



**THE LIFE YOU CAN SAVE**



**2017**

ANNUAL  
REPORT



# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Subscribers and Followers of The Life You Can Save,

It is a rare privilege to be able to contribute to efforts to reduce the devastating impact of living in extreme poverty. I have met so many amazing people while serving as Executive Director these past five years and have been inspired by their dedication to helping

others. Even more impressive have been the stories I have been exposed to of people coping with and overcoming extreme poverty. And as the below video shows, we are having real impact—impact that we want to dramatically expand in 2018 and beyond.



*This short video features the Executive Directors of two of our Recommended Nonprofits, GiveDirectly and Village Enterprise, talking about the impact The Life You Can Save has in supporting their work.*

<https://tinyurl.com/ycokvn9w>

In 2017, our most critical metrics—net impact (money moved minus money spent) and money moved (relative to money spent)—grew ~40% over 2016. We achieved a net impact of approximately \$3.4 million and a ratio of money moved to money spent of about 13:1. Our Team is also pleased that our worldwide audience is now ten times what it was in 2013 when we formally started our nonprofit. This all represents real progress as we seek to grow and expand The Life You Can Save. However, to bring TLYCS to scale, we will need to attract more funders that see the enormous opportunity our leverage model (highlighted in the video above) offers in the battle against extreme poverty.

Since TLYCS's inception, most of our presence has been online. This has largely been by necessity in order to best leverage our very lean team. We have had to utilize approaches that scale easily and remotely, which generally have been technological platforms like our website, email newsletter, and social media. In **2018**, we will significantly increase our efforts on both partnership development and expanding in new markets where there is enormous opportunity that we have not previously had the resources to exploit. Further, we will intensify our efforts to recruit high net worth and ultra high net worth donors for support of our recommended nonprofits and TLYCS itself.

On behalf of our Team and our Board of Directors, I want to thank all of the donors who are helping our recommended nonprofits and TLYCS

“We are having real impact—  
impact that we want to  
dramatically expand in  
2018 and beyond.”

to effectively address global extreme poverty. Of course, I also want to thank our Team for their skill and dedication—they are a pleasure to work with. Thanks also to Peter Singer for his consistent availability and his tireless work on behalf of the global poor, and to Frances Kissling, our third Board member, who has provided guidance when I have really needed it!

Thank you in advance for reading our annual report, particularly our plan for 2018; and please do contact me at [charlie.bresler@thelifeyoucansave.org](mailto:charlie.bresler@thelifeyoucansave.org) to discuss how you would like to support our work.

Do Good Feel Good,

Charles Bresler, Ph.D.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Report describes The Life You Can Save’s work and its impact over the course of 2017. Highlights of our results were:



We moved over \$3.6 million to our Recommended Nonprofits (RNPs) in 2017, while spending less than \$300,000 on our operating expenses. This means that for every \$1 we spent, we raised about \$13 for our RNPs.



Our most important metrics continued to grow, though at slower rates than in previous years. Total Money Moved was up 33% relative to 2016, while Net Impact (Money Moved net of expenses) increased by 38%.



We are still much smaller than we want to be, and money for staff, marketing, and programs is the primary constraint.



Going forward, we’ll devote a much larger share of resources (particularly senior management time) toward partnership development and high-net-worth fundraising, which we expect to become major sources of growth. We made some progress in these areas in 2017, but we are significantly under capacity.

# 2017 THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

In 2017, The Life You Can Save saw strong growth in all our key metrics. Here are the numbers we look at, and why.

METRIC	2017	2016	% CHANGE	DIFFERENCE
MONEY MOVED	\$3,647,878	\$2,735,652	↑ 33%	\$912,226
EXPENSES	\$283,488	\$300,000	↓ -6%	\$16,512
NET IMPACT	\$3,364,390	\$2,435,652	↑ 38%	\$928,738
LEVERAGE RATIO	12.9	9.1	↑ 41%	3.7
UNPAID WEB TRAFFIC	379,209	395,136	↓ -4%	-15,927



# 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

## PRIMARY METRICS PERFORMANCE

We moved ~\$3.4 million more to our RNPs than we spent on our operating expenses. We consider this number—our “Net Impact”—to be our primary metric (as discussed in depth in our [2016 Annual Report](#)). Our Net Impact increased by over \$900k relative to 2016, or ~38% growth. This increase was driven in roughly equal parts by money donated directly on our website and donations from partners and high net worth individuals. The latter “offline” donations grew at a faster pace. [See appendix for more details.](#)

## IMPROVED FINANCIAL POSITION, ALLOWING US TO ADD STAFF

Most of TLYCS’s fundraising efforts go to support the amazing work of our RNPs. But in order to be able to focus our efforts this way, TLYCS itself requires core donors who understand how we can leverage their support of our operating expenses by generating multiple dollars to our nonprofits for each dollar we ourselves spend (e.g., in 2017, for every \$1 we spent on operating expenses, we moved \$13 to the charities on our list). In 2017, we made progress in broadening our donor base with people we expect to become long-term supporters. This improved financial position allowed us to begin staff expansion. In June, we added a Marketing Director, which is allowing us to reorganize and better leverage our talents. We have also added a halftime

Director of Growth Initiatives and part-time Director of Development, Australia, who will also assist in world-wide partnership development.

## DEVELOPING AND NURTURING PARTNERSHIPS

In 2017, we nurtured existing partnerships and worked to develop a pipeline of new ones. This work has been so promising that we will be devoting significantly more resources in this area going forward, as our [2018 Plan](#) details below.

