

2019: A year in review

DATA FOR THE PEOPLE





At IDinsight, we are devoted to fighting the injustice of global poverty so everyone, especially people living in low-income communities, can live their fullest lives. We have seen that by empowering senior leaders in governments, non-governmental actors, and foundations with cutting-edge data and evidence tools, we can more effectively improve lives. Much of our work in 2019 was in pursuit of this vision.

We are working with leaders at [GiveDirectly](#) to understand whether direct cash transfers improve the welfare of people living in Uganda's refugee settlements. We are helping leaders test whether direct transfers of cryptocurrency can help improve hunger and hyperinflation in Venezuela; we are supporting leaders at Tostan more effectively combat female genital cutting in West Africa. We are using machine learning to help leaders at Educate Girls ensure hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Indian girls are in school, learning, and on the path to improved life outcomes. Importantly, we are doing this work with dozens of senior leaders in government ministries across Asia and Africa, through our "[Embedded learning partnerships](#)" which you can read about in more detail below.

While we are focused on using data and evidence to empower leaders in cities like Dakar, Washington DC, and New Delhi, **we are equally committed to empowering low-income communities impacted by the policies set by these leaders.** IDinsight's work in 2019 is also a reflection of this passion. In June, Rhoda Munyau, a colleague at IDinsight, sat down with a man in Nyatike, Kenya and asked him who should decide which projects are funded in his community. In September, hundreds of IDinsight surveyors, spread out across India, asked 25,000 households (representing 60 million people from India's lowest income communities) their perspectives on the government's recent health policy. **Data like this, which explicitly reflects and amplifies the experiences, preferences, and voices of the people, can be used to change the balance of power.** It can change how global actors, from Silicon Valley to Manila, spend billions of dollars.

We believe that data and evidence can and must be used to amplify the voice of the people. We believe the same tools used to help senior leaders make more impactful decisions can be deployed to give the people greater influence over where the money goes, what policies are implemented, and how programs are operated. If done well, we believe that using evidence to both advise leaders and project the voice of the people will best address communities' most important and urgent needs.

This report shares an overview of our work this year, including three areas we are particularly excited about, and learnings from some of our failures. It shares details about our long-term projects called “Embedded Learning Partnerships,” designed to equip non-profits and mainly governments with the tools and skills to incorporate evidence into their decision making. You’ll read about how we expanded new, innovative services like machine learning and “Data on Demand” to help our partners strengthen their impact. And we share details from a new initiative to bring community preferences into the rooms where decisions are made.

As always, our brilliant, passionate, and kind team of IDinsighters drives everything we do. This year we also welcomed three new members, Chris Chibwana, Rebecca Sharp, and Dan Stein, to our Partner group. Each of them has been instrumental in getting us to where we are today, as have all of the hundreds of IDinsighters, past and present.

A sincere thanks to all of you for your partnership, support, and encouragement as we work to undo the injustices that persist globally.

With gratitude,

Neil Buddy Shah
CEO and Founding Partner

"WE BELIEVE THAT DATA AND EVIDENCE CAN AND MUST BE USED TO AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE."





GIVING COMMUNITIES A VOICE
THROUGH DATA

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: MEASURING PEOPLE'S PREFERENCES

One of our most notable projects this year was developed in partnership with GiveWell to give communities a voice in funding decisions that affect their lives. Our research surveyed about 2000 people in Ghana and Kenya with similar characteristics as those who often receive services from GiveWell charities. The results illustrated that communities value life-saving projects more than cash transfers and informed an update in GiveWell's model at the end of last year. But more broadly, these findings illustrate the potential for more foundations, governments, and non-profits to follow suit — using data and evidence to inform how they give.

In December, we launched Measuring People's Preferences, an initiative to bring the perspectives of people affected by aid to the table where decisions are made.



OPEN SOURCED RECODE THE GOODS FUTURE PERFECT MORE -



A US charity just did something radical: asked recipients where the money should go

GiveWell's "moral weights" project changed how the organization recommends top charities.

By Dylan Matthews | @dylanmatt | dylan@vox.com | Dec 20, 2019, 9:10am EST

ff SHARE



A staffer conducts an interview for the "moral weights" study that GiveWell commissioned to inform its donations. | IDInsight

FUTURE PERFECT

Finding the best ways to do good.

If you donate to charity, you are implicitly making a lot of heavy choices about "moral weights."

