Biennial Report

2023-2024



"The world feels smaller when we work together"

- Nivita D. Sharma, MD

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A Word from the CEO

Dearest Donors,

On behalf of everyone at EqualMed, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your generous support over the last decade. Your commitment to our mission has made a powerful difference, and we are deeply grateful for your belief in our work.

Because of donors like you, we have been able to reach remote islands of Fiji by foot, car, and boat to deliver medical supplies to the furthest islands. For over a decade now, we have been creating lasting impacts in the healthcare system in Fiji. We have left a footprint in the medical infrastructure in Fiji that does not go unnoticed. Your support isn't just a donation, it's a partnership, and it's helping us build a better future, one step at a time.

I hope these next several pages highlight why our work is important and how invaluable your support is to help us carry out our mission. For more details, please visit: https://equalmed.org/project-2023-24-1

Thank you once again for your continued belief in our mission. We look forward to sharing more milestones with you in the years to come.

With sincere appreciation,

Nivita D. Sharma, MD







Mission

EqualMed aims to improve access to healthcare in under-served communities around the world and make a difference to the lives of many one-step-at-a-time

Vision

A world in which every human has equitable access to quality healthcare.

History

The foundation of EqualMed began in 2013 and in 2016 was officially registered as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt public charity with the IRS and as a corporation in the State of Georgia. Its genesis was Nivita D. Sharma who was a high school student at the time. The call to establish a nonprofit to help the medically under-served and economically disadvantaged was motivated by the passing away in 2013 of her beloved grandmother at 69 who did not have access to quality healthcare in the Fiji Islands. Turning her own sorrow of losing her young grandmother, Nivita aims to make a difference to the lives of the medically under-served and those less fortunate to afford basic healthcare. However, Nivita's pledge to bring healthcare to those in need in Fiji was a tremendous struggle when she embarked on her mission as an individual in 2013 and 2014. She used her personal savings to achieve the medical missions in 2013 and 2014 because organizations would not support an individual's cause. Learning the hard way, Nivita established EqualMed, as a tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit, to pursue her passion of significantly reducing the medical care disparity throughout the world. Fiji is her first country to work with as it is close to her heart and the fact that large charities do not usually assist the medical system of nations in the South Pacific.






About Us

The foundation of EqualMed began with two medical missions to Fiji by its founder and chief executive officer, Nivita D. Sharma. Using her personal savings, Project Fiji was successfully executed in summer of 2013, and medical needs evaluation resulted in the second project that was successfully executed in summer of 2014. The desperate medical needs of health facilities in Fiji evaluated in the 2013 and 2014 missions led to the formal genesis of EqualMed that was incorporated as a tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit in 2016. Since then, Nivita traveled to Fiji using personal savings to ensure the medical supply container shipments were deployed directly to targeted healthcare facilities. Simultaneously, Nivita conducted needs assessments to prepare for subsequent missions. When Covid-19 struck, EqualMed, through the generosity of its donors, came to the rescue of Fiji's healthcare system by shipping three 40-foot containers of medical supplies in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Why Fiji?

To many, Fiji is paradise and indeed it is for hundreds of thousands of tourists enjoying the clear blue skies, sunshine, and unspoiled beaches engulfing the crystal-clear waters. But for the people of this friendly nation, paradise is elusive. This archipelago of about 300 islands suffered multiple military coups that resulted in the exodus of medical professionals that has left the nation with a relatively neglected health system due to withdrawal of foreign aid since 1987. Yet, patients from neighboring pacific nations come to Fiji for medical treatment because Fiji has the most advanced medical facilities among the 16 countries in the South Pacific. Fiji has a School of Medicine and is the hub of the University of the South Pacific. Ironically, medical facilities throughout Fiji lack very basic medical supplies. Necessary medical supplies such as micropore tape, thermometers, dressings, stethoscopes and otoscopes, skin prep wipes, crutches, scissors, insulin syringes, diabetes monitoring equipment (blood glucose monitors and test strips), catheters, and even basic medications are lacking and urgently needed. These supplies are available abundantly in the USA. Each year millions of tons of unexpired medical supplies in the USA are discarded in landfills that unnecessarily burden our lovely planet. By redirecting such supplies, EqualMed makes a small yet valuable stride in sustainability efforts. Patients in Fiji often must bring their own medical supplies. For example, during previous medical missions, Nivita witnessed a 10-year old boy with a suspected broken arm waiting for hours to be seen at a major city hospital only to be told to purchase plaster from a private pharmacy in town as the hospital did not have any. Admitted children were asked to bring their own bedding (pillows, sheets, and blankets). Medical staff use commercial adhesive (sticky tape) tape instead of medical micropore tape on wounds and seconds later the tape falls off (try it on yourself). The list goes on. The take home idea is that basic medical supplies are lacking in paradise – a paradox! Together we can take one-step-at-a-time and make a difference to the lives of many.

