



*Equalizing Access to Healthcare*

2019

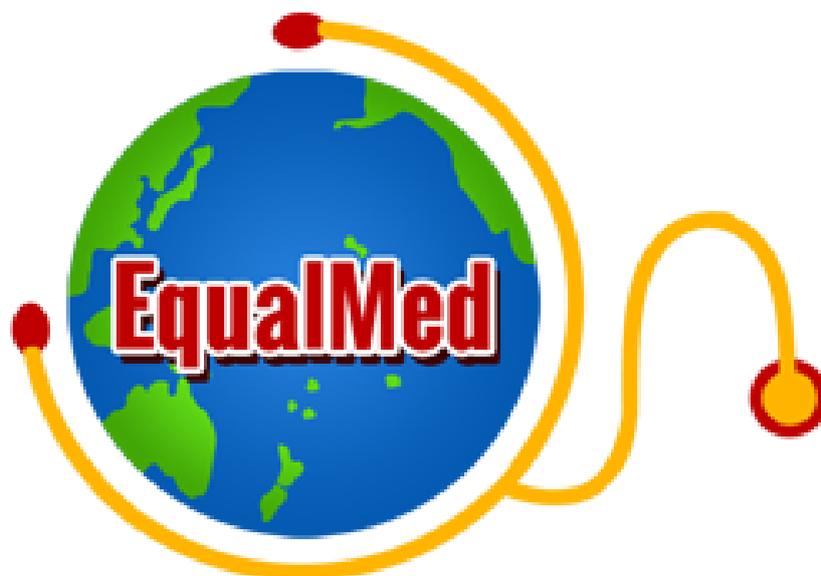
## ANNUAL REPORT



Volunteers of Fiji sharing their appreciation on behalf of all patients and healthcare workers. Vinaka Vakalevu is Fijian for “thank you very much.”

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*Equalizing Access to Healthcare*

## 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 17-year old high school student at the time. The call to establish a non-profit to help the medically under-served and economically disadvantaged was motivated by the passing away of Nivita's grandmother in 2013 who did not have access to quality healthcare in the Fiji Islands. Turning her own sorrow of losing her young grandmother, Nivita wants 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 her charity 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 nations in the South Pacific.

To learn more about our history visit: <https://equalmed.org/founder-%26-ceo>



Supplies and equipment are unloaded from the 40-foot container in June 2019 and organized according to their final destinations.

## **ABOUT US**

### ***EqualMed's Inaugural Project Fiji***

The foundation of EqualMed was 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, and its first major mission, Project Fiji 2017, was successfully executed in July 2017. Project Fiji 2018 was equally successful in July 2018.

### ***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 has 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 is regarded as having the most advanced medical facilities in the South Pacific. Fiji has a School of Medicine and is the primary hub of the University of the South Pacific.

Medical facilities in Fiji do not have the very basic of medical supplies to treat people in need of medical care. Lacking and urgently needed are necessary medical supplies such as micropore tape, thermometers, dressings, stethoscopes and otoscopes, skin prep wipes, crutches, scissors, insulin injections, diabetes monitoring equipment (blood glucose monitors and test strips), catheters, and even basic medications. These supplies are available abundantly in the USA. Each year tons of unexpired medical supplies in the USA are discarded in landfills that unnecessarily burden our lovely planet.

Patients in Fiji often must bring their own medical supplies. For example, during previous medical missions, Nivita witnessed a boy of about 10 with a suspected broken arm waiting for hours to be seen at a major city hospital only to be told to purchase plaster from the 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.

Please see photos over the next few pages and visit <https://equalmed.org> for details and photographs of medical facilities crying out for help.

## **PEOPLE**

EqualMed is in its early years and board members comprise the following individuals. EqualMed welcomes interested persons to volunteer as board members and help it grow in its mission to equalize access to healthcare throughout the world.

### **Founder & Chief Executive Officer: Nivita D. Sharma.**

Nivita Sharma is currently a third-year medical student at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City. She graduated Magna Cum Laude and Highest Honors with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a minor in Global Health in May of 2018. Nivita was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Beta Kappa, and National Blue Key Honor Society.

Currently, Nivita serves on the executive board of the Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights and is a frequent volunteer at the Weill Cornell Community Clinic, which provides care to uninsured patients.

