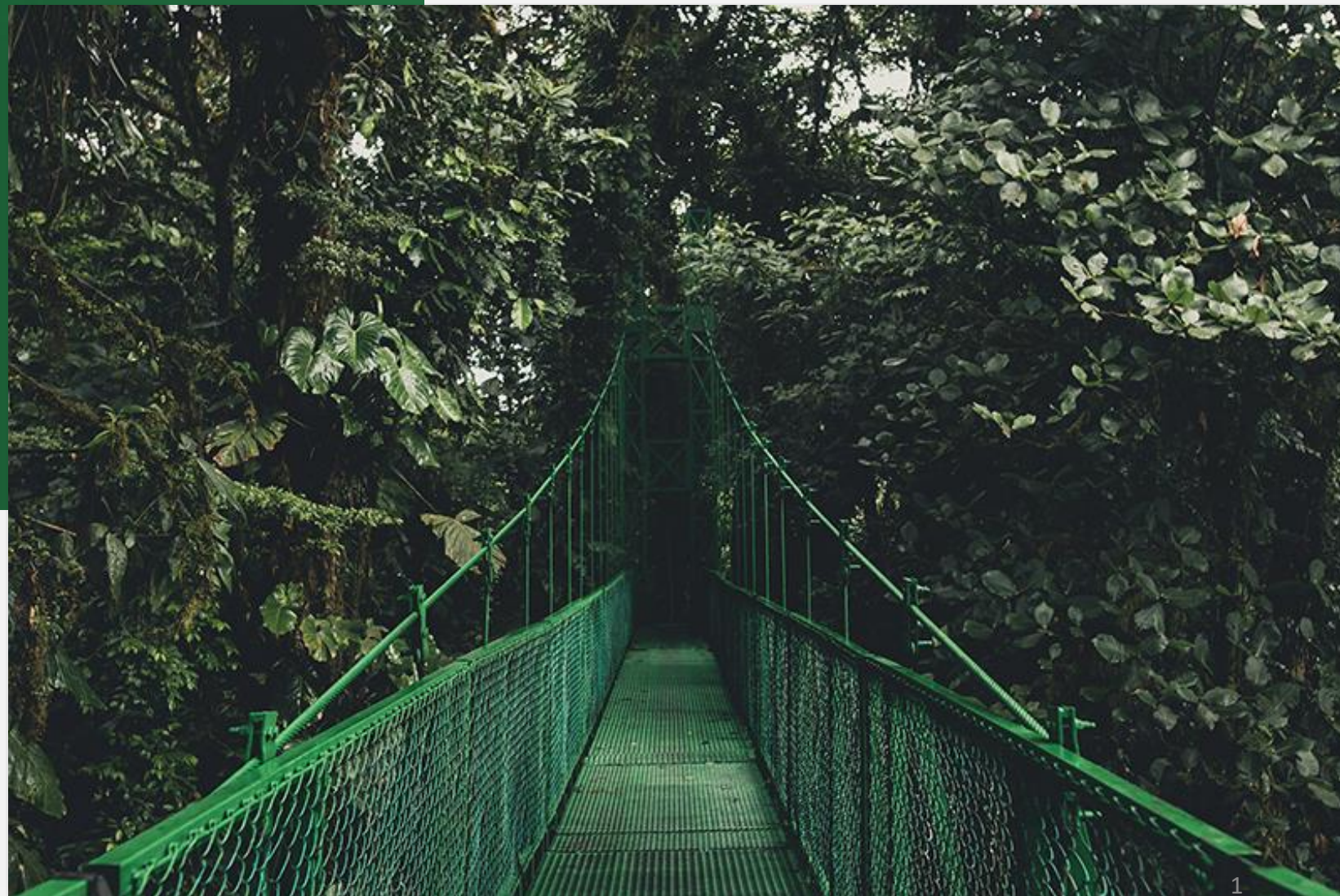


# So what do you mean by equity?

## Definitions briefing note

June 2021



## Authorship and acknowledgements

This briefing note was written by Motunrayo Fagbayi (member of The Equity Index Advisory Council) and Alex Martins (Co-Founder and Research Lead for Equity Index). It was produced as part of The Equity Index's pilot project, delivered with the support of the Joffe Charitable Trust through a £20,000 grant.

**Note: The definitions of equity presented in this note are not exhaustive.** There are undoubtedly hundreds of resources that we have not been able to include in this note. Subject to resource, we plan to periodically revisit and update this document with new sources and information, as they arise. We encourage you to [get in touch](#) if you would like to share any relevant resources.

Please also note that inclusion of a definition in this mapping does not necessarily indicate endorsement by The Equity Index.