Our Team



Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Nivita Sharma is a first-year gastroenterology and hepatology fellow at the University of California San Diego Medical System. In 2018, she graduated Summa Cum Laude from The University of Georgia with a major in biology and minor in global health. She obtained her medical doctorate from Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City in 2022 and completed her internal medicine residency training at Duke University Medical Center in 2025.

Nivita is an inductee of the Gold Humanism Honor Society in medicine, Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, and Palladia Women's Society. She has a passion for volunteering at local and global levels, which she has been engaged in since high school. She also enjoys teaching students across all levels to inspire students to pursue STEM careers and to boost the representation of women in medicine.

She is tri-lingual – English, Hindi, and Spanish, and can utter a few Fijian words and phrases.



Chairman of the Board

Dr. Divesh Sharma is a Distinguished Professor of Accounting at Kennesaw State University, Georgia, USA. He grew up in the Fiji Islands and obtained his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand and Griffith University in Australia. Dr. Sharma is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants (Australia) and worked as an auditor with KPMG prior to his academic career. He is deeply motivated to contribute to the development and betterment of his home country.



Corporate Secretary

Dr. Vineeta Sharma is a Professor of Accounting at Kennesaw State University, Georgia, USA. She grew up in the Fiji Islands and obtained her undergraduate and graduate qualifications from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and Griffith University in Australia. She is committed to making a positive humanitarian impact both through her professional career and involvement with nonprofit work.



Director of Health Operations

Mr. Selvin Prasad was born and raised in Fiji and has personally witnessed the flawed healthcare system of Fiji. He began his journey with EqualMed in 2017 serving as a volunteer unloading the container of medical supplies. His volunteering transitioned into serving as the communication channel between EqualMed, the Ministry of Health, and healthcare facilities throughout Fiji when the pandemic struck. Selvin manages ground logistics and deployment. Selvin's love for his country and faith drive his passion to help those in need. He is an assistant lecturer at The University of the South Pacific and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Accounting. Mr. Prasad is the recipient of two academic gold medals for the best master's dissertation in his college and the entirety of the University of the South Pacific.



Director of Education Operations

Ms. Ranjani Lata is the Director of Education Operations for EqualMed in Fiji. Her volunteering expanded to serving as the communication channel between EqualMed and the education sector in Fiji since 2019. Ranjani graciously worked during weekends and her vacation to manage the unloading, sorting, labelling, and distribution of medical supplies and equipment during the pandemic years of 2020, 2021, and 2022. She spearheaded EqualMed's initiative to equip high school science labs enabling students to engage in science experiments. EqualMed is encouraging science students to consider a career in healthcare as a sustainable strategy to address healthcare needs in Fiji. Ranjani heads the science department at Waidina College. She holds a Master of Science by research in biology and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in biology.

Partners and Supporters

Our generous donors
Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach, USA
i-SENS USA, Inc.
Ministry of Health, Fiji
Fiji Pharmaceuticals and Biomedical Services
Diabetes Fiji Inc.