During her undergraduate years, Nivita held the office of Vice President (2017-2018) of The American Red Cross Chapter at The University of Georgia. She is a certified Red Cross first aid and CPR responder. Nivita served on the Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) at The University of Georgia in the 2016 to 2018 academic years. She volunteered at Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center from 2015 to 2017. Through her role in MEDLIFE, she travelled to Lima, Peru to set up mobile clinics and provide medical care to less fortunate and medically under-served families living in rural communities. While in high school, Nivita engaged in various charitable events to help the economically disadvantaged and those with medical disabilities.

### **Chairman of the Board: Divesh S. Sharma, PhD.**

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.

### **Corporate Secretary: Vineeta D. Sharma, PhD.**

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.

## **PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS 2019**

Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach, USA

Jack DeLoss Taylor Charitable Trust, USA

The Lighthouse - GA, USA

NaHina Fiji Ltd

Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Fiji

Fiji Pharmaceuticals and Biomedical Services

Diabetes Fiji Inc.

Marriot Momi Bay, Fiji

GPH, Fiji

Fortune Star, Fiji

Our generous donors

## CEO'S REPORT

Dear Generous Donors,

It is with great gratitude and a full heart that I share with you the successes and impacts of Project Fiji 2019 – it was a historical year for EqualMed. For the first time since our inception, we raised enough funds to ship a 40-foot container of medical supplies and equipment. Since 2013, EqualMed has donated more than \$1,500,000 FJD in medical supplies and equipment to the Fiji Islands. You can see the great strides we have made over the years with the help of each and every one of you. **YOUR** generosity and dedication to EqualMed's mission allows us to touch and improve the lives of so many medically under-served and under-privileged in Fiji. For the first time, EqualMed held three strategic meetings with the Minister for Health and Medical Services, Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, and his team to strengthen our relationship, confirm support in Fiji, and identified targeted areas of need. *“On behalf of the Prime Minister, the people of Fiji, and the medical system in Fiji, we are sincerely grateful and with a warm heart a big thank you to you, your donors, sponsors, and partners, VINAKA VAKALEVU,”* says Dr. Waqainabete.

Throughout the years I have been conducting needs assessment at each healthcare facility that I visit. This enables me to compile lists of desperately needed items to be donated to a specific facility. **YOUR** generosity and the support of our partners enabled EqualMed to ship a 40-foot container of medical supplies and equipment to Fiji in 2019. Hundreds of thousands of economically disadvantaged and medically under-served children, women, and the elderly will directly benefit from **YOUR** generosity as you will witness through photographs over the next few pages. The following are examples of how Project Fiji 2019 was executed.

- In 2018, I came across a rural hospital that I did not know existed, Wainibokasi Hospital. This hospital serves over 80,000 patients and was in dire condition. In 2018, EqualMed donated many items to Wainibokasi Hospital, but this was not enough. I was shocked to hear how patient care was compromised due to a lack of basic medical supplies. As a result of **YOUR** generosity, EqualMed was able to equip this hospital with items such as baby bassinets, bed sheets, blankets, digital thermometers, various types of wound dressing, hospital beds, pillowcases, scalpels, stethoscopes, surgical towels, tourniquets, and many more items.
- As mentioned in past years, diabetes is among the leading causes of disability and death in Fiji and it has become a long-term goal for EqualMed to help provide specialized care for patients with diabetes. This year we continued to fulfill our goal to fight diabetes through Diabetes Fiji Inc., a non-profit organization that provides specialized medical care and conducts educational outreach programs throughout the scattered islands of Fiji. As a result of **YOUR** generosity, EqualMed provided glucose monitors for adults and children, insulin injections, lancets, skin prep wipes, test strips, wheelchairs, BP machines, pulse oximeters, post-surgical shoes/boots, gloves, crutches & walkers, canes, adult diapers, and heel protectors, among other items. With the help of Diabetes Fiji Inc. and the Ministry of Health, these supplies were shipped to remote villages in the outer islands.
- In 2018, I discovered that a new maternity ward was being constructed at Nausori Health Center. While it is excellent to create more space for the rising numbers of expecting mothers, what use is an empty space with scarce medical supplies and equipment. As a result of **YOUR** generosity, EqualMed donated the first electric birthing bed in Fiji to the new Nausori Maternity Ward. This electric birthing bed allows mothers, especially those with high-risk pregnancies, to have a safer and more comfortable delivery. Additionally,

EqualMed donated baby blankets, newborn jumpsuits, hospital beds, baby cots, and specialized diagnostic equipment such as infant stethoscopes.

