From The Founders

Challenges in Effective Altruism

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The philanthropic landscape is changing, but are we going in the right direction? Just a few years ago most charities would raise funds by exploiting our emotional conscience. Actually some charities still do and the strategy of showing a starving child or a young girl carrying firewood on her head still pays off. But why? Do we really believe that our donations will help that particular child who looks straight at us in our comfy homes? Of course not, but it makes us feel guilty and to make the guilt go away, we act without much further consideration, such as what is going to happen to my donation and what can it achieve? I personally find this way of fundraising unethical and deceitful for three reasons. First it shamelessly abuses our empathy and sense of justice; secondly it exploits the suffering and invades the privacy of an individual; and thirdly it often totally misrepresents the true situation.

Luckily the awareness and understanding of donors is changing and the whole philanthropic sector is getting more professional, transparent and accountable. It began with donors asking about administration ratios and overhead costs to reveal the organisation’s efficiency. This was a good first step because many large international NGOs (INGOs) or UN agencies got caught with ridiculous administration cost ratios. The newspapers were filled with articles of outrageous salaries, first class flights, 5 star hotels and even of gold taps installed in the house of a Singaporean charity’s CEO. Although some cost cutting and improvements to efficiency were made, window dressing and creative accounting is still common.

With a new generation of philanthropists, the charity’s efficiency is being questioned and, even more so, the effectiveness of its interventions. Rightfully these philanthropists demand evidence of the charity’s impact. And it was not long until the first lists of the most effective interventions appeared. Since saving a person’s life is often regarded as the highest possible positive impact, it is not surprising that the provision of deworming and Vitamin A as well as the treatment of malaria...
One of the biggest obstacles for students to fully participate in education is poor health. Child’s Dream works in the most isolated and impoverished communities in the Mekong Sub-Region. It is not surprising that one of the challenges we face is poor health and hygiene, and malnourishment among students. The main reasons for this dire health situation are lack of access to water, sanitation facilities, and knowledge about personal hygiene and healthy food. That is why our Basic Education team ensures that all students in our schools and boarding houses have access to water, toilets and other sanitation facilities like showers for boarding students. Our team in Cambodia launched its school health programme in 2013, now covering 14 primary schools, 3,712 students and 74 teachers. After four years, we have started to see very encouraging behavioural changes like students requesting their parents to build toilets at home.

Our Health Team currently works with three partners in Myanmar, namely Metta Yeik Social Team, Tara, and Border Health Initiative to provide health education to both students and teachers in targeted schools. The procedure begins with student health screening to identify problems, making our health education more responsive. Since many suffer from malnourishment, dental problems and skin infections, we have now educated roughly 6,770 students (and parents) about balanced diets, how to brush their teeth, wash their hands and properly use the toilet, while providing additional nutrition to malnourished children. Good health is important, especially during the first few years of schooling, not only to improve the children’s ability to learn and develop themselves, but also to create lasting change.

My point here is that, yes, it is important to measure impact, but it must be done in a sensible way. As the torch of philanthropy is being passed on to tech-savvy millennials with short attention spans requiring instant feedback, we face the risk that impact measurements are oversimplified, often disregard the human factor and sustainability. Younger philanthropists are definitively going in the right direction by demanding more transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, but they should not neglect the humanity when we put our beneficiaries into our log-frames and analyse our impact on their lives using quantitative and qualitative indicators. They are not our test subjects, but our fellow humans!
The Career Planning Programme was launched in 2016 in Pouk High School, Siem Reap Province, and then successfully expanded to another high school, Pich Chenda, Battambang Province, in 2017. This professional and personal development guidance is open to grades 10–12 to address the longstanding problem of students being under-informed, mainly due to limited access to current information about the labour sector. Operating annually from early September to August, the programme aims to offer employability, life skills training and counseling to help youth make informed choices about higher education or practical work through vocational training, as well as to improve daily interpersonal skills.

Different topics are provided as deemed appropriate; for instance, grade 10 students are engaged in Learning How to Learn, Cultural Awareness, and Time Management. Grade 11 focuses on Teamwork, Leadership, Presentation Skills and Social Media, including a series of guest speakers who share experiences of success, failure and perseverance. Grade 12 emphasises occupational knowledge, which includes Types of Jobs and Responsibilities, Writing CVs and Applications, Job Interviews, as well as career expositions.