## BUILDING AND CAPITALIZING ON INFRASTRUCTURE

In last year’s [Annual Report](#), we emphasized the effort we put into building infrastructure, e.g. processes for new charity selection and donation checkout. In 2017, we reaped the rewards of those investments:

- Our [Panel of Experts](#) added two new nonprofits: [Helen Keller International’s Vitamin A Supplementation](#) work (based on GiveWell’s recommendation) and [D-Rev](#) (based on Impact Matters’ audit).
- Using data generated by the donation platform we implemented in 2016, we were able to conduct more segmented and personalized communication with our 13,000+ mailing list members.

We continued to invest in infrastructure

and improved processes in 2017. In particular, we:

- Migrated to Salesforce for our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in order to better organize and streamline our customer database to support our fundraising plans for 2018 and beyond.
- Systemized much of the workflow around [Giving Games](#), our philanthropy education program. These improvements reduced operational workload, enhanced post-game follow-up, and significantly improved our ability to track outcomes. For more, stay tuned for the Giving Game Project’s upcoming annual report.
- In the UK, brought on a (volunteer) UK Development Director and [established](#)



In 2017, for every \$1 we spent on operating expenses, we moved \$13 to the charities on our list.



a partnership with [Prism the Gift Fund](#) allowing donations from UK donors to qualify for Gift Aid, providing a tax advantage for gifts to our RNPs and to TLYCS itself.





# 2018 PLAN

The emphasis of our work in 2018 will be on scaling our outreach to people who are not already giving effectively, and ideally, people who have never even considered what “effective giving” means. Our interest is not in “preaching to the choir”; we have a powerful and compelling argument to make and we want new people to hear it and to support our **Recommended Nonprofits** (RNPs). This overarching goal frames the specific initiatives that we plan to pursue in 2018.

## EXPAND PUBLIC AWARENESS OF EFFECTIVE GIVING

Capturing the attention of new audiences is foundational to all that we hope to achieve in influencing the culture of giving in order to improve life for the millions living in extreme poverty. To this end, channels we hope to pursue in 2018 include the following:

**PILOTING TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS:** These can be scaled when there is a clear return on investment and source of funding. *One relatively inexpensive strategy we will*

*actively engage in is “growth hacking,” a process of rapid experimentation across marketing channels and product development to identify the most efficient ways to grow a business.*

**THE LIFE YOU CAN SAVE – THE BOOK:** We expect to purchase the rights in North America to Peter Singer’s seminal book, *The Life You Can Save*, in Q3. Peter Singer has generously offered to donate his world-wide audio book rights to TLYCS, which we hope we will be able to use very productively. *We intend to explore many ways to share the electronic version of the book widely, which we think can also have a significant impact on our key metrics in the back half of 2018.*

**GLOBAL FOOTPRINT:**

- EXPLORE ESTABLISHING ADDITIONAL GLOBAL ENTITIES:** Creating additional local branches of TLYCS has the potential to greatly scale awareness and dollars, including in developing countries where extreme poverty, as well as highly cost-effective, impactful nonprofit organizations, are in donors’ own communities or



HELLEN KELLER INTERNATIONAL



OXFAM

We have a powerful and compelling argument to make and we want new people to hear it and to support our Recommended Nonprofits.





countries. We are currently actively dialoguing with potential partners in India and Chile as we pursue this strand of potential growth.

- **TLYCS UK:** In our third largest market, we have established TLYCS UK in partnership with Prism the Gift Fund, allowing contributions from UK donors to qualify for Gift Aid, providing a tax advantage for gifts to several of our RNPs and to TLYCS itself. *Our (volunteer) UK Development Director will continue to expand our UK presence.*
- **TLYCS AUSTRALIA:** Despite its relatively small population (23 million), Australia is our second best donor market, likely because it is Peter Singer's country of origin. *Our recently-hired (part-time) Australia Development Director will expand awareness of TLYCS and effective giving, especially with high net worth individuals; he will also head our newly formed Australian nonprofit, TLYCS Australia, which will make donations tax-deductible there.*

**PHILANTHROPY EDUCATION:** We aim to educate on a scale that will change the way the world gives. *To do that, we plan to facilitate embedding transformative philanthropy curriculum in schools, businesses, religious and secular groups, and more.*

- *We will continue to promote our signature Giving Games to encourage charity-minded individuals (particularly in university settings) to consider the effectiveness of their life-long giving.*
- *We have begun dialoguing with Effective Giving NL about partnering to extend their "Master Classes" to the*



We will pursue having select companies feature some of our RNPs.



*United States, Australia, and the UK.*

- *We plan to continue to evolve our own online and offline curricula, incorporating:*
  - » Effective giving concepts in a range of subject areas
  - » Effective giving concepts targeted at many age groups
  - » Modules allowing for adaptation and flexibility
  - » A school-based chapter model to help spread and develop ideas
  - » Customization for particular audiences like (ultra) high net worth families
  - » Providing research/feedback about best practices in philanthropy education

**MEDIA COVERAGE:** Over the past two years, we have received numerous high-profile media mentions, including in the Washington Post, NBC News and Scientific American. *We will expand and deepen our network of journalists and other influencers promoting high impact nonprofit work and spreading high level themes about effective giving and extreme poverty.*



Capturing the attention of new audiences is foundational to all that we hope to achieve in influencing the culture of giving.

**UNIVERSITY CHAPTERS:** We believe that university undergraduate and graduate chapters introducing young adults to effective giving has great potential in shifting the overall culture of philanthropy in developed countries.

- **One for The World** is already a partner of TLYCS, with programs on 12 campuses including Harvard and Wharton Graduate Schools of Business. It is currently run exclusively by volunteers. *We will engage with interest groups—both our RNPs and otherwise—that maintain an active university presence in order to leverage their access to giving-oriented young people.*

We see our online and offline activities as complementing each other. Our online presence will serve as one of many ways of sourcing and nurturing high value leads. And we expect some of our offline partnerships to be major sources of web traffic as our partners steer their audiences to our site.