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# Part 1: Introduction & overarching definitions of equity

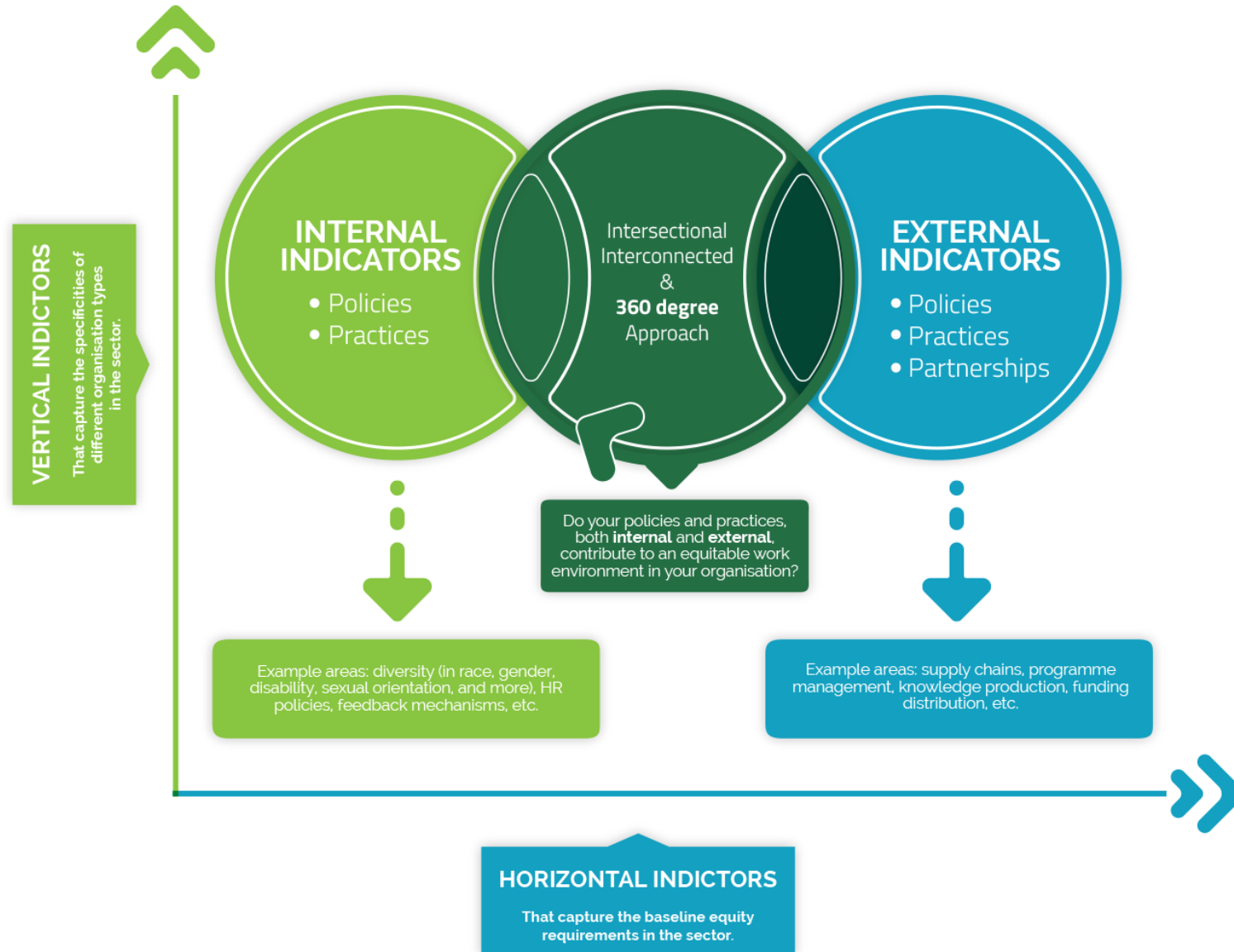
## Introduction

- The term ‘equity’ has a myriad of definitions and connotations, depending on who uses the term, which angle it is viewed from, and the context in which it is employed. Definitional clarity has been an important component of The Equity Index’s work to date. Given the many different uses of the term that are in operation within or beyond the development sector, this briefing note seeks to provide a brief overview of a range of definitions of equity, within the context of global development and beyond.
- We must begin with a large **caveat**: definitions of equity, even with the development sector alone, are far too numerous for this short briefing note to be comprehensive. It is therefore not intended to be exhaustive, however we offer this piece of work as a primer on some of the most commonly used and referenced definitions of equity in the international development sector or by UK governmental and civil society actors. We do not comment on the validity or usefulness of the included definitions; rather, we grant the reader access to a wide range of definitions.
- A **final note** before we begin: our experience and work thus far has reinforced the fact that equity is a highly context-specific term, and its meaning varies greatly from country to country, sector to sector, and even institution to institution. Given that we are a UK-focused social enterprise, many but not all of the definitions provided in this note are UK-specific.

## Objectives, structure and definitions

- **Objective of this briefing note:** Equity is in many ways a misunderstood term, often conflated with the term ‘equality’ despite being very distinct. Our aim is therefore simple: to present a survey of prominent definitions to both demystify and contextualise the term. Throughout our pilot project, we have also noted how often equity is associated only with the concepts of diversity and inclusion, when in fact its broader definitions go far beyond this narrow conception. We also present our own definitions of equity to ground the work we have done and to contextualise the indicators we are developing for use in the index.
- **Structure of the note:** Given the multitude of existing definitions, we have structured the material in line with The Equity Index’s core model. After providing broad, overarching definitions of equity, we focus separately on definitions associated with our conception of internal and external equity. This model is summarised on the next slide.
- **Our overarching definition of equity:** The Equity Index uses the term to refer to a general process of ‘levelling an unequal playing field’ between the Global South and Global North, through organisational policies and practices that do not discriminate against marginalised groups, a fairer distribution of resources, and more equitable partnerships.

# The Equity Index model



## Overarching definitions of equity

- As outlined by the Equitable Evaluation Initiative in their [evaluation framework](#), definitions broadly sit on a spectrum of describing equity as a **process** (a means to an end) or an **outcome** (an end in and of itself) – or indeed both. As the EEI notes on their [website](#): “[equity] often speaks to either the how or to the what end, but not both. We believe that evaluative practice should reflect the principles of equity in how it is designed and implemented as well as what it supports.”

