



Dear friends of EI,

A message from Paul Cheh, Program Executive

I hope this newsletter finds each of you healthy and well.

It has been a pleasure getting to know everyone since joining EI in the middle of 2023. I've particularly appreciated the warmth and openness you all have shown in welcoming me and making me feel part of the EI family. From last year's Fellowship Year events to this January's Annual Forum, and now the start of **our new 2024 cohort year**, the journey together has been truly memorable.

I'm especially excited to see our **EI Atlantic Fellows (senior Fellows) community-building efforts** thriving. A standout project you will read about below is the Village-based Stunting Alleviation Program in Indonesia. Now in its second year supported by an Equity Community Building Fund grant, the project has reached over 100 villages and been recognized by the local government. It's motivating to hear from our senior Fellows' continued growth and impact, and we hope you are just as inspired.

We also hope you enjoy the all new **Fellows Reflections** section below. Fellows have taken time to write about a diverse set of issues ranging from finding one's purpose to tackling health equity through climate action to embracing diversity to the lifelong bonds developed through the EI program.

Finally, we are thrilled to announce that **applications for the [2025 Equity Initiative Fellowship program](#) are now open**. We encourage you to share this opportunity with inspiring changemakers in your network so we can continue to grow our community with passionate individuals committed to positive social change.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement with EI. I look forward to connecting,



Newsletter Highlights

Our 2024 Fellows are up and running!

CBF Update: Village-Based Stunting Alleviation

Celebrate Fellows' milestones from Bich, Sherjan Kalim & more

Reflections from the ground: Chi Ling Chan, Renard Siew, Meriam Tedding and Adisorn Juntrasook

...& more from the Equity Community.

EI Calendar

June 2024

15 June: Applications for the 2025 cohort open - spread the word!

8 - 15 June: Global Learning II @ Harvard, USA

July 2024

11 - 14 July: Global Atlantic Fellows Convening @ Oxford, UK

August 2024

3 - 10 August: Asia Trek @ Philippines

engaging and working together in the days, weeks and months to come.

31 August: Applications for the 2025 EI Fellowship program close

Warm Regards,
Paul Cheh

2025 Fellowship Applications Now OPEN!



The Equity Initiative

APPLICATIONS

are

NOW

OPEN



1. If you are committed to health equity, meet the eligibility requirements, and are interested in becoming part of the EI Community, apply now!
2. If you know someone who may be interested in applying, forward them this newsletter!
3. Check out our social media channels (links below). We will continue to post about recruitment on social media- every like, share and comment helps our posts to reach a wider network of possible applicants.



TIMELINE

31 AUGUST 2024	APPLICATION DEADLINE
OCTOBER 2024	SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES NOTIFIED
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2024	SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES INTERVIEWS
DECEMBER 2024	FINAL SELECTION ANNOUNCED
JANUARY 2025	2025 FELLOWS ANNOUNCED
MARCH 2025	FIRST 2025 FELLOWSHIP EVENT COMMENCES

APPLICANT RESOURCES

Need more information about applications? [Click here ----->](#)

[2025 EI Fellowship Application Details](#)

Download the Equity Initiative Prospectus [here ----->](#)

[Download the Equity Initiative Prospectus](#)

ARCHIVES

Did you miss our most recent activities? Catch them below:

Equity Initiative Applicant Newsletter

Are you interested in applying for the EI Fellowship? The EI Applicant Newsletter will be very useful! Catch the previous issues here:

[Issue 1: Welcome to EI!](#)

[Issue 2: Who Are Our Fellows?](#)

[Issue 3: Application Process](#)

[Issue 4: The EI Community](#)

Online Open House

Need something more interactive? Our Fellows shared their thoughts about the Induction Year and EI Community below.

Guests for pt 1: [Chhaiya Im](#) (2024, Cambodia), [Sonesavanh \(Peck\) Phimmasine](#) (2024, Laos), and [Emmanuel dos Santos Martins](#) (2024, Timor-Leste).

Guests for pt. 2: [Rennta Chrisdiana](#) (2019, Indonesia), [Nadirah Babji](#) (2023, Malaysia), [Chi Ling Chan](#) (2022, Singapore).

