

Syllabus

Effective Altruism Philippines Introductory Fellowship

A 7-week program catered to 18-25 year olds interested in using evidence and reason to do the most good

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About the Introductory Fellowship

This introductory fellowship is aimed at senior high school students, university students, fresh graduates, and young professionals aged 18 to 25 years old, who are interested in maximizing their social impact through their career or resources and in learning about the philosophy of Effective Altruism. This fellowship will kick-off with a hybrid welcoming and closing event on August 10 and September 21 respectively, and weekly online learning sessions will run from August 17 to September 14, every Saturday based on the agreed-upon time of the accepted fellows. The hybrid events will be held at a venue within Metro Manila. Those located outside of Metro Manila can join the event virtually.



Fellowship Overview

Schedule	Торіс				
Week o: August 10	Welcoming Event: Overview of Effective Altruism and the Introductory Fellowship				
Week 1: August 17	Differences in Impact: Prioritization and High-Impact Careers We'll investigate what opportunities to do good are available to us, come to terms with the tradeoffs we face in our philanthropic efforts, and explore tools that can help us find these, specifically in our career and education.				
Week 2: August 24	The Scout Mindset: Open Truth-Seeking and Effective Giving We'll explore how to have epistemic humility as we seek truth and update our thinking, rather than merely defending our beliefs— which may lead us to unusually high-impact interventions for the most pressing and challenging causes that deserve funding and donations.				
Week 3: August 31	Expanding Our Compassion: Radical Empathy and Cause X We'll reflect on our values and their practical implications on who or what we extend our compassion and moral consideration to. We'll also ponder on how we ought to treat animals and the future people, and speculate which problems and/or causes are neglected now but may be crucial in the future.				
Week 4: September 07	Cause Area Exploration Global and Mental Health, Animal Welfare, and Longtermism We'll discuss the four priority areas of Effective Altruism and the rationale behind their endorsement. We'll do so by having a dialogue with leaders and organizers from Philippine-based organizations working in these causes.				
Optional but highly encouraged! September 09 to 13	Co-Working Session for Capstone Projects and/or Makeup Session for those with Absence(s)				
Week 5: September 14	Effective Altruism in Action: Collaborative Spirit and Capstone Projects We'll integrate what we've learned over the past weeks and apply the concept of collaborative spirit by creating a capstone project with your co-fellows. This could be done in pairs or by groups of three.				
Week 6: September 21	Synthesis: Fellows' Graduation and The EA Landscape				



About the Learning Sessions

Effective Altruism isn't defined by any particular solution, in fact, we expect the focus to shift as the evidence or environment changes. What defines effective altruism are the guiding principles that underpin its search for the best ways of helping others. So, what are these **principles** that unite EA?

Prioritization. Resources are limited, so we have to make hard choices and trade-offs between potential interventions. For instance, some charities help 100x or 1,000x as many people as others when given the same resources and our goal is to find and support them.

Radical Empathy. We aim to give everyone's interest equal weight, regardless of where or when they live. This means focusing on groups who are most neglected, and even extending our moral concern to animals and future humans.

Open Truth-Seeking. Rather than merely defending our beliefs and being fixed to a certain approach, we strive to possess epistemic humility and the readiness to update our beliefs.

Collaborative Spirit. We achieve more by working together and doing this effectively requires high standards of honesty, integrity and compassion.

As a practical community, members of Effective Altruism Philippines apply the aforementioned principles in their life decisions to make a social impact. What are the most common actions that they do to demonstrate this?

High-Impact Careers. We have 80,000 hours in our careers. So, our members strive to make this time count by finding a career that is both fulfilling and impactful.

Effective Giving. Not all charities and interventions are equal, as such, we subject our charitable giving to the same rigour as other types of spending and/or help others donate to effective charities and funds by doing the research.

Cause Area Exploration. We support and endorse causes that are: scalable, tractable, and/or neglected by working and growing the communities of these areas.

Cause X. We acknowledge that there might be issues that are currently neglected but may be crucial in the future. So, we set out to find this Cause X.

Together, these principles and action points merge to form our learning session topics throughout the fellowship! As such, we expect you to learn both the theoretical underpinnings and the applications of Effective Altruism.



