

Research Meeting

April 18, 2013

Eliza shared some highlights from her recent call with GiveDirectly, including its process for expanding to a second country and reiterated interest in providing transfers to whole villages in Kenya. Eliza also explained the system we developed to gather the necessary data to track GiveDirectly's progress.

Ben Rachbach, a prospective Research Analyst, gave an update on the work he completed during his trial period of employment with GiveWell. Ben summarized his preliminary research on super-volcanoes, a potential global catastrophic risk. The impacts of super-volcano eruptions may include agricultural disruption, global cooling, and indirectly, large-scale conflict. The largest super-volcanoes could cause volcanic "winters" lasting up to 15 years. There is no method for preventing eruptions, but food storage and research to monitor super-volcano activity and predict eruptions could help mitigate the negative humanitarian impacts.

Ben also reviewed his preliminary research on climate change tail risks. Some of the potential impacts he discussed were rising temperatures due to a release of methane from the tundra, sea level rise from melting ice sheets, and the reversing of the Gulf Stream. A major challenge in estimating impacts is the lack of precedent for these changes. Possible funding opportunities in this area are research on geoengineering and tail risks.

Cari recently attended the Global Philanthropy Forum, which she shared highlights from. The forum included discussions about transparency in particular foundations.

Tim gave an update on the work he is doing to follow up with promising charities. Tim is maintaining a database to store information about organizations that we might consider for a top charity ranking in the future, including what additional information we would need and when we should next contact them.

Natalie's recent work has involved updating our VillageReach review and improving our donation management system.

Jonah has continued creating summary notes for recent conversations, which are mainly in the area of meta-research.

Holden has been working on posts for the blog as well as creating his plan for understanding scientific research and political advocacy, including building a network of advisors.

Elie has been working on the history of philanthropy project as well as managing other staff.