

HAI welcomes new Foundation Board Chair

At the recent HAI Foundation Board meeting (June 24-25, 2022), we said farewell to Lander van Ommen, who completed two terms as Chair of the Foundation Board. We are incredibly grateful to Lander for his huge contribution to HAI over the last few years, including during the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic, and look forward to continuing to work with him in future.

At the same meeting, Cecilia Sison was elected to succeed Lander as the Chair of the Foundation Board.

Having already served as a Board Member during the previous term, Cecilia brings a wealth of experience and insights gained from her leadership at Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA) Philippines and several other roles in international organisations ([Cecilia Sison – Health Action International \(haiweb.org\)](https://haiweb.org)). Her dedication and passion for public health enables us to continue pursuing our mission with persistence and resourcefulness.

We sat down with Cecilia to hear her thoughts on HAI's future and audacious goals of advancing access to medicines for everyone, everywhere.

What makes HAI's mission meaningful to you?

Access to medicines is my lifelong advocacy. It was borne out of active involvement in the team that helped build the MeTA in the Philippines, and how a multistakeholder approach works best in a system that must address potentially conflicting interests and see how common objectives can bring all parties together at the table. I saw up close how important ensuring access to medicines is in strengthening a country's health system and how it is able to deliver services best to its citizens.

I had the privilege of working closely with the HAI Management Team in MeTA Phase 2, and the engagement continued. I am honored to have been able to continue this work with HAI, albeit in a different capacity. Being in the HAI Foundation Board has been an excellent opportunity to collaborate with a vibrant team as management and the Board work towards a common mission.

What are some of the challenges you foresee in this position?

I see the need to build financial resources and sustainability as the biggest challenge for organisations like HAI. There is no shortage of excellent project ideas, creativity, and competence in the team, but we must always be on our toes to work with new partners, find new funding, and ensure sustainability. The challenge is to

remain flexible, and always able to adapt.

How do you make sure you are adding value to the organisation?

I hope to be able to share my unique experience (and my country's journey) in building/organising multistakeholder teams. Where we once saw marked boundaries among some stakeholders involved in the access to medicines issue, MeTA succeeded in bringing all of them together in productive dialogue. I want to bring this experience and share insights that might be useful to other groups wanting to build an in-country multistakeholder platform in addressing some issues.

I believe MeTA—and working with HAI —has helped me develop strengths in networking. It is a strength that I hope can make HAI even stronger, effective, and relevant in a new environment. Networking is undoubtedly a strength HAI is known for and can build upon. I hope I can contribute to sustaining it.

What's the impact you want to make as the Chair of HAI's board?

I want to make it conducive for HAI to thrive in a constantly changing environment despite resource challenges and constraints. We hope this Board will formulate policies and strategies that will help the organisation evolve and thrive, while maintaining financial and operational sustainability. During our watch, we want to transition to an even stronger team and structure, provide members of our team with opportunities to thrive and grow, and build competencies that will support succession plans.

Already, the Board has begun to take another look at its mission and objectives. I believe it is healthy for a Board to embrace the need for change and welcome the opportunity to make these changes. I want to ensure sustainability for HAI. I want to be part of the effort to build a stronger organisation that will be able to withstand the test of time.

A complete list of HAI's Board Members can be found on our [website](#).