

Evidence Action

Evidence Action operates three main initiatives: Dispensers for Safe Water installs and maintains chlorine dispensers in rural Africa; The Deworm the World Initiative partners with governments in India, Nigeria, and Pakistan for school-based deworming programs; Evidence Action’s Accelerator drives new program development, refining high-potential and cost-effective interventions.

Their annual demonstrated impact includes:

- Improving safe drinking water, which saved an estimated more than 15,000 lives of children under 5 and averting over 3 million diarrhea cases in young children.
- Reaching over 515 million people globally with interventions since their founding.

UNITED STATES (USD) 

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Key Strengths: Evidence, Scale

Multidimensional Poverty Index Indicators: Mortality, Drinking water, Sanitation

Other Key Outcomes: Child development

Recent Expense Budget: US\$32,000,000

Year Founded: 2013

Operating in

6

countries

4M

people given access to clean water

275M

children annually treated

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The problem: scaling impactful interventions

In order to tackle extreme poverty at the level it exists, how do we bridge the gap between identifying evidence-based, cost-effective interventions that work and successfully scaling them up to improve the lives of millions?

The solution: expertise

Evidence Action's mission is to be a world leader in scaling evidence-based and cost-effective programs to reduce the burden of poverty. Evidence Action works to identify and scale interventions in Africa and Asia, filling the gap between promising research and achieving measurable impact.

Evidence Action was incubated by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), a highly respected poverty research network. (IPA is another of The Life You Can Save's recommended organizations).



How Evidence Action works

Evidence Action operates three initiatives: Dispensers for Safe Water, Deworm the World Initiative, and Evidence Action's Accelerator.

Dispensers for Safe Water

Every year, over 829,000 people die from diarrhea caused by unsafe drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene — and 525,000 of those deaths being children under five. [1] Dispensers for Safe Water ensures safe drinking water in rural communities in Kenya, Uganda, and Malawi through a three-part approach:

1. Installing chlorine dispensers directly at local water sources — a proven, low-cost water treatment solution
2. Working with local community promoters who market, maintain, and refill the dispensers
3. Overseeing a locally staffed delivery and repair supply chain

Dispensers for Safe Water's focus on behavioral change yields chlorine adoption rates that are five times higher than other water treatment solutions, and are sustained over time. [2]



Deworm the World Initiative

There are more than 868 million children at risk for parasitic worms worldwide. [3] These worms interfere with nutrient absorption and cause malnourishment, anemia, and impaired mental and physical development; they also prevent children from attending school, which impacts their future success in life.

The Deworm the World Initiative works with governments to implement large-scale school-based deworming programs, currently supporting treatment of an estimated 280 million children annually. Deworm the World's work has helped contribute to significant declines in worm prevalence in Kenya, and emerging evidence from India indicates that success in reducing prevalence is being achieved there as well.

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Evidence Action's Accelerator

Evidence Action's Accelerator drives new program development. They test and refine delivery models of high-potential, cost-effective interventions with the goal of rapid scale and impact similar to their existing flagships. In 2019, Accelerator replaced Evidence Action Beta, maintaining an emphasis on robust evidence, cost-effectiveness, and impact at scale while prioritizing ready-to-implement interventions that leverage Evidence Action's capabilities in scaled delivery. The Accelerator focuses on "ready to scale" programs within health and nutrition, with the goal of building the next generation of Evidence Action programs. [4]

A background image of a rural landscape with trees and a person carrying a water container. The image is used as a backdrop for a call-to-action banner.

Calculate the impact you can have
What can you help Evidence Action achieve? Enter a donation amount below to find out.

USD

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What makes Evidence Action so effective

Broad reach and potential for scale

Dispensers for Safe Water currently provides 4 million people access to clean water, while the Deworm the World Initiative has scaled from treating 160 million children in 2015 to over 280 million children in 2018. [\[5\]](#).[\[6\]](#)

Cost-effectiveness

Dispensers for Safe Water's current cost is US\$1.28 per person per year, while deworming programs supported by Deworm the World cost on average less than US\$0.50 per treatment – and in some geographies, such as India, the average cost is less than US\$0.10 per treatment. [\[7\]](#)

Proven adoption rates

In areas where Dispensers for Safe Water works, use rates for chlorine have been extremely robust, ranging from over 50% to an astounding 100% in areas in Malawi. This is unheard of in the world of water and sanitation for point-of-collection products.

Compounding impact

A randomized controlled trial of deworming in Kenya found school-based deworming reduced school absenteeism by 25%, increased hours worked as adults by 17%, and increased future wage earnings by 23%. This evidence is only from one study from a context where worm intensity was unusually high, but it offers the possibility that deworming could have such longer term impacts. [\[8\]](#).[\[9\]](#).[\[10\]](#).[\[11\]](#)

Evidence Action's accountability and sustainability

Evidence Action is a model of non-profit transparency. The organization makes its documents publicly available and publishes its reports and data. Notably, when programs prove to not be effective, Evidence Action recognizes and shares outcomes, and alters its programs accordingly. One such example was No Lean Season, which received acclaim and support after initial promising results. In its dedication to ongoing proof and accountability, Evidence Action continued to pressure-test the program for scalable robustness, and when the evidence proved to be disappointing, the organization publicized the new findings and halted funding. Subsequently, operational challenges combined with the disappointing evidence led to

the closure of No Lean Season. As Vox observed, “We’d benefit enormously from a nonprofit sector in which every charity was as careful and honest as Evidence Action.”

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— VOX

Recognition for Evidence Action

Evidence Action’s Deworm the World and Dispensers for Safe Water Initiatives are the direct result of the work of Michael Kremer and Esther Duflo, two of the winners of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. [\[12\]](#) Evidence Action’s Deworm the World has received funding from rigorous evaluator GiveWell, and The Jameel Poverty Action Lab lists school-based deworming as a “best buy” in terms of education and health. [\[13\]](#).[\[14\]](#)

In July 2018, GiveWell awarded a Good Ventures-funded incubation grant of \$5.1 million to Evidence Action Beta “to create a program dedicated to developing potential GiveWell top charities by prototyping, testing, and scaling programs which have the potential to be highly impactful and cost-effective.” Evidence Action’s Accelerator will take forward this work, and is currently using GiveWell funding to support the Government of India’s iron and folic acid supplementation program.

SOURCES

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