Bracketing for the moment money you spend on yourself and loved ones, \$1,000 that you donate to an art museum is \$1,000 that you could instead donate to medical research, or malaria prevention, or a food pantry, or your alma mater. Some of the decisions we have to make about where to give are about efficiency: How many people can *this* food pantry feed with \$1,000, compared to another food pantry? How many lives can a malaria charity save compared to a cancer charity?

GiveWell, the charity evaluator which has directed \$519 million to its preferred charities over the 2010s, has to make these decisions at a granular level. In 2019, the charity

"This is the first time I can remember that a major charitable organization...has sought input from its recipients so systematically. It has the potential to change not just GiveWell's recommendations, but how a whole variety of international aid groups make decisions about where to put their money."

- Dylan Matthews, VOX



MOST READ



4 false claims in under 30 w
Kevin McCarthy's IG report t
exercise in gaslighting



Future generations will look b



EMBEDDED LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENTS



INDIA

Improving lives using an outcomes-focused governance model

Success in government is rarely framed as improving lives and is instead discussed in terms of inputs and budgetary spends. NITI Aayog, the Indian Government's policy innovation arm, is challenging this status quo by pioneering the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP). The ADP uses performance ranking and technical support to incentivize 117 district administrations across India to directly improve health, education, and economic outcomes for over 250 million people.

Frequent and reliable data on outcomes is the foundation for this initiative. As NITI Aayog's knowledge partner, IDinsight provides the underlying measurement framework for the ADP. In addition, we provide rapid primary data on outcomes for 27 districts mentored by NITI Aayog.

Initial evidence of the ADP's impact is heartening. In the NITI-mentored 27 districts, our numbers reveal that 33,000 more mothers delivered their children in institutional facilities instead of at home (from 66 percent to 74 percent). And, over 300,000 more children affected by diarrhea received oral rehydration therapy (51 percent to 67 percent) and zinc (34 percent to 53 percent). These are pre-post numbers and we plan to do a deeper evaluation of the ADP in 2020.

As with any program of this size and ambition, the ADP continues to have room for further strengthening. We are committed to working closely with NITI Aayog in 2020 to help make the ADP a continued success.



Number of people affected:

**250 MILLION
PEOPLE**



Early progress:

**IMPROVED
HEALTH
OUTCOMES***

*Significant improvements in health metrics over 7 months in 27 districts, home to about 60 million people: institutional delivery of babies increased from 66% to 74%; anti-diarrheal treatment increased because of oral rehydration therapy (51% to 67%) and Zinc (34% to 53%).

"We are highly impressed by IDinsight's work for the Aspirational Districts Program, and use the insights provided by the team regularly in our work."

- Health Advisor, NITI Aayog, India



GHANA

Using Monitoring and Evaluation to strengthen high-priority initiatives

In Ghana, the Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation is working to strengthen implementation and improve the social impact of government priority programs.

Through an embedded learning partnership with the ministry, we are supporting officials to use evidence to bolster its evaluation efforts and show the benefits of using data to inform Ghanaian policy. We have completed a landscape and evidence review, generated insights from administrative data, and collected and analyzed primary data to inform the government's Free Senior High School program, which is reaching 1.2 million students across the country.



Number of people affected:

1.2 MILLION STUDENTS TARGETED FOR THE FREE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM*



Early impact:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INFORM EDUCATION STRATEGY*

*IDinsight is working with the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a strategy for remedial education for underperforming senior high schools. Recommendations to improve the implementation of the One Village One Dam initiative were presented to Cabinet for discussion.

"I love [IDinsight] - you make everything so easy."

- Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Ghana



MALAWI

Developing a data-driven social cash transfer program

To support citizens living in poverty, the Malawian government operates an unconditional Social Cash Transfer Program that reaches over one million people. Working in a long-term embedded partnership with the government, IDinsight is providing services to support the Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Finance to analyze the program and enhance its effectiveness. Our team is also testing different innovations to improve the long-term impact of the program, and advising on cash-plus and poverty graduation activities.



Number of people affected:

**1.2 MILLION
PEOPLE**



Impact potential:

**PROGRAM PROVIDES
CASH TRANSFERS TO
MALAWI'S POOREST
CITIZENS**

"We are madly in love with the dashboard,"

**- Senior Ministry Leadership,
Malawi Social Cash Transfer Program**



THE PHILIPPINES

Supporting country-wide health systems

IDinsight designed a monitoring system to help the Philippines Department of Health track progress toward the implementation of new health systems for Universal Healthcare Delivery. This system is designed to allow leaders across the country, as well as the general public, to monitor progress in the health system across technical, financial, and managerial indicators on a quarterly basis.