CEO's Report

Dear Generous Donors, Supporters, Partners, and Future Contributors,

In 2023, the genesis of ***EqualMed reached a major milestone***—celebrating **ten years** of giving. By 2024, we proudly marked over a decade of impact and continued service. As the world began to emerge from the pandemic, we faced a host of new challenges—from disruptions in our personal lives and local communities to financial uncertainty and rising burnout. Yet, amid this period of both challenge and growth, the ***unwavering support of our donors continued to shine through***.

The Fijian healthcare system remained under significant strain in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic also ***exposed and exacerbated existing weaknesses in the medical infrastructure***. To support Fiji's recovery from the pandemic, EqualMed garnered donations to contribute essential medical supplies to ease the pressure on the national healthcare infrastructure. This is where **YOU** helped us raise $13,298 USD.

Amid ongoing post-pandemic recovery efforts, Fiji faced another major challenge in 2023 when devastating floods and landslides struck the country. These disasters displaced many residents, forced school closures, blocked critical roads, and severely disrupted access to healthcare at a time of urgent need. As one nurse at Sigatoka Hospital shared, *"With our current resources, our nurses face challenges every day in providing quality care to patients."*

During these difficult times, EqualMed's shipment of vital medical supplies and equipment arrived in a 40-foot container after a **102-day journey** impacted by global shipping delays, personnel shortages, and international instability. Valued at over $1.5 million FJD, the shipment included essential items such as oxygen administration kits, blood collection sets, IV kits, stethoscopes, laryngoscopes, surgical instruments, ER stretchers, wheelchairs, limb casts, and much more, providing much needed relief and support to healthcare providers and patients.

My gratitude can only go so far—but the **true impact** is ***best conveyed by the medical staff receiving YOUR support firsthand***. From Dr. Prashant Singh, Medical Officer at Naqali Health Center, a remote clinic about four hours from the city hospital:

"Our health center does cater for approximately 7,000 people. We see close to about 100-200 patients on a daily basis. We see our fair share of critically ill patients on a daily basis. The supplies given to us by EqualMed will help us see these patients better. With the ***provision of this wheelchair we were in desperate need*** *to actually cater for our sick patients. We will use these supplies and put them to good use."*

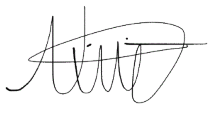
I also want to highlight our ongoing efforts to nurture the next generation of healthcare professionals in Fiji. Over the past several decades and heightened by the pandemic, the country has experienced a significant "brain drain," with the brightest minds seeking opportunities abroad. This has created a critical shortage of professionals in essential fields like medicine and nursing. To help address this, EqualMed is working to equip high schools with science resources **aimed at sparking interest in STEM** education. By promoting STEM subjects early on, we hope to inspire local students to pursue careers in healthcare, and ultimately serve their own communities. One of the teachers from Waidina College expresses their gratitude:

*"This year we are so grateful that our school is able to receive all these science equipments and my teachers here and students are very much grateful for your continued support for the education of our school right in **one of the remote schools** in the Naitasiri province."*

In 2023 and 2024, we adopted a more targeted deployment strategy. Our volunteers went ***straight to patients' doorsteps***. We **identified patients with diabetes who had undergone limb amputations and needed wheelchairs, walkers, and canes to survive** at home. *Diabetes supplies were provided free of charge to these patients*. By **going door to door**, we **ensured that critical supplies reached individuals and families who might otherwise have been overlooked.** Chronic diseases leave mental, physical, and financial burdens on patients and their families. We are working to ease the financial burden of medical supplies for under-served and under-resourced patients living with diabetes.

In recent times of both challenge and growth, your dedication has reminded us why we do what we do. Please know that **YOUR generosity is not only appreciated, but also essential**. The photos on the following pages provide just a small snapshot of where the donations were distributed and the lives they touched. ***There will never be enough words to thank YOU for a decade of support - a decade of equipping healthcare facilities, schools, orphanages, nursing homes, and patients directly***. YOUR ongoing commitment to the people of Fiji truly means the world. I leave you with three little words that express gratitude on behalf of all Fijians: **Vinaka Vaka Levu**!!!

