



*Equalizing Access to Healthcare*

**2018**

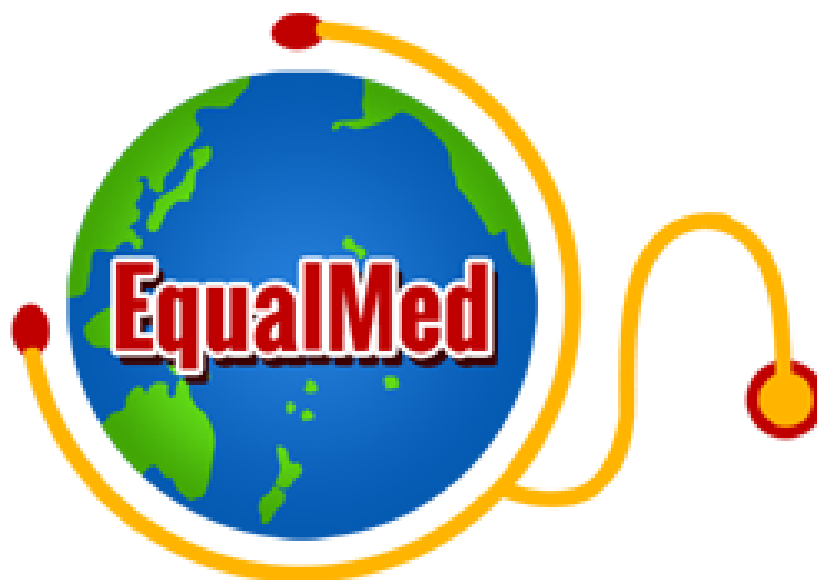
## **ANNUAL REPORT**



Doctors, nurses, and hospital staff of Wainibokasi Hospital show their appreciation for all that they have received to help give the best quality of healthcare that they can to their patients. Vinaka Vakalevu is Fijian for “thank you very much.”

## CONTENTS

<b>Mission</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About Us</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>People</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Partners and Supporters in 2018</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CEO's Report</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Performance and Governance</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Some Words of Thanks from Fiji</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2019 Objectives and Activities</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2018 Financial Summary and 2019 Budget</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>How You Can Help</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Contact Us</b>	<b>19</b>



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## 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 20-foot container in July 2018 and organized according to their final destination.

## **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 successfully 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. They often lack primary medical supplies and equipment. 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 are lacking and urgently needed. 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 first-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 2018**

Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach, USA  
Jack DeLoss Taylor Charitable Trust, USA  
NewEyes, USA  
Ministry of Health, Fiji  
Fiji Pharmaceuticals and Biomedical Services  
Diabetes Fiji Inc.  
Shangri-la Resort, Fiji  
Fortune Star, Fiji  
Our generous donors



## CEO'S REPORT

Dear Generous Donors,

With **YOUR** help, Project Fiji 2018 made a great impact. **YOU** have touched and improved the lives of so many medically under-served and under-privileged in Fiji, especially children and the elderly. In the 2017 [annual report](#), I described some of the shocking discoveries I made during the July 2017 mission. In that report, I outlined two main objectives for 2018.

The **first goal** was to provide diabetes medical supplies and equipment so that 500 children as young as 3 years and 10,000 village elders suffering from diabetes could receive proper medical care. This goal has become a long term goal because EqualMed is a small charity in its early years and has limited donor funds. Please visit <https://equalmed.org/fighting-diabetes>. Since diabetes leads to foot ulcers and many sufferers have had their lower limbs amputated (the diabetes related amputation rate in Fiji is 3 every 24 hours – the third highest in the world), walking aids, wheelchairs, and post-surgical shoes/boots and many other medical supplies and equipment were needed. As a result of **YOUR** generosity, EqualMed provided 3,340 adult diapers, 39 BP machines, 44 crutches & walkers, 19 canes, 85 heel protectors, 2 pulse oximeters, 68 post-surgical shoes/boots, 27,000 gloves, 30 glucose monitors, 7,098 insulin injections, 25,000 lancets, 22,627 skin prep wipes, 3,000 test strips, and 6 wheelchairs. With the help of the Fiji Ministry of Health and The Fiji Government, the medical supplies and equipment were also shipped to remote villages in the outer islands as far as Vatoa Island – the most remote island in Fiji that takes almost one week to get to by boat! See photos in this report.

