



Dear friends of EI,

A message from Phuong, Executive Director

As the year draws to a close, I am excited to introduce you to our final Equity Newsletter of 2024.

It's been a busy few months in the community and we're always glad for this opportunity to look back and celebrate each other. Eight of our Senior Fellows have experienced significant milestones in the past months - from new roles & responsibilities to awards, growing initiatives and making impact in their respective fields. We are happy to be part of this journey and are excited for the change ahead.

At the same time, our 2024 Fellows are gradually coming to the end of their Induction Year. It has been a meaningful and enjoyable experience planning and getting to know each Fellow over our five Learning Events across the world. You may find yourself reminiscing about your own Induction Year as you read about what went on at Asia Trek and Project Accelerator.

As we wrap up 2024, our work is definitely not done! Planning for the Final Convening and Annual Forum is well underway and we



Newsletter Highlights

Our 2024 Fellows at Asia Trek and Project Accelerator

A farewell & appreciation for Ernesto Garilao

Celebrate Fellows' milestones from Beverly Ho, Nadirah Babji, Clive Tan & more

Reflections from the ground: Raudah Mohd Yunus & Si Thu Htin Aung

just finished two crucial workshops on Public Narrative and Climate Justice. Find out more below.

Finally, as we each take time to reflect on our own work and place in the world, hear from other Fellows and their reflections from the ground covering reform and capacity building in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

We hope you have an impactful and restful end to the year. See you in 2025!

Warm Regards,
Phuong

...and more from the Equity Community.

EI Calendar

January 2025

20 - 22 January: Final Convening

23 - 26 January: Annual Forum

Induction Year Update: Building Skills & Second Year Projects



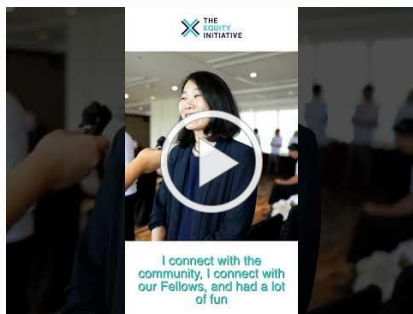
It's been a wonderful ride...

As their Induction Year draws closer to its end, the 2024 cohort of Equity Initiative Fellows have gone through transformative experiences, growing and learning together.

The road ahead to the Final Convening and Annual Forum in January 2025 promises to be an exciting one! But before that, here's a snapshot of our Fellows' experiences during Asia Trek and Project Accelerator.

2024 Learning Events: Fellows' Impressions

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



3 to 10 August @ Philippines
Asia Trek

Visiting coastal mangroves, a rehabilitation centre and the Asian Development Bank was an opportunity to see multiple facets of change in action. Hear [Rui Wang's](#) (2024, China) thoughts.

[Full story here](#)



5 to 12 October @ Malaysia
Project Accelerator

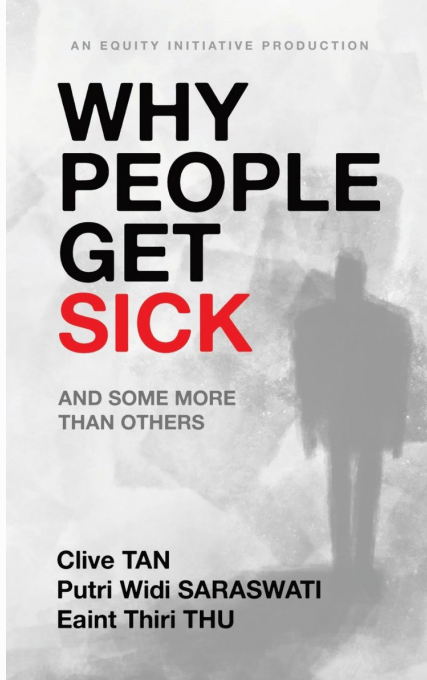
In the final Learning Event before this cohort's Final Convening, Project Accelerator was a week of reflection, growth and looking ahead. See what [Zarni Lynn Kyaw](#) (2024, Myanmar) had to say.

[Full story here](#)

EI Community News

Utilizing Storytelling to Propagate Public Conversation of Health Equity in Southeast Asia

[Clive Tan](#) (2022, Singapore), [Eaint Thiri Thu](#) (2022, Myanmar), and [Putri Saraswati](#) (2022, Indonesia) have published their book *Why People Get Sick*, now [available online](#)! This



second-year project harnesses the power of storytelling to spark critical conversations about health equity in Southeast Asia. Featuring personal stories and case studies from across the region, the book explores how social injustice and systemic inequities shape health outcomes. Designed to engage young changemakers, *Why People Get Sick* invites readers to reflect on the lived experiences of diverse communities, fostering empathy and inspiring collective action toward a more equitable future in health.