- In 2019, EqualMed provided further donations for specialized care to the physical therapy department at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital. Necessary basic items that are taken for granted in developed countries like crutches, arm slings, bandages, foot braces, pressure boots, and casts are not available in Fiji. As a result of **YOUR** generosity, EqualMed was able to equip this department by providing these to the appreciation and excitement of the care givers.
- Since 2017, EqualMed has been performing eye tests to issue reading glasses to residents living in impoverished areas. In 2019, EqualMed tested the eyes of people from several villages and provided more than 300 pairs of reading glasses.
- In addition to the efforts outlined above, EqualMed continued to donate medical supplies and equipment to rural hospitals and health centers throughout the Fiji Islands.

Project Fiji 2020 brings many challenges. With an unexpected and evolving pandemic that has hit the world, our usual operations have been slightly altered. I am unable to travel to Fiji to personally distribute and deliver the medical items to each healthcare facility. However, dedicated volunteers in Fiji and the Ministry of Health are overseeing the unloading, distribution and delivery of the items. In the wake of this pandemic, EqualMed immediately gathered supplies and equipment that are crucial in caring for patients with Covid-19. When developed countries such as the USA encounter personal protective equipment, ventilator, and hospital bed shortages to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, imagine how ill-prepared a small country like Fiji would be. Earlier in 2020, my call for this endeavor was kindly supported by our donors and I am pleased to say that Project Fiji 2020 is well under way.

EqualMed operates purely on a **volunteer** basis, and **YOUR** contributions were used to acquire the medical supplies and equipment, and to pay shipment of the 40-foot container from Illinois to Fiji. I paid for my travel to Fiji and the cost of some sea and ground transportation within Fiji. *All of YOUR generous contributions went directly to beneficiaries* as you can see from the 2019 financial summary and graphs of funding sources in the next few pages. To ensure accountability and transparency, the website also provides lists of medical supplies and equipment donated. Details are on the website of EqualMed (<https://www.equalmed.org>). For media coverage and Fiji TV news and special report on EqualMed, please click <https://equalmed.org/media-coverage>.

I am very thankful to all of **YOU**, and to the partners, supporters and volunteers of EqualMed. Without **YOUR** support, EqualMed would not be able to execute its mission of providing access to medical care to the medically under-served and economically disadvantaged.

I look forward to a successful Project Fiji 2020 and thank you enormously from the bottom of my heart. With **YOUR** support, we can take one-step-at-a-time and make a HUGE difference to those suffering medical disparities in economically disadvantaged communities.

Sincerely,



Nivita D. Sharma

Since 2016, EqualMed has partnered with Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach (HSMO). A non-profit organization based in Illinois from whom we purchase medical supplies and equipment. Each year, HSMO packs our containers to the brim with medical supplies and equipment.

**Thank you to HSMO for your integral and unwavering support over the last four years.**





This 40-foot container travelled about 16,000 miles to arrive in Suva, Fiji, ready to be unloaded.

Unloading the container would not be possible without our enthusiastic volunteers.



Supplies and equipment are carefully allocated to each area of distribution. Dialysis chairs, hospital beds, walkers, bedpans, gloves, BP machines, sterile gauze & dressings, are just a few of the many items seen here.



Trucks are loaded with supplies and equipment to be delivered immediately to healthcare sites. IV poles, wheelchairs, walkers, crutches are seen here.

Pediatric hospital cribs are much needed to deliver specialized care in Fiji.



Donating the first electric birthing bed in Fiji to the Nausori Hospital Maternity Ward.

Donating much needed supplies and equipment to the nurse's clinic at the Special Needs School in Suva, Fiji.



Donating specialized medical supplies and equipment to the Physical Therapy Department of Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, Fiji. Many items in boxes are not seen here as they were immediately put to use.