816 students participated in Career Planning 2017-18, with three teachers from each host school selected as trainers. The programme has shown good results through cooperation from the teacher trainers with our local team in implementing activities that balance commitment in learning with fun games and outdoors activities to build self-esteem and friendship.
In July 2018, the Teacher Preparation Course (TPC) of Rural Indigenous Sustainable Education (RISE) in Myanmar was selected to be funded by Child’s Dream. TPC operates to create trained local teachers to provide education services in remote areas. Many remote communities in Myanmar are facing teacher shortages due to many teachers having little or no formal training or professional development; they are also discouraged by very limited salaries. This results in reduced access to education for children as well as overcrowded classes where one teacher has to teach multiple levels at once. Another problem is that indigenous community teachers struggle to enter nationally-recognised training colleges due to the Government entrance policies.

As a solution to these challenges, TPC ensures a recognised teacher training qualification by offering a 9-month pre-service teacher training programme with six months on teaching methodology and educational theory, followed by a three month practicum in community schools.

TPC trains the teachers who are recruited by RISE’s partner organisations, with the commitment of returning to their communities and serving as local teachers upon completion of the programme. The trainees share local understanding and culture and provide primary-level students with instruction in their local language, as part of a Mother Tongue Based, Multi-lingual Education (MTB-MLE) approach, which has been shown to promote learning across all school subjects, keep children in school and improve the quality of second and third language acquisition. Supporting the training of community teachers will ensure better education outcomes for indigenous children in remote areas.
Key Achievements 2017

- CHF 7.1 million were spent on our direct project work (CHF 6.4 million in 2016)
- 300,000 individuals reached by our interventions (250,000 in 2016)
- 33 school buildings built
- 131 patients under the age of 12 were supported in the Children’s Medical Fund
- 659 high school and vocational scholarships in the region (423 in 2016)
- 5.7% administration ratio (5.9% in 2016)
- 198 university scholarships in the region (171 in 2016)
- We built 8 boarding houses, 9 playgrounds, and 10 water systems
- We have dramatically increased our Higher Education initiatives, mainly in Myanmar, and the first annual Alumni Association Programme (AAP) conference was held in Laos.
- CHF 7.8 million funds raised in 2017. An increase of 11%! (CHF 7 million in 2016)
Our Impact

**Health**
- 4,845 community members received drug prevention and awareness education.
- 5,953 children learned about health and hygiene.
- 1,538 children have received life-saving operations and medical interventions.
- 1,538 life-saving operations provided so far.
- 2,000 target support by year 2020.

**Basic Education**
- 247 school buildings built.
- 659 high school and vocational scholarships in the region.
- 138,599 students and teachers in Myanmar receive stationery.
- 247 school buildings built so far.
- 350 target support by year 2020.

**Higher Education**
- 2,849 trained to become future leaders.
- 6,394 students received vocational training for employment.
- 427 university scholarships awarded.
- 427 university scholarships awarded so far.
- 500 target support by year 2020.
Do You Want to Raise Funds for Us?

Great, thank you! SimplyGiving is the ideal partner for fundraising events in our name. You can easily open your own event, connect it to Child’s Dream and promptly start to collect donations for us. Please find out more on SimplyGiving’s homepage. https://www.simplygiving.com

Kachin Emergency Relief

Thousands of people have fled the renewed conflict between Myanmar’s army and the ethnic insurgent group Kachin Independent Army (KIA) in Kachin State in northern Myanmar. At least 4,000 people have been displaced as a direct result of the conflict and more than 100,000 people seek refuge in different camps across Kachin State. We responded to this crisis in early May by supporting the relief efforts in the amount of MMK11,450,000 (approx. USD8,500) through our local partner by supplying soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, slippers, raincoats, clothes, and hot cocoa drinks to approx. 1,400 children. We had three target areas: Injang Yang, Nam Chyin, and Namma Ti, where most civilians take refuge at. Special thanks to everyone who helped in making this project successful!

USP Alumni

Every year we follow-up with all our alumni who received scholarships for university studies. As you read this newsletter the group of alumni has grown to the exciting number of 199 (Laos 52, Myanmar 147). If you are interested in seeing how our alumni contribute to positive changes in their communities and countries, please read our survey results 2018 here>> Alumni Report 2018 - Myanmar and Alumni Report 2018 - Laos. A big thank you to our donors who so generously funded university students. We are still looking for donors for our current students. If you are interested in supporting a student, please get in touch with us.

Child’s Dream Top Rated NGO for 2018 by GreatNonprofits

We received exciting news in early June that GreatNonprofits nominated Child’s Dream, once again, as a top-rated nonprofit. Five-star reviews from donors, peer organisations, former volunteers and friends about their transformative experiences working with us and our dedication to beneficiaries made it possible for us to receive this honour for four consecutive years. (See more reviews and share your story with us here). These heart-warming stories have been a great motivation for us to keep pushing the boundaries of our outreach and empowering support to marginalised communities; we hope that we continue to inspire the haves in reaching out to the have-nots.

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