The **second goal** was to alleviate the significant shortage of the medical supplies and equipment at a rural hospital which lacked the very basic of supplies and equipment. Hospital staff here made cotton balls with their bare hands as the hospital did not have dressings, patients were laid on wooden tables because they lacked beds, there were no baby bassinets, only one BP machine in the maternity ward, doctors and nurses shared stethoscopes, the hospital used old and torn curtains for bed sheets, there was no infant BP machine and neo-natal stethoscope, among many other items. As a result of **YOUR** generosity, EqualMed provided, 6 baby bassinets, 187 bed sheets, 132 digital thermometers, 198 lbs of gauze, 4 hospital beds, 560 pillowcases, 4,000 scalpels, 28 stethoscopes, 2,340 surgical towels, 450 tourniquets, 192lbs of wound dressing, and many more items. The donations have been shared with smaller health clinics in the Central-Eastern region of Fiji.

In addition, EqualMed conducted eye tests and issued reading glasses to more than 220 low-income villagers living in the most remote parts of Fiji. These eye tests were done over several days and from the first day, word had spread like wild fire as elderly people from villages 50 miles away came for the tests. You may wonder why this is so. Considering that even a basic reading eye test and a pair of reasonable quality reading glasses cost about \$100USD in Fiji and requires travelling to the main city, which many cannot afford, the possibility of an eye test nearby with a free pair of reading glasses is a rare opportunity.

**YOUR** generosity enabled shipment of a 20-foot container of medical supplies and equipment, and hand-carry of delicate items such as reading glasses and glucose monitors. In total, approximately \$200,000USD of medical supplies and equipment, and services were provided. More than 300,000 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.

I want to remind you that 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 20-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 2018 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 of the 2018, 2017, and prior missions are on the website of EqualMed (<https://www.equalmed.org>).

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.

This year we have been very fortunate through our partner Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach, who provided a “scholarship” to undertake the goal of shipping a 40-foot container of medical supplies and equipment to Fiji. This scholarship reduces the cost of funding the 40-foot container by 50%, from \$7,000 to \$3,500. **However, the cost of shipping and transportation will increase significantly and EqualMed needs your support to help those less fortunate.** EqualMed will continue to fight the Diabetes epidemic by providing supplies for patients with diabetes and fill the gaps of urgently needed medical resources, especially in the outer often-neglected islands of Fiji. I humbly request you to consider giving the gift of life again that you can make on the website (<https://www.equalmed.org>), by sending a check to EqualMed, 933 Checkered Way, Kennesaw, Georgia, 30152 (USA if you are overseas), or a direct deposit (bank details available upon request). **YOUR** gift will be utilized for the medically under-served beneficiaries and **will never be used for any administrative costs, unlike many charities.** I want you to know that your gift to EqualMed goes where you want it to go.

I look forward to a successful Project Fiji 2019 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

*Quote from a receiving nurse in Fiji*

“Nursing patients is challenging, especially when we don’t have resources. But the young lady has a really big heart to give us stores of instruments, linens. And this helps us deliver good quality care to our patients. Being a nurse is not easy. We want to make our patients’ stays at the hospital a good one. So to make sure they have a good quality stay, we look to other resources. We take used curtains to replace torn bed sheets just so we can cover plain mattresses. But what can we do? That’s all that we have.” – Receiving nurse



This 20-foot container travelled about 16,000 miles to arrive in Suva, Fiji, ready to be unloaded.

Our wonderful volunteers unloading the container on a hot sunny day.



Supplies and equipment are organized and sorted according to areas of distribution. You can see the baby bassinets, hospital beds, wheelchairs, and crutches – some of the most needed supplies in the hospitals. The sealed boxes contain sterilized medical supplies such as dressings, gloves, scissors, diapers, BP machines, blood collection equipment, bedpans, etc





Loading supplies and equipment onto the trucks, ready to go for delivery to the local hospitals.

The nurses at Wainibokasi Hospital, a rural hospital in Central Fiji, are surprised and overjoyed to receive one of two truckloads of supplies.



Walking through the donated medical supplies and equipment at an appreciation ceremony held by Wainibokasi Hospital.







Donating neonatal BP machines and stethoscope – items not found in Fiji – to the Nausori Maternity Hospital.



Donating items such as infant & adult BP machines and suture & surgical scissors to other rural hospitals and health clinics identified last year in 2017 to meet their needs.



Returned to a diabetes peer group to donate BP machines, walkers, adult diapers, and gauze – supplies that the group had expressed need for in 2017. Demonstrated how to use the automated BP machines.