[Pt. 1 The Induction Year](#)

[Pt. 2 Community Building](#)



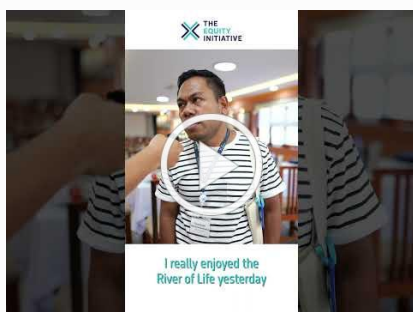
Welcome to our 2024 EI Fellows

A warm welcome to the 30 dynamic individuals who have been selected as the 2024 Equity Initiative Fellows!

Representing 11 countries across Southeast Asia and China, this 8th cohort embodies a shared passion for fostering positive change in areas like education, environmental and social advocacy, public administration, agricultural development, disability rights, LGBTQI+ rights, and technology. Their diverse backgrounds and innovative approaches promise to enrich our community and amplify our impact. [Meet the newest cohort here.](#)

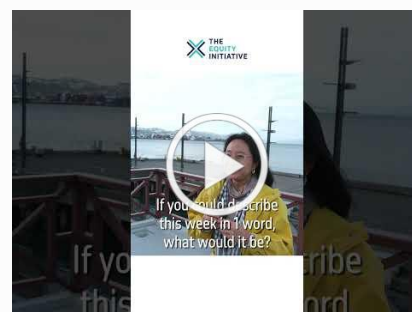
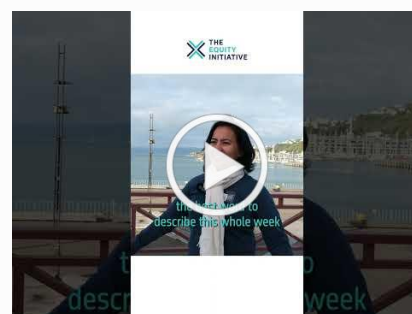
2024 Learning Events: Fellows Impressions

Catch up with some of our 2024 Fellows reflect on the learning events so far. Links to the full stories below:



31 Mar to 5 Apr @ Viet Nam
Opening Retreat

Our 2024 EI Fellows kicked off

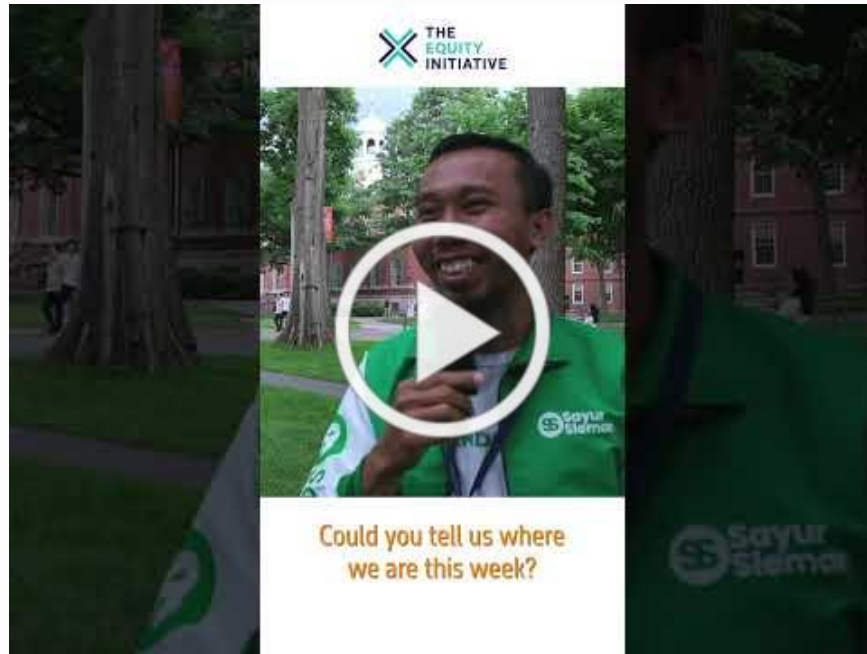


4 to 11 May @ New Zealand
Global Learning I

For the first time ever, EI Fellows

their journey with laughter, discussions and even some exercise! [Full story here](#)

visited New Zealand! Through site visits and warm hospitality from everyone we met, our Fellows left with fresh new insights on Health Equity and leadership. [Full story here](#)



7 Jun to 15 Jun Mar to 5 Apr @ USA

Global Learning II

Fellows go back to school at Harvard and MIT! Catch up on the latest learning event with the [full story here](#).

