

# GiveDirectly

GiveDirectly provides unconditional cash transfers using cellphone technology to some of the world's poorest people, as well as refugees, urban youth, and disaster victims. They also are currently running a historic Universal Basic Income initiative, delivering a basic income to 20,000+ people in Kenya in a twelve-year study.

Their annual demonstrated impact includes:

- Sending cash transfers to 139,968 people in 12 countries.
- Improving government relations to scale their Africa-based poverty relief programs, refining their ability to respond to international crises.
- Scoping expansion in India and Bangladesh.

Donations above \$2 **tax-deductible**. See our global [tax-deductibility options here](#).

**DONATE NOW**

By Card or Paypal

**OTHER WAYS TO DONATE**

By Bank Transfer, Cheque, Crypto, etc.

**Key Strengths:** Evidence, Scale, Respect for dignity

**Multidimensional Poverty Index Indicators:** Assets, Empowerment

**Other Key Outcomes:** Increased income

**Recent Expense Budget:** US\$260,000,000

**Year Founded:** 2008

Moved

**US\$700M**

from donors directly to beneficiaries

Delivered cash to

**1.5M**

people living in poverty

**9**

new programmes launched in 2023

## Other ways to donate

We recommend that gifts up to \$1,000 be made online by credit card. If you are giving more than \$1,000, please consider one of these alternatives.

**CHEQUE**

**BANK TRANSFER**

STOCKS OR SHARES

PAYROLL / WORKPLACE GIVING

BEQUESTS

The problem: traditional methods of international giving are complex — and often inefficient

Often, donors give money to a charity, which then passes along the funds to partners at the local level. This makes it difficult for donors to determine how their money will be used and whether it will reach its intended recipients. Additionally, charities often provide interventions that may not be what the recipients actually need to improve their lives. Such an approach can treat recipients as passive beneficiaries rather than knowledgeable and empowered shapers of their own lives.

The solution: unconditional cash transfers

Most poverty relief initiatives require complicated infrastructure, and alleviate the symptoms of poverty rather than striking at the source. By contrast, unconditional cash transfers are straightforward, providing funds to some of the poorest people in the world so that they can buy the essentials they need to set themselves up for future success.

Cash transfers are relatively well-studied compared to other forms of charitable aid. Numerous studies have shown that this approach changes lives for the better. Several of the studies have found that cash transfers improve child health and schooling, while savings and investment rates are typically high. [1].

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At the home of recipient Gabriel Otieno Awoche in Koga village on 22 October 2014. Gabriel built a house and chicken coop with the cash. He also bought woodworking tools for his furniture workshop. Gabriel with his wife Lucy Adhiambo and their daughter Charlotte, 3. They also have another daughter, Mariam, age 11/2.

## How GiveDirectly works

GiveDirectly is the first and largest nonprofit that lets donors send money directly to the world's poorest people in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Malawi. [2] These direct cash transfers allow families to spend on whatever they need most: food and shelter, education costs, investing in their own businesses, purchasing medicine, etc.

GiveDirectly uses a rigorous, data-driven model to oversee the entire transfer process end-to-end — without a middleman or partner charity. They use national data and door-to-door surveys to seek out the poorest households to receive transfers. Recipients are selected using a range of criteria that vary by region, including housing materials, assets, and vulnerable recipient status. They then transfer approximately US\$1,000 (amounts vary roughly by program) to the family using a mobile payment system.

Besides their standard unconditional cash transfer programs, GiveDirectly is also running innovative cash projects including:

- A historic Universal Basic Income initiative, delivering a basic income to 20,000+ people in Kenya in a 12-year study, the largest randomized control trial on UBI to date.
- A large-scale cash transfer program targeting refugees and host families in Uganda and Rwanda.
- An urban youth program to deliver cash transfers to individuals aged 18–35 living in Mathare, Kenya.
- Cash transfers for disaster victims, an increasingly recognized form of effective assistance in these dire circumstances. (The UN Secretary General has noted that, “Where markets and operational contexts permit, cash-based programming should be the preferred and default method of support.”)

**GiveDirectly seeks to change the questions donors ask about giving, and the way we think about effective charity.**





The GiveDirectly team has strong experience in international development, economics, policy analysis, and program evaluation, in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. They are committed to transparently tracking and improving their effectiveness through randomized controlled trials of their work.

## What makes GiveDirectly so effective

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### Cost-efficient

By cutting out middlemen and complex infrastructure, GiveDirectly is able to transfer 88% of donations directly to families in need.

### Rigorous accountability

GiveDirectly collaborates with independent researchers to evaluate their programs through randomized controlled trials.

### Scalability

GiveDirectly's cash-transfer model is designed to scale. If the organization received \$100 million in funds today, they have the capacity to deploy that money within the year.

### Compounding impact

By providing a means to better nutrition, clothing, health, and education, cash transfers give families, and children in particular, a chance to escape the cycle of extreme poverty.

### Proven results

Numerous studies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America have found that cash transfers improve child health and education, and that family income rises and remains high. [3]. GiveDirectly's trial in Kenya found that earnings went up by 34%, assets increased by 52%, and children went without food on 42% fewer days. [4].

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## GiveDirectly's accountability and transparency

One of our two charity evaluators, GiveWell, has praised GiveDirectly for its transparency, including providing all documents requested and making its annual reports publicly available. [5]. [6] GiveDirectly also took the unusual step of making details of the randomized control trial in Kenya available before data was collected, ensuring that it had no opportunities to bury bad news.

They maintain a real-time newsfeed on their website called GDLive, where donors can read unedited profiles of the recipients GiveDirectly serves, learn about their aspirations and what they use their cash transfers to buy, and follow them as their lives move forward. [7].

## Recognition for GiveDirectly

Beyond being one of our recommended charities, GiveDirectly is considered a Top Charity by GiveWell. In 2012, they received a Global Impact Award from Google and is on Fast Company's 2018 list of the World's Most Innovative Companies. [8].

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### SOURCES

All photos and videos courtesy of GiveDirectly

[1] [GiveDirectly website](#)

[2] Harvard Business Review, [Want to Help People? Just Give Them Money](#)

[3] [GiveDirectly website](#)

[4] Innovations for Poverty Action, [The Impact of Unconditional Cash Transfers in Kenya](#)

[5] [GiveWell's review of GiveDirectly](#)

[6] [GiveDirectly website](#)

[7] [GDLive](#)

[8] [Fast Company's profile on GiveDirectly](#)

[9] [GDLive](#)

[10] [GiveDirectly website](#)

[11] The Life You Can Save, [Providing 6,000+ Kenyans With Basic Income](#)

[12] Slate,

[What If We Just Gave Poor People a Basic Income for Life? That's What We're About to Test.](#)

[13] [GiveDirectly website](#)

[14] ODI,

Cash transfers: what does the evidence say? A rigorous review of impacts and the role of design and implementation features