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New IPA-Evaluated Idea Joins GiveWell's List of Most Effective Charities



Independent charity evaluator GiveWell bases their recommendations for effective charities on evidence and takes a deep dive into the weeds before making their annual recommendations. We also believe rigorous evidence is critical to good charity decisions and apparently so do many people, with over \$90 million in donations in 2016 as a direct result of their recommendations.

Several IPA-evaluated causes have been perennials in their top lists. (Read about the original studies showing effectiveness of [Chlorine Dispensers for Safe Water](#), [childhood deworming](#), [subsidized anti-malarial bednets](#), and [GiveDirectly's unconditional cash transfers](#)).

In the recent announcement of GiveWell's top charities we're thrilled to see a new (but familiar to us) name, efforts by [Evidence Action](#), an organization originally incubated at IPA, to scale up [No Lean Season](#). In rural Bangladesh, the time every year when the food from last year's harvest has run low but the new crop hasn't come in yet is known as the "lean season." In those two to three months food becomes scarce, incomes drop, and families begin to skip meals.

With Yale's Mushfiq Mobarak, Gharad Bryan of LSE, and Shyamal Chowdhury of the University of Sydney, IPA tested a new approach. Rather than offering money or government-created temporary jobs in the rural area – this approach thought in terms of economic systems. There were jobs available in the urban centers, and people who needed work in the rural areas. What if we simply made it easier for members of hungry families to get to those existing jobs? Simply offering a few dollars for transportation costs helped the rural poor get from their farms to cities to find their own temporary employment, and the effects were big.

Every dollar spent on that program generated between 2 and 6 dollars in additional income back to the the families, resulting in fewer meals skipped back home. Thanks to the data, GiveWell considers it among their top contenders for effectiveness, and it is being scaled up to reach over [300,000 households in Bangladesh](#), while also being tested in other countries. Listen to IPA Executive Director Annie Duflo and Yale's Mushfiq Mobarak talk about the program at a recent event in New York ([SoundCloud clip below](#), or [stream/download the MP3 from Google Drive](#)):

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And as a bonus, you can see how IPA and researchers found that GiveWell's "[Stand Out Charity](#)" Living Goods, was [reducing child mortality by 27 percent in Uganda](#).

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