El Community Update Appreciating Ernesto Garilao for his contribution to the Philippine National Committee (NC)

As Ernesto Garilao, or Ernie, steps down from his role in the Philippine National Committee, all of us at Equity Initiative would like to dedicate a moment to thank him for his immense contributions.



Pictured above: Ernesto Garilao in white, third from the right

Ernie has been a part of the Philippine NC since the start of the programme and a crucial member of the team selecting illustrious Fellows from the Philippines. A leader in the field of equity himself, Ernie is the President of the Zuellig Family Foundation (2009-present) whose mission is to reduce health inequities to improve health outcomes of the poor.

He had also served previously as Executive Director of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (1975-1992), Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform from 1992 to 1998 and Vice Chair of the Social Reform Council, the highest policy-making body for the Philippines' anti-poverty programs from 1994-1998.

With all the years of hard work and passion he has put in, Ernie shared that a key reason for stepping down - besides allowing for leadership renewal - was to take time off for personal projects, including rest and travel. Here's what Ernie had to say about his time serving in the NC:

"The Equity Initiative has its own DNA - experimenting with fewer restrictions and (being) more flexible (in) giving opportunities to the promise of impact.

I really enjoyed my stay here, not just interacting with the institution but with

everyone. Exchanging ideas, listening to perspectives & priorities and in the end knowing that eventually we come up with good fellows who will truly reduce inequities."

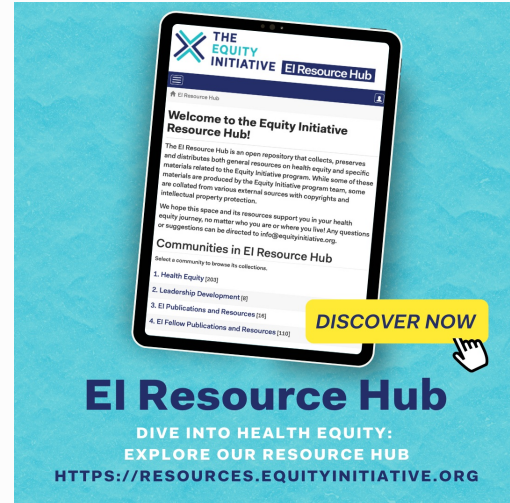
Join us in thanking Ernie for his contribution as we wish him all the best for all that lies ahead!

Curious about the NCs and who else is in the committee? [Read more on our website here.](#)



The Equity Initiative Psychosocial Support Program

We are pleased to introduce the EI Psychosocial Support Program for all Fellows. The program offers fully paid, confidential, 1:1 support from mental health professionals, including our 2023 Fellow Adisorn Juntrasook and Malaysia's Cara Cara organization. Please click [here](#) for more details.



The Equity Initiative Resource Hub

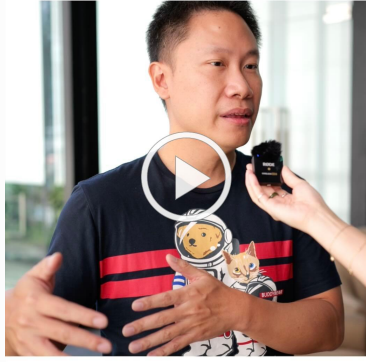
Introducing our newly updated EI Resource Hub, a comprehensive space for accessing knowledge and tools in Health Equity, Leadership, and the Southeast Asia region. Dive in today to enrich your understanding and support your journey of learning and development! Find out more [here](#).

2024 Community Building Activities: Fellows' Impressions

22 to 24 November @ Thailand

Public Narrative

Public Narrative, one of the most popular trainings the Equity Initiative provides to the EI Community was just conducted in Bangkok. Hear about [Chatchai Aphibanpoonpon's](#) (2024, Thailand) experience about learning how to shape narrative!



and what sort of experience
leads me to this point

Congratulations to...

Celebrating milestones and achievements from our Equity Fellows

Award Winners & Recognition

[Aghnia Dima Rochmawati](#) (2023, Indonesia) has been recognized as one of the [2024 Women of the Future 50 Rising Stars in ESG](#) which celebrates talented female trailblazers aged 35 and under worldwide who are leaders in ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) - acknowledging their significant positive impact on organizations, the environment, and society. Dima continues to [delve deeper into sustainability practice](#), supported by her community.

[Beverly Lorraine Ho](#) (2017, Philippines) and her work on equity was rewarded with the [Leadership Award in Public Health Practice](#). Awarded yearly by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the award recognises alumni who have been an outstanding example of effective leadership in the practice of public health, in the public or private sphere.

[Chi Ling Chan](#) (2022, Singapore) and her team working on [an Equitech AI solution serving healthcare professionals in Timor Leste, Medibot](#), was selected from over 2,200 applications as a 2024 Solver team by [MIT Solve](#), gaining access to funding and support to scale their innovative idea.

Events & Key Milestones

[Amina Evangelista Swanepoel](#) (2021, Philippines) celebrates [15 years of incredible growth](#) at Roots of Health, having impacted thousands of women and young people.