We are excited for what's ahead, and **we are honored to have you by our side**.
With my sincerest gratitude,



Nivita D. Sharma, MD

"The world feels smaller when we work together"
Nivita D. Sharma, MD

Snapshots



Unloading of the container begins in Suva, Fiji with the help of all our volunteers.



Items are inspected, organized and sorted into aliquots for each medical facility.



Here is a sample of medical equipment donated to the healthcare facilities: IV poles, hospital beds, canes, wheelchairs, walkers, and emergency room stretchers, among many others.





Official handing over of donated items to the Ministry of Health. EqualMed is recognized by the Fijian government for a decade of contributions.





Donations are delivered to Sigatoka Hospital. Sigatoka hospital serves as the primary maternity ward for southwest region of Viti Levu (main island of Fiji). Items included high grade sanitation equipment, sharps containers, scales, stethoscopes, operating room equipment, gauze, and other essential items.





Labasa hospital in northern Fiji receives donations (hospital beds, oxygen masks, operating room supplies, etc.) to the main hospital and eye department.





Medical supplies are handed over to Savusavu hospital on the northern island of Vanua Levu. Medical supplies traveled on an additional ferry and smaller boats and by road to reach these medical centers. The main ferry ride is an overnight ride and will take 12 hours from these remote small hospitals to the city hospital.




Donations are provided to Naqali Health Center which is located in the inner part of the main island, Viti Levu. Basic supplies such as band-aids, antiseptic solution, gauze, and grip socks were in dire need.




A sample of supplies donated to the homes of patients with diabetes (left). Science lab equipment donated to students of Waidina Secondary High School (right).





Medical supplies donated to Dilkusha Children's home, a local orphanage. Many of the children here have chronic and terminal medical illnesses that are taken care of by the in-house staff.





Items are donated to Father Law Home, an aged care facility. Many of the elderly patients here do not have homes and have debilitating medical conditions that require daily attention. To prevent future outbreaks of disease within the facility, PPE were also provided.

Our Impact

On behalf of the board members, the staff, clients and the students we would like to thank you. Thank you very much for everything that has been provided. We have received **walking sticks, walkers, wheelchairs. We have also received lots of items that are going to be needed at the home**. ... Nothing here will go to waste. Everything here is going to be used. And of course our clients thank you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Vinaka.

- Father Law Home

Thank you to EqualMed for thinking of us and bringing this kind donation to our hospital. We have been **ordering a scale for years now**, which **never came**, but **thanks to EqualMed we have a scale now**. These donated items will be given to the departments where they are most needed and utilized to its best.

- Sigatoka Hospital

"We do believe that it will help us in case of emergency. Your **donation will help us make a lasting impact**. Thank you for your incredible generosity."

- Dilkusha Childrens Home







The supplies given to us by EqualMed will help us see these patients better. With **the provision of this wheelchair, we were in desperate needs** to actually cater for our sick patients. We will use these supplies and put them to good use.

- Naqali Health Center

This year we are so grateful that our school is able to receive all these science equipments and my teachers here and students are very much grateful for your continued support for the education of our school right in **one of the remote schools** in the Naitasiri province.

- Waidina Secondary School

Performance & Governance



EqualMed reports key performance metrics and its governance practices to Candid, formerly GuideStar. Candid is the largest provider worldwide of information about non-profits. Candid collects, standardizes, and distributes information on millions of non-profits and promotes and rates the transparency of non-profits so donors and other stakeholders can have confidence in the charities they support. Candid issues four levels of Seal of Transparency: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. **EqualMed attained the highest Platinum Seal of Transparency in each year since 2017, placing EqualMed in the top 0.1% of the most transparent and good governance charities**.
https://www.guidestar.org/search

A common performance yardstick of a non-profit is the program expense ratio. This ratio measures the percentage of expenses used to fund the core missions of a non-profit. EqualMed is proud to report that its program expense ratio is 100%. This means that all donor funds including personal contributions go directly toward providing healthcare to the medically under-served and less fortunate.

