

A focus on effectiveness

- Giving What We Can celebrated its three year anniversary on 14th November 2012, having grown from an independent organisation in Oxford, to an international charity, with over 260 members from 17 countries and chapters established in the US, Britain, Switzerland and Australia.
- To date our members have collectively pledged to give away \$100 million over the courses of their lives, a promise that will save 4 million years of healthy life.
- Giving What We Can's members include the influential moral philosophers Peter Singer and Thomas Pogge.
- The typical person in the UK could donate £85,000 in their lifetime, just by taking the pledge.
- Aid programs vary dramatically in their cost-effectiveness. There is a factor of more than 1,000 between the most cost-effective and least cost-effective charities.
- The cost-effectiveness of available interventions ranges from 0.02 to 300 DALYs per \$1,000, with a median of 5.
- As such, moving money from the least effective intervention to the most effective would produce about 15,000 times the benefit, and even moving it from the median intervention to the most effective would produce about 60 times the benefit.
- Giving What We Can evaluates charities based on the number of Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) they save. QALYs are a measure of disease burden, used by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence to measure the cost-effectiveness of health interventions.
- Our sources include WHO-CHOICE and the Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries Report, as well as Givewell, another excellent charity evaluator.
- Giving What We Can currently recommends three charities: The Schistosomiasis Control Initiative and Deworm the World focus on treating neglected tropical diseases. They supply cheap medication to schools where they can be reliably administered. Against Malaria Foundation distribute bed-nets to defend against mosquitoes. They supply nets treated with long-lasting insecticide to charities on the ground.
- Giving What We Can constantly searches for other charities that can offer even better cost-effectiveness. Of these the charity RESULTS looks most promising, but more investigation is needed before it is possible to recommend it.

Making a pledge to give

- Toby Ord is the founder and president of Giving What We Can, and an ethical philosopher at Oxford University. He has calculated that he will earn £1.5m over the course of his life and has pledged to donate £1m of that to the most cost-effective charities. On GWWC's best estimates, this will save about 62 500 years of healthy life for people in the developing world; a health gain that is on a par with saving 1 000 lives.
- So far more than 260 people have pledged to give at least 10% of their income to the causes they believe to be most cost-effective (known as the Pledge to Give). This represents over \$100 million, and over 4 million years of healthy life saved.
- The Pledge to Give: 'I recognise that I can use part of my income to do a significant amount of good in the developing world. Since I can live well enough on a smaller income, I pledge that from today until the day I retire, I shall give at least ten percent of what I earn to whichever organizations can most effectively use it to help people in developing countries. I make this pledge freely, openly, and without regret.'
- Several members have gone beyond this and pledged to give everything they earn over a fixed baseline (known as the Further Pledge).
- It's easy to underestimate one's own wealth, so Giving What We Can has created a calculator to work out how rich one is, in global terms. Someone earning £12 000/yr is in the richest 5% of the world's population. Someone earning £24 000/yr is in the richest 1% of the world's population.