**October 8 Assignment**

Many NGOs, charities, and government initiatives exist to address and alleviate the many dimensions of poverty that households experience in the developing world. Suppose that you want to donate and help. What is the “best” way to do so?

In this assignment, you will pick an initiative or NGO and try to make the case in 2 pages or less why it offers the best bet for addressing poverty in the developing world.

In your memo, you should include:

* A brief description of the NGO, organization, or initiative, including where they work, what aspect of poverty they aim to address (education, health, income, etc), and what kind of intervention they use
* Argue for why this chosen organization’s work is most likely to be effective. What is it that they do differently or better than others and why is that important?
* How do you (and the organization) *know* that the organization is effective? Have they done impact evaluation? What kind? Was their evaluation convincing?

Links to NGOs and projects that have done evaluations are provided on the next page. You can choose one of these, or you can find your own.

Alternatively, if you find that aid is not effective and likely to make the problem worse, you can write your memo arguing this case. If you go this route, you should:

* Describe an intervention to which many people or governments give money.
* Describe what the intervention does and why it is not likely to succeed or has led to negative outcomes in the past.
* How do you *know* that the intervention led to no impacts or negative impacts? Was there an impact evaluation done that led to these findings?

As an added incentive on this assignment, I will donate $50 to the organization described by the memo that most convinces me of a best bet strategy for poverty alleviation. Alternatively, if the best memo argues that aid is likely to be ineffective or harmful, I will spend $50 on bringing food to the final exam.

NGOs and Projects that have done impact evaluations:

* Give Directly (<https://www.givedirectly.org/>)
* Pratham (<http://www.pratham.org/impact/how-we-measure>, http://www.povertyactionlab.org/publication/remedying-education-evidence-two-randomized-experiments-india)
* Oxfam (<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/methods-approaches/monitoring-evaluation>)
* Catholic Relief Services (<http://www.crsprogramquality.org/publications/2012/6/12/impacts-of-food-vouchers-on-local-markets-reflections-from-c.html>, <http://www.crsprogramquality.org/publications/2012/10/2/an-evaluation-of-household-impact-among-fee-for-service-savi.html>)
* GiveWell is an NGO that recommends NGOs who have rigorous evidence for their effectiveness. Their list of NGO summaries is a good source of ideas for NGOs and information about them and their evaluations. (<http://www.givewell.org/charities/top-charities>)

Research and books arguing that aid or particular projects are not effective:

Here are links to research and books arguing that projects have not been successful

* A World Bank project in the Philippines (http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Aid\_Under\_Fire.pdf)
* US food aid and civil conflict (<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/aer.104.6.1630>)
* *Dead Aid* by Dambisa Moyo