Sample of donations such as glucose monitors, glucose strips, walkers, lancets, insulin syringes, surgical boots, sharps disposal containers, adult diapers, BP machines, water bottles, bed pans, and more to the Diabetes group. These items were distributed to the outer islands of Fiji.



Supplies are distributed to the physical therapy division of CWM Hospital (left). Supplies for inpatient use are being labeled for distribution (right).



Supplies and equipment are transported from the main island, Viti Levu, to smaller outer islands by boats like these. Supplies have reached outer islands as far as Fiji's farthest Island, Vatoa Island – which takes about one week to get there as the boats stop at other islands to refuel and for rest.





Supplies and equipment reaching the outer islands of Fiji, which often go neglected.



Residents of villages in Nadroga have gathered at a village coffee shop to patiently wait their turns to have their eyes tested and receive their first pair of glasses.

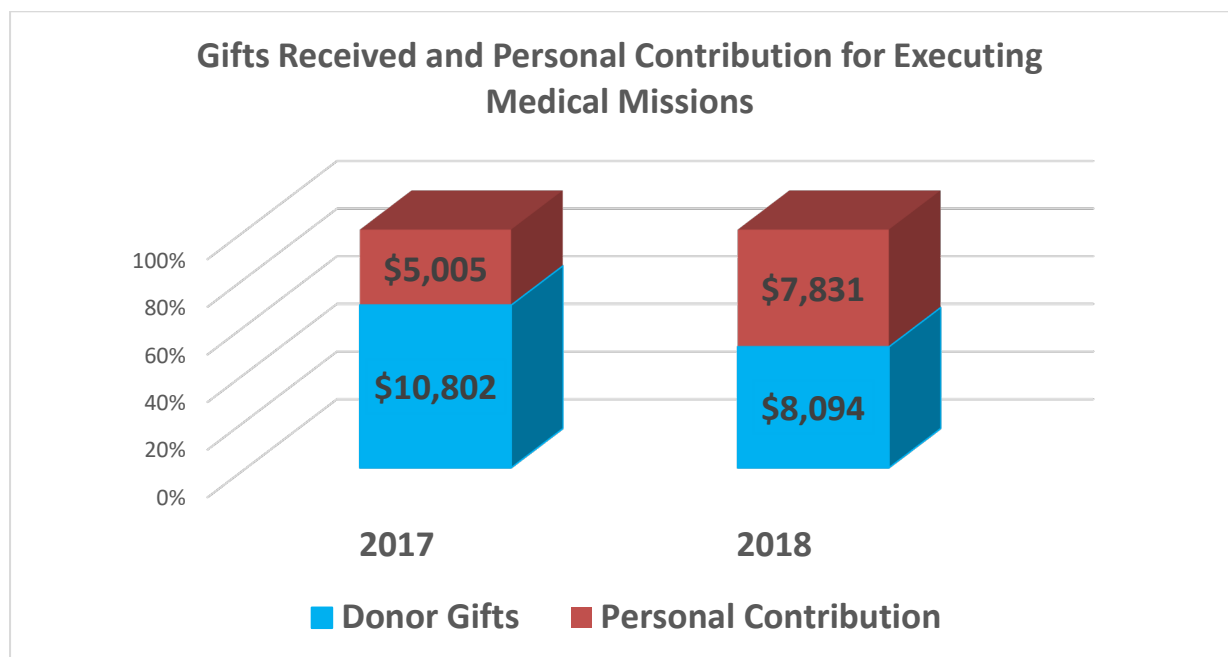




## PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE



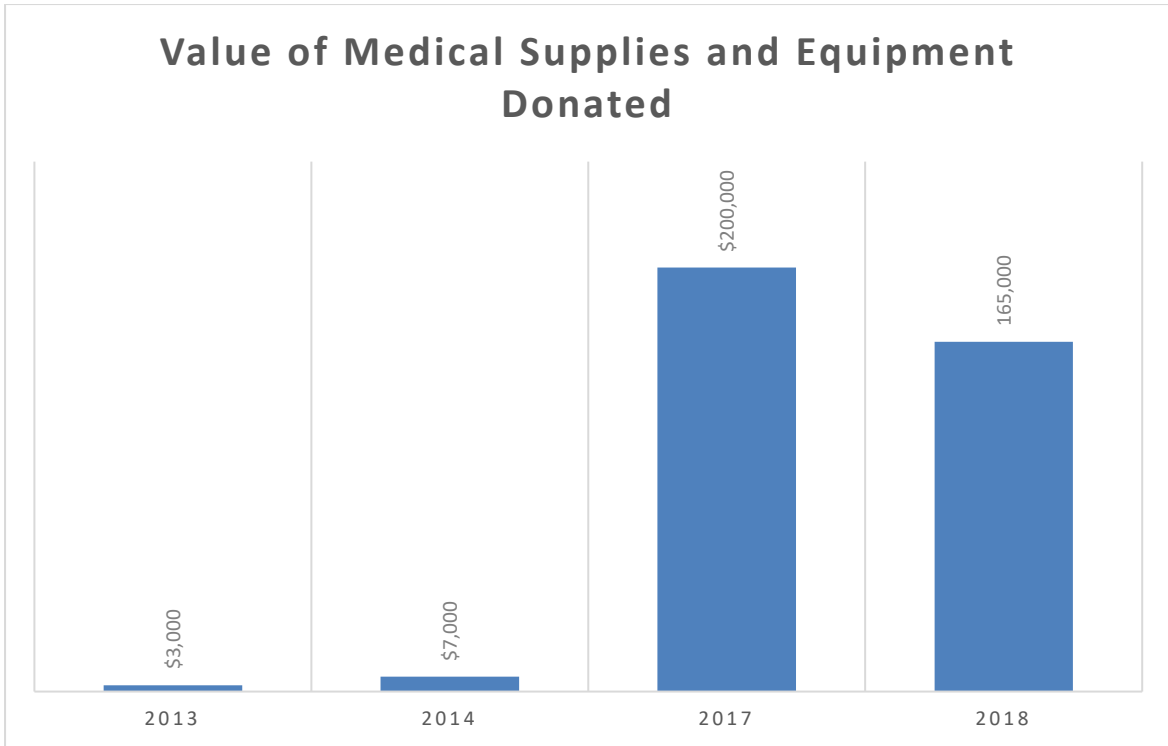
