

Wise Giving

Change results from what we do; not what we think.

The world has more problems than we can solve. Supporting those who offer good solutions may be all that most of us can do. But when my phone rings almost daily with people requesting donations, I always decline. To ensure that what little I have to donate goes to the best possible use, I pool my contributions and carefully target them for maximum affect.

Don't give blindly.

In magazine and TV ads, the imploring face of a lovable child lures you to a headline claiming that what you spend each day on coffee can save that child from sickness and hunger. Such ads target your emotions. They rarely offer evidence that the fundraisers manage money well, and often they don't.

Having once written grant applications, I learned that wise donors do their homework before they invest. My employer, I came to learn, spent 74% of its income on fundraising and overhead. A single grant from the U.S. government fully financed all of the field projects, so people's donations covered nothing more than the costs of fundraising and overhead. It can cost a lot to raise money, but some fundraisers will not stop until they pass a threshold where the cost of fundraising exceeds the amount that donors send in.

Sometimes the same field project receives funding from several NGOs in exchange for the right to feature its achievements in their fundraising appeals. The project may be commendable, but the different organizations that claim the project sometimes pay more to their CEOs than to the project.

This article provides the ratings of about twenty agencies involved in family planning provided by three agency evaluators on the Internet. This article does not rate the agency raters. It only helps you to consult them rather than gamble with money that you want to put to good cause.

A fundraiser with nothing to hide will open its books for inspection so neutral evaluators can assess how it spends people's money. Those with something to hide will seal their books and allow no means for you to verify the Return on Investment (ROI) to expect when you invest in that project.

Prioritize the Options

When calculating ROI, you need to know that most of the money will actually go to services. But not all services offer the same ROI per dollar invested. If you donate to your city's opera, you help ensure that the opera will remain solvent despite high operating costs - and that those who can afford the high price of tickets will have an opera to attend. Unless your donation saves employee jobs, it will do very little to help to the needy, and once it has been spent, your contribution may have no lasting benefit.

If you want to help the needy, you will get a larger ROI by investing in a different type of project. Consider the following examples:

1. The ad says that what you spend each day on coffee can spare a child from chronic sickness and hunger. The field project may be a third-world orphanage that operates more cheaply than a similar orphanage located in the U.S. Perhaps you really can give a starving child a good start in life for the price of your daily mug of java purchased at Starbuck's. The amount you invest could total \$800 per year, which you would probably need to continue until the child grows up, and that could total in the range of \$15K. That is less than the cost of raising the same child in your home, but more than it costs to do other things. Before we conclude that supporting a child for \$15K yields a good ROI, let's consider two other options:
2. The cost of fully immunizing African children ranges from \$14.21 to \$24.12 per child.¹ This one-time investment can protect the children from numerous common diseases that could cripple or kill them at some point in their lives. A one-time investment of \$1K to a wisely selected organization can fully immunize from 40 to 70 children for life. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which vaccinates more children than the World Health Organization, favors this option because it yields a high return for each dollar invested. Warren Buffet, who also knows a good ROI when he sees one, gave ten billion dollars to the Gates Foundation.
3. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has also invested several billion dollars in family planning. In an over-populated world, the potential benefits of helping people limit the size of their families can exceed those of any alternative investment.

Family size determines whether well intended parents can afford to adequately provide for the needs of their kids and whether their communities can afford to offer each child a basic education. Even in the poorest of nations, where birthrates drop from seven per family to less than three per family, the quality of life improves in several ways.

It is difficult to calculate an exact return per dollar invested, but we can calculate the cost of operating a regional family planning program that makes appropriate forms of contraception available to all families in a district where hundreds or even thousands of families live. The following section lists some programs that do exactly that.

The cost of family planning services is low, the prevention of each unwanted child is lasting, and the benefits extend beyond just the family and community. As the website overpopulation.org clearly demonstrates, world overpopulation poses a serious threat to all the Earth's inhabitants – plant or animal – including ourselves and our progeny.