Approaching the Fellowship

Take ideas seriously. Often, conversations about ideas are like fun diversions: we enjoy batting around interesting thoughts and saying smart things, and then we go back to doing whatever we were already doing in our lives. This is a fine thing to do—but at least sometimes, we think we should be asking ourselves questions like:

- "How could I tell if this idea was true?"
- "If it is true, what does that imply I should be doing differently in my life? What else does it imply that I am wrong about?"

And, zooming out:

- "Where are my blind spots?"
- "Which important questions should I be thinking about that I'm not?"

This also comes with recognizing that it is a privilege to be able to discuss these ideas. We are talking about lived realities and complex issues so it is important that we take ideas seriously—that we want to make our worldviews as full and accurate as possible since we see that this allows us to make better decisions about the things we care about.

Disagreements are interesting. When people with access to the same information reach very different conclusions from each other, we should be curious as to why it happens. We tend to be incurious about this simply because it is very common that we are used to it. But if, for example, a medical community is divided on whether Treatment A or Treatment B does a better job of curing some disease, they should want to get to the bottom of that disagreement, because the right answer matters—lives are at stake. Even if you do not expect to end up agreeing with the other person, it is valuable to try to understand why you disagree, and exactly how their views disagree with yours.

Strong opinions, weakly held. People usually abstain from trying to have opinions about things because they think things like "I am not an expert" or "It is hard to know for sure." Instead, during this Fellowship, we invite you to be bold enough to venture guesses, expressed clearly enough such that it is easy for someone else, or evidence about the world, to prove you wrong. In the long run, we hope that you will become stronger and more engaged thinkers; this seems more important than minimizing your error in the short run. It is easy to have a vague disagreement and to just "agree to disagree," without ever learning from each other. A clearly expressed view makes it easier for other people to figure out exactly what you disagree about, and you can only learn from others when your disagreements become concrete.



Fellowship Structure

The hybrid **welcoming event** will have a workshop to give an overview of the basics of Effective Altruism and to set the expected norms and policies during the fellowship. It will also serve as a socials event to enable the fellows to interact with each other.

During the **weekly online learning sessions**, we will discuss the four guiding principles of EA and feature how it is applied by the community members in their education, further studies, careers, cause areas, and/or donations to make a positive social impact. To maximize your participation in these meetups, you will have to consume a set of resources and attend a 2-hour meeting on Zoom to discuss the key concepts in small groups.

The hybrid **closing event** in Metro Manila will help the fellows settle in the EA Landscape by giving them a venue to network and connect with community members, and by introducing them to opportunities and job openings that can be EA or EA-aligned.

Expectations

The fellowship takes place over the course of seven weeks from the week of August 10th to the week of September 21st. To complete the Introductory Fellowship, fellows must fulfill the following requirements:

- 1. Go through the resources of each week. Note that both the "Exercise" and "Others" sections are optional but highly encouraged to supplement your learning.
- 2. Attend at least 4 of the weekly learning sessions. If you cannot attend a meetup, there will be a makeup session available on the week of September 13 to 19. Specific timing depends on the facilitators' availability.
- 3. Attend at least 1 hybrid socials either the Welcoming or the Closing Event. In case there are last minute changes to your schedule, kindly email the IF Core Team at team@effectivealtruism.ph to notify us of your absence. Please also RSVP with "No" or "Maybe" so we can be advised accordingly.
- 4. Present a capstone project individually, by pair, or by group of three on Week 5.

Feedback, Concerns, and Diversity

We are committed to making the fellowship an environment that is productive, constructive, welcoming, and safe. It is a priority of the IF Core team to welcome ideologically and demographically diverse perspectives. Fellows are encouraged to express any troubles, feelings, or problems to their facilitators or the fellowship team. This may be about any topic, whether personal or general feedback.



The Syllabus

Week 1: Differences in Impact

Prioritization and High-Impact Careers



RESOURCES

The Premise. Everyone wants to help others, but are good intentions enough to make a difference? Two of the earliest figures in Effective Altruism make a case why there is a need for evidence and reason when addressing global problems.

<u>Scope Insensitivity</u> by Eliezer Yudkowsky (2-minute read). Many people believe in the abstract that saving ten times as many people is ten times as good. Yet numerous psychological studies show that humans have trouble feeling, on a gut level, the differences between saving one hundred and one thousand.

<u>The Big Idea</u> by Will MacAskill (7-minute read). A sobering truth: even though we want to, we simply won't be able to solve everything at once in a world in crisis. There will always be tradeoffs. If so, we must carefully assess our options and prioritize.