EqualMed reports key performance metrics and its governance practices to GuideStar, which is the largest worldwide provider of information about non-profits. GuideStar collects, standardizes, and distributes information on millions of non-profits. GuideStar promotes and rates the transparency of non-profits 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.



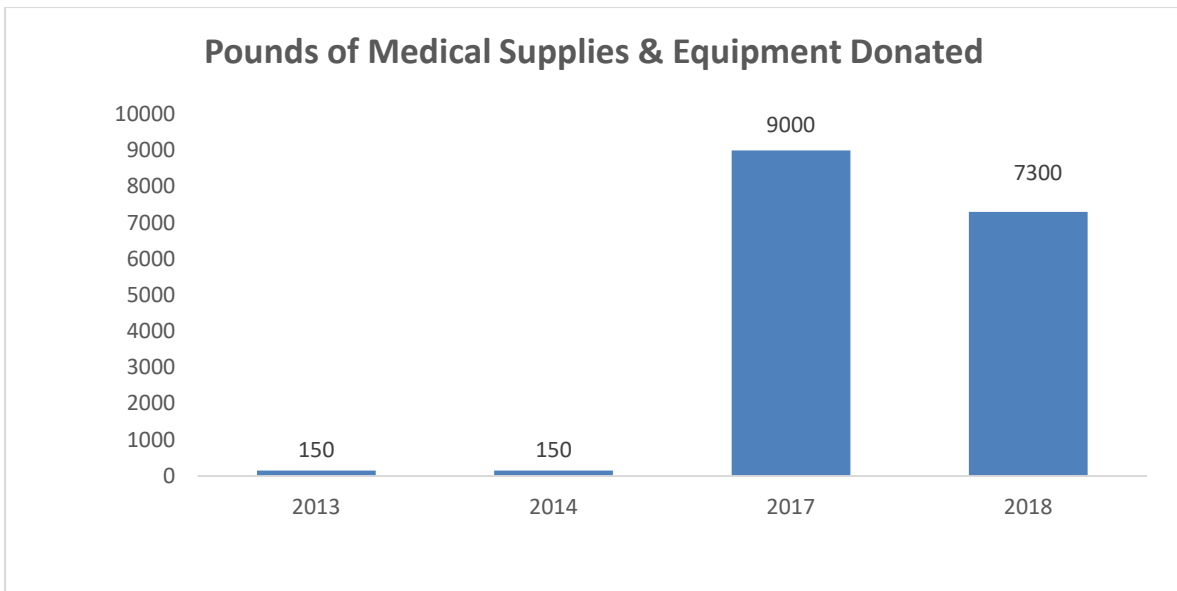
 *100% OF DONOR GIFTS WERE USED TO PROVIDE MEDICAL SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT IN 2017 AND 2018*

 *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*



The value and pounds of medical supplies and equipment provided shows a decline between 2017 and 2018. This is expected as the target beneficiaries in 2018 were diabetic patients that required less expensive and lighter supplies and equipment. The beneficiaries in 2017 were hospitals and clinics that were affected by Cyclone Wilson in 2016 and their needs were different that included heavier and more expensive items such as hospital beds, stretchers, wheelchairs, and other hospital equipment.