¹ <http://www.givewell.org/international/technical/programs/immunization>

Comparing Agencies

This section lists agencies that specialize in family planning or related services. It posts links to:

- The agency's web page describing its objectives and field projects or services
- The evaluations of agency evaluators, including reviews made by the Better Business Bureau [Wise Giving Guide](#), charitynavigator.org, and GuideStar.org
- Optional comments - This section may include a reference to GuideStar comments and will include feedback from users of this site as they come in.

Efficacy Information: This is evidence demonstrating the organization's effectiveness at achieving a set of measurable objectives - information that is generally required for organizations soliciting grants. As "Evidence of Impact" GuideStar provides a checkmark if Expert Reviews are available, and it provides the comments of its reviewers in a section below.

If you have any additional or inside information concerning any of the listed agencies, please share it with us so we can improve this list.

Field Project Sponsors

These two organizations provide Family planning services directly to poor people.

1. [DKT International](#)

DKT provides condoms at low prices to developing nation's health organizations. Click the link for details on what they do and how to make donations.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators: Known only to Charity Navigator

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=3627#.UikdcpK1G2Y>

Comments: Claim Charity Navigator four star, but link to Charity Navigator shows only three. Weak on Accountability & Transparency.

2. [Planned Parenthood Federation of America \(PPFA\) International Program Headquarters](#) also [IPPF or International Planned Parenthood](#)

This organization has more than one subgroup involved in international family planning. Use the new IPPF link first. The new IPPF site is still in BETA version as of this writing. No websites have been posted for the PPFA organizations. You are referred instead to the parent Planned Parenthood organization, which offers mainly information concerning Planned Parenthood agencies that operate inside the U.S.

The PPFA organization is parent to two international sub-agencies:

- PPFA Africa Regional Office (Nairobi, Kenya)
- PPFA Latin America Regional Office (Miami, Florida)

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?keyword_list=Planned+Parenthood+International+&Submit2=GO&bay=search.results

<http://www.bbb.org/us/Charity-Reviews/name/Planned+Parenthood+International/>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=4942#.UikgVpK1G2Y>

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/13-1845455/international-planned-parenthood-federation.aspx>

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/20-4365831/international-planned-parenthood-federation-worldwide.aspx>

Comments: The two GuideStar links rate different IPP organizations involved in family planning. One (IPPF/WHR NY) shows mostly positive comments, but the other (IPPF Washington, DC) has one negative comment worth noting: "I have given in the past, but the 2009 990 suggests that the top 3 salaries consume nearly 10% of all revenues."

Author's note: I too have given to IPPF, but I try to avoid giving where I think a substantial portion of my donations go to the support of administrators who are much wealthier than I am.

Training or Consulting Organizations

These organizations provide training and/or consulting to health care programs that (or workers who) offer family planning services directly to poor people. Click the web page links to learn more details about what they do.

1. [Engenderhealth](#)

Trains health care providers

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.bbb.org/charity-reviews/national/human-services/engenderhealth-in-new-york-ny-2037>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=6526#.UjnuH8akowA>

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/13-1623838/engenderhealth.aspx>

Comments: This organization receives good evaluations and comments on all reviews and its mission statement places family planning high on its list.

2. [Jhpiego](#)

A U.S. university-sponsored organization that works with local (usually government sponsored) developing nation health care organizations to offer technical support to existing services and sometimes set up new services.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/23-7424444/johns-hopkins-university.aspx>

Comments: I believe this organization receives much of funding from USAID. It works with governments and NGOs on family planning projects, but it does not provide the services or specialize in family

planning.. The Green Umbrella program in Bangladesh (that I studied) was developed with the help of an affiliate of Johns Hopkins. It trained thousands of women health care workers in a country where women did not see doctors and no medical personnel were women. See <http://green-umbrella.net/>

3. [Pathfinder International](#)

Our 1,000-plus employees work alongside hundreds of local partner organizations, helping implement projects that address a wide range of sexual and reproductive health issues.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/53-0235320/pathfinder-international.aspx>

<http://www.bbb.org/charity-reviews/national/relief-and-development/pathfinder-international-in-watertown-ma-3439>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=4306#.UikWQpK1G2Y>

Comments: Many good GuideStar reviews, but weak on Charity Navigator financial statements.