Against Prioritizing. There are different tools and frameworks that we can use to measure the impact of a program or decision, which we will explore further in our exercise. Too often than not, these require us to quantify and for many, this is considered to be a cold and calculating move. But are we really undervaluing life by putting a number on it?

<u>The Value of a Life</u> by Nate Soares (10-minute read). In an interesting analogy, Soares explains the difference between putting a price and putting a value on life

<u>Estimation is the Best We Have</u> by Katja Grace (3-minute read). A consideration of what to do when faced with uncertainty and why we shouldn't be paralyzed by it.

Grounding Us. Up until this point we have been grappling with dense ideas and we understand that this could be overwhelming and a lot to process, hence, we wanted to end this section on a positive note. We hope that you find comfort in these last resources.

<u>The World is Awful, Much Better, Can Be Much Better</u> by Max Roser (8-minute video). It is wrong to think these three statements contradict each other. We need to see that they are all true to see that a better world is possible.

How to Balance Impact and Doing What You Love? by Benjamin Todd (4-minute read). Working in the development sector, or even dedicating your energy to help others, is by no means an easy task. May we also extend compassion to ourselves.

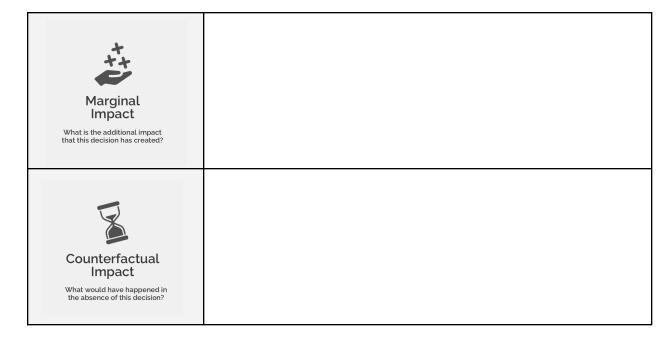




SNS Framework. A tool for estimating the value of allocating marginal resources to solving a problem based on its scale, neglectedness, and solvability. We encourage you to try assessing your personal advocacy and/or a social issue in the Philippines using this framework. You can also view this **12-minute video** from Will MacAskill where he evaluated several causes as a reference.

Scale How many and how badly are they affected?	Neglectedness How much talent and funding is focused on this?	Solvability Will adding more people and funding lead to progress?

Marginal and Counterfactual Impact. A tool for estimating the direct and indirect impact of a decision. This time, try to measure the marginal and counterfactual impact of choosing your current career or education and/or of pivoting to a new one. You can also skim through these articles from Probably Good to better grasp the concept of marginal and counterfactual impact.







ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

80,000 HOURS



80,000 Hours conducts research on which careers have the largest positive social impact and provides career advice based on that research. It provides this advice on their website, youtube channel and podcast, and through one-on-one advice sessions.

<u>Probably Good</u> is dedicated to helping people build careers that are good for them and good for the world. We provide tools, ideas, and direct support to empower more people to make a positive impact through their work.

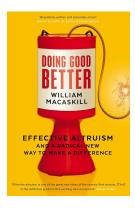




Magnify Mentoring supports a global community of people who are motivated to have a positive impact with their careers and lives. Our team and expert advisors pair mentees who are interested in pursuing high-impact careers with more experienced mentors for a series of one-on-one meetings.

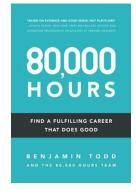
Effective Thesis aims to assist students in their thesis topic choice and direct their attention to areas that have the potential to greatly improve the world. They do this by suggesting research paths which are important yet neglected, and which could provide opportunities for higher impact.

PUBLISHED BOOKS



Doing Good Better by Will MacAskill

Do you care about making the world a better place? Perhaps you buy ethical products, donate to charity or volunteer your time in the name of doing good. But how often do you know what impact you have?



80.000 Hours

by Benjamin Todd

A free guide based on 10+ years of research alongside academics at Oxford. You have about 80,000 hours in your career, so your career choices are among the most important decisions you'll ever make.



Week 2: The Scout Mindset

Open Truth-Seeking and Effective Giving



Prospecting and Debiasing. With lives and resources at stake, it is important that individuals working and/or engaging with the development sector, practice open truth-seeking. To do so, the first step is to identify the biases that we might have and to find concrete ways to address them.