Donating much needed medical supplies and equipment to the nurses' clinic in remote Tau Village.



Donating new glucose monitors, test strips, lancets, etc to the Diabetes Fiji Inc. Hub in Suva, Fiji.



Administering reading eye glass tests for the residents of Tau Village and several surrounding villages. An interpreter is assisting.



Happy to receive their first pair of reading glasses.



Donating UV sunglasses to patients with diabetes who work in farms in Koronivia Village.



Supplies and equipment donated in previous years are still in use at health facilities throughout Fiji. Here are just a few examples.





The doctors and nurses of Wainibokasi Hospital host an appreciation event for EqualMed and its donors, topped off with cake!

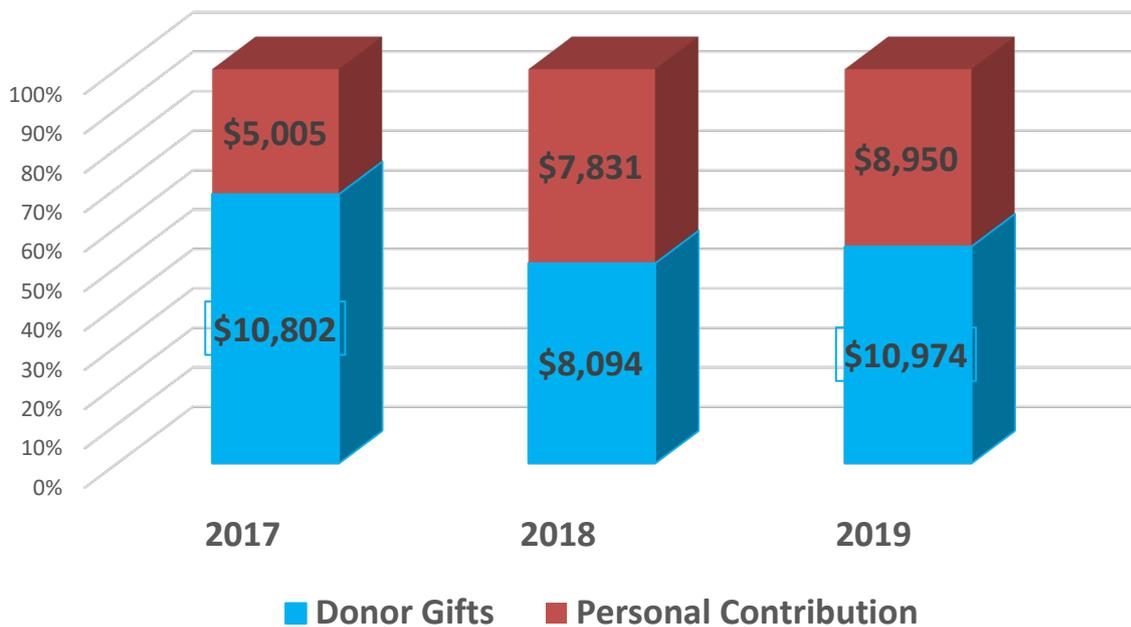
**PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE**