## DRIVE DONATIONS BY MAKING EFFECTIVE GIVING EASIER

We see many exciting possibilities for generating greatly increased funds for

our RNPs, including the following:

**HIGH VOLUME RETAILERS:** Many of these retailers already have point of sale giving programs and all have international supply chains, but none that we are aware of feature the most effective (global) nonprofits at their point of sale. *We will pursue having select companies feature some of our RNPs, beginning with Amazon Smile, Starbucks, and Costco, based on existing relationships.*

**CORPORATE GIVING PROGRAMS:** Our first significant corporate giving program is with the digital marketing firm, **MediaMath**. We will be looking for other businesses where we can introduce our RNPs as a giving choice for employees, including:

- Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) as part of employers' cafeteria benefits plans
- Payroll deductions ("give more tomorrow")
- Philanthropy education (Giving Games in Corporate Settings)
- Year End Giving Guides
- Webinars by Peter and Charlie

**FINANCIAL & LEGACY ADVISORS / TRUST ATTORNEYS:** We believe settings where we can discuss effective giving with financial advisors (and in some cases, directly with their ultra high net worth clients) is a productive area to pursue. We have given talks at Schwab, are developing a relationship with a financial advisor group with \$5 billion under management, and have plans to soon develop connections with Silicon Valley investing groups. In 2017, TLYCS became a featured and financially supported nonprofit of **Traders4ACause**, an organization that seeks to educate

young stock and commodity traders, while suggesting that philanthropy should be a part of their life, and Charlie gave a keynote at their convention. Developing an editorial presence in relevant journals and at appropriate conferences would also be valuable. *We will continue to pursue building relationships with financial advisors through direct engagement and industry presence.*

## COORDINATED FUNDRAISING

**CAMPAIGNS:** *As opportunities present, we will continue engaging in new coordinated fundraising campaigns to raise money for specific effective projects, as we have done in the past, e.g. promoting the Village Enterprise Development Impact Bond, holding Paul Simon benefit concerts for Fistula Foundation and for TLYCS, etc.*

## RAISE FUNDS MORE EFFECTIVELY FOR RNPS

In order to attract more TLYCS followers and generate more donations for our RNPs, we plan to expand recently-established partnerships and build new ones:

**TODAY:** We have developed a significant relationship with a technology marketing group, **Today**, in Melbourne, Australia. This group is dedicating considerable pro bono resources to building a new, engaging, and flexible donation platform that we believe will increase donor engagement, donations, and donation tracking. We are hopeful that this relationship will continue beyond the current project and will become a major asset. *The platform we are building with Today is an important step towards our vision of establishing a world class online donor management system where we provide behavioral feedback to help donors increase their impact.*



ONE ACRE FUND





FISTULA FOUNDATION

**PRISM THE GIFT FUND:** In our third largest market, our (volunteer) UK Development Director facilitated establishment of a partnership with Prism the Gift Fund. This allows donations from UK donors to qualify for Gift Aid, providing a tax advantage for gifts to our RNPs and to TLYCS itself. *We will leverage this relationship to grow donations from the UK in 2018 and beyond; it is already proving fruitful, including facilitating a \$100,000 donation to an RNP.*

**GROWFUND:** We are dialoguing with Growfund, a company that creates no-minimum donor-advised funds (DAFs). We will be working to find philanthropists who see the amazing

opportunity to seed DAFs for university students where we can influence a lifetime of giving by establishing effective giving habits early on. We also hope to collaborate to increase the number of corporations providing DAFs as part of their benefits programs.

## REORGANIZATION AND NEW HIRES

In order to achieve our goals for 2018, we will be expanding and reorganizing our staff. From 2013-2017, TLYCS operated largely as a single Team. Going forward, we will implement a reorganization entailing increased specialization that began informally in Q4 of last year. In 2017, we added

a talented Marketing Director, who is handling digital efforts along with our Chief Technology Officer. This in turn is allowing our Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer to devote more time to offline opportunities.

### PLAN FOR NEW HIRES:

- We have hired an experienced fundraiser (part-time) to focus on high net worth and ultra high net worth individuals in Australia, our second-largest market.
- We have hired a Director of Growth Initiatives who will support many of the above new projects.
- We are looking for another senior staff member to assist with partnership development and fundraising.

We believe these staffing changes will allow us to better pursue the projects discussed above, as opportunities arise. These projects are labor intensive (or in the case of traditional and some digital marketing, capital intensive), so we had been awaiting funding to pursue them—and, in many cases, still are. Clearly, in order to scale, we need significantly more resources—both people and money!

## CONCLUSION

As indicated by two leaders of highly effective nonprofits in the video in the beginning of this report, TLYCS has proven that we can efficiently increase our net impact and leverage. However, we have not yet achieved the type of hockey stick growth we believe is possible. The infrastructure and relationships we have built over the last five years and the additional



In order to implement the plan, we need additional funders who understand the leverage we can provide and see the enormous opportunity in front of us.



staff we can now afford will help move us toward our goal of scaling. In order to implement the above plan, we need additional funders who understand the leverage we can provide and see the enormous opportunity in front of us.

In 2013, my wife and I believed we could create a multiple on our initial investment (\$500,000) to develop TLYCS. This has proven to be true, as the cumulative impact (along with that of other early donors) has achieved a significant multiple. At the time, it was a risk to make the contribution that we did, because TLYCS was still relatively an unknown, and we could have given our gift to an established highly effective nonprofit where its impact would have been guaranteed. Now, donors do not face that risk—we have substantial evidence that donations will create considerable leverage. We hope you'll take advantage of that opportunity.