Why You Think You're Right—Even if You're Wrong by Julia Galef (12-minute video). In this Ted Talk, Galef explained the difference between the motivations of a soldier and a scout.

Efforts to Improving the Accuracy of Our Judgments and Forecasts by Luke Muehlhauser (15-minute read). Open Philanthropy is a research and a grantmaking foundation that makes funding decisions using the principles of effective altruism. How do their strategies differ from others and what measures do they have to improve their team's rationality?

Integrity and Redirections. If our assumptions are wrong and we're not getting the results that we want, what should be done? A huge part of open truth-seeking is having the integrity to admit your mistakes, pivoting, and in some cases, doing the difficult task of letting go.

<u>Our Mistakes</u> by GiveWell. This is an extensive list of all the mistakes made by GiveWell, a charity evaluator that publishes research on the cost-effectiveness of varying interventions. Feel free to only skim the sections that you're interested in.

Center for Effective Aid Policy has Shut Down by Mathias Kirk Bonde (11-minute read).

Governments spend billions on projects to help the world's poorest, few of them cost-effective. This was the gap that the Center for Effective Aid Policy focused on. However, last July 2024, the organization officially shut down.

Maternal Health Initiative is Shutting Down by Ben Williamson and Sarah Eustis-Guthrie (24-minute read). Maternal Health Initiative trained healthcare workers in a system of counseling that increased access to family planning women receive in the postpartum period. Upon reviewing the results of their pilot programme, they decided to shut down.

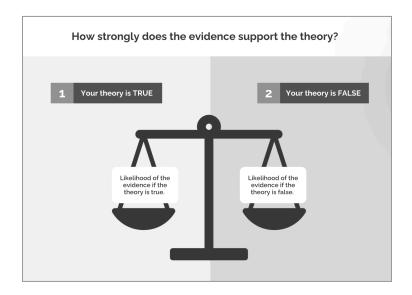
The Landscape. The pursuit of effective giving is a collaboration between several stakeholders—from funders to charity evaluators and researchers and charity incubators and nonprofits, all of them featured this week. We're ending with a list of charities that you may donate to and/or endorse.

What are the Best Charities to Support in 2024 by Giving What We Can (15-minute read). This list mostly features charities based abroad. In 2021, EA Philippines released a tentative list of their recommended local charities. See here.





Bayes' Rule. It is a mental model which allows you to adapt your thinking reactively to new evidence. Learn more from this **12-minute video** of Julia Galef or this **interactive course** from Clearer Thinking.



Heuristics. A heuristic is a mental shortcut that our brains use that allows us to make decisions quickly without having all the relevant information. While using them as a rule of thumb can save us time and can prevent decision paralysis, there are also cases where they do lead to systematic errors. You can view this <u>article</u> from Conceptually to learn more.



What





ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

is

GiveWell



GiveWell

dedicated to finding outstanding giving opportunities and publishing the full details of our analysis to help donors decide where to give. They don't focus solely on financials, instead, they conduct in-depth research to determine how much good a given program accomplishes per dollar spent.

Giving

<u>We Can</u> leverage thousands of hours of research to help people decide where to donate, share practical advice to make more informed giving decisions on one's own, and connect donors with a community who value making progress on some of the world's most pressing problems.

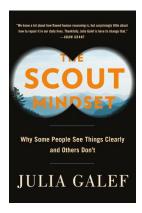




<u>Charity Entrepreneurship</u> dedicates hundreds of research hours to identifying the most effective charity ideas. Then, they recruit aspiring entrepreneurs and, through their 2-month Incubation Program, provide them with the training and funding to turn these ideas into high-impact organizations.

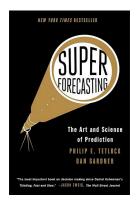
Founders Pledge is a nonprofit that encourages entrepreneurs to pledge to donate a portion of their profits to effective charities, and conducts cause prioritization and charity evaluation research to assist their members in deciding which organizations to support.

PUBLISHED BOOKS



The Scout Mindset by Julia Galef

Galef shows that what makes scouts better at getting things right isn't that they're smarter or more knowledgeable than everyone else. It's a handful of emotional skills, habits, and ways of looking at the world.



Superforecastingby Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner

It offers the first demonstrably effective way to improve our ability to predict the future—whether in business, finance, politics, international affairs, or daily life.



