



# An open letter to our community

May 2024

We are writing this open letter to share some big news: The Equity Index is entering a new **resting phase**, or indeed a fallow phase, where land is left without crops to improve the quality of the soil and allow for refreshed growth. Although it is bittersweet, we are excited to share an update on our next steps. There is real power in rest - in fact, it is a crucial part of the resistance!

## WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

Looking back, we are incredibly proud of everything we have achieved as a micro organisation with no full-time staff. We have managed to sustain a vast amount of work on only £20,000 of grant funding, generously provided by the Joffe Charitable Trust, who we thank again for taking a leap of faith with us back in 2020 and 2021. This funding enabled us to deliver a [pilot project](#) that gave us 'proof of concept' (aka allowed us to test our model), and as per our firm commitment to share transparently, everything we produced as part of the pilot is available on our website.

Since completing our pilot project in 2021, we have also worked on some high-impact projects that again we are very proud to have supported. In 2022, we partnered with CIVICUS to deliver an [online consultation](#) on constituent accountability for grassroots organisations, movements, activists and other informal civil society actors across the Global South.

It has also been a joy to work on several Brazil-focused projects, a context where exciting changes have been happening when it comes to efforts to collect data on and measure equity. In 2022 and 2023, we partnered with Development Impact Managers and Advisors (DIMA) to design materials on racial and gender equity in the Brazilian context, including a guide (in Portuguese) [on equity for Brazilian start-ups](#) and on [Diversity Smart Investing](#).

At the end of the pilot, we also made a series of commitments to guide the future development of the organisation, including running equitable recruitment processes for both staff and independent board members, enabling Lorriann and Alex (our Co-Founders) to transition out of the organisation. All the details on these commitments can be accessed [here](#). We do not have the resources to take these commitments forward at the moment, but believe them to be important to any future phase of work The Equity Index embarks upon.

## THE FUNDING PARADOX

We remain deeply committed to the work of increasing transparency on equity, but need to carry it forward in different ways. As anyone who embarks on these kinds of initiatives knows, it takes an incredible amount of pro-bono time and effort to sustain this work. This is not feasible in the long term. We also firmly believe that equity-focused work needs to be properly resourced in order to be effective.

We know that we are (sadly) in excellent company, as many other systems change organisations are also struggling to find the funding necessary to sustain and resource their work. This includes Healing Solidarity, Loop, Global Integrity, Accountable Now and many other excellent initiatives. There is a real paradox in the fact that even though the narrative has shifted and calls to reform the sector and decolonise development grow, the funding for initiatives that seek to further these agendas remains scarce.

We believe that policies, programmes and frameworks that are rooted in the principles of equity are fundamental to building societies where all people can thrive.

We remain convinced that an index that uses external and objective scrutiny to understand whether development organisations are being equitable in their internal and external practices will help to drive up standards and

incentivise positive change. We are concerned that after many hours of volunteer time, many potential funder meetings and conversations, no further funding has been forthcoming, even though every funder we met supported the theory of change and recognised its importance.

Without the external scrutiny of an index, organisations may co-opt the language of equity and tinker around the edges, but hold back from implementing the practical measures that can result in transformation. Or opt for the deliberate misinterpretation and misrepresentation of every initiative that challenges systemic inequalities and the status-quo. In the UK context, we were saddened by the lack of action and momentum following the publication of the UK Parliament's International Development Committee (IDC) Inquiry report on [Racism in the aid sector](#), which made a series of recommendations on data related to racism and equity in the sector that have been left unaddressed thus far.

## WHAT NEXT? WHAT DOES A RESTING PHASE LOOK LIKE?

Our own lives have changed since we began on this journey. Having taken some time to pause and reflect we have decided to drop the ball on the aspects of this work that drained our energies and to focus on those aspects that enriched it. So that means, for now, we step back from the fundraising, the (albeit limited) consultancy and the work of trying to build out The Equity Index as an organisation.

We will focus the limited resources that we can allocate to this initiative to share the learning we have gained from this project widely, encouraging organisations to use the resources that we have developed, deepening our own learning and understanding of equity, and contributing to the global community that continues the work to move us forward.

We have learned so much! It's been an incredible journey and we are so grateful to our many supporters. As this work continues to energise and inspire, we invite you to participate in the open calls, events and the many spaces we hope to convene for people working for change in the coming months. Please stay tuned for more news on this!

In solidarity,

The Equity Index



# THE EQUITY INDEX



Please write to us if you have any questions, feedback, or anything else that you would like to share.

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