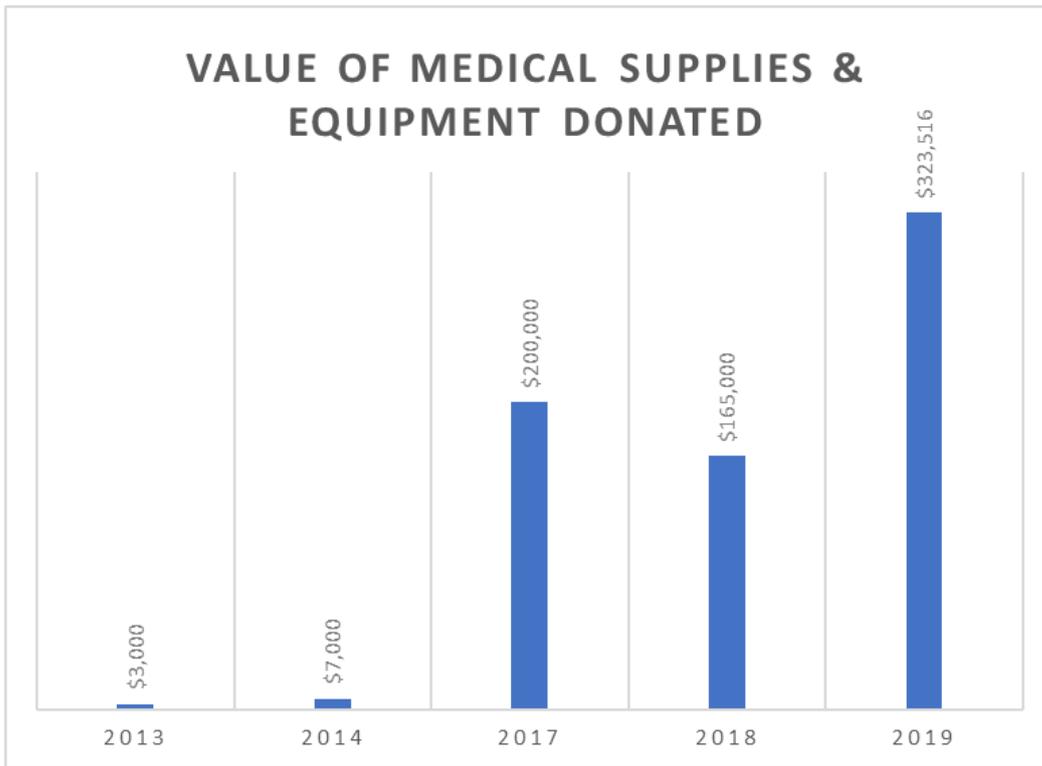
EqualMed reports key performance metrics and its governance practices to GuideStar, which is the largest worldwide provider of information about non-profits. GuideStar collects, standardizes, and distributes information on millions of non-profits. GuideStar promotes and rates the transparency of non-profits so that donors and other stakeholders can have confidence in the charities they support. GuideStar issues four levels of Seal of Transparency: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. EqualMed attained the highest level, Platinum Seal of Transparency in April 2018.



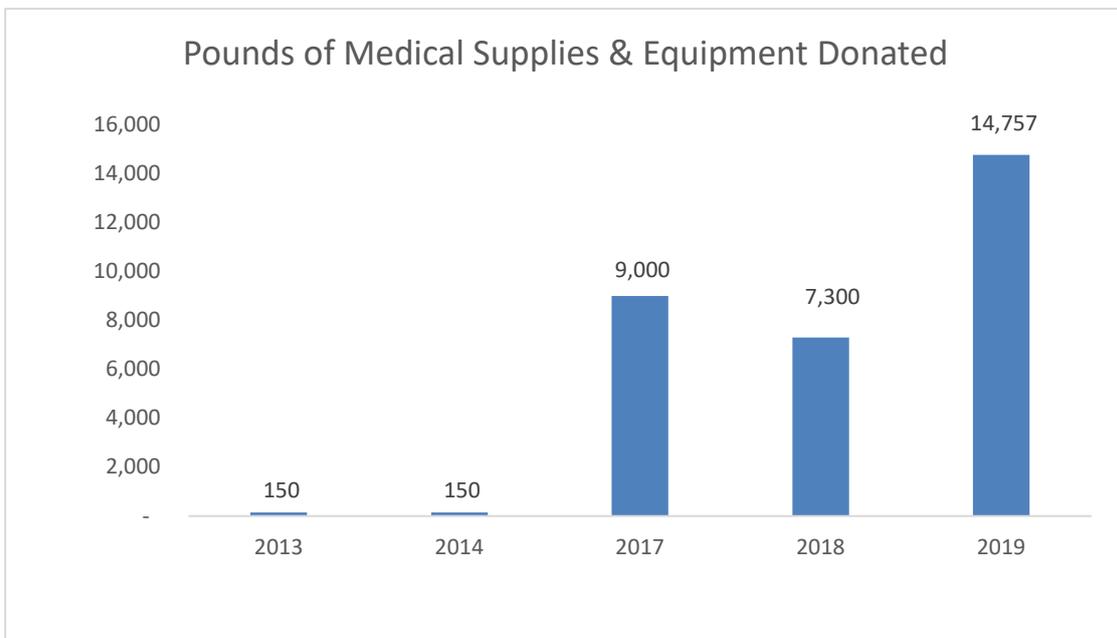
**Gifts Received and Personal Contribution for Executing Medical Missions**