OUR PROGRAM EXPENSE RATIO IS 100%

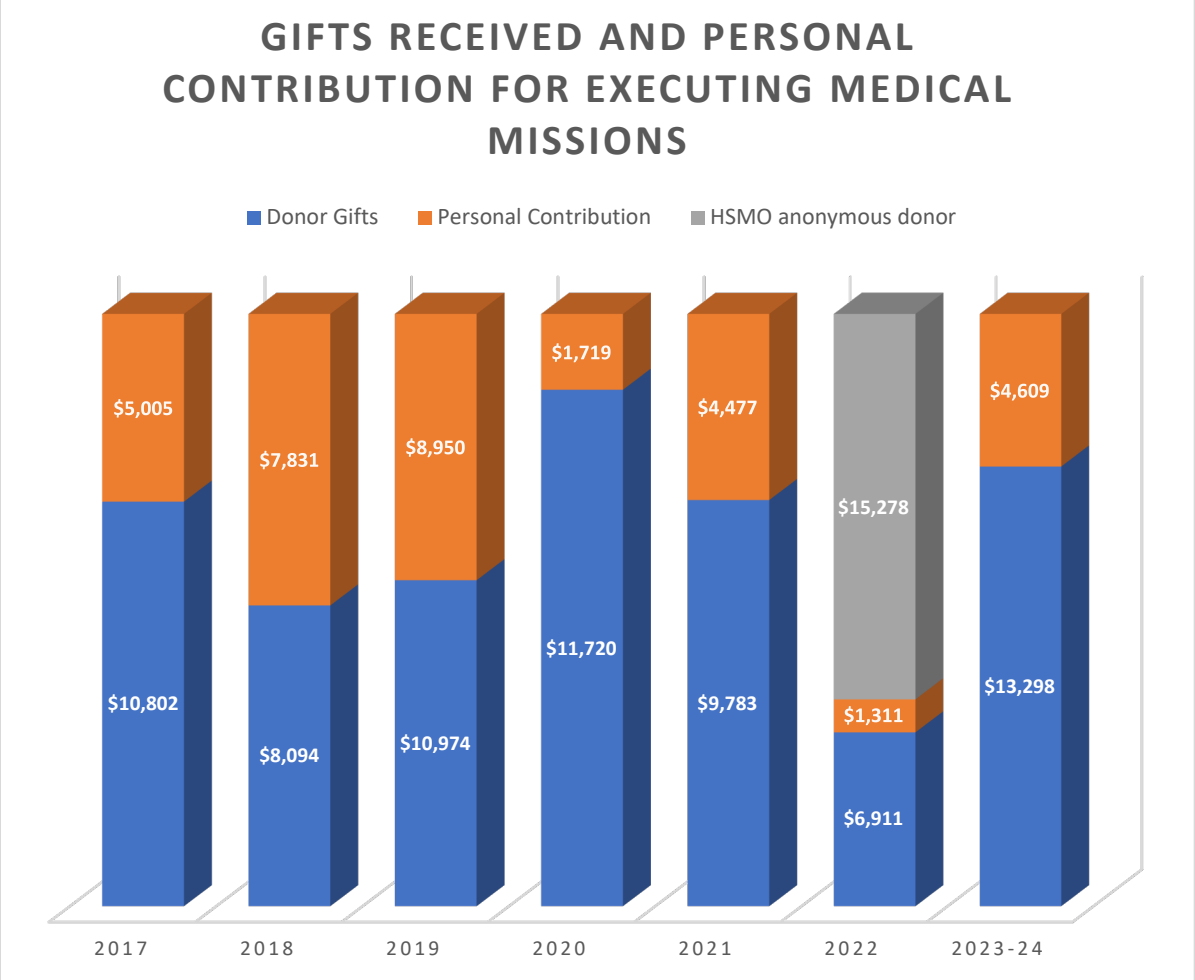
EQUALMED IS A PURE VOLUNTEER RUN 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT CHARITY