**SOME WORDS OF THANKS FROM FIJI**

**“This generosity is very rare. People in this age like to receive, they don’t like to give. Charity is a very important integral component of human beings. It is a loving exchange.” – Receiving doctor**

**“I hope this is not the end and that we can continue our relationship.” – Receiving doctor**



*“We receive consumables from the government, but it is quickly depleted. Who knows what can happen, we have outbreaks.. I don’t know what happens tonight. Therefore, whatever you give, it is always used.” – Receiving nurse*

**“Nursing patients is challenging, especially when we don’t have resources. But the young lady has a really big heart to give us stores of instruments, linens. And this helps us deliver good quality care to our patients. Being a nurse is not easy. We want to make our patients’ stays at the hospital a good one. So to make sure they have a good quality stay, we look to other resources. We take used curtains to replace torn bed sheets just so we can cover plain mattresses. But what can we do? That’s all that we have.” – Receiving nurse**



**“We doctors and nurses in Fiji cannot pay you accordingly for the kind donation and contribution you have brought to us. But we pray for you and the kind donors for all their help.” – Receiving nurse**

**“Thank you so much for your kind generous hearts of giving.”  
– Receiving nurse**



## 2019 OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

### *Project Fiji 2019*

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 in summer 2017. The second primary target is a health center in rural eastern Fiji (Wainibokasi Hospital), which was visited in 2018. This health facility desperately needs medical supplies and equipment and photographs of its fragility can be seen here <https://equalmed.org/urgent-needs>. EqualMed will ship and distribute in summer 2019 a 40-foot container of medical supplies primarily containing supplies to treat diabetes and equip Wainibokasi Hospital. 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. This scholarship reduces the cost of filling the 40-foot container to that of a 20-foot (from \$7,000 to \$3,500). **However, the cost of shipping and transportation will increase and EqualMed needs your support.** 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.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR PROJECT FIJI 2018

	\$USD
Net donations received (after Paypal and bank fees)**	8,094
Payments for medical supplies	(4,332)
Payments for shipping and transportation	<u>(6,263)</u>
Surplus/Deficit	(2,501)
<b>Deficit met out of pocket</b>	<b>\$2,501</b>
Additional costs: airfares and unsponsored accommodation	<u>\$5,330</u>
<b>Total personal out of pocket contribution**</b>	<b><u>\$7,831</u></b>

### Donations received after completion of Project Fiji 2018 for Project Fiji 2019

Net donations received (after Paypal and bank fees) in 2018	3,897
Net donations received (after Paypal and bank fees) in 2019 till April 20**	5,472
Budgeted costs for Project Fiji 2019***	<u>(16,800)</u>
<b>Funding gap for Project Fiji 2019</b>	<b><u>(\$7,431)</u></b>
<b>Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach Scholarship</b>	<b>3,500</b>
<b>Net expected funding gap</b>	<b><u>(\$3,931)</u></b>

*Note: travel costs will be funded personally and is not included in the budgeted costs.*

\*\*Total donation by board members: Nivita, Divesh, and Vineeta Sharma = \$7,831 for meeting costs of providing medical supplies, equipment, and medical services, and travel and accommodation costs over 15 days of medical mission in Fiji. Accommodation was provided by Shangri-la Resorts for three of the 15 days to conduct eye tests and issue glasses in rural Fiji. The \$7,831 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).

\*\*\*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 \$16,800 budget includes shipping costs of \$7,000 and cost of medical supplies of \$9,800 that is made up of Blood Glucose Meters (100 x \$18 = \$1,800) and glucose test strips (100 x \$10 per box of 50 = \$1,000 – this item is scarce and most expensive in USA and Fiji), and lancets, insulin needles, skin prep wipes and other medical supplies and equipment sourced from our supply partner, Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach (\$7,000).

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 there is a significant gap to fund *Project Fiji 2019*. You can help in various ways including making a donation or 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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