### Process definitions:

- “Deep equity means working towards outcomes in ways that model dignity, justice, and love without re-creating harm in our structures, strategies and working relationships.” ([Change Elemental](#))
- “When marginalized people begin to gain and wield ideological power, they have the authority to produce knowledge and create meaning. Their ideas are prioritized, and organizational decisions are shaped by their views. Organizations that practice equity create space for these leaders who exist at the intersection of race, gender, and class oppression.” ([Non-Profit Quarterly](#))

### Outcome definitions:

- Equity is the “absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically.” ([World Health Organisation](#))

## The distinction between equity and equality

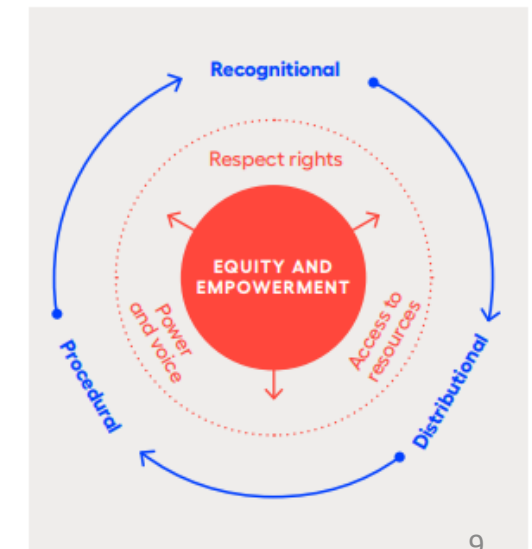
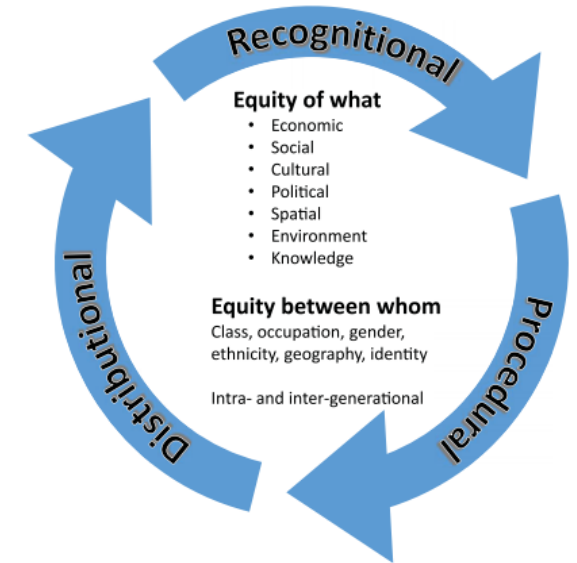
- As noted in the introduction, despite being conflated often, equity and equality are not synonymous concepts. In a [2013 United Nations paper](#), Vandemoortele outlines the difference as follows:
  - “The terms ‘equality’ and ‘equity’ are often used interchangeably, although they embody quite distinct points of view. Equality implies that no differences should exist between people. Everyone should earn or receive the same. Equity, on the other hand, accepts differences but rejects disparities that are unfair and avoidable. Differences must be based on a level playing field and on principles of social justice; they have to be earned fairly.” p.18
- The Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda recognises, at least in theory, the importance of both equality – “the imperative of moving towards substantive equality of opportunity and outcomes for all groups” – and equity – “understood as fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities,” as outlined in a 2016 [UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination report](#).
- Both equity and equality are referenced in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The [preamble](#) envisages a “a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity,” as well as a “just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.”
  - The goals themselves also refer to equitable access to education (goal 4), to water and sanitation (goal 6), to infrastructure (goal 9), and trade (goal 17).
  - Most of the SDGs also contain references to equality, including gender equality and equal access to justice. For an overview of how equity is referenced throughout the SDGs, see p.6 of this [Global Sustainability article](#).



## Development-specific definitions



- In an [article](#) for Global Sustainability, Leach, Reyers, Bai, Brondizio, Cook, Sandra Díaz, Espindola, Scobie, Stafford-Smith and Subramanian define equity in relation to two questions: equity of *what* and equity *between whom*? The authors also present an overarching typology for equity (summarised in the graphic to the right and on p.4 of the article):
  - **Distributional**: “how resources, costs and benefits are allocated or shared amongst people and groups.”
  - **Recognitional**: “refers to acknowledgement of and respect for identity, values and associated rights.”
  - **Procedural**: “how decisions are made, and the extent to which different people and groups are able to influence these or have their perspectives represented or incorporated.”
- The 2021 [Human Development Report](#) adopts elements of this framing (summarised in the graphic to the right), noting that:
  - Equity is central to human development because “inequalities... are reflected in asymmetries of power. The unequal distribution of nature’s contributions to people and of environmental degradation’s costs are often rooted in the power of a few to benefit without bearing the negative consequences—and in the disempowerment of the many that disproportionately bear the costs. The former group represents a minority of humans that biases collective decisions. Equity can rebalance these power asymmetries so that everyone can benefit from and contribute to easing planetary pressures.” p.71

