

# **A conversation with Matt Johnson, February 27, 2017**

## **Participants**

- Matt Johnson – Chief Marketing Officer, GiveDirectly
- Natalie Crispin – Senior Research Analyst, GiveWell

**Note:** These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Mr. Matt Johnson.

## **Summary**

GiveWell spoke with Mr. Johnson of GiveDirectly for a general update. Conversation topics included GiveDirectly's current priorities and plans to expand its fundraising team.

### **GiveDirectly's current priorities**

GiveDirectly's current priorities include:

- Hiring for its fundraising and marketing teams.
- Building its office culture to strengthen the team's ability to work together.
- Making iterative improvements to simplify and increase the efficiency of its rolling retail campaigns (i.e. its standard cash transfer program) as well as its other programs.
- Continuing to run the core retail campaigns.
- Raising the last \$5 million for the universal basic income study by July 2017, which is roughly when enrollment for the program is expected to start for 26,000 people in Kenya. GiveDirectly has raised \$25 million out of the \$30 million that it needs to run the program at its full scale.

## **Fundraising**

### **Current fundraising team**

- Matt Johnson (Chief Marketing Officer) leads the fundraising team and manages partnership work (i.e. relationships with large donors)
- Max Chapnick (Communications Associate) does media relations
- Yash Kothari (Analytics and Operations Manager) leads digital product development and website content management
- Sharon Harvey (Outreach Coordinator) does data analytics, donor relations, and community relations
- Joanna Macrae (Senior Partnerships Manager) manages partnerships with foundations, government agencies, and high-net-worth individuals in the United Kingdom and Europe

### **Hiring for the fundraising team**

The organization has the capacity to distribute much more funding than it expects to receive in the near term, and one of its main goals is to increase its fundraising.

GiveDirectly has two main fundraising goals:

1. Maximizing the revenue that it can distribute to the poor in the short term. The most efficient way to do this is by building relationships with foundations, institutions, and high-net-worth individual donors. GiveDirectly's current priority is to hire more staff who can focus on building partnerships with large donors to achieve this goal.
2. Building a base of small donors so that in the long term, revenue is more predictable and less reliant on a small number of large donations. Mr. Johnson is working on building a strong marketing team to build digital tools, refresh its website, and do digital marketing to achieve this goal. This work includes two main priorities:
  - a. Creating more and better digital tools to enable GiveDirectly's small donors to influence their networks to critically evaluate how GiveDirectly's work compares to other poverty interventions.
  - b. Creating more and better content (such as op eds, videos, and infographics) on topics such as cash transfers, basic income, the charity ecosystem, and GiveDirectly's new refugee work.

Currently GiveDirectly's revenue is about half from major donors and half from retail donors. GiveDirectly expects its work on creating new fundraising tools and website content to have a strong return on investment this year.

### **Updates on partnership work**

GiveDirectly's partnership project with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) is in motion, but progress has been slow.

GiveDirectly currently has sufficient funding for its partnership work.

### **Good Ventures funding for fundraising**

In August 2015, GiveWell recommended that Good Ventures award a grant of \$25 million to GiveDirectly, \$7 million of which was earmarked by GiveDirectly for fundraising. GiveDirectly plans to spend down this funding by the end of 2018. This work was delayed because it took more time than expected for GiveDirectly to find and hire Mr. Johnson.

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