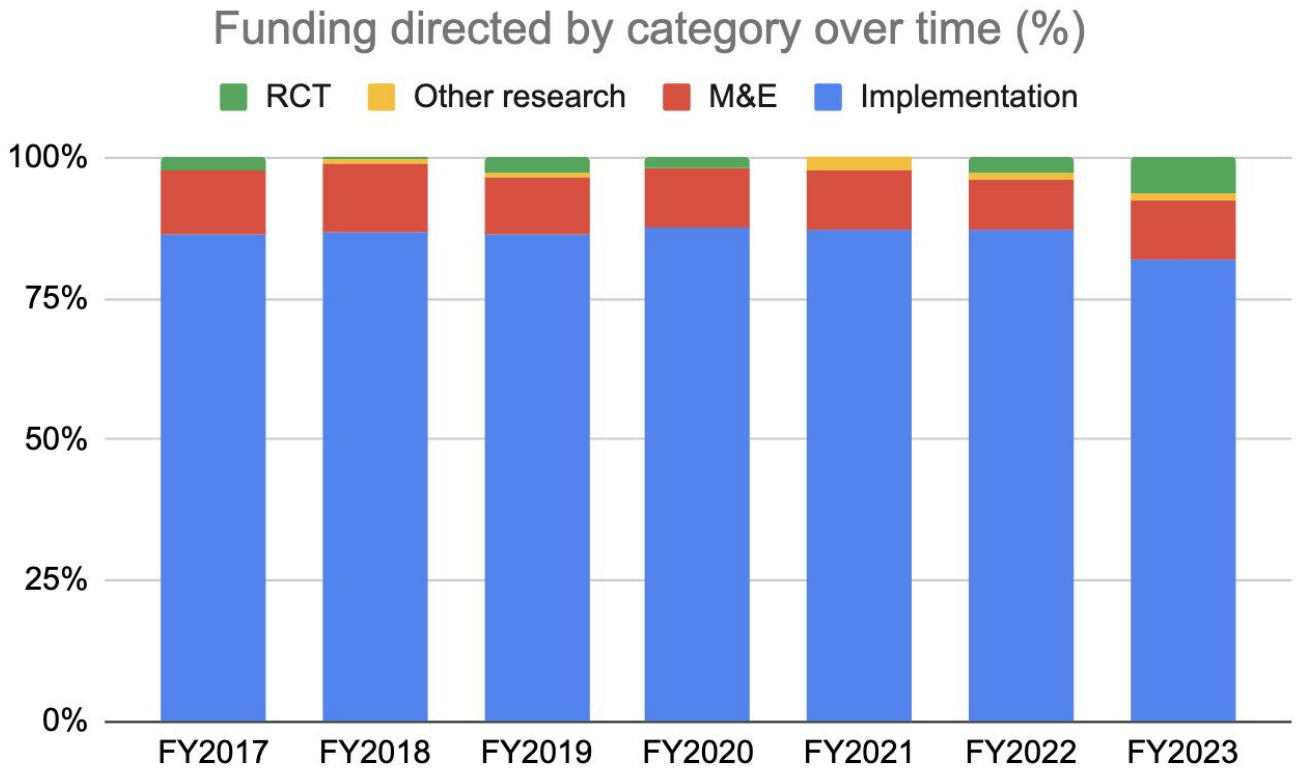
GiveWell

How does research affect philanthropy?

Dan Brown, Program Officer

GiveWell directs 10-20% of its funding to research and evaluation, including ~$10m per year to new RCTs



Why? Because we value information

	BOTEC
Cost of study	**$2,000,000**
Change in funding per year if we positively update	**$10,000,000**
How long would we fund the program if we updated (years)	10
Probability of a positive update if we funded the trial	**30%**
Cost-effectiveness (CE) of 'unlocked' opportunity (x cash)	11
CE of counterfactual opportunity if we don't update (x cash)	10
Marginal value of reallocated funding (x cash)	**1**
GiveWell "units of value" per $, GiveDirectly	0.003355
GiveWell "units of value" per year, if we updated	~34k
Expected GiveWell "units of value" per year	~10k
Present Value total units of value	~82k
Bottom-line cost-effectiveness (x cash)	**12**

$10m * 10 years = $100m = the 'size of the prize' - the amount of funding this study could influence

Marginal benefit of a positive update = (11x-10x) = difference between CE following a positive update and the counterfactual

Expected value of the trial = value we get from updating (~34k GiveWell units) * probability we'd update (30%)

We divide total units of value by costs to back out a CE estimate (expressed as x cash)

New Incentives' conditional cash transfers for vaccination: A positive update led to more than $100m in additional programmatic grants

Photo credit to New Incentives

- $4m grant for a 2-arm cRCT covering 167 vaccination clinics.
- Study finds an increase in uptake of measles (14ppt), BCG (16ppt) and penta (21ppt) vaccines.
- Effect on % fully vaccinated is 1.7 times greater than our previous best guess based on existing CCT studies.

- → **Leads to more than $100m in subsequent grants** to the program since 2020, expanding to 11 states across northern Nigeria.

No lean season: a negative update led to a redirection of funds

Photo credit to Evidence Action & Sophie Skinner

- $250k co-funding of a cRCT covering 110 branches of implementing microfinance organisation.
- Study finds no effect on migration in 2017, 12 ppt increase in 2018 (compared to 22-40ppt effect in earlier trials).
- Cost-effectiveness approximately halves and falls below our funding threshold.

- → **Without this trial we likely would have directed $5m per year** to the program.

A beneficiary preferences survey changed how we value averting death compared to improving consumption

	(1) GiveWell moral weights in 2019	(2) Survey: VSL approach	(3) Survey: Choice experiments	(4) GiveWell moral weights in 2020
Double consumption for 1 person for 1 year	**1**	1	1	**1**
Avert death of 1 under 5 child	**47**	143	318	**100**
Avert death of 1 person aged 5 or older	**85**	118	167	**100**

Note: Value of doubling consumption for one person for one year normalised to 1.

Where would GiveWell like to see additional research?

- Long-term follow-up studies
- What happens when we stop programs?
- Layering interventions
- Spillover effects
- Replication studies

Contact us: research@givewell.org