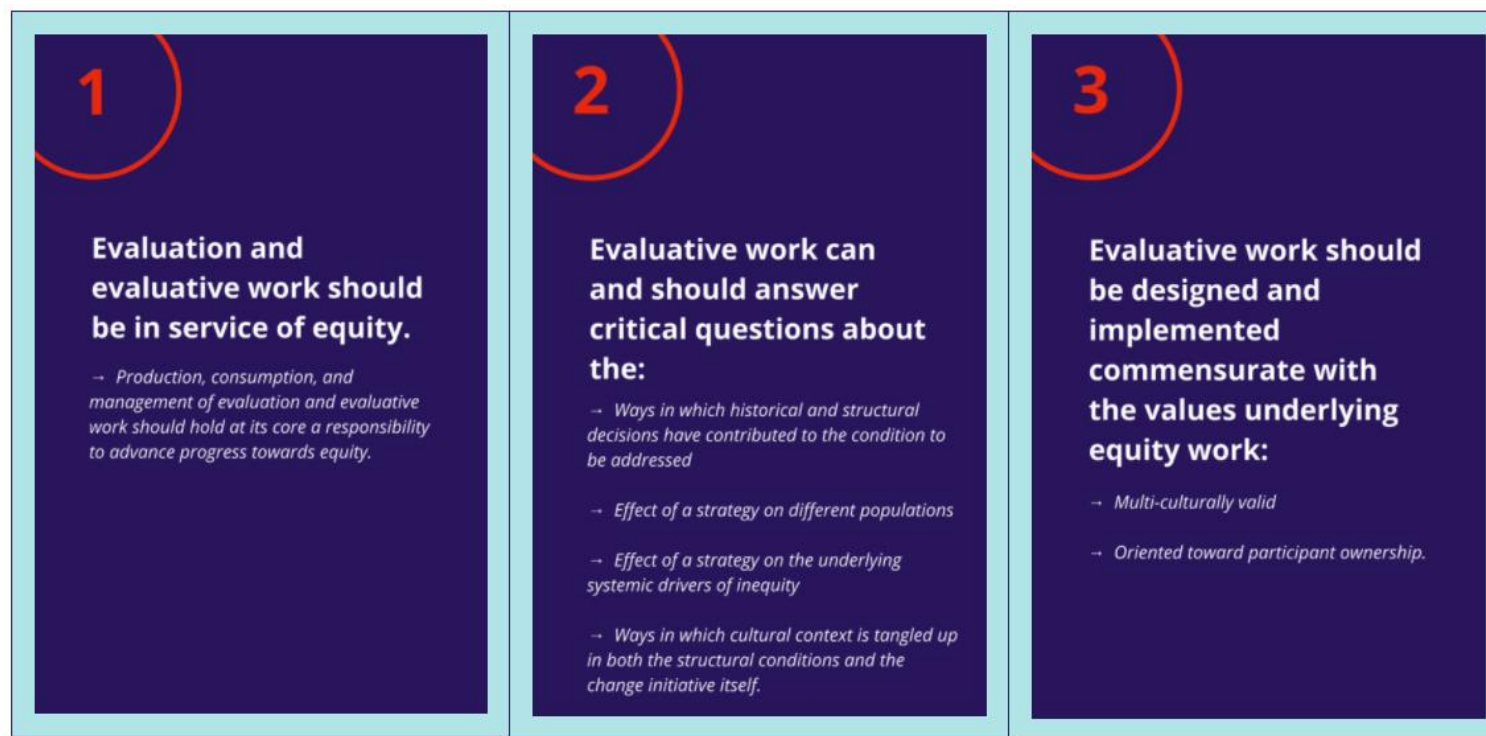


## Thematic definitions of equity

- As noted by the [Equity Tool](#), “equity refers to social justice or fairness, and is one of the central pillars of many health, education and livelihood programs.” Multiple thematic definitions exist – below are a few indicative examples.
- Health equity: “the fair distribution of resources needed for health, fair access to the opportunities available, and fairness in the support offered to people when ill. The outcome of these efforts would be a gradual reduction of all systematic differences in health between different socioeconomic groups. The ultimate vision is the elimination of such inequities, by levelling up to the health of the most advantaged.” Whitehead and Dahlgren, [WHO](#), 2007, p.5
- Education equity: [UNESCO, UIS 2018](#) report: “We take equity to mean that a distribution is fair or justified. Equity involves a normative judgement of a distribution, but how people make that judgement will vary.” p.17
- “Equity considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness, and impartiality of its distribution at all levels or educational subsectors.” Jacob and Hollinger, [Inequality in Education: A Critical Analysis](#), p.4
- Climate equity: The World Resources Institute approach to equity is based on a recognition that “climate change poses the greatest threat to those least responsible for it, including low-income and disadvantaged populations, women, racial minorities, marginalized ethnic groups and the elderly.” The [Climate Equity Reference Project and Calculator](#) summarises equity as “national fair shares in a global effort to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

