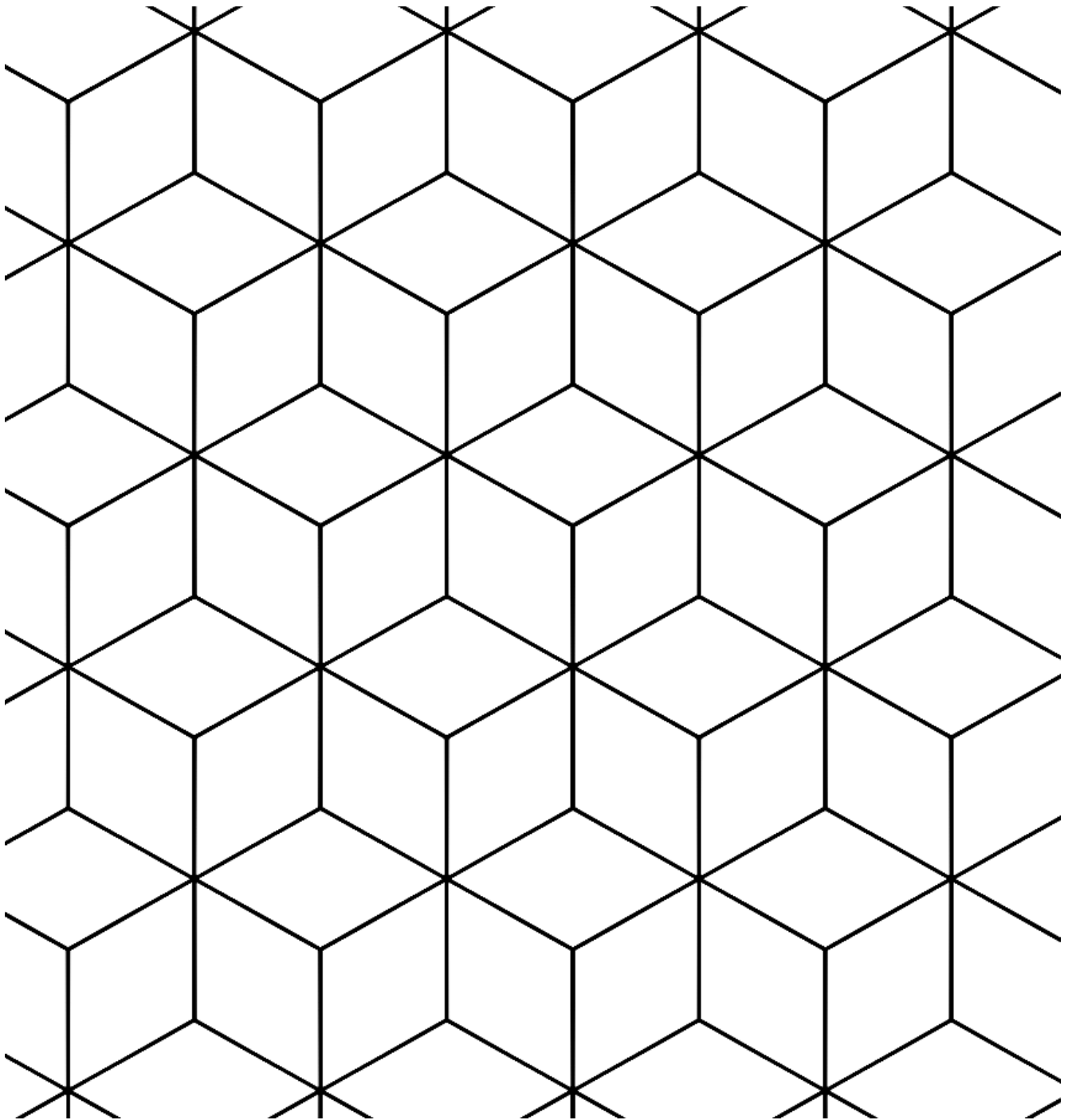


FOUNDERS PLEDGE REPORT SUMMARY: VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENTATION

Version: February 2018



BASED ON ORIGINAL RESEARCH BY **GiveWell**

This is a Founders Pledge summary and interpretation of original research published by [GiveWell](#). To view the latest version of GiveWell's full report on their website, please visit [this page](#).

ABOUT GIVEWELL

GiveWell is a nonprofit dedicated to finding outstanding giving opportunities and publishing the full details of their analysis to help donors decide where to give.

Unlike charity evaluators that focus solely on financials, assessing administrative or fundraising costs, they conduct in-depth research aiming to determine how much good a given program accomplishes (in terms of lives saved, lives improved, etc.) per dollar spent. Rather than try to rate as many charities as possible, they focus on the few charities that stand out most (by [their criteria](#)) in order to find and confidently recommend high-impact giving opportunities (their [list of top charities](#)).

To learn more about GiveWell, go to [GiveWell.org](#).

THE PROBLEM

The WHO estimates that 190 million children under five years of age are affected by vitamin A deficiency.ⁱ Vitamin A deficiency can occur when a diet does not include any fortified foods, animal sources, or other rich sources of vitamin A - as is the case in many low-income countries.ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ Vitamin A is crucial for the proper functioning of the immune system^{iv} and deficiency can cause severe problems, especially to children: it is the major cause of preventable blindness, and it increases the risk of disease and death from severe infections, like measles and those causing diarrhea.^v

THE SOLUTION

Vitamin A deficiency can be addressed cheaply and effectively through supplementation.^{vi} The supplements themselves are very cheap (roughly a dollar and a half per person per year), and delivery can also be inexpensive if carried out through existing infrastructure.^{vii} This makes vitamin A supplementation an extremely cost-effective intervention.

THE EVIDENCE

Evidence suggests supplementation of vitamin A is very effective in reducing child mortality, especially in settings where there are high rates of deficiency, and child mortality rates are high.

THE ORGANISATION: HKI'S VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME

Helen Keller International (HKI) works on malnutrition and blindness, including vitamin A supplementation. They engage in an array of activities to address the problem from several angles. They do advocacy (encouraging governments to allocate funding to vitamin A supplementation), provide technical assistance (for different phases of the delivery, such as budgeting and planning, training, monitoring and evaluation), and help fund government-run vitamin A supplementation programmes. HKI usually works in regions with high rates of vitamin A deficiency and child mortality, where their programmes are most likely to have a high impact.

HKI can deliver a supplementation round for roughly \$0.75 per child, and it is currently estimated to avert a child's death for about \$1500 on average. As a frame of reference, the UK National Health Service would consider it cost-effective to spend up to £1,000,000 to save a life.^{viii} HKI plan to use additional funding for the vitamin A supplementation programme to support programmes in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Nigeria, Tanzania, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Senegal. As of the end of 2017, it has the

capacity to productively and strategically employ \$38 million in additional funding for their vitamin A supplementation programme.

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