El Community News



Community Building Fund: Project Update Championing Village-based Stunting Alleviation Program, Indonesia

Project by [Goris Mustaqim](#) (2019 Fellow, Indonesia)

Currently in its second year supported by an Equity Community Building Fund grant, the project tackles stunting alleviation in villages across Indonesia and is implemented by Saving Next Gen Indonesia (Asgar Muda Foundation).



Project milestones

- The program has been replicated in more than 100 villages in the NTV province
- Scaling up continues with expansion into Central Java (fourth province) together with the International Organization for Migration
- Partnership with Astra International through CSR has supported capacity building of local stakeholders
- Received an award from the government of Sumedang district, recognising the team's efforts to innovate and impact more throughout Indonesia

Lessons learnt

- As the program expands to more villages, providing technical and advocacy support through meaningful community engagement is crucial. The team continues to seek an effective balance between online and in-person engagement.
- In expanding their network of partnerships, the team has found direct & targeted campaigns to be more effective than online campaigns.

[Hear from program partners & beneficiaries \(Instagram\)](#)

Congratulations to...

Celebrating milestones and achievements from our Equity Fellows

[Linh Phan](#) (2019 Fellow, Vietnam) and [May Sripatanaskul](#) (2018 Fellow, Thailand) successfully collaborated recently, sharing on health equity frameworks and projects with over 250 dedicated healthcare personnel from Vietnam.

Embracing new roles and responsibilities, [Sherjan Kalim](#) (2021 Fellow, Philippines) has recently started a new position as Head of Department at Cotabato Regional and Medical Center.

While [Pham Thi Ngoc Bich](#) (2022 Fellow, Viet Nam) continues her work with the [Slow Food Community](#), she has also been chosen for a fellowship with the American Express Leadership Academy focusing on the theme of "Resilient Changemakers."

In a collaborative effort between four Fellows, [Xu Jin](#) (2018 Fellow, China), [Borwornsom \(Ack\) Leerapan](#) (2018 Fellow, Thailand), [Tiara Marthias](#) (2018 Fellow, Indonesia), and [Han Win Htat](#) (2018 Fellow, Myanmar) have successfully proposed an organized session at the Health Systems Research 2024 Symposium.

Discussing the topic, "*Enhancing private sector engagement and digital solutions to promote just and sustainable governance in complex health systems*", they will also have two Professor discussants joining the session from the University of Hong Kong and Peking University.

Atlantic Fellows



Global Atlantic Fellows Annual Convening

Every year, the Atlantic Institute hosts a welcome ceremony marking the entry of Fellows across the world into the Global Atlantic Fellows community. Over the course of the Convening, the program and activities include panel discussions, poetry, music, dance, open space, creative workshops and various

[Advisory Board \(GFAB\)](#)

[Amina Swanepoel](#) (2021 Fellow, Philippines) and [Rennta Chrisdiana](#) (2019 Fellow, Indonesia) have been appointed for the second cohort of GFAB- the **Global Atlantic Fellows Advisory Board** and will serve from 2024 to 2026.

Congratulations and we're sure they will represent us well! Find out more about the new GFAB cohort [here](#).

[Atlantic Program Staff Retreat](#)

From 27 Feb to 1 March 2024, staff across all seven Atlantic Fellows programmes worldwide convened in-person for the first time in five years.

With the theme of *Flourishing Together: Recharging, Renewing and Rebuilding*, the retreat held in Da Nang, Vietnam was a great opportunity to forge and strengthen connections between staff across programs - in pursuit of global impact.

forms of dialogue and conversations.

Our 2023 Fellows will attend the [Global Atlantic Fellows Annual at Oxford from 11 - 14 July](#). We look forward to hearing about your experiences meeting other changemakers across the seven programmes!

Follow our social media channels to stay up to date!



Fellows Reflections



Reflections from the ground

Living a Purpose: From Power of One to the Power of Many

Editorial by [Chan Chi Ling](#) (2022 Fellow, Singapore) 17 June, 2024

Recently, I was asked “How did you find your purpose?” The first thing I wrote down when I was thinking this through was: *purpose is not something to be found, it's something to be lived*. For most of us, many of the dots that constitute a purpose are connected backwards, because most times we don't actually have full control over where life takes us, as was the case for me.

Likewise for me, purpose is an internal compass that is forged from a personal history, and accorded a personal meaning. It is also necessarily relational, because no one arrives at a purpose entirely on their own. The formation of Equitech Collective had something to do with my personal history with inequity, which is later reified through bonds and relationships that are built over time, some of which through the Equity Initiative.

My first encounter with inequity was when I was four years old. I was sitting in a car stopped at a traffic light in urban Guangzhou, China, when a little girl about my age knocked on the car window. She was begging for food.

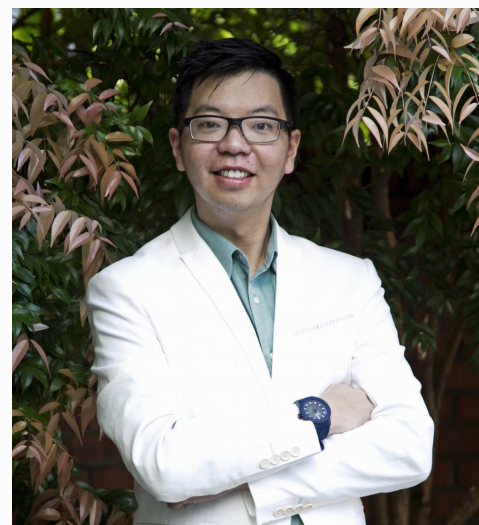
She looked straight at me, her mom had her hand stretched out to passersby who would not see them. My four year old body felt rage and my mind couldn't comprehend why we were living two starkly different realities. It was my first memory of injustice: *That's not fair - why do I have what I need, and why can't she have that too, when there is more than enough to go around?*

Years later as a working adult I would start researching into inequities in all their different shapes and forms. One of my first bosses in the Singapore civil service gave me a book "*The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*" by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, and I later spent some time researching into systemic factors that drive inequality across different dimensions: racial, gender, income, the list goes on. It made me realize how detrimental inequity can be to communities and individuals, and it brought me back to the girl by the roadside: I could have given her my food in that moment, but it would have done nothing to remove the systemic barriers that trapped her in poverty.

In recent years, the mounting inequities in our world have become even harder to grapple with. Consider this statistic from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's 2024 Annual Letter: hundreds of millions of people live on less than \$2.15 a day—on the same planet where, during the first 24 months of the pandemic, billionaires' wealth rose more than it had in the 23 years prior. And just as needs are mounting, low-income countries have fewer resources with which to meet them.

The power of one is small and beautiful, but it is through the power of many that systemic barriers to equity can be torn down. That's what Equity Initiative has been for me: it is the coming together of many 'powers of one' to form a power of many who share a common purpose. It is both a space and a community where I found I didn't need to explain my 'why' so much, simply because on some fundamental level this purpose is already shared. In interactions among Fellows, purpose is not so much found but renewed, and reified through bonds and relationships that sharpen the 'how' and the 'what'.

About a year after my graduation from the fellowship, I left my role in the Singapore public service in 2023 and founded the Equitech Collective to build transformative technology for a more equitable future. Equitech's mission is to catalyze systemic breakthroughs that improve equitable access to health and education through the innovative use of technology. A number of our founding projects involved EI Fellows and leveraged skills and experience of product engineers from the tech industry. Our purpose is never quite "found" - it continues to be lived every day, expanding and evolving through collaborations and learning, failures and successes along the way. Like the Equity Initiative, it is about the coming together of many 'powers of one' to form a more enduring power of many to advance equity in the diverse and colourful region that is Southeast Asia. And hopefully, dear reader, you will come to be a part of this journey too.



Reflections from the ground

Thinking about the nexus of health and climate change

through an equity lens

Editorial by [Renard Siew](#) (2021 Fellow, Malaysia) written for Earth Day on 22 April, 2024

At the recent COP28 meetings in Dubai, the Declaration of Climate and Health has gained much needed attention. There is no doubt that climate change is the defining issue of our generation already exacerbating extreme weather events we so often hear about in the news - floods, droughts, forest fires affecting livelihoods and causing deaths.

In examining the nexus of health and climate change through an equity lens, it becomes apparent that vulnerable and marginalized populations will bear the brunt of this burden. Socioeconomic disparities exacerbate the health impacts of climate change, as those with limited resources often face greater exposure to environmental hazards and have fewer means to adapt and recover from catastrophic events. Low-income communities are more likely to reside in areas with poor air quality and inadequate infrastructure, leading to higher rates of respiratory illnesses and heat-related deaths during extreme weather events. Similarly, indigenous peoples and communities of colour often bear a disproportionate burden of environmental degradation and climate-related disasters, stemming from systemic inequalities and historical injustices.

The global distribution of climate change impacts is inherently unequal, with developing countries facing the most severe consequences despite contributing the least to greenhouse gas emissions. This disparity highlights the ethical imperative to address climate change through a lens of justice and equity, ensuring that those most affected receive adequate support and resources to protect their health and well-being. To promote health equity in the face of climate change, interventions must prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, involve them in decision-making processes, and address underlying social determinants of health such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to healthcare.

By centering equity in climate action, we can indeed help build more resilient and inclusive societies where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their socioeconomic status or background. It is high time that we move from Declaration to Declared Action - and this starts with us, EI Fellows.



Reflections from the ground

Cultural diversity, equity and belonging to an indigenous community

Editorial by [Meriam Tedding](#) (2024 Fellow, Philippines) written for World Day for Cultural Diversity on 21 May, 2024

For me, the value of diversity is recognizing that every human being or group of people has their own unique stories, belief, characteristics and traditions. And it should be OKAY that we are all different in our own way.

The world would be a better place to live if every human being would learn to respect and celebrate other people's beliefs because, for me, each story of hope, challenges, belief & traditions is beautiful. There is always unity in diversity.

The Global Learning 1 in Wellington, New Zealand and my experience with the Maori community was indeed a dream come true. I am even more proud that I, myself, am part of an Indigenous community. I feel connected with the Maori people and I am happy that the Indigenous Peoples in different parts of the world are respected and accepted. I am also happy to see that they can make decisions for their people based on their belief, customs and traditions.

My experience with the Equity Initiative (EI) as a Fellow has affirmed my belief in the beauty of diversity. I believe that what EI has been doing all these years is a perfect example of the celebration of cultural diversity. Empowering diverse groups of people from different walks of life and background in the hope to pursue EI's dream of health equity for ALL - regardless of their religion, tradition, cultural belief and profession.

The fellowship program created an inclusive environment where everyone is given the opportunity to share their own perspectives in life. It also promotes equity where every Fellow feels valued and respected regardless of who they are.

Meriam Tedding is a proud Sama Bajau from Western Mindanao, Philippines and part of Cohort 8 of the EI fellowship program.



Reflections about the Equity Initiative

The Greatest Gift has Been My Cohort of Fellows

Editorial by [Adisorn Juntrasook](#) (2023 Fellow, Thailand) 12 June, 2024

The Equity Initiative Fellowship has been a transformative journey, both shedding light on the path toward health equity and strengthening my commitment to walking it. During the induction year, learning directly from experts who have dedicated their lives to this mission was invaluable. Hearing their first-hand accounts of obstacles faced, victories achieved, and the struggles that persist reminded me that collective, sustained action across all levels is necessary to create global change.

However, the greatest gift has been my cohort of Fellows. This extraordinary group of individuals from Southeast Asia and China, each driving positive impact in their own communities, has become a constant source of inspiration. More than that, they have become dear friends. As we travelled together, the bonding experiences, deep conversations, laughs and tears shared helped us become truly close friends despite coming from different places. Their perspectives have helped me better understand the complexities we must navigate to build a more equitable society, while their support has uplifted me in my personal and professional pursuits.

The induction year also provided transformative leadership training from those advancing equity at the highest levels. Learning authentic leadership through their real-world examples and guidance was a powerful experience that has already enhanced how I approach my work. The lessons went beyond just words and taught us practical skills for actually making a difference.

Now, as a Senior Fellow, I eagerly anticipate the next phases of growth and opportunity through collaboration with the Atlantic Institute. The potential for connection with an interdisciplinary global community, accessing resources to pilot equity-focused projects, and continued leadership development is tremendously exciting. This fellowship has been a major turning point in my life, and I'm confident the experiences ahead will make its powerful impact even greater.

Want to contribute to the next newsletter?

Help us build an engaged community for health equity by sending us updates on your speaking engagements, highlights of your work and travel, and interesting projects you encounter.

Send your contributions to: info@equityinitiative.org & we'll be in touch!



China Medical Board | CMB Foundation Southeast Asia 591 UBCII Tower, Unit 1204 (A),
Sukhumvit Road, North Klongton, Wattana | Bangkok, 10110 TH

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