



# THE EQUITY INDEX

**Indicator Assessment  
Framework & Guidance  
document  
June 2021**

## About The Equity Index

[The Equity Index](#) is a UK social enterprise advocating for greater equity across the international development sector. We will measure and track the multiple dimensions of equity in the internal and external workings of UK development organisations to influence meaningful change in their policies, practices, and partnerships. This includes racial and gender equity, equity in knowledge production, in funding, in collaborations and more. We are an anti-racist and feminist organisation that supports the broader decolonising development and Shift the Power movements.

## Principles

The indicators against which The Equity Index will measure organisational policies, practices and partnerships will be guided by the following general principles:

- Intersectionality
- Capturing a combination of policy and practice
- More qualitative than the quantitative in nature
- Realistic but also ambitious
- Present a reasonable reporting burden for organisations
- Avoiding a tick box approach to equity and identifying entry points that can lead to meaningful change by kick-starting a process

## Objectives and purpose of the Indicator Framework

This document seeks to collect level 1 responses for organisations that are being assessed under The Equity Index's pilot project. Organisations are invited to provide answers to the questions outlined in this document as well as evidence in the form of supporting documentation. Responses will be assessed and scored by The Equity Index.

## How to fill out this document

This document asks your organisation to provide explanations for your organisation's status under each indicator. This is not compulsory to fill out. You can also just send us the evidence/supporting documentation against indicators. If this is the case, please make this explicit in the "Evidence Provided" section of Sections II and III.

## Self-assessment

This framework can also be used by any organisation as a self-assessment tool – we recommend completing each section by gathering input from across the organisation and then using the provided guidelines to self-determine a score.

# Table of Contents

- Glossary and definitions ..... 5
- Part Ia: Essential Information ..... 7
- Part Ib: Contextual information ..... 8
- Part II: Internal indicators ..... 10
- Part III: External indicators ..... 15
- Part IV: Any other relevant information ..... 20

# Glossary and definitions

The Equity Index is keen to ensure that we use language that is as equitable and inclusive as possible, recognizing that this may mean different things for different people. We have attempted to represent a diversity of perspectives in the below definitions, and we welcome and invite feedback on both the terms and definitions that we use.

TERM	EQUITY INDEX DEFINITION
<b>Equity</b>	We recognise that the term 'equity' has a multitude of definitions in different contexts. 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.
<b>Internal equity</b>	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, and in general focuses on whether the organisational culture feels equitable.
<b>External equity</b>	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.
<b>Global South and Global North</b>	<p>There is no single, agreed definition of the terms Global South and Global North and we acknowledge that many actors in the sector do not use this language. While there is therefore no perfect term, The Equity Index prefers this term to the less equitable equivalent 'developing countries.'</p> <p>The Global South refers broadly to a grouping of countries and people that experience economic marginalisation within the global system and have elements of a shared history of colonisation and exploitation. This is largely the same grouping within which are most often the net receivers of foreign aid, although many Southern donors also exist. The global North refers to countries and people traditionally referred to as 'the West,' that tend to be net foreign donors to countries in the global South.</p>
<b>Racial, gender, disability and LGBTQIA equity and inclusion</b>	The Equity Index will measure different aspects of internal equity based on personal characteristics, emphasising the importance of fair treatment and equality of outcomes. This is applied universally regardless of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation and gender identity.
<b>Intersectionality</b>	<p>Originated by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989, the concept of intersectionality refers to the ways in which different social identities and categorisations interact to reinforce systems of privilege and oppression.</p> <p>It is a complex concept, and in the context of the Index we use it to ensure we measure equity from a wide range of different and intersecting angles.</p>

<b>Women</b>	By women, we mean anyone who self-identifies as female in their gender identity, including transgender women, which may or may not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth.
<b>People of Colour</b>	People who identify as a racial or ethnic minority in the UK, including members of diaspora communities in the UK. We acknowledge that people will self-identify in different ways and may prefer other terms to People of Colour, including Black, Asian and Minority or Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) and Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), mixed race, or by their specific race and/or ethnicity (for instance Black or Asian).
<b>People with Global South nationality/ background</b>	This refers to people who were born and raised in a country or countries in the Global South that are currently based in the UK (regardless of whether they have naturalized as citizens of the UK or another country in the Global North, or whether they hold dual nationality between South/North).
<b>LGBTQIA community</b>	LGBTQIA is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual. As with People of Colour, we acknowledge that other terms are also used, including for instance LGBT+. Another acronym sometimes used is SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression).
<b>Disabled people/ People with disabilities</b>	People who identify as having a disability. Under the <a href="#">UK Equality Act</a> , this is classified as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.
<b>Board</b>	A non-partisan body that provides non-binding strategic advice to the management of your organisation. For corporate and other organisations that have an international development department and a separate board covering this work, please include data for this (rather than the overarching organisational board).
<b>Senior Management Team (SMT)</b>	This represents the most senior staff in your organisation, i.e. the Director and Founder level staff often overseeing strategic direction, vision and business development.in charge of operational running of your organisation including finance, procurement and management. For corporate and other organisations that have an international development department, we are looking for data on the most senior members of this specific team (rather than the organisation as a whole).
<b>Commitment</b>	A public statement outlining an intention to achieve a goal, with clear and measurable steps for achieving it, or a statement outlining an intention to achieve a goal that has been disseminated to all concerned parties.