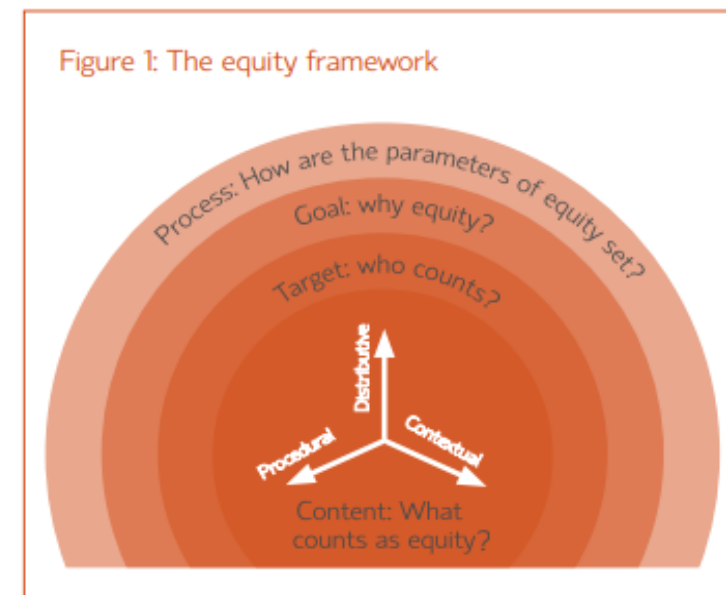
## Equity in evaluation frameworks

- For the former UK Department for International Development (DFID), now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), considerations of equity are incorporated into the ‘4E’ value for money framework (which also includes economy, efficiency, effectiveness/cost-effectiveness).
  - In this framework, [equity considerations](#) are: “how fairly are the benefits distributed? To what extent is the intervention supporting marginalised groups? (‘Spending fairly’).”
- The approach advocated by the [Equitable Evaluation Initiative](#) is grounded in three principles, as summarised below:



## Equity in evaluation frameworks

- A 2011 [paper](#) produced as part of a climate and deforestation programme, REDD-net, put forward a framework for defining and measuring equity consisting of four layers: process, goal, target and content (summarised in the figure below). The parameters of what counts as equity include the following dimensions, summarised on p.6:
  - Distributive equity
    - Is the distribution of benefits, costs and risks given consideration?
    - What is the intended basis for the distribution of benefits: equal shares, net social welfare, merit, needs?
  - Procedural/Participatory equity
    - Which marginalised groups are recognised? Voicing their interests?
    - Who is participating in decision-making and who is left out
  - Contextual equity (incorporating Capabilities, Access, Power)
    - Do marginalised individuals have access to the resources (e.g. land, capital) necessary to secure benefits of the initiative?
    - Are the causes of inequity identified? Addressed?



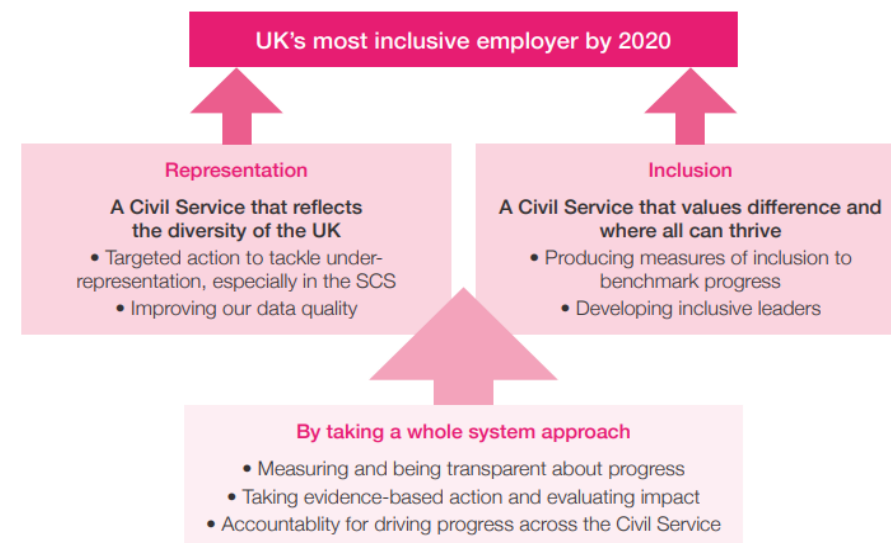
## Part 2: Definitions of internal equity

## Equity in the context of diversity and inclusion

- It would be impossible to include all prominent definitions of internal equity in the context of diversity and inclusion, given their multitude and the short length of this briefing note. Given our focus as The Equity Index, we have primarily drawn from definitions originating from the UK (as a UK-focused organisation).
- We also note that diversity and inclusion are not synonymous with equity. However, many UK based organisations focus on and define ‘D&I’ in contrast to their US counterparts who use ‘DEI’ or ‘EDI.’ We have opted to include diversity and inclusion definitions in order to set the wider context for equity in a UK organisational setting, and because diversity and inclusion are often essential components of achieving greater organisational equity.
- **Our definition of internal equity:** A term used by The Equity Index to refer to an organisation’s internal policies and practices on racial and gender equity, disability and LGBTQIA inclusion, and more, as well as on whether the organisational culture feels equitable.

## UK government definitions

- The UK [Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#), published in 2017, does not contain an explicit definition of equity. It does cover the following commitments:
  - “Continue to increase the **representation** of currently under-represented groups at all levels across the Civil Service; and
  - Focus on **inclusion** to build our culture and reputation as a place that attracts, develops, retains and fully engages all the diverse talent across our organisation.” (p.4)
- The strategy also commits to advancing “equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic [age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; sexual orientation] and those who do not.” (p.8)
- With regard to representation, the UK government publishes the [Civil Service diversity and inclusion interactive dashboard](#). It currently presents data from 2012 to 2019 on representation of women, ethnic minorities, disabled people, religion, and sexual orientation.