Week 3: Expanding Our Compassion

Radical Empathy and Cause X



REQUIRED RESOURCES

What Were They Thinking? Some of the greatest disaster in history were established parts of society: slavery, the subjugation of women and genocide. In retrospect, it's easy to say: What were they thinking? But can we actually prove ourselves to be different to our future descendants?

Moral Progress and Cause X by William MacAskill (5-minute read). Some of the worst atrocities in history occurred because the victims were outside most of society's *moral circle*—the set of beings that people think deserve their moral concern. We must then ask: What other causes are we neglecting that might be important in the future?

Should Animals, Plants, and Robots have the Same Rights as You? by Sigal Samuel (20-minute read). If we wish to avoid participating in a moral catastrophe, then we must critically examine the boundaries of our moral circle— do nonhumans have a place in it

On Animals and their Sentience. Probably the most direct symptom of humans' speciesism, the belief that other animal species are less worthy than humans, is our treatment of farmed animals. Recent studies confirm that they are sentient, able to feel pain and suffering.

<u>The Welfare Range Table</u> by Bob Fischer (10-minute read). This research from Rethink Priorities summarizes the state of scientific knowledge about some commonly farmed species' abilities to have pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

<u>Suffering in Animals vs. Humans</u> by Brian Tomasik (8-minute read). How should we weigh the suffering of animals against that of humans? Tomasik argues that most nonhuman animals can suffer to an extent that deserves our concern.

The Long-Term Future. There may be a greatly neglected group of beings lying outside of our moral circle: future generations. Our actions today can radically change the world they inherit.

The Case for Longtermism by William MacAskill (9-minute read). This introduction to long-termism describes why future people matter, the scale of humanity's potential, and ways we can positively influence the long-term future.

Why I Find Longtermism Hard, and What Keeps Me Motivated by Michelle Hutchinson (15-minute read). It can be difficult to come around the idea of longtermism but despite the uncertainties, Hutchinson circles back on the idea that: There are so many possible people in the future who have no ability at all to advocate for themselves, and I care about them.





Part 1: A Letter to the Past

Imagine someone from the past who held views characteristic of that time. Also imagine, for the sake of the exercise, that this person is not too different from you - perhaps you would have been friends. Unfortunately, many people in the past were complicit in horrible things, such as slavery, sexism, racism, and homophobia, which were even more prevalent in the past than they are now. And, sadly, this historical counterpart is also complicit in some moral tragedy common to their time, perhaps not out of malevolence or ill-will, but merely through indifference or ignorance.

This exercise is to write a short letter to this historical friend arguing that they should care about a specific group that your present self values. Imagine that they are complicit in owning slaves, or in the oppression of women, people of other races, or sexual minorities.

For the sake of this exercise, imagine your historical counterpart is not malevolent or selfish, they think they are living a normal moral life, but are unaware of where they are going wrong. What could you say to them to make them realize that they're doing wrong? What evidence are they overlooking that allows them to hold their discriminatory views? You might want to write a few paragraphs or just bullet points, and spend time reflecting on what you write.

Write your letter here.			

Part 2: A Letter from your Future Self

Now imagine one day you get a strange letter; it's a letter from your future counterpart, hundreds of years in the future. In the letter they argue that, just like your past counterpart, you currently are unknowingly and unwittingly committing some moral wrong. What do you think the letter might say? What issue might be of great moral importance that you are unaware of today?

Write your letter here.





ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

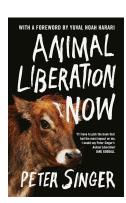


Rethink Priorities is a research and implementation group that identifies pressing opportunities to make the world better. We act upon these opportunities by developing and implementing strategies, projects and solutions to key issues. We do this work in close partnership with foundations and impact-focused non-profits.



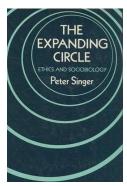
Global Priorities Institute is an interdisciplinary research center at the University of Oxford that conducts foundational research on projects whose contributions are unlikely to be otherwise made by the normal run of academic research, and that speak directly to the most crucial considerations decision makers must confront

PUBLISHED BOOKS



Animal Liberation Now by Peter Singer

Fully rewritten for the 21st century, the book reveals new developments and refines its arguments to address the pressing problems of today: the impact of meat consumption on the climate emergency and the spread of new viruses.