# APPENDIX: MONEY MOVED METHODOLOGY AND DETAILS

## Introduction

## Growth Rates and Trajectory

## Different Types of Money Moved

- Direct Donations.
- Referral Donations.
- Large Gifts from High Net Worth Donors
- Partnerships

## Counterfactuals

- Counterfactual 1: What factors besides TLYCS could be responsible for TLYCS’s impact?
- Counterfactual 2: If The Life You Can Save didn’t exist, would the money we’re moving still end up in the hands of highly effective nonprofits?
  - » GiveWell
  - » EA Funds’ Global Health and Development Fund
  - » Giving What We Can

## Money Moved by Charity

## Online Donation Analytics

- Online donations by user acquisition channel
- Online donations by age cohort
- Online donations by country
- New vs. Returning
- Online donations by gender

## INTRODUCTION

This appendix aims to provide readers with a deeper understanding of our “Money Moved,” a critical figure which underlies our most important metrics. It explains the methodology we use to calculate this figure, which requires some judgment calls, so we want to clearly communicate what we include in our “Money Moved”, what we don’t, and why.

The appendix also includes a discussion

of several more granular perspectives on our money moved, breaking the aggregate number down by charity and type of donor.

A note on methodology: we’ve adopted GiveWell’s convention of counting money moved on a February-January basis. This gives a more accurate representation of annual impact since January giving typically includes carry-over from the December “giving season”.<sup>1</sup>

## GROWTH RATES AND TRAJECTORY

The ~\$3.6 million we moved in 2017 was up 33% vs. the previous year. While we believe that rate represents solid growth given our lean team, a closer examination reveals a potentially worrisome trend that warrants discussion.

As the table below illustrates, our growth slowed toward the end of the year.

### Money Moved, Ex-One for the World<sup>2</sup>

METRIC	2017	2016	% CHANGE
<b>FULL METRIC YEAR (FEB-JAN)</b>	3,487,585	2,735,651	<b>27%</b>
<b>Q1-Q3 (FEB-OCT)</b>	1,878,655	1,184,927	<b>59%</b>
<b>Q4 (NOV- JAN)</b>	1,608,929	1,550,724	<b>4%</b>
<b>DECEMBER</b>	879,839	849,329	<b>4%</b>

[1] In calendar year 2017, we moved ~\$3.75m up 44% from ~\$2.6m moved in calendar year 2016. The calendar year 2016 number reflects a downward revision of ~\$100,000 from the figure listed in our previous annual report. This was due to receiving donation reports from charities that were below our placeholder estimates. As discussed later in this report, our impact figures are now significantly less reliant on estimates, which account for only 7% of our 2017 impact.

[2] One for the World is excluded because while they’re part of TLYCS they operate largely independently and they weren’t in our 2016 numbers so this perspective provides a cleaner comparison of the trajectory of our core operations.



Of particular note is that we moved roughly the same amount of money in December 2017 as we did in December 2016. Since December accounts for an outsized share of our impact (~25% in 2017), our lack of growth in “giving season” clearly slowed our growth rate for the full year. We knew that December 2016 would be a “tough comparable” to beat, since we had a particularly high profile media mention and we know we can’t expect that every year. While we received some nice media mentions in December 2017, including in the Washington Post, NBC News, and on Felix Salmon’s and Marc Gunther’s blogs, we still saw less referral traffic than in the previous year. That said, we feel we are, unambiguously, in the best place we’ve been with media relationships and we will be working to deepen and broaden those connections going forward.

However, our slowing growth is more than just a “December” story: our growth rate for the October-November period was just 21% vs. 2016, vs. a 77% growth rate in the January-September period. We first noticed donations starting to slow in the fall, and this followed a drop off in web traffic that began during the summer.

In investigating these slowdowns (which we noticed in close to real time thanks to the dashboards and tracking systems in which we previously invested), we’ve made some observations suggesting that the explanation is complex.

- The slowdown in traffic was broad-based, and relatively consistent across many different segments of our audience. This suggests there was no single cause, and no single (or simple) solution. Improving the trajectory of our traffic is going to require more than, for example, lowering the bounce rate on our homepage.

- While donations slowed, this wasn’t entirely driven by a simple “web traffic slowed with a corresponding slowdown in donations” narrative. As noted above, the slowdown in web traffic started a few months prior to the slowdown in donations. Also, while we had less web traffic in December 2017 than the previous year, donations through our website were actually 16% higher.
- The precision of our money moved tracking improved in 2017 vs. 2016. Estimated donations (discussed below) accounted for just 7% of our 2017 money moved, down from 15% in 2016. This is largely because we only started processing donations on our site in late May 2016, so prior to that time we relied much more on estimated figures. This shifting composition of our money moved calculation from year to year complicates our attribution work.

On net, we’re not entirely sure how to interpret these observations. One theory is that the second half of 2017 was a difficult environment in which to fundraise for extreme poverty. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma inflicted enormous amounts of damage and attracted significant donor attention. And probably more importantly, we regularly hear feedback from donors in wealthy countries, even people deeply committed to fighting extreme poverty, that they are currently directing a greater share of their giving to domestic political issues than previously.

We plan to compare our 2017 results and growth experience to those of some peer organizations ([see Counterfactuals section for more info](#)) as that information is released. We hope this benchmarking exercise will shed light on whether our experience was idiosyncratic to TLYCS or something more widespread across the global nonprofit sector.





## DIFFERENT TYPES OF MONEY MOVED: DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

To help us better understand our impact, we break our money moved down into four main sources:

### 1. DIRECT DONATIONS: \$1,056,714

Donations made directly through our website are of course the easiest for us to track, and we can do so perfectly. We began processing donations through our site in May 2016, so 2017 was the first full year for which we have been able to track this metric.

### 2. REFERRAL DONATIONS: \$1,415,143 (\$1,164,751 REPORTED BY CHARITIES + \$250,392 ESTIMATED)

Some (perhaps many) of the donors we influence donate directly to our RNPs (online or offline), rather than through TLYCS's website. We can track some of this giving, but much has to go right for that to happen, so the quality of this measurement varies significantly across charities.

For the RNPs with which we have systems set up, we can typically track a) when someone donates to a charity immediately after coming to their website via a link on ours and/or b) when someone explicitly indicates that their donation was influenced by TLYCS (e.g. in response to a "where did you hear about us?" question). Many of our RNPs do not have the ability to capture either of these types of indicators.

And even for those that do, the systems unfortunately have significant weaknesses:

- Most importantly, we're very limited in our ability to track giving from "migrated" donors who were originally influenced by us and subsequently give directly through the nonprofits' sites without indicating our influence. This dynamic is discussed in more detail below. We're only able to track this sort of giving for two nonprofits ([AMF](#) and [GiveDirectly](#), the latter only since Q416), and tellingly, these organizations report significantly higher money moved than our other RNPs (though we suspect other factors also contribute to this discrepancy).
- Many donors don't report what influenced their donation, and we're missing the portion of those donors whom we influenced. This issue is particularly acute for offline donations, where donors aren't automatically asked about the driver of their gift. Compounding this problem, large donors are more likely to give via offline methods (check, bank transfer, or foundation/donor advised fund grant), so our tracking systematically misses the largest gifts.
- Our referral tracking misses people who first learn of an RNP via TLYCS, but who then donate on the RNP's website during a separate web session, including getting there via a search engine, rather than from our website.

For RNPs with which we do not have tracking established, we estimate referral donations. These estimates are

based on the number of times someone clicks a "donate" button for that charity and the average "referral donation per donate click" of the RNPs that we can track (excluding those that track ongoing referral giving, to avoid skewing the numbers).

### 3. LARGE GIFTS FROM HIGH NET WORTH (HNW) DONORS: \$648,200

Cultivating these gifts will be an increased area of focus going forward, so we find it helpful to split these gifts out as their own category.

When we're in direct contact with a donor, we can track these gifts well. When we're not in direct contact, our tracking is a mixed bag at best. Large gifts are generally made to RNPs offline through vehicles like checks, bank

transfers, donor advised funds, and foundations. We only know that we have influenced one of these gifts if the donor indicates this, either telling us directly, or by telling the charity, who then includes the gift in their tracking for us. While charities are more likely to inquire about where their largest gifts come from, we're confident we're missing some untracked gifts of this nature (e.g. anonymous grants via donor advised funds).

Occasionally, we need to make a judgment call about how to account for a large gift in our metrics; this happens infrequently enough that we simply handle them on a case by case basis. Historically the most important judgment call has been that we've taken credit for only 5% of \$13 million given to our recommended nonprofits (\$5 million in 2015, \$6 million in 2016, and





\$2 million in 2017) by a particular family we consulted with, because we believe this family very likely would have given to effective nonprofits even without our involvement.

This year, the most notable judgment call was around a \$425,000 gift to Fistula Foundation which we are fully counting in our metrics. While the donor cited Peter Singer rather than TLYCS as inspiring their gift, TLYCS has done a significant amount of work to highlight and leverage Peter's support for Fistula Foundation (arranging a benefit concert by Paul Simon being a notable example). In contrast, before TLYCS became a nonprofit, our website contained a single paragraph about Fistula Foundation. Distinguishing our impact from Peter's is a tricky issue, which we discuss in detail in the section about counterfactuals.

The HNW category is much "lumpier" than, for example, the steady giving that takes place on our website. Our largest gifts will definitionally be relatively infrequent and (if experience

is any guide) will require extended sales cycles. Therefore, we internally pay less attention to relatively volatile metrics (e.g. "Trailing 3 month donations vs Same 3 months previous year") and focus more on qualitative assessments about the number and quality of our HNW leads at various stages of the sales funnel, and the trajectory of our progress.

#### 4. PARTNERSHIPS: \$527,821

Partnerships are another metric we'll be paying close attention to as we increase resources in this area in 2018 and beyond. To date, it's been relatively easy to track much of the partnership-related money moved, as these dollars have generally taken the form of financial donations or the donation of services that led to quantifiable financial donations. Going forward, we expect some of our partnerships to have impact that is harder to track or quantify.

#### LIVING GOODS



## COUNTERFACTUALS

Aggregating the money we move through indirect channels is only half the battle. We also need to understand the extent to which our work caused these donations to be made. To do that, we examine two key questions: Could other factors besides TLYCS itself be creating the impact we're claiming as our own? And is it possible that other actors would replace our impact if TLYCS didn't exist? We'll look at each of these questions in turn.

### COUNTERFACTUAL 1: COULD PETER SINGER HIMSELF ACCOUNT FOR A PORTION OR MOST OF TLYCS'S IMPACT?

It can be difficult to distinguish between TLYCS's impact and the impact of our founder, Peter Singer. Peter has been spreading the ideas that underlie TLYCS since his seminal 1972 essay Famine, Affluence, and Morality. He was doing that before TLYCS became a nonprofit, and he'd be doing it even if TLYCS had never been created. So it's worth assessing to what extent TLYCS might simply be measuring Peter's impact rather than creating its own.

There's no question that TLYCS's numbers include some money that is moved as a result of Peter Singer's work. We know that many people who donate through our site find us via Peter, and when RNPs track donations, they'll typically treat "The Life You Can Save" and "Peter Singer" as the same source. Complicating matters further, our nonprofit is named after Peter's book of the same name, creating ambiguity if someone says they were influenced by "The Life You Can Save." On the other hand, there's also no question that TLYCS amplifies Peter's work. We help arrange

media appearances and distribute his content through our website and other channels. Sales of his book *The Life You Can Save*, have, naturally enough, declined since 2009, when it was published, whereas *The Life You Can Save* is informing new visitors about his ideas, and keeping the list of recommended nonprofits up to date. So some of Peter's impact should properly be attributed to TLYCS.

Fortunately, we have some information available to help us tease apart these effects. *The Life You Can Save's* website was launched soon after the book's publication in 2009, and was supported and maintained by a small team of volunteers. It wasn't until 2013 that *The Life You Can Save* acquired a small full time staff and became a registered nonprofit. The interim period provides a valuable baseline.

The data tell a clear story. Before the full-time staff was hired, web traffic was consistently ~60,000 visitors per year. When TLYCS became a nonprofit, traffic began rising steadily; it is now roughly 10x the previous level. Most of the drivers of that growth can clearly be attributed to our team's work, such as content creation, search engine optimization, and development of media contacts. We don't have baseline data for money moved (i.e. for 2009-2012), but we do know that we've seen consistently strong growth in this metric. Again, much of that growth can be attributed back to our staff's work, not Peter's. It seems obvious that our work has been the primary catalyst behind our growth.

Is it possible that a portion of our numbers is merely a product of ongoing giving from donors who Peter influenced prior to 2013? We likely include some of this money, but it's



unlikely to be a material amount for a variety of reasons:

- Prior to 2013, Peter tended to refer donors to GiveWell, especially when TLYCS had very limited content. So we'd expect these "legacy donors" to mostly show up in GiveWell's money moved. This dynamic is discussed in more detail below.
- Our limited ability to track giving from "migrated donors" (donors who originate with us and then make subsequent gifts directly to the charity) means we're systematically missing the most questionable gifts.
- In 2017, ~50% of donations through our site came from new visitors.
- Since TLYCS has substantially improved our web content, it has some claim to credit for current gifts from donors Peter influenced before we became active.

## COUNTERFACTUAL 2: IF THE LIFE YOU CAN SAVE DIDN'T EXIST, WOULD THE MONEY WE'RE MOVING STILL END UP IN THE HANDS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE NONPROFITS?

If we weren't around, how might our donors otherwise find highly effective nonprofits to support? Obviously one way would be to track down such nonprofits themselves. Alternatively, they could use another intermediary (meta-charity) that identifies them.

We think the first possibility is unlikely, at least at significant scale. High quality charity evaluation is difficult and time consuming. Some donors would no doubt find effective organizations on their own through perseverance or luck, but they'd likely be a small minority.

It's more probable that our donors would find great nonprofits through other intermediaries if we didn't exist. We see the largest potential for overlap with GiveWell and Giving What We Can. However, for reasons discussed below, we don't think our money moved includes significant amounts of money that would go to one of these organizations (or nonprofits recommended by them) in our absence.

### GIVEWELL

Our relationship with GiveWell is symbiotic. Their charity evaluation research has long been a major piece of our own charity selection process. And The Life You Can Save and Peter Singer both help spread GiveWell's research and brand.

While some of our donors would use GiveWell in our absence, we expect that dynamic is limited by the ways in which we're differentiated from them. GiveWell's primary focus is its research; it offers rigorous and often highly technical analyses. This product seems to resonate particularly strongly with a relatively narrow demographic. GiveWell's donors generally skew young (72% are under 40 years old), live in the US (85%) and work in the finance or tech industries (these account for 57% of their donors and 76% of money donated). These donors are usually active consumers of the thorough content GiveWell produces: 87% report high or moderate engagement with their research, while only 13% rely mostly on GiveWell's recommendations.<sup>3</sup>

The Life You Can Save has a very different approach: we focus on generating consumer engagement with mass audience. As such, the information on our site is designed to be accessible to more casual donors. Our content is presented in a way that's easy to understand, and we supplement text with images, videos, and interactive

tools. Therefore, we expect our audience will be significantly more diverse than GiveWell's; in fact, that's a big part of our growth strategy! And we've observed that GiveWell's research doesn't appear to be driving the decisions of many donors on our site. While those of our RNPs that match GiveWell's recommendations receive significant support from donors on our site, we move comparable dollars to several non-GiveWell recommended organizations.<sup>4</sup> All of this suggests that significant portions of our audience would not use GiveWell in our absence.

As explained above, when people donate to GiveWell-recommended organizations on our site or note to one of our RNPs that we influenced their direct gifts to that charity, we include those gifts in our money moved. However, there's also the question of money given to our shared RNPs via GiveWell's site by donors who indicate to GiveWell that they found them through The Life You Can Save. This is a significant amount of money, and it's not obvious how to properly attribute it.

GiveWell reported over \$8.6 million in giving from donors referred by The Life You Can Save or Peter Singer in 2015<sup>5</sup>. We were their largest source of both money (34% of

GiveWell survey respondents) and donors (20%)<sup>6</sup>. We clearly had some influence on those gifts, which is an argument to include them in our metrics. But GiveWell obviously has a great claim to them as well: after all, the donors in question ultimately gave through their site. And we don't know how much of a role we really played, as GiveWell's research may well have been the deciding factor for these donors. This is a major reason why we exclude these gifts from our money moved metrics.

Lastly, it's worth noting that we think counterfactual concerns around GiveWell are likely smaller than in years past. Historically, GiveWell recommended that donors split their gifts following specific allocation across one or more charities. It was therefore possible for donors to follow GiveWell's recommendations on our site as well, and donors who did that would almost certainly give through GiveWell in our absence. However, in Giving Season 2017, GiveWell recommended that donors give in a lump sum to GiveWell to regrant as they see fit. Therefore, we don't need to worry about misattributing any donors who followed GiveWell's main recommendation in our 2017 Giving Season metrics.