[Jin Xu](#) (2018, China) co-wrote an intriguing paper published in BMJ Global Health. The research paper titled *Benefit equity of social health insurance in China and its provinces (2014–2020): implications for universal health coverage can be [accessed directly here](#).*

[Noor Affizan](#) or Fii (2021, Brunei) launched the [Brunei Ministry of Health's Sustainability Initiative](#) this month which she leads on, marking "a significant turning point in our journey towards establishing a climate-resilient and sustainable healthcare system."

Embracing New Roles

[Clive Tan](#) (2022, Singapore) takes up a new, exciting role as Director, Home Team Medical Services at Ministry of Home Affairs Singapore.

[Madiyarasi Vengidasan](#) or Mady (2023, Malaysia) has been admitted to a prestigious double masters programme in MA

Nadirah Babji (2023, Malaysia) received the [International Conference on Family Planning \(ICFP\) 2025 Youth Trailblazer Award](#). As one of 40 trailblazers selected from around the world championing family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights, Nadirah will play a key part in next year's ICFP to be held in Bogotá, Colombia.

Humanitarian Leadership and MA in Philanthropic Studies. She was awarded a joint scholarship from ZFI Nma Foundation - Indiana University, US.

Fellows Reflections

Reflections from the ground

Who is asking for capacity-building? Reflection on the Myanmar context

Editorial by [Si Thu Htin Aung](#) (2023 Fellow, Myanmar) first published in HPN on 6 August, 2024



The concept of localisation, which gained prominence with the Grand Bargain agreement from the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, has been evolving over the past decade. This approach emphasises the importance of local actors in humanitarian aid, striving for practical frameworks and realistic methodologies. In countries like Myanmar, where international aid plays a crucial role, localisation is familiar to some of the local communities. Drawing from practical experience with local aid groups, this discussion aims to reinforce better practices and explore the nuances of capacity-building and -strengthening for local support organisations and community members.

The practical implementation of localisation often varies widely depending on who is involved, leading to significant differences on the ground. One key area of discussion is the role of capacity-building or -strengthening for local support organisations, including individual community members. Many efforts are being made in this regard, prompting the question: why is there a need to improve the capacity of local support organisations and individuals?

The need to improve and strengthen capacity may be perceived as implying a lack of capacity among the locals, which has sparked considerable debate. While this is a complex issue, it is crucial to address it without straying from the primary intention. Focusing on capacity-building or -strengthening, there is a significant emphasis on demand-driven approaches. International humanitarian aid organisations are seemingly tailoring their capacity-building initiatives based on the needs expressed by local groups.

The capacity-building and -strengthening of local responders is fundamental. Evidence has shown that this approach is beneficial in many

aspects. However, defining the demand must be done with care, to prioritise the needs of the community and local support groups. The situation is often complicated and unstable, especially in conflict-affected settings. Donors, UN agencies and intermediary international organisations should also consider supporting the capacities necessary for the survival of local support groups, rather than always aiming for their development and growth. Local aid organisations operating in areas with heavy fighting or under military control, like in Myanmar, face enormous pressure and have limited functional space. For these groups, the emphasis should be on developing the capabilities and resources necessary for their continued survival.

In summary, demand-driven capacity-building and -strengthening should exist as a process and method that is discussed and deciphered by all concerned stakeholders. At the same time, while using the principle of improving and strengthening capacity based on demand, donors, UN agencies and international organisations should be careful to avoid spending excessive time on compliance demands

Full article published in [Humanitarian Practice Network here](#).

Read more from Si Thu [on LinkedIn here](#).

Atlantic Fellows



Atlantic Institute News

[Renard & Bich attend Planetary Health conference hosted by Atlantic Institute in Columbia](#)

Representing our community, Renard Siew (2021, Malaysia) & Pham Thi Ngoc Bich (2022, Vietnam) attended the [Global Convening on Planetary Health and a Just Transition](#), held in Bogotá from October 14-18, 2024. This event brought together 34 leading researchers and activists from around the world - all part of the



Atlantic Institute News

[Global Atlantic Fellows Annual Convening](#)

What happens when you convene global changemakers - from seven Fellowship programmes and over 80 countries - together in one room?

For four days from 11 to 14 July, 2024, the Equity Initiative team, Fellows and our counterparts from around the world gathered at Oxford, United Kingdom for this year's Global Atlantic Fellows

Atlantic Fellows community - to build alternative narratives, exchange knowledge and share strategies.

The Convening also brought together visions of the Global South for a just transition in a way that highlights the need for reforms at all levels to build more harmonious relationships with nature. Organised by Dejusticia and the Atlantic Institute based at the Rhodes Trust in Oxford, UK, we are excited to be part of this global movement.

Annual Convening.

Check out [our top five highlights from the Convening](#), as well as Clive Tan's (2022, Singapore) [poem](#) inspired by the Global Convening.

Follow our social media channels to stay up to date!

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!



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