

1000 people match Oxford don's '10% of future income' charity pledge

More than 1000 people have pledged to give at least 10% of their future earnings to charity, after joining a movement started by students and academics at Oxford University.

Dr Toby Ord, a philosopher at Oxford University, founded a charity evaluator called Giving What We Can in 2009 to encourage people to pledge to give money to the most cost-effective charities possible. After a year, 64 people had joined the society. Today the organisation estimates that its members will give over £270 million to charity over their lifetimes.

Dr Ord started Giving What We Can because he came to believe that we have a moral imperative not just to give to those less fortunate than us, but to give to causes which do the most good.

'Choosing where to donate can be almost as important as how much – if a person donates to a charity that's twice as effective, it's essentially the same as them donating twice as much money,' he said.

'Our research has shown that the difference between charities is astonishing. Some charities do 1,000 times as much good with a donation as others. Think about how much good someone could do donating to charities that were ten, a hundred, or even a thousand times more effective.

'That means that anyone can save a large number of lives over the course of their lifetime by taking this pledge.'

'The number of people taking the pledge shows that doing a large amount of good can be achieved by anyone. And far from being a burden, most of us agree that knowing our money is going to the most effective causes actually makes us happier.'

Giving What We Can has carried out research to find the most cost-effective charities in the world, which do the most good for the least money. It recommends the **Against Malaria Foundation**, which distributes insecticide treated bednets in India and sub-Saharan Africa for *£3 each*; **Schistosomiasis Control Initiative**, which can prevent one of the world's most debilitating parasitic diseases for *£3 per treatment*; **Project Healthy Children**, which can fortify a child's meals with nutrients for *3p a year*; and **Deworm the World Initiative**, which can provide treatment for intestinal worms for *£1 per person*.

Further information and interview opportunities

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Part of the inspiration behind the movement is the work of Peter Singer on the morality of helping others, whose book 'The Most Good You Can Do' has recently been published.

Case Studies: people taking the Giving What We Can Pledge

People from all walks of life have taken the pledge. Here are just a few examples.

Beth Barnes – Student, TEDx speaker

One of Giving What We Can's youngest members, Beth has just finished studying the International Baccalaureate and A-level maths at Exeter College, and hopes to go on to study Natural Sciences at Cambridge. While she has always wanted to do good in the world, taking Giving What We Can's pledge and thinking about the effectiveness of her donations has helped Beth to focus her energies:

"For a long time I've felt that I wanted to do as much as I can to help others. I am incredibly lucky to have everything I need to have a fulfilling life, while so much of the world has so little. The ethos of effective altruism appealed to me immediately, but many of the things I learnt about how to actually do the most good surprised me."

For Beth, giving is a personal choice. But by being a part of Giving What We Can's community, she's supported to follow through with her goals, and has more information about other ways to do the most good:

"I've met a whole load of wonderful people who inspired me to do more of the things I knew I should do, including starting an effective altruism society at my college."

Giving What We Can's members pledge to give at least 10% of their income. However, following in the footsteps of founder Toby Ord, Beth is keen to go further:

"When I have more of an idea of what my career will be and things like where I'll be living, I hope to take the Further Pledge and give away everything above a basic income."

Beth recently presented on the topic of effective altruism at the TEDxExeter conference.

Lee Bishop – Manager at Amazon

After hearing about Giving What We Can through a BBC article, taking the pledge was an easy decision for Lee Bishop. Though already donating money regularly, reading about effective giving was something of an epiphany – it just made sense for him to ensure his donations were doing as much good as possible. Taking the pledge means Lee can do a bit of good every day.

"By donating 10% of my income to the most cost-effective charities I'm able to do good on a daily basis, even on an uneventful midweek day when I might otherwise not necessarily have 'achieved' anything worthwhile that day."

Lee first took the pledge as a student at Newcastle University, and has continued to give now that he works as a manager at online retailer Amazon. Starting to pledge while still a student has made the transition easy:

“The pledge comes out of my wages as soon as they are paid and goes to a good cause. Because I’ve been giving since I started working I’ve just learnt to put that money aside when I think about how much I have to spend. I rent my own flat; I have more than enough money to go on holiday a couple of times a year, and to go out for food or drinks. I get to a few Liverpool and Hibernian football matches and went travelling for a month last summer.”

Far from being a burden, taking the pledge has enriched Lee’s life.

“Taking and keeping giving the pledge for the last six or seven years is one of the things I am most proud of, alongside completing the Edinburgh Marathon after having open heart surgery six months beforehand. The truth is though; giving is easy. I’m able to do all of the things I love doing, and I could do more, whilst giving to good causes. I would encourage anybody considering taking the pledge to do so.”

Sim Dhaliwal — Former teacher, Goldman Sachs intern

After completing a politics degree, Sim started her career as a teacher in the West Midlands through the Teach First program. She first heard about Giving What We Can at university:

“I spent the years since university reading and thinking more about effective giving and taking the pledge. I felt like I could contribute by earning money to give away.”

Sim’s decision to change careers came after discussions with members of Giving What We Can, and sister charity 80,000 Hours, which gives advice to those who want to make the biggest difference with their careers:

Giving What We Can helped motivate me to think about what I wanted from life and my work. It was a contributing factor in giving me the confidence and impetus to apply for an internship in banking (through Teach First). When I got the offer from the bank, I signed the pledge online, which was a very important day for me!”

Sim will start donating as soon as she starts her internship. Taking the pledge will help her make decisions about where to give effectively, now, and in the future.

“I feel like the pledge will make sure I am always engaged with ideas about how to make a difference most effectively. Remembering just how lucky I am to have been born where I was, have the family that I do and the opportunities that I have had.

Sim is confident that taking the pledge won’t just mean she helps out others — she’ll be happier too:

“Nobody needs to have loads of money. I think I’ll be happier knowing that I’ve got a bit less but that will make a significant difference somewhere else. I’m not ashamed to say that I hope it enriches my life and increases my happiness, as well as those that it reaches!”