4. [United Nations Population Fund](#)

Trains trainers on reproductive health and family planning covering 13 countries. Helps countries develop plans to build national RH/FP counseling capacities.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators: Note the following link goes to Friends of UNFPA:

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=11538#.UiU5SJK1G2Y>

Comments: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is a separate organization that gets most of its funding from various governments, including the U.S. I cannot verify that Friends of UNFPA is authorized by the United Nations Population Fund to collect money on its behalf.

Other Organizations

Click the web page links for more detailed information about what these organizations do.

1. [African Population and Health Research Center](#)

Sponsors fellowships for candidates whose dissertation topics address health policy or health systems issues.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators: Known only to GuideStar

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/06-1608361/african-population-health-research-center.aspx>

Comments: GuideStar states that there are no Expert Reviews for this organization and it has not provided an impact summary.

2. [Global Fund for Women](#)

Makes grants to support women's groups in five regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Asia Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/77-0155782/global-fund-women.aspx>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=7340#.Ujn7DcakowA>

Comments: No BBB report. Many good GuideStar reviews, but weak on Charity Navigator financial statements. Makes little mention of family planning.

3. [Population Action International](#)

Works to improve reproductive health services by building political will (U.S. and international) for such programs. The PAI research team develops evidence for advocacy on population and reproductive health issues.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/52-0812075/population-action-international.aspx>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=4348#.Ujn5M8akowA>

Comments: No BBB rating or GuideStar reviews, but Charity Navigator rates it five stars.

4. [Population Connection](#) (formerly ZPG)

Its main programs are designed to:

- Educate young people about unsustainable population growth through K-12 lesson plans
- Inform constituents across the country about their congressional representatives' stances on population growth and family planning and work with Congress and the White House on family planning policy and funding levels.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.bbb.org/charity-reviews/national/health/population-media-center-in-shelburne-vt-18074>

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/94-1703155/population-connection.aspx>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=6425#.Ujn3osakowA>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=6425#.UikHw5K1G2Y>

Comments: See GuideStar link. Charity Navigator rates it lacking on good financial statements.

5. [Population Institute](#)

Educates policymakers and the public about population, and seeks to promote universal access to family planning information, education, and services.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.bbb.org/charity-reviews/national/relief-and-development/population-institute-in-washington-dc-2270>

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/52-0899578/population-institute.aspx>

Comments: Low BBB ratings, no Charity Navigator ratings, and no GuideStar reviews. "Funding for the Population Institute comes from foundations, corporations and individual gifts. The Institute does not seek or receive financial support from the U.S. government"

6. [Population Media Center](#)

Strives to improve the health and well-being of people around the world through the use of entertainment-education strategies, like serialized dramas on radio and television, in which characters evolve into role models for the audience for positive behavior change.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.bbb.org/charity-reviews/national/health/population-media-center-in-shelburne-vt-18074>

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/03-0358029/population-media-center.aspx>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=10867#.UikLtJK1G2Y>

Comments: Note how the different evaluators rated this agency differently.

7. [Population Reference Bureau](#)

Informs people around the world about population, health, and the environment and develops action plans.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/53-0214030/population-reference-bureau.aspx>

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=11928#.Ujn848akowA>

Comments: No BBB evaluation, No GuideStar reviews, and Charity Navigator financial statements not audited. However, the Population Reference Bureau is certified by Combined Federal Campaign.

See <http://www.prb.org/Donate.aspx>

8. [Women Deliver](#)

A global advocacy organization bringing together voices from around the world to call for action to improve the health and well-being of girls and women.

Evaluations by Internet charity evaluators:

<http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/26-4462256/women-deliver.aspx>

Comments: Not available: information from BBB or Charity Navigator or GuideStar reviews.

9. [Women's Plans Foundation](#)

Australia based WPF makes grants to NGOs accredited by AusAID and eligible to receive matching funding for programs which include family planning. No information available to verify value or efficacy.