# Part Ia: Essential information

NAME OF ORGANISATION	
COMPANIES HOUSE # / REGISTRATION #	
NAME OF PERSON FILLING OUT THIS DOCUMENT	
POSITION	
DATE OF SUBMISSION	
LIST OF DOCUMENTS ATTACHED AS EVIDENCE	

# Part Ib: Contextual information

The objective of this section is to gather information about your organisation that will serve as a means to assess and score indicators.

Please provide answers and corresponding evidence, where applicable to the following questions:

## 1.1 REGISTRATION AND STATUS

1. Is your organisation a part of a larger organisation with HQ elsewhere? Please provide details of length of existence of parent company and location of HQ.

2. What are your organisation's main sectors of work?

3. In what countries does your organisation implement projects? Please list all.

## 1.2 STAFF, SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM AND BOARD

4. How many Boards do you have? If yes, how many people sit on the Board(s)?

5. How many people form your Executive or Senior management team?



6. How many full-time staff do you have in your UK office? If you have a separate International Development team, please specify how many full-time staff do you have in that team in your UK office.

7. Do you have an operational HR department with staff that are separate from the Senior Management Team, Founders and Directors?

### 1.3 PROJECT DELIVERY

8. Please provide a list of countries where you have implemented projects in the last five years.

9. Please provide a list of countries where you are registered either as a subsidiary organisation or work through a legally registered organisation.

10. How many active projects do you currently have in the Global South?

# Part II: Internal indicators

This section outlines indicators that measure internal equity within your organisation. Please provide documentary evidence for each indicator.

**Indicator I-1.1 | Please provide the number/percentage of staff under each sub-category mentioned below that currently work as full-time staff or full-time equivalent<sup>1</sup> within the UK team.**

*In the explanation, please specify instances where categories overlap (for example X number of women who are also a person of colour and are disabled)*

<b>Women</b>	
<b>Persons of Colour</b>	
<b>Persons with Disabilities</b>	
<b>Persons identifying as LGBTQIA</b>	
<b>Persons with Nationalities from the Global South</b>	
<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>
<b>Equity Index Assessment</b>	
Note: We have opted to not score these indicators as part of the pilot, as there are no standardised benchmarks across the sector for all characteristics and identities.	
<b>Practical resources</b>	
<p>Other indices have determined a scoring breakdown, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FAIR SHARE Monitor has <a href="#">defined</a> a benchmark for a ‘fair share’ of women leaders: “a FAIR SHARE as at least 50% women leaders – or, if the workforce consists of more than 50% women, a correspondingly higher proportion.”</li> <li>• Gender and Health Index: For gender parity in senior management &amp; governing bodies, the scoring is as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ G: 45-55% women represented; or difference of one</li> <li>○ A: 35-44% women represented</li> <li>○ ● A1: 56-100% women represented</li> <li>○ R: 0-34% women represented</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The 2021 scoring key can be accessed <a href="#">here</a>.</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup> By full-time equivalent, we mean staff who may be on consultancy or part-time contracts but have roles equivalent to a full-time employee.

**Indicator I-1.2 | Please provide the number/percentage of Board members that fall under each sub-category mentioned below.**

*In the explanation, please specify instances where categories overlap (for example X number of women who are also a person of colour and are disabled)*

<b>Women</b>	
<b>Persons of Colour</b>	
<b>Persons with Disabilities</b>	
<b>Persons identifying as LGBTQIA</b>	
<b>Persons with Nationalities from the Global South</b>	
<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>
<b>Equity Index Assessment</b>	
See above.	

**Indicator I-1.3 | Please provide the number of Executive/Senior members that fall under each sub-category mentioned below.**

*In the explanation, please specify instances where categories overlap (for example X number of women who are also a person of colour and are disabled)*

<b>Women</b>	
<b>Persons of Colour</b>	
<b>Persons with Disabilities</b>	
<b>Persons identifying as LGBTQIA</b>	
<b>Persons with Nationalities from the Global South</b>	
<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>

<b>Equity Index Assessment</b>	
See above.	

**Indicator I-2.1 | Has the organisation made a measurable public commitment to promoting internal equity in all forms (race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and more) that is intersectional in its approach?**  
*If yes, please provide an explanation of your approach and if possible, public commitment per category.*

<b>YES</b>	
<b>NO</b>	
<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>

**Equity Index assessment/ scoring guidelines**

The emphasis of this indicator is on whether the organisation has made a *public* commitment to equity, rather than whether it has internal policies related to equity (for instance on diversity and inclusion). The scoring therefore places emphasis on this aspect:

1. The organisation has not made a specific statement on or commitment to equity within its organisation.
2. The organisation has made a generic statement on equity that does not make specific commitments for future improvement.
3. The organisation has made a specific statement on equity that is intersectional in its approach but does not make specific commitments for future improvement.
4. The organisation has made a specific statement on equity that is both intersectional in its approach and includes specific commitments for future improvement.

**Practical resources**

The [Gender and Health Index](#) includes an indicator on an organisation’s commitment to gender equality, scored as:

- G (green): Commitment to gender equality/equity with gender referring to men and women, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning.
- GP (green/purple): Commitment to achieve gender equality, with focus on empowering women and girls
- A (amber): Organisation works on women’s health and wellbeing, but makes no formal commitment to gender equality; Commitment to social justice and health equity, but makes no formal commitment to gender equality
- R (red): No mention of gender

**Indicator I-2.2 | Does your organisation provide its staff with opportunities to anonymously provide feedback on how equitable the culture of the organisation feels? If yes, have you acted on any suggestions received as part of this feedