of our expectations merit a hire. This was not the case when we made a previous hire in late 2007.

After we have worked with the Research Analyst for 3 full months and completed our first quarterly review, we will reassess our needs and determine whether we should hire further, scale back, or stay at the current staff level. For now, the only goal we are committing to is the hiring of one capable Research Analyst.

### Timeline

11/14/2008 – writeup completed on prospective salaries, duties, and evaluation for new hire. Two top candidates contacted and asked to complete a preliminary project if interested.

11/28/2008 – Preliminary projects due.

12/2/2008 – preliminary evaluation of preliminary projects completed. Hire is made if possible; if neither of the top two candidates demonstrates both interest and a strong preliminary project, we broaden the search by:

- Posting the position opening on our blog.
- Contacting several friends whom we believe will provide us with referrals.
- Public postings via sites such as Monster.com and Doostang.com if we do not receive applications within a few days.

12/9/2008 – preliminary project given to interested applicants.

12/23/2008 – preliminary projects due.

Hire made by Monday, Jan. 5.

1/5/2009 – 1/12/2009 – training period for new hire.

1/19/2009 – first formal audit and evaluation of new hire, focusing on execution of instructions.

1/26/2009 – second audit and evaluation of new hire.

2/16/2009 – third audit and evaluation of new hire.

3/2/2009 – fourth audit and evaluation of new hire.

3/30/2009 – fifth audit and evaluation of new hire, focusing on value added. At this point, we will give most serious consideration to whether to continue the relationship.

## **Goal 2: complete an in-depth research report on developing-world aid**

We aim to publish an **in-depth research report on developing-world aid by June 1, 2009**. The report will include:

- Activities listings and basic ratings for each of the approximately 800 US-registered international-aid charities with annual budgets in excess of \$1 million.
- At least 10 recommended charities in all, and at least one recommended charity within each of the following areas:
  - Direct health interventions
  - Economic empowerment programs (microfinance, agricultural training, irrigation, etc.)
  - Primary and secondary education (scholarships, school building)
- Literature reviews on several general questions about international aid (see <http://blog.givewell.net/?p=303>)
- Detailed notes on two focus regions

We anticipate devoting half of our time (40 total focused hours per week) to research. We anticipate that our Research Analyst will work 30 total focused hours per week, of

which 25 will be devoted to research, and that we will get at least another 5 focused hours per week from volunteers.

Completing this report will require completing the following tasks.

**Task 1:** Review literature on the cost-effectiveness of different health interventions; identify priority interventions.

**Time estimate: Done; took approx. 200 hours of our time and 40 hours of volunteer time.** This estimate includes all discussion, brainstorming, and writing up findings.

**Task 2:** Review literature on economic empowerment programs and primary and secondary education; identify priority interventions.

**Time estimate: 240 hours (6 weeks) of our time.** We have already looked preliminarily at the literature in both of these areas, and believe that there is significantly less to go through in the two combined than in health.

**Task 3:** Creating a dataset summarizing the major activities of as many international aid organizations as possible, including the ~800 in the dataset we currently own (see <http://www.givewell.net/applicants>).

**Time estimate: 400 hours (13.3 weeks) of volunteer/assistant time.** We have had volunteers working on this task at a fairly consistent rate of 30 minutes per charity.

**Task 4:** Create ratings of charities by matching up their activities with our list of priority interventions. Use these ratings to identify priority charities.

**Time estimate: 200 hours (5 weeks) of our time; 40 hours (1.3 weeks) of volunteer/assistant time.** We have no sense of how to do this estimate, and are assigning it an amount of time comparable to other major tasks.

**Task 5:** Conduct literature reviews on other questions, including the general questions listed at <http://blog.givewell.net/?p=303>, and any literature review necessary to help choose our two focus regions

**Time estimate: 240 hours (6 weeks) of our time.** As with Task 4, we have no sense of how to do this estimate, and are assigning it an amount of time comparable to other major tasks.

**Task 6:** Complete in-depth reviews of recommended charities.

**Time estimate:** assuming 10 recommended charities, each of which takes 20 hours of volunteer/assistant time and 20 hours of our time (these estimates based partly on our experiences writing such recommendations in Year 1 for PIH, PSI, NFP and KIPP), yields an estimate of **200 hours (5 weeks) of our time; 200 hours (6.7 weeks) of volunteer/assistant time.**

**Task 7:** Conduct and write up personal visits to our two focus regions

**Time estimate: 4 weeks of our time (2 weeks each for Holden and Elie)**

**Task 8:** polish final report/fudge factor.

**Time estimate: 200 hours (5 weeks) of our time; 200 hours (6.7 weeks) of volunteer/assistant time.**

### Timeline

12/22/2008 – literature review of economic empowerment and education completed.

2/2/2009 – literature review of general aid-related questions completed.

2/11/2009 – dataset summarizing activities of international aid organizations completed.

3/9/2009 – ratings completed for each charity; priority charities identified and contacted. Site visit #1 begins.

3/30/2009 – Site visit #1 completed; site visit #2 begins.

4/13/2009 – Site visit #2 completed.

4/27/2009 – reviews of recommended charities completed.

6/1/2009 – final report released.

### **Goal 3. Continue to pursue customers and measure demand.**

We feel it is important to continuing pursuing more “customers,” i.e., people who will use our research for their charitable giving. We feel this way because:

- Our ability to recruit customers reflects on the viability of our project as a whole.
- Getting feedback from customers about where our resource is falling short will help us to focus on the right areas.
- Moving more money increases the attractiveness of our project to the current supporters of our operating expenses.

At this point we do not have a single strategy for pursuing customers that we believe is cost-effective and reliable. Instead, we have many possible strategies that we are interested in (or in the process of) experimenting with:

- **Targeting companies in our target sectors** (finance, consulting, software).
  - We have cold-emailed 18 companies that we found through a search of corporate charity-matching programs.
  - We will follow up with each company once by both email and phone, and assess the results. We will consider this strategy a success (enough to continue it further) if we get either (a) an opportunity to speak in front of at least 30 people (in a forum that allows us to follow up with attendees and receive their feedback on future research); (b) \$10,000 in funds committed to charities found through our research (either GiveWell pledges or donations restricted to grants).

- **Targeting relatively small family foundations.** We have cold-emailed 18 family foundations, and will follow up with each once by email and once by phone and assess the results. We will consider this strategy a success (enough to continue it further) if we get at least \$10,000 in funds committed to charities found through our research (either GiveWell pledges or donations restricted to grants).
- **Presenting our research results more engagingly and more frequently** in the hopes of increasing the interest of those on our email list, as well as generating online attention (links from blogs, etc.)
- **Partnering with major online giving resources** such as Guidestar, Charity Navigator, and Network for Good. We are currently in contact with GuideStar (scheduled to speak next in December), and are planning on continuing to find and contact partners along these lines.
- **Partnering with donor-advised funds** such as those run by Vanguard, Fidelity and Schwab. We are currently in contact with these three DAFs, and plan on gradually building relationships.
- **Partnering with private wealth advisors.**
- **Partnering with organizations/people that focus on raising funds for particular causes (or charity in general), as opposed to particular organizations.**
- **Online advertising** via platforms such as AdWords, Facebook, and LinkedIn.
- **Person-to-person networking.**
  - We have invested a high amount of time in this technique without great returns so far; see our *Overview of progress and new evidence since 6/19/2008*.
  - We plan to continue following up with extremely promising contacts, particularly those who actively contact us and/or those that may be able to get us in front of large groups.
  - We plan not to continue spending a significant amount of time pushing for more introductions.

At this point we do not have a good sense of the expected return on time for any of the following strategies, and as such do not want to commit to a specific deliverable. Instead, we plan to allocate 10 hours per week to experimenting with these strategies (in the rough order of priority listed) and estimate the return on different strategies in terms of the following metrics:

- Money moved (defined as the to the sum of Clear Fund grants, GiveWell Pledges, and all other donations that are directly attributable to GiveWell's research).
- Money moved through donors who know us only from GiveWell.
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- Links from other blogs and websites (taking into consideration the significance, as measured by Alexa and Technorati rank, of these blogs and websites).
- Mentions in mainstream media.
- Traffic to website and blog.
- Subscribers to blog and email list(s).

- Partnerships with donor advised funds, wealth advisors, and online donor resources.

#### **Goal 4. Pursue important relationships**

We seek to build relationships along the following lines

- Successful supporters to serve as mentors and members of the Board of Directors
- Partners who can help us reach potential users of our research
- Donors who can increase our money moved and continue to build our network
- High-credibility supporters for our Advisory Board

We currently spend a total of about 15 hours per week on correspondence (via email) with current and potential contacts. We believe that we can maintain this allocation and reach the following deliverables:

- A total of three experienced entrepreneurs who serve as mentors to us on a regular basis. (We currently have one.)
- A total of five highly credible and/or visible figures who serve on our Advisory Board and endorse our research. (We currently have two.)