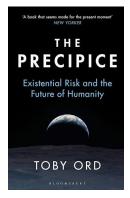
The Expanding Circle by Peter Singer

What is ethics? Where do moral standards come from? Are they based on emotions, reason, or some innate sense of right and wrong? But if evolution is a struggle for survival, why are we still capable of altruism?



What We Owe the Future by Will MacAskill

It's not enough to reverse climate change or avert the next pandemic. We must ensure that civilization would rebound if it collapsed; counter the end of moral progress; and prepare for a planet where the smartest beings are digital.



The Precipice by Toby Ord

It explores the science behind the risks we face. It puts them in the context of the greater story of humanity: showing how ending these risks is among the most pressing moral issues of our time. And it points toward longtermism.



Week 4: Cause Area Exploration

Mental Health, Animal Welfare, Longtermism, and Biosecurity

This week, we'll be exploring some of the priority areas of Effective Altruism by having a dialogue with the leaders and organizers of Philippine-based organizations. Learn more about these causes by reading through these resources: Mental Health | Animal Welfare | Longtermism | Biosecurity

ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT





Phlourish tests and scales cost-effective mental health interventions to make them accessible. They do this by either adopting proven interventions or developing innovative ones, testing its fit for a chosen demographic, and scaling its distribution if proven cost-effective.

Animal Empathy Philippines aims to bring farmed animals issues in the Philippines to the forefront and harness collective action to effectively help farmed animals, and is guided by the question: How might we help Filipinos do the most good for farmed animals?





WhiteBox Research is a non-profit initiative that aims to solve open research problems in AI interpretability and develop more AI safety researchers.

<u>Condor Global SEA</u> is a program of the Condor Initiative that aims to connect high talent individuals in Southeast Asia to high impact opportunities to safeguard humanity's future through a 7-day camp.





Project SHIELD PH or the Project Strategic Health Initiative for Epidemic Limitation and Defense in the Philippines was a 5-month research initiative held in 2023, funded by Open Philanthropy's Biosecurity Scholarships Program. They developed a biosecurity research agenda for the Philippines, aiming to get the ball rolling in capacitating the nation to reduce risks of biological catastrophes.

APRMI PH or the Alternative Protein Research Mapping Initiative in the Philippines is an independent, nonprofit think tank aimed at scoping & engaging with top scientific talent in the Philippines to accelerate alternative protein research in the Philippines.

Note: APRMI PH is currently in the process of rebranding and scaling up their initiative.



Week 5: Effective Altruism in Action

Collaborative Spirit and Capstone Projects

List of Topics. We don't necessarily have a strict rule on what kind of capstone project you can present, instead, we want you to pursue a topic that reflects your experience in the fellowship, and your understanding of Effective Altruism. However, we do have several prompts that you may explore.

- 1. You can take a more personal route by sharing your breakthroughs after joining the fellowship. For instance, considering a different career path or cause area after using the SNS Framework or updating your belief using bayesian thinking.
- 2. You may pitch ideas on how we can reach more people in your area, campus, or sector by setting a strategy to communicate an EA principle.
- 3. If you have ideas that challenge the current framework of the movement, you may discuss your insights and share why it is vital to be heard and considered.
- 4. You can endorse a cause area that you think Effective Altruism should support and back it using the concepts discussed throughout the fellowship.
- 5. You can endorse a local charity that you think is EA-aligned and deserves funding. Alternatively, you can propose a hypothetical organization that can address and/or solve a specific issue.

<u>Non-negotiable</u>: Share your plan on how you wish to get more involved with the community and how you wish to proceed with your learning journey. EA PH has several programs lined up that you can join after the Introductory Fellowship such as the In-Depth Fellowship and Career Planning Program.

General Mechanics.

- 1. You may choose to do your capstone project individually, by pair, or by groups of three. If you need assistance in finding members, just let us know!
- 2. Once you're settled with your topic, you will have to input it on a google sheet. This should be done 3 days before the presentation so the IF Core Team has enough time to review and provide feedback.
- 3. We suggest working on your project and/or meeting with your members on the week of September 9 to 13– as this is our dedicated period for co-working.
- 4. From this point on, you may choose to submit an 8-minute pre-recorded presentation or discuss it live on Zoom where you are given the same amount of time. Please expect a 3-minute QnA on the meetup. We'll be pooling together the questions from your facilitators, co-fellows, and/or EA PH members.

More information will be provided as we approach this week.