We do NOT compensate our volunteers and our team

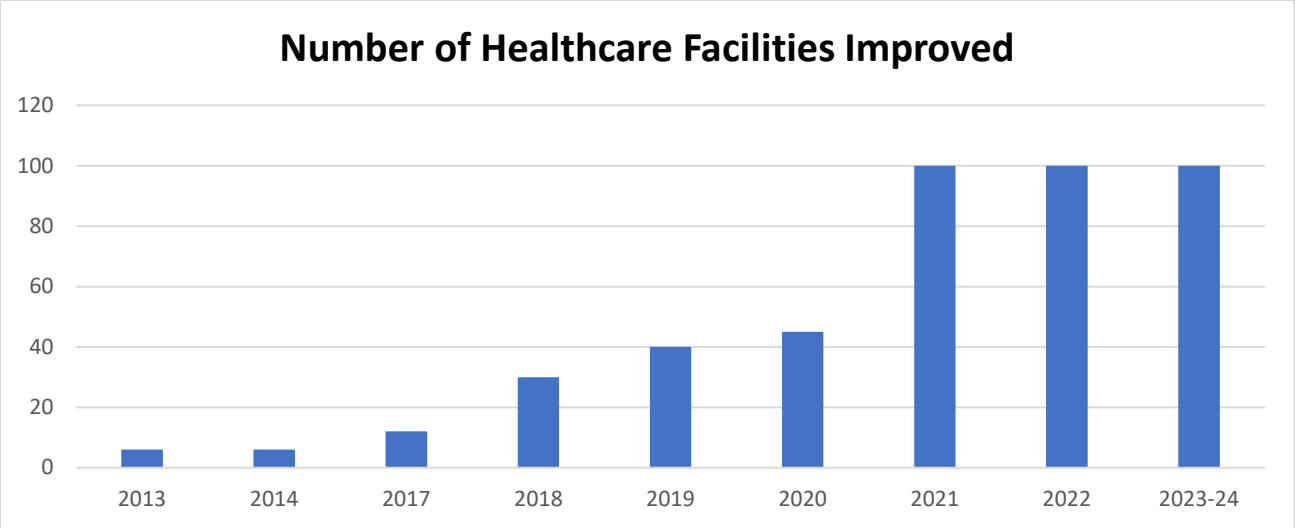
In our triennial report covering the pandemic years 2020 to 2022, we highlighted three critical healthcare system needs due to supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic: stretched resources, reallocated resources across healthcare facilities leading to significant shortages in remote areas, and crumbling infrastructure. In 2023 and 2024, EqualMed focused on these areas and is pleased to report that we were able to make some inroads and help cushion the impact by:

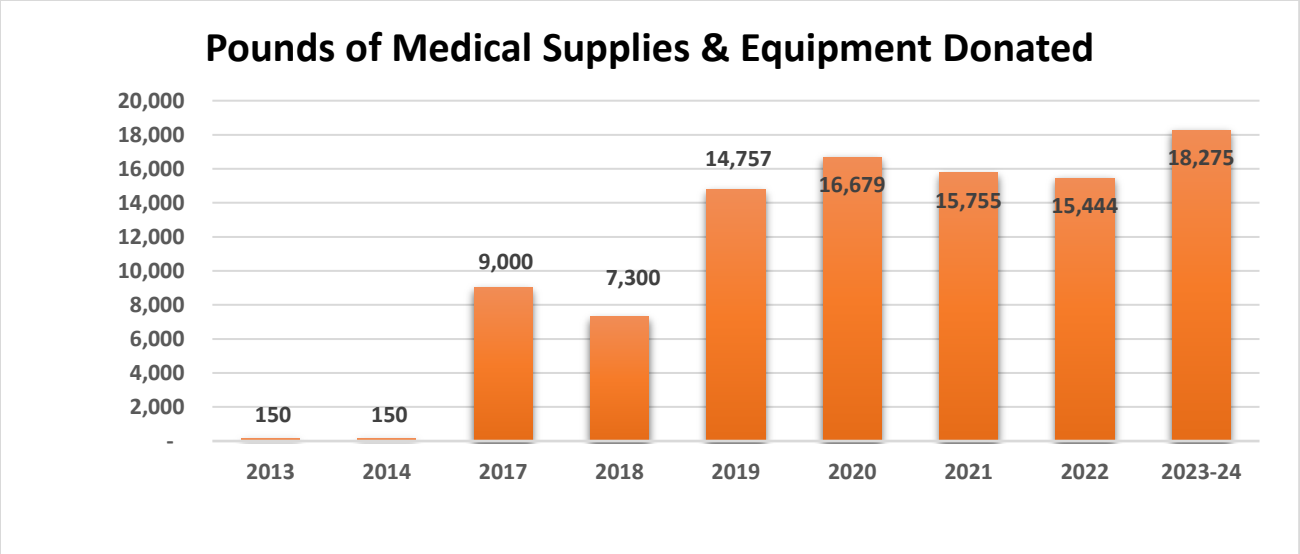
Providing diabetes supplies for continued patient support.
Providing essential medical supplies and equipment and consumables to the out-of-reach regions, and
Alleviating poor infrastructure by replacing dilapidated equipment.

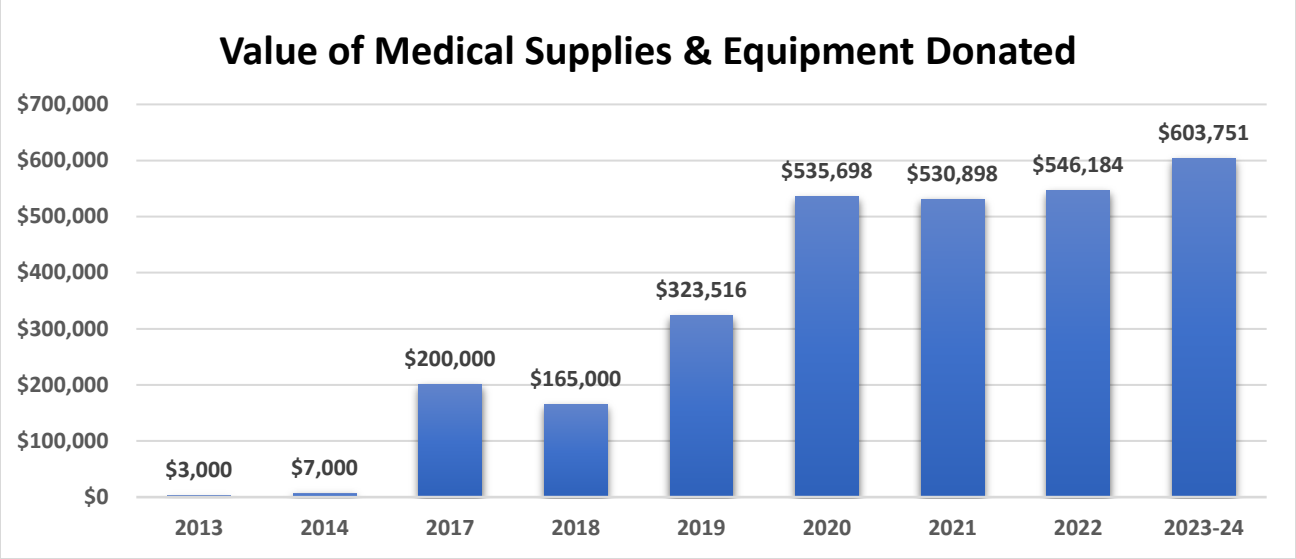
Some details are contained in this report, and more are on our website: https://equalmed.org/project-2023-24-1



EqualMed is a small charity (less than $50,000 revenue) and has e-filed Form 990-N with the IRS, search here: https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/details/







Values are in USD

Financial Summary

*All our transactions are on a cash basis. For each year in our history, the **total cost has exceeded donor gifts** received. Donor funds are used to acquire, ship, and transport medical supplies and equipment to Fiji. As depicted in the bar graph above and summary financials below, a significant portion of the sourcing and transportation costs to and within Fiji are met personally by the board members including the CEO. All other major costs such as packaging and transportation of supplies within Fiji to health facilities, customs clearance fees, website hosting, registration fees, and travel costs are also funded personally and are not included in the financial summary reported below.*

Platinum Transparency 2024

Candid.