## UK professional industry definitions



- CIPD, a UK professional body for HR and people development, [defines](#) diversity and inclusion as follows:
  - “Diversity is about recognising difference. It’s acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives in decision-making and the workforce being representative of the organisation’s customers.
  - Inclusion is where people’s differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.”
- Acas, the UK’s Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, [defines](#) diversity and inclusion in a similar way:
  - “Diversity is the range of people in your workforce. For example, this might mean people with different ages, religions, ethnicities, people with disabilities, and both men and women. It also means valuing those differences. To avoid bullying, harassment or discrimination, you should make sure:
    - your workforce and managers understand what is protected by discrimination law
    - what’s expected under discrimination law is actually happening in your workplace
    - you make changes if what’s expected is not happening, for example stepping up staff training
    - your workforce and managers understand what the benefits can be of having a range of people with different backgrounds
  - An inclusive workplace means everyone feels valued at work. It lets all employees feel safe to:
    - come up with different ideas
    - raise issues and suggestions to managers, knowing this is encouraged
    - try doing things differently to how they’ve been done before, with management approval”



## *Development & third sector definitions of internal equity*

- Bond, the UK network for organisations working in international development, uses the phrase "[equity, diversity and inclusion](#)," with a particular focus on anti-racism and gender equity. Bond highlights the “stark inequalities in gender, race, disability and sexuality in the sector’s workforce” and is focusing on “working to transform the NGO sector, focusing on particular areas such as anti-racism and gender equity.”
- In a 2020 report, [Holding the mirror up to ourselves: Diversity and inclusion practices and trends in civil society organisations](#), CIVICUS notes that definitions of diversity and inclusion are contested, and they mean different things to different people. Acknowledging this, CIVICUS uses the following definitions:
  - “Diversity is about welcoming all of the dimensions that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another, often referred to as ‘the mix’. These dimensions can include, but are not limited to, a person’s nationality, citizenship status, geographical location, linguistic background, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, indigeneity, faith, religion, age, disability status, health status, HIV status, family/ relationship status, caregiving status, educational background, employment status, social class and cultural identity.” p.8
  - “Inclusion is the proactive and mindful step we take to make sure diversity happens, creating an environment where all different kinds of people can thrive and succeed. Inclusion refers to the positive ways of working with diversity at the workplace. As such, inclusion is seen as an action, but more specifically as a practice. While diversity can be mandated and legislated, such as through affirmative action and quotas, inclusion can only emerge from voluntary and intended actions.” p.9

## *Development & third sector definitions of internal equity*

- A 2020 report by Acevo and Voice4Change in the UK, [Home Truths: Undoing racism and delivering real diversity in the charity sector](#), defines equity as follows:
  - “At its core, equity is about treating people in a just way – not necessarily all in the same way – in order to secure good outcomes for all people (Cipriani, 2020).
- More specifically, it has three elements:
  - “First, equity is an analytical framework. It sees people and certain population groups as differently situated in society. For example, in a system where ‘race’ actively shapes the kinds of lives that BAME [Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic] people can lead, it tends to result in disparities in terms of access to and outcomes in important aspects of life, e.g. health, education, employment, criminal justice etc. And an equity-informed analysis is attentive to the ways in which systems, institutions and individuals enable and deliver these detrimental outcomes.
  - “Second, equity is a way to think about corrective action. It suggests that, as people and certain populations are differently located in society, we cannot secure justice by trying to treat people the same, e.g. using ‘equal opportunities’ in a recruitment process. Equal opportunities will tend to ignore the social context that may have shaped BAME lives in the moments up to recruitment – including the effects of past discrimination. We pick up on equity-informed alternatives to equal opportunities below.
  - “Third, race equity is for thinking about outcomes for BAME people. Specifically, the logic of equity-thinking is that there must be enhanced outcomes for BAME populations, to end racial disparities so that ‘race’ no longer affects how people are situated in collective life.” p.24

## *Development & third sector definitions of internal equity*

- The Ford Foundation, a U.S.-based philanthropic organisation, [defines](#) equity alongside diversity and inclusion, as follows:
  - “Diversity is the representation of all our varied identities and differences (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, tribe, caste, socio-economic status, thinking and communication styles, etc.), collectively and as individuals. We seek to proactively engage, understand and draw on a variety of perspectives. We believe that the solution to the problems we hope to address through our grant making can be found by affirming our similarities, as well as by finding value in our differences.
  - “Equity seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity, and fairness in access to information and resources for all. We believe this is only possible in an environment built on respect and dignity.
  - “Inclusion builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people. We believe every person’s voice adds value and we strive to create balance in the face of power differences. We believe that no one person can or should be called upon to represent an entire community.”
- The Ford Foundation also acknowledges the [connection](#) between internal and external equity: “Fighting inequity on a global stage begins inside.” More details are published in the Foundation’s [2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Annual Report](#).