The resulting data will help the Department of Health and regional leaders to effectively allocate resources and make data-driven strategic decisions over the next six years of Universal Healthcare roll-out to the entire country.

As part of this engagement, IDinsight created a conceptual model for health system restructuring and UHC delivery, which has served as the foundation for UHC roll-out strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation plans.



Number of people to be covered by UHC:

**100+ MILLION
PEOPLE**



Impact potential:

**UNIVERSAL ACCESS
TO HIGH QUALITY AND
AFFORDABLE
HEALTHCARE BY 2021**

“If [we had] never gotten your guidance on the need for a Theory of Change, of process monitoring, we’d never [have] the level of understanding we have now.”

- Official from the Department of Health, The Philippines



INNOVATIONS FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

INNOVATIONS FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

As development leaders globally are confronted with some of the most pressing issues of our time: entrenched poverty, climate change, refugee crises, and deepening inequality, they will need to spend their resources as effectively as possible to improve people's lives. At IDinsight, we develop new services when our clients need updated or revamped approaches to address their challenges. We established our innovations team to bring cutting-edge tools to policymakers globally.



Data on demand

Imagine this hypothetical scenario: a minister of health is planning to roll out a nutrition program for children. She wants to understand the current rates of malnutrition and understand how the problem varies across geographies to decide where to allocate resources. Instead of taking six months and paying sky-high costs to survey children and parents, aggregate the data, and get an analysis, she takes another approach. She uses Data on Demand, which enables her to rapidly survey families, get reliable data in a week's time, and gain the information she needs to inform her policy decision at a lower cost. This is the vision we have been working towards at IDinsight as we look to realize the potential of Data on Demand (DoD). **DoD is a tool to make rigorous data collection radically faster and cheaper.**

This year, we deployed Data on Demand for seven projects in sectors ranging from financial inclusion to agriculture to health, reaching tens of thousands of households. One of our most notable accomplishments was surveying 5,700 health facilities in ten days rather than the typical six month plus time period. We are building up our infrastructure of surveyors by creating data systems to enable remote management, creating a machine learning algorithm to automatically detect data quality issues, and developing novel sampling techniques to further increase efficiency. In addition, we are rigorously testing each approach to iterate and create effective solutions.

If data could be collected as seamlessly as we envision, policymakers and non-profit implementers could easily incorporate the voice and perspectives of the people into their decision-making.



Machine learning

The opportunity to use machine learning – algorithms that make predictions based on data – has huge potential for the global development community. There are vast opportunities to use machine learning to improve service delivery and revolutionize how we address issues from climate change to healthcare access. At IDinsight, we are expanding our machine learning work to help implementers like Educate Girls reach more out-of-school girls. We are exploring how it can improve the efficiency of community health workers to save millions of lives. And we are analyzing crop health to tailor agricultural extension services to farmers' needs.

This year, our machine learning work will enable Educate Girls to enroll 600,000 extra girls than they would have without our predictions – one of our most impactful projects to date. In addition, as part of our Data on Demand work, we are building machine learning algorithms to predict in real-time which surveyors are collecting high quality data and which need to be retrained or let go. In Ethiopia we piloted a project using satellite imagery and machine learning to improve our sampling methods – practices we are now developing in India.

These active projects illustrate how machine learning can be transformative – making global development practices and services more responsive to people's needs.

Read more about this project in the [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#).



Results-based financing

As donors, investors, and implementers look to maximize resources to increase social impact, new financing tools have taken root. Results-based financing (RBF), which includes impact bonds, ties funding to outcomes – like improved test scores or school attendance. For example, with impact bonds, an investor usually provides up-front capital, and the implementer agrees to deliver on a set of mutually decided-upon outcomes to unlock a return. There have been more than 150 impact bonds worldwide, each looking to effectively harness capital to improve social impact. At IDinsight, we are working to establish shared standards around what impact means, how to measure it, and how to tie it to payments. This year we also published in [NextBillion](#), [Center for Global Development](#), and on [our blog](#), about how to enhance the effectiveness of results-based financing tools.