Financial Summary for 2023-2024[1]

Item description	Notes		$USD
Net donations received (after Paypal and bank fees) available for acquisition of medical supplies and transportation costs	2		13,298
Payments for medical supplies after HSMO scholarship		(8,000)	
Payments for shipping and transportation		(9,907)	(17,907)
Deficit			(4,609)
Total personal out of pocket contribution	3		**$4,609**

Notes:

1. The financial summary is for cash donations received and expenses. As a small charity, EqualMed uses the cash basis of accounting.

2. Net donations are calculated after accounting for fees charged by PayPal and incoming wire fees and bank services fees. All donor funds are utilized to acquire and ship medical supplies and equipment.

3. The personal contribution amount is funding provided by the CEO and ***excludes*** in-kind donations by the Board of Directors for meeting operating expenses (packaging and transportation of supplies within Fiji to health facilities, travel costs, customs clearance fees, state of Georgia registration fees, website hosting fees, and other operating expenses). **Donor funds are never used for operating costs**.

Near Term Objectives & Activities

One of the most disturbing and concerning issues facing the healthcare system in Fiji is the significant lack of medical consumables. **More than a decade ago, the CEO, Nivita Sharma, then a high school student, had identified through personal visits to healthcare facilities that medical staff in Fiji reused consumable medical supplies**: https://equalmed.org/urgent-needs

Since then, EqualMed has been helping to ensure continuous supplies of consumables are alleviating the risk of communicated diseases patients face due to reuse of disposable consumables. However, EqualMed has come to learn that **due to significant lack of essentials, healthcare staff were continuing to wash**, **note it is wash and not sterilize**, **consumables such as IV catheters, urinary catheters, central line catheters, IV extension sets and oxygen masks**. Items such as gloves and masks that should be used once or disposed of when seeing multiple patients, are being reused.

Providing consumables remains a core focus of our work

EqualMed has also come to learn that the number of people seeking medical services has grown significantly since the pandemic. Many young people in their 30s to 40s are dying inexplicably. **The patient growth has burdened healthcare facilities and hospitals are struggling to perform triage due to obsolete and malfunctioning equipment** such as blood pressure machines (BP) and scales.

EqualMed aims to undertake a more targeted approach by sourcing more technologically advanced BP machines and scales to address these issues in 2025 and 2026

Ways To Get Involved

As you can see from the financial summaries, EqualMed uses 100% of donor gifts to bring healthcare to the medically under-served and less fortunate to afford basic healthcare. Considerably much more needs to be done to bring healthcare to the basic level and many more health facilities beg our support. Over the years and as the pandemic struck, costs have risen and significant budgetary shortfalls have been funded personally.

To help EqualMed expand its reach, you can help in various ways:

- If you are an **individual**, make a financial contribution.
- If you are a **medical supplier**, reach out to us about donating needed items.
- If you are a **freight/shipping company**, reach out to us about helping transport medical supplies within the USA and/or to Fiji.
- Want a **more hands on role**? Contact us to become a volunteer, corporate partner, or board member

To make a donation or leave a bequest: Please contact us or visit https://equalmed.org/donate-now-1

All cash or in-kind donations are tax deductible under the IRS as EqualMed is an IRS tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit charity and is registered in the state of Georgia, USA.

We would love to hear from you about any other ideas you have to help us out! Contact us to discuss how you can help.

equalmed.org

equalmed1@gmail.com

facebook.com/equalmed/

Fiji Islands & USA