## Definitions of racial and gender equity

- The [Racial Equity Index](#) defines racial equity as follows: “Racial equity refers to both the process and the outcome that results from fair and just inclusivity of people of all races, taking into deliberate consideration all the historical and current inequities experienced by individual racial groups.”
- Equity in the Center defines a [race equity culture](#) as “one focused on proactive counteraction of social inequities inside and outside of its organization.”
- [Racial Equity Tools](#) defines racial equity as “the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them.”
- The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia [defines](#) gender equity as the “process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls, and importantly the equality of outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles or norms or differences between the sexes. Equity ensures that women and men and girls and boys have an equal chance, not only at the starting point, but also when reaching the finishing line. It is about the fair and just treatment of both sexes that takes into account the different needs of the men and women, cultural barriers and (past) discrimination of the specific group.” p.3

# Part 3: Definitions of external equity

## Equity in a South/North or global context

- As with internal equity, it would be impossible to include all prominent definitions of external equity in this short note. In this section, we have primarily focused on definitions in the context of the international development sector.
- **Our definition of external equity:** A term used by The Equity Index to refer to various dimensions of an organisation's approach to partnership with organisations in the Global South, including the ways in which funding is distributed, programmes are designed and implemented, and governance and responsibilities are distributed.

## Equity in a global development context

- The World Bank’s 2006 [Equity and Development paper](#) states two principles of equity:
  - “Equal opportunity. The outcome of a person’s life, in its many dimensions, should reflect mostly his or her efforts and talents, not his or her background. Predetermined circumstances—gender, race, place of birth, family origins—and the social groups a person is born into should not help determine whether people succeed economically, socially, and politically.
  - Avoidance of absolute deprivation. An aversion to extreme poverty, or indeed a Rawlsian form of inequality aversion in the space of outcomes, suggests that societies may decide to intervene to protect the livelihoods of its neediest members (below some absolute threshold of need) even if the equal opportunity principle has been upheld. The road from opportunities to outcomes can be tortuous. Outcomes may be low because of bad luck, or even because of a person’s own failings. Societies may decide, for insurance or for compassion, that its members will not be allowed to starve, even if they enjoyed their fair share of the opportunity pie, but things somehow turned out badly for them.” p.18-19
- The World Bank’s 2010 report on [Equity and Growth in a Globalizing World: Commission on Growth and Development](#) focuses on equity within and between nations, as well as both ex ante (opportunity) and ex post (outcomes) equity. The report notes that:
  - “most credible political philosophies are “egalitarian” in some sense, even if they differ vehemently about what equity implies. On the one hand, the philosophies of the left espouse equality of income or wealth, arguing that everyone has an equal claim to the fruits of society. The philosophies of the libertarian right, on the other hand, argue that everyone has an equal claim on the fruits of their own labor and capital. If policy makers do prize equity in itself, they must pay close attention to the distributional consequences of growth.” p.xii

## Equity in a global development context

- A 2009 paper by the ODI, [Equity in development: Why it is important and how to achieve it](#), states that “equity comes from the idea of moral equality, that people should be treated as equals,” p.vi. It identifies three areas of considerable consensus, in order of priority:
  - “Equal life chances: There should be no differences in outcomes based on factors for which people cannot be held responsible.
  - Equal concern for people’s needs: Some goods and services are necessities, and should be distributed according solely to the level of need.
  - Meritocracy: Positions in society and rewards should reflect differences in effort and ability, based on fair competition.” p.vi
- The paper also identifies give core priorities for addressing equity concerns at the national level (p.vi-vii):
  1. Providing universal public services for fair treatment.
  2. Targeted action for disadvantaged groups.
  3. Social protection.
  4. Redistribution.
  5. Challenging embedded power imbalances



## Equity in a global development context

- The paper '[Globalization, Poverty and the North-South Divide](#)' in the *International Studies Review* asks:
  - “Is globalization a force for equity or for exploitation? Does globalization bring about progress or backwardness, development or underdevelopment, poverty or affluence? What are the possible links between globalization and inequality in general, and between globalization and poverty in particular? ... What are the implications of such links? How are these possible and convoluted relationships between globalization and poverty related to the North-South divide?”
  - Following the formulation of the late philosopher John Rawls, justice as fairness should be interpreted in terms of equal rights, reciprocity, global equity, and some form of redistribution of the global resources from the haves to the have-nots.
  - ...the links between globalization and poverty should encompass a dimension of distributive justice in terms of global equity, fairness, and redistribution of resources.”
- The World Health Organisation’s paper '[Concepts and principles for tackling social inequities in health](#)' outlines equity as an outcome:
  - “The end goal of equity in health care, however, would be to closely match services to the level of need, which may very well result in large differences in access and use of services between different socioeconomic groups, favouring the more disadvantaged groups in greatest need.”

## Equity in the context of knowledge production and research

- A paper produced by the Rethinking Research Collaborative paper on [equitable research partnerships](#) provides the following overview:
  - “A starting point in understanding fair and equitable research partnerships is to recognise that partnership and research are both political. Partnerships exist in specific contexts, which drive expectations of how the partnership is formed, and how the partners contribute to and benefit from it. Though often presented as a ‘neutral good’, the term ‘partnership’ conceals a tangle of complex power relations. These are embedded in institutional structures and processes; in research practices and identities; in the tools, texts and technologies of research; and in the jargon of development and research policy and funding.”
- The UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) recognises that there is no agreed definition of equity in partnerships but [defines](#) equitable partnerships as:
  - “Partnerships in which there is mutual participation, mutual trust and respect, mutual benefit and equal value placed on each partners contribution at all stages of the research process.”