[3] All data is from [GiveWell's 2015 Metrics Report](#), and refers GiveWell's to "major donors" (those giving between \$2,000 and \$1 million). These donors accounted for ~90% of GiveWell's money moved, and are the only donors for which demographic data is available. GiveWell does provide a caveat around the engagement numbers, noting: "We do not expect that the sample of donors for which we have this information is representative of all our donors (we would guess it is strongly skewed to include donors who are most engaged)." This is also a good place to mention that GiveWell deserves a massive tip of the hat for publishing such detailed information. Thanks GiveWell!

[4] We're fairly confident in this assertion, though the comparison is somewhat complicated by differences in our ability to track donations (we generally have better tracking in place for GiveWell-recommended charities). We can make an apples-to-apples comparison looking only at donations made directly through our site. We have perfect tracking data for these gifts for 17 charities. Ranking these charities from most money received to least, GiveWell's Top Charities rank 1, 2, and 9, while their Standout Charities rank 7, 11, 15, 16, and 17. Evidence Action (which runs programs earning both Top Charity and Standout ratings from GiveWell) ranked 5.

[5] We have asked GiveWell for more granular data to help us distinguish between referrals from The Life You Can Save and Peter Singer. At time of writing, GiveWell has agreed to provide some data that will allow for more detailed analysis.

[6] The \$8.6 million figure came from a survey GiveWell conducted, which received responses from donors that accounted for 65% of GiveWell's 2015 money moved. In our broad Money Influenced metric, we include \$13.2 million in donations through GiveWell. This assumes a) GiveWell's survey is representative of their donors (\$8.6 million / 65% = 13.2 million) and b) Money moved through GiveWell was unchanged between 2015 and 2016 (as 2016 data is not yet available, though it should be soon).



## GIVE DIRECTLY



## EA FUNDS' GLOBAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Centre for Effective Altruism's Global Health and Development Fund is clearly marketed toward a "traditional effective altruist" audience, presumably similar to the demographics of GiveWell's donors discussed above. Kerry Vaughan, manager of the EA Funds project, described this strategy on the Marketing Panel at EA Global 2017<sup>7</sup>:

"Emotional appeals don't really seem to work. The best copy for getting someone to donate to EA funds is a 5-10 page article I wrote about all the arguments why you should do it: that works really well. So I think that's just that EA is attracting a particular type of person who violate a bunch of the existing marketing stereotypes and marketing wisdom and you have to adapt what you do on the basis of how that audience is different."

As described above (under "GiveWell"), TLYCS is explicitly seeking a broad target audience, and our user experience is designed accordingly. Given the dramatic differences in our approaches, we don't think the Health and Development EA Fund is a material counterfactual concern.

## GIVING WHAT WE CAN (GWWC)

The Life You Can Save and GWWC have many similarities. Both organizations are communities of donors committed to supporting highly effective nonprofits, and both were founded by philosophers. So one might expect that if The Life You Can Save didn't exist, our members would naturally gravitate to Giving What We Can.

Once again though, our broad outreach approach represents important differentiation. We work to entice casual donors into the effective giving fold. GWWC is building a community of unusually committed givers as evidenced by the substantial giving pledge that is a core part of their identity. They describe this lifetime pledge as "a solemn commitment to giving at least 10% of your income to the organisations that you think can do the most good with it." TLYCS, on the other hand, takes a much lighter approach to recommending taking a pledge, and to the pledge amount. We believe this differentiation severely mitigates concerns about whether our impact would be replaced by GWWC in our absence.

[7] <https://www.eaglobal.org/talks/marketing-ea-panel/> (19:00)



**INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTIONS**



**MONEY MOVED BY CHARITY**

The table on the right displays the distribution of our money moved across RNPs, broken out by type of money moved.

The split is quite top-heavy, with the top three RNPs accounting for more than half of total donations. However, there are two important reasons to believe that our impact won't be nearly that concentrated going forward.

First, some of the concentration is due to the fact that we have particularly good tracking systems set up with Against Malaria Foundation (AMF) and GiveDirectly (GD); of particular note is that we're able to capture "migrated donors" (discussed above) for these two—and only these two—charities. AMF and GD collectively account for

nearly 70% of overall referral (reported + estimated) donations, but it's likely that much (though not all) of this dynamic is simply because we're tracking more donations to these charities, not because we're moving more money to them. By way of comparison, AMF and GD account for just 22% of all online (Network for Good) donations, which provides an apples to apples comparison across RNPs.

The other important note is that, as discussed above, HNW donations are quite lumpy. Fistula Foundation is always a favorite among our audience, but their particularly strong performance this year was driven by just one large offline gift. We expect that over time, we'll help more of our RNPs attract large gifts, and that the overall spread of money will even out.

RECOMMENDED NONPROFIT	DIRECT	REFERRAL (REPORTED)	REFERRAL (ESTIMATED)	PARTNERSHIP	HNW	TOTAL
AMF	134,091	718,407	-	76,580	100,000	1,029,078
FISTULA FOUNDATION	89,675	16,153	12,955	2,334	425,000	546,117
GIVE DIRECTLY	101,964	239,771	2,280	105,071	-	449,086
SEVA	36,007	57,225	1,080	78,923	123,200	296,434
OXFAM	87,084	12,069	1,222	105,077	-	205,452
SCI	64,722	-	32,845	103,077	-	200,789
EVIDENCE ACTION	75,662	-	48,335	40,440	-	164,437
PHC	65,120	-	37,515	3,059	-	105,694
ONE ACRE FUND	73,511	26,947	960	3,044	-	104,463
IPA	36,323	44,894	560	-	-	81,777
PSI	65,018	268	11,000	4,572	-	80,858
VILLAGE ENTERPRISE	44,348	510	21,380	-	-	66,238
DMI	42,941	-	19,875	1,520	-	64,336
GAIN	28,850	-	19,465	385	-	48,700
LIVING GOODS	27,583	8,811	6,695	784	-	43,873
POSSIBLE	29,564	-	12,225	1,690	-	43,478
FRED HOLLOWES	-	39,696	-	-	-	39,696
IGN	27,138	-	7,545	1,120	-	35,803
D-REV	15,945	-	5,805	-	-	21,750
HELEN KELLER INTL	11,167	-	8,650	-	-	19,817
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,054,714</b>	<b>1,164,751</b>	<b>250,392</b>	<b>527,821</b>	<b>648,200</b>	<b>3,647,878</b>



## ONLINE DONATION ANALYTICS

Google Analytics provides us with valuable insights into who is donating on our site (unfortunately we don't have such information for offline donors or those we refer to our RNPs). Please note that these numbers include some imprecision (including only counting the initial gift of a recurring donation) and some missing data (e.g. Google only provides demographic data on a subset of users).