-  *100% OF DONOR GIFTS WERE USED TO PROVIDE MEDICAL SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT IN 2017, 2018, 2019*
-  *EQUALMED DOES NOT USE DONOR GIFTS FOR OPERATING EXPENSES*
-  *NO COMPENSATION IS PAID TO ANYONE*



*MEDICAL SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT DONATED IN 2013 AND 2014 WERE FUNDED PERSONALLY AS THESE WERE INDIVIDUAL MEDICAL MISSIONS THAT LED TO THE FORMATION OF EQUALMED*



## MAGNITUDES OF GRATITUDE

*“The desperately needed medical items given to us are not available in Fiji and we are so fortunate and thankful that EqualMed is supporting our efforts to address diabetes. We thank Nivita and her **donors** so very much from the bottom of our hearts. Vinaka vaka levu!”* – Diabetes Fiji Inc.



“On behalf of Tau nursing station here in Fiji we would just like to give a big Vinaka Vaka Levu, thank you. Thank you to EqualMed for all the help you have given us. All the villages in need have shown us their gratitude and we would like to relay that to you and **your donors**. Thank you so much for staying true to your vision for providing medical supplies and healthcare to people that are in need.” -Receiving nurse

“This medical equipment received today has **never been available in Fiji** and were extremely crucial as the staff have been compromising patient care by using make-shift shoes and boots.” – Receiving physical therapist at Colonial War Memorial (CWM) Hospital, Fiji’s largest main city hospital.

*“Words cannot express the LOVE & KINDNESS extended to our people in Fiji which had really made a big difference **especially here in our remote small rural hospital of Wainibokasi.**”* – Receiving doctor



*"Valelevu health center cares for more than 60,000 patients. Our challenge is that we do not have enough space nor enough tools that we use daily. We have 24 hour services but we only have three beds. We face a lot of challenges, but some of our challenges have been minimized with the supplies that have been donated by EqualMed. We have been able to give full care to our patients. Thank you."*  
– Receiving nurse



**"On behalf of the Nausori Maternity in Fiji I would like to say thank you. First for the giving your time. We look after three provinces here in Fiji and we have about 80-90 deliveries a month. The donation of this maternity bed has answered so many of our prayers. We thank you on behalf of all the midwives. We cannot maneuver around our patients well with the current beds. So to have an electric bed is a blessing for us. Please convey our sincere gratitude to your donors for their contributions for our beloved nation and for the mothers of Fiji"** – Receiving nurse

*Thank you very much for today's donations. Today is one of a kind. We are indeed grateful and very happy about all the donations we have received today. We can now deliver quality healthcare to our communities. We can't thank you enough because we have limited resources in everything. Even though we are the smallest nursing station in our division, we are so fortunate to have your generosity. Vinaka and God bless."* – Receiving nurse

*We are very lucky to have your assistance towards the HITH program. Your donations will be used on HITH patients and inpatients in surgical wards; especially on wound such as pressure injuries, vascular ulcers, diabetic foot ulcers and surgical wounds."* – Receiving nurse

*"Just so wonderful to see LOVE and GOODWILL in action."* – Receiving nurse

*"I would like to thank EqualMed for donating walking canes. I could not walk without one, but as soon as I received this walking cane I could resume my daily activities. I thank you from my heart."* – Patient with diabetes

*"Hundreds of speculums donated have already been put to use in the CWM emergency department and ICU as they had run out of these for many months."* – Receiving nurse