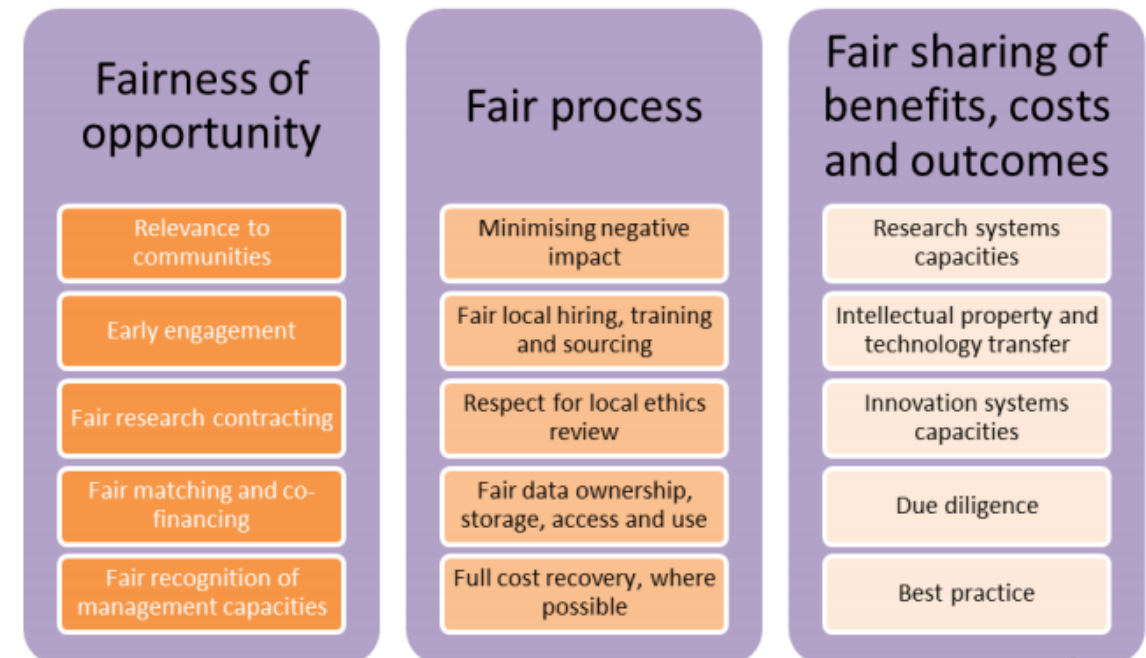
## Equity in a knowledge production and research



- In a report on [Finding and building effective and equitable research collaborations or partnerships](#), the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) expands on equitable partnerships:
  - “Many studies have suggested that economic and scientific inequalities between countries contributes to inequitable research partnerships with the wealthier partner prone to dominating the selection of partners, the research agenda, the decision-making process, budget management and publication... Even partnerships that start out equitably, with objectives set collaboratively and clear responsibilities allocated, appear to become more unequal as they approach publication, dissemination of the outcomes and policy impact.” p.5

- The report also summarises (p.6) the overall reporting areas of the [Research Fairness Initiative](#), which advocates for equitable research partnerships for health and development. The areas include:
  - Fairness of opportunity
  - Fair process
  - Fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes

Figure 1: Research Fairness Initiative reporting areas<sup>b</sup>



## Equity in a knowledge, research and evaluation context



- The [University of Toronto Scarborough's Knowledge Equity Lab](#) seeks to advance knowledge equity in the following ways:
  - Challenging the dominance of the English language, prioritising linguistic diversity, translation, preservation as a means of knowledge accessibility and conservation.
  - Decolonising and learning from indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, through non-written forms like stories, ceremonies, land, and more
  - Reflecting on positionality and representation, asking 'whose knowledge, voices, stories, and experiences are being represented; whose knowledge do we consider valid and important, whose knowledge are we learning from?'
  - Re-embodiment knowledge and pedagogy, away from the disembodied assumption of knowledge and learning being purely a cognitive set of abstract ideas, divorced from living and being, from the full, embodied self.
  - Cultivating care, trust, and safety when it comes to knowledge production and sharing, so the process and not just the outcome of knowledge generation can be healing and transformative for those involved.
  - Recognising art, music, stories, and more as ways of knowing and showing, and appreciating the ways that it can evoke and communicate knowledge in more accessible and engaging ways
  - Questioning power, ownership, and control over modes of knowledge production, being cognizant of the visible and invisible gatekeepers that define the standards of knowledge legitimacy and create dependency on these systems.
  - Cultivating a pluri-verse of knowledge systems as opposed to a monoculture of knowledge, where different ways of knowing, living, and being can co-exist.

# Part 4: Conclusions

## Concluding thoughts

- We come away from this exercise having reinforced our view that equity is a complex and multifaceted term that varies depending on context, time and place. But we also believe that equity can be codified in order that we can both understand and measure it.
- The Equity Index's definition of equity goes beyond diversity and inclusion, with its core focus on South-North or global equity, and draws from both internal and external definitions. A significant part of our work is focused on internal organisational policies, practices and cultures, and another significant part is dedicated to measuring all facets of equitable partnerships.
- Ultimately, what most definitions of equity used in this briefing note have in common is the focus on taking action to redress historical unfairness and injustices, and many also have an emphasis on the need for differential (rather than equal) treatment based on historical discrimination.
- This short briefing note has been significantly limited by our focus on English language definitions. We acknowledge this, and note that a full and comprehensive review of equity definitions would need to incorporate many other languages, as well as oral and other types of definitions. This would be a priority avenue for future research.

**Question for reflection:** Taking equitable principles into account, who should be defining and reflecting on this work, and how should these definitions be proactively embedded into the international development sector as a whole?

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