Working with a number of partners, we design evaluations for development impact bonds (DIBs), determine payment metrics for outcome payers, and evaluate active projects. IDinsight is working with Village Enterprise to evaluate the first DIB on the African continent to address poverty, reaching more than 12,000 households. We are also ensuring that payments and funding returns are effectively tied to outcomes.

We see that RBF can be used to align funders, implementers, and investors around shared goals. By effectively defining and evaluating impact metrics, we hope to ensure that stakeholders' positive intentions are grounded in results that actually change people's lives.



FAILING FORWARD

We recognize it's both important to celebrate successes as well as acknowledge and share when things don't go as planned. One such example this year was our project to understand the impact of low touch nudges to address barriers to using latrines in India. The goal? To reduce rates of open defecation. We theorized that leveraging cost-effective "nudges" — such as providing toilet cleaning liquid, air freshener, or a radio to make latrine use a more pleasant experience — could increase people's use of latrines.

Through a randomized controlled trial we found that while the nudges helped decrease the salience of some key behavioral barriers to latrine use, they did not decrease open defecation. This work helped sanitation stakeholders and policymakers in India understand the behavioral factors inhibiting latrine use in rural areas and also better appreciate the parameters that should be met for nudges to actually be effective.



Thank you for helping
make the difference.





PICTURES:

1. Fatoumata Traore, a member of IDinsight's field team (right) interviews a respondent about changes in social norms in her village after the end of Tostan's Community Empowerment Program in the Koulikouro region, Mali. ©IDinsight/Mallika Sobti
2. Rhoda Munyau, an IDinsight field officer interviews a respondent who would qualify as a GiveWell beneficiary in Nyatika, Migori, Kenya. ©IDinsight/Emily Coppel
3. Aloo Collins, a village leader in Nyatika, Migori, Kenya, describes characteristics of poor people in his village in an exercise to help identify survey respondents for the Measuring People's Preferences Project. ©IDinsight/Emily Coppel
4. The Dakar team's very first Field Manager training in the IDisight office. ©IDinsight/Cassandra Pignon
5. Women in Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh, India select pictures most related to savings behavior as part of a co-creation workshop for savings calendars led by the IDinsight India Financial Inclusion team. ©IDinsight/Andrés L. Parrado
6. Enumerator assesses student using IDELA at Bright School Complex, Accra, Ghana. ©IDinsight/Becca Bier
7. Women receive their cash transfers. ©Malawi Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare
8. The pilot strategic planning exercise for the Philippines Department of Health in Paranaque City, in cooperation with the City Health Office, the Department of Health and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation. ©IDinsight/Albert Domingo
9. Following the chief's lead, somewhere in Katsina, Nigeria. ©IDinsight/Mallika Sobti
10. A farmer in Rajasthan, India, learns how to set up and charge his mobile phone as part of the Data on Demand survey. ©IDinsight/Andrew Fraker
11. Two IDinsight staff members test a digital survey form on a smartphone before talking to a respondent in Rajasthan, India. ©IDinsight/Ryan Fauber
12. Participants from a Village Enterprise program receive their cash transfers in Soroti, Uganda. IDinsight is evaluating the Development Impact Bond, which is one of the first on the African continent. ©IDinsight/Michael Otieno
13. IDinsight team members conduct a survey in the presence of "nudges," in this case cleaning supplies, to promote latrine use. ©IDinsight/Siobhan McDonough
14. Somewhere on a drive between Tanqua Abergele and Mekele. ©IDinsight/by Mallika Sobti

GROUP PICTURES:

1. IDinsight Dakar team poses for a photo. ©IDinsight/Mallika Sobti
2. IDinsight India team celebrates the holidays. ©IDinsight/Sukhmani Sethi
3. The IDinsight project team working on designing a monitoring system for the Department of Health in the Philippines poses for a photo. ©IDinsight
4. A GiveDirectly project enumerator team in Uganda. ©IDinsight/Raymond Sekadde
5. Data on Demand team members celebrate the end of a successful learning workshop near Delhi. ©IDinsight/Ryan Fauber
6. IDinsight Team and Department of Education Officials in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte. ©IDinsight
7. Participants from a Village Enterprise program receive their cash transfers in Soroti, Uganda. IDinsight is evaluating the Development Impact Bond, which is one of the first on the African continent. ©IDinsight/Michael Otieno
8. The Ghana Learning Partnership field team poses for a group photo. ©IDinsight