## 2020 OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

### *Project Fiji 2020*

The plan was to continue providing medical supplies and equipment so that children as young as 3 years and village elders suffering from diabetes can receive medical care. Please visit <https://equalmed.org/fighting-diabetes> for photos of some of the children with diabetes Nivita interacted with. The second primary planned target was a health center in rural eastern Fiji (Wainibokasi Hospital), which was visited in 2018 and 2019. This health facility desperately needs medical supplies and equipment and photographs of its fragility can be seen here <https://equalmed.org/urgent-needs>. However, the unexpected Covid-19 pandemic has altered the urgent needs as it has further strained the healthcare system of an already struggling nation. The donations for 2020 will be used to source items that are logistically and financially challenging to obtain to help fight the pandemic. Therefore, in mid-2020 EqualMed shipped with the generous help from donors a 40-foot container primarily containing supplies to fight the Covid-19 pandemic and equip hospitals throughout Fiji as they all are running out of critical yet basic medical supplies. The plan was to ship a 20-foot container but the overwhelming needs led to doubling the container size. Our supply partner, Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach has been so understanding of our financial situation and provided what they call a scholarship to EqualMed again in 2020. This scholarship reduces the cost of filling the 40-foot container to that of a 20-foot (from \$7,000 to \$3,500). With a personal contribution, this 40-foot container was successfully shipped and arrived in Suva, Fiji in late June. Remember that your gifts are tax deductible and all donor gifts are used to provide medical supplies and equipment to the medically under-served and economically disadvantaged in villages in Fiji.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has strained and consumed medical supplies and equipment in Fiji, EqualMed is working with the Ministry of Health and its dedicated volunteers in Fiji to identify health facilities on the brink and in urgent need of supplies for Project Fiji 2021.

## Financial Summary for Project Fiji 2019

	<b>\$USD</b>
Net donations received (after Paypal and bank fees)	10,974
Payments for medical supplies after HSMO scholarship	(4,479)
Payments for shipping and transportation	<u>(6,935)</u>
Deficit	(440)
Additional costs: airfares and unsponsored accommodation	<u>(8,510)</u>
<b>Total personal out of pocket contribution<sup>1</sup></b>	<b><u>\$8,950</u></b>

## Donations received after completion of Project Fiji 2019 for Project Fiji 2020

Net donations received (after Paypal and bank fees) in 2019	1,015
Net donations received (after Paypal and bank fees) in 2020 till May 12	8,671
<b>Personal contribution</b>	<b>1,953</b>
Budgeted costs for Project Fiji 2020 <sup>2</sup>	<u>(14,000)</u>
<b>Funding (gap)/surplus for Project Fiji 2020</b>	<b>(2,361)</b>
<b>Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach Scholarship</b>	<b>3,500</b>
<b>Specialized Medical Equipment Acquisition &amp; Transportation<sup>3</sup></b>	<b><u>(2,000)</u></b>
<b>Net expected funding (gap)/surplus<sup>3</sup></b>	<b><u>(\$861)</u></b>

1: Total donation by board members: Nivita, Divesh, and Vineeta Sharma = \$8,950 for meeting costs of providing medical supplies, equipment, and medical services, and travel and accommodation costs over 45 days of medical mission in Fiji. Sponsored accommodation was provided by NaHina Ltd Fiji for 26 days during distribution of supplies to central division in Fiji and to conduct eye tests and issue glasses to remote area villagers. The \$8,950 personal contribution *excludes* in-kind donations related to operating expenses (state of Georgia registration fees, website hosting fees, and other expenses like phone calls to Fiji).

2: Budgeted costs include acquisition of medical supplies and shipping to Fiji. Within Fiji transportation and travel costs are excluded and will be funded personally or through partners. The \$14,000 budget includes shipping costs of \$7,000 and cost of medical supplies of \$7,000 that is made up of medical supplies and equipment sourced from our USA medical supply charity partners at discounted prices. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and international travel bans to Fiji until further notice, no travel or accommodation costs are expected.

3: Specialized medical equipment have been ordered (cardiology stethoscopes, infant stethoscopes, tympanic thermometers, pulse oximeters, and battery operated BP machines) and will be separately transported to Fiji.

Note: EqualMed is a small charity and has filed Form 990-N with the IRS.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

As you can see from the budget, the success of EqualMed's mission is reliant on donor gifts and personal contribution. You can help in various ways including making a financial donation, sending medical supplies or assisting in some other way such as transportation/freight of medical supplies within the USA and/or to Fiji. 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.

### **Make a donation**

Please contact us or visit <https://equalmed.org/donate-now-1>

### **Leave a bequest**

Please contact us or visit <https://equalmed.org/donate-now-1>

### **Become a corporate partner or board member**

Please contact us to discuss how you can help

### **Other ways you can help our cause**

Please contact us to discuss how you can help

## **CONTACT US**

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