

Are some charities 100 times better than others? Oxford researchers suggest where you give matters more than how much

A society which encourages people to donate to the most effective charities in the world has attracted \$350m in pledges, it announced as it celebrated its fifth birthday this week.

Giving What We Can was set up by Dr Toby Ord (of the Philosophy Faculty at Oxford University) in December 2009, inspired by his decision to give more than half of all his future earnings to charity. It has two main activities: Firstly, it evaluates charities and recommends the ones which most effectively use donations to do good in the world. Secondly, it encourages people to pledge at least 10 per cent of their lifetime earnings to effective charities. By taking this pledge, anyone can become a member.

In five years Giving What We Can has attracted more than 800 members from over 40 countries. Its members include people from many walks of life, such as students, teachers, business professionals and nurses.

Dr Ord said: 'I am delighted that so many people have taken this pledge. But pledging is only half of the story because we believe that where you give your money is as important as making the decision to give in the first place.

'We have done lots of research into which charities contribute most to improving the lifespan and quality of life of as many people as possible and published this on our website – and we encourage donors to do their own investigations too.'

Giving What We Can estimates that the \$350m given effectively could save 14 million years of healthy life.

Dr Ord added: 'Some charities can be many, many times more effective than others – training a guide dog can cost £25,000 and for this money more than 2,000 people could be cured of blindness in developing countries.

Giving What We Can's recommended charities include:

- Deworm the World and Schistosomiasis Control Initiative, which cure painful intestinal parasites for under 50p per child per year.
- Against Malaria Foundation, which provides mosquito nets at a cost of around £4 each.
- Project Healthy Children, which works with governments in the developing world to fortify staple foods with much-needed micronutrients.