Our general takeaway from this data is that we have a long way to go in our efforts to reach a mass audience; our current user base still exhibits a great deal of demographic concentration.

## ONLINE DONATIONS BY USER ACQUISITION CHANNEL

One of the main cuts of data we look at is "acquisition channel", which tells us how users arrive at our website. About half the money donated through our site is given by donors who find us through "Organic Search" (e.g. by doing a Google search).

Note that "Paid Search" reflects our free Google adwords allocation for nonprofits, not ads we pay for. While we expect this channel to convert at a much lower rate than other channels, we still know there's plenty of room for optimization and have recently started experimenting with outsourcing this work.

DEFAULT CHANNEL GROUPING	USERS	ECOMMERCE CONVERSION RATE	TRANSACTIONS	REVENUE	% OF REVENUE
ORGANIC SEARCH	201,632	0.76%	1,825	\$409,425	47%
DIRECT	54,996	1.18%	781	\$196,358	23%
REFERRAL	29,581	1.08%	400	\$81,628	9%
EMAIL	5,009	2.13%	169	\$56,471	7%
PAID SEARCH	231,511	0.14%	348	\$51,736	6%
SOCIAL	18,000	1.88%	418	\$38,377	4%
(OTHER)	3,589	2.37%	125	\$33,096	4%
DISPLAY	19	0.00%	0	\$0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>544,337</b>	<b>0.64%</b>	<b>4,066</b>	<b>\$867,091</b>	<b>100%</b>

## ONLINE DONATIONS BY AGE COHORT

Our online donors skew young, with 60% of donations coming from people between the ages of 25-44. However,

we do see donations across the spectrum of ages. And we suspect that older members of our audience disproportionately favor offline giving, which isn't captured in this data.

AGE	USER	TRANSACTIONS	ECOMMERCE CONVERSION RATE	REVENUE	% OF REVENUE
18-24	67,856	619	0.74%	\$47,206	9%
25-34	74,830	834	0.92%	\$172,689	34%
35-44	49,455	536	0.92%	\$132,108	26%
45-54	35,982	214	0.51%	\$58,548	11%
55-64	32,810	182	0.49%	\$41,921	8%
65+	31,948	227	0.61%	\$61,285	12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>292,881</b>	<b>2,612</b>	<b>0.75%</b>	<b>\$513,757</b>	<b>100%</b>





### ONLINE DONATIONS BY COUNTRY

The U.S. accounts for most of our online donations by a wide margin. However, this picture is distorted because donations through our website are only tax deductible for US donors, so we regularly direct international donors to give through other tax

advantaged means. (In 2018, we'll be able to look at data from TLYCS UK and TLYCS Australia, our two new sister organizations.)

Therefore this table may be most useful in gauging the relative magnitudes of our audiences in various non-US countries.

COUNTRY	USER	TRANSACTIONS	ECOMMERCE CONVERSION RATE	REVENUE	% OF REVENUE	REVENUE
UNITED STATES	237,893	2,893	1.04%	\$664,767	84%	-
AUSTRALIA	38,121	373	0.73%	\$45,994	6%	38%
UNITED KINGDOM	94,262	221	0.20%	\$31,073	4%	25%
CANADA	35,863	129	0.30%	\$19,551	2%	16%
IRELAND	5,419	22	0.35%	\$11,969	2%	10%
GERMANY	5,063	32	0.46%	\$7,944	1%	7%
NEW ZEALAND	4,410	38	0.72%	\$3,498	0%	3%
SINGAPORE	4,554	34	0.60%	\$2,655	0%	2%
INDIA	19,381	6	0.03%	\$746	0%	1%
SOUTH AFRICA	9,011	9	0.09%	\$357	0%	0%

### NEW VS. RETURNING

We have many more new visitors to our website than returning visitors, but as you'd expect, the latter donate at a

much higher rate. In 2018, these factors balanced out such that we received roughly half our donations from each of these cohorts.

USER TYPE	USERS	TRANSACTIONS	ECOMMERCE CONVERSION RATE	REVENUE	% OF REVENUE
NEW VISITOR	531,545	2,012	0.38%	\$441,146	53%
RETURNING VISITOR	60,062	2,104	2.02%	\$394,025	47%
TOTAL	591,607	4,116	0.65%	\$835,170	

### ONLINE DONATIONS BY GENDER

We see an interesting gender difference in our online giving, though we're not really sure what to make of it. Even though women make up the majority of the visitors to our site (by a modest

margin), male visitors are almost twice as likely to donate, and men donate ~20% more than women on average. Therefore, male visitors end up accounting for 65% of giving on our site. (Note that this data is based on a particularly small sample size).

GENDER	USERS	TRANSACTIONS	ECOMMERCE CONVERSION RATE	REVENUE	% OF REVENUE
FEMALE	176,739	1,033	0.49%	179,790	35%
MALE	140,854	1,611	0.95%	340,094	65%
TOTAL	317,593	2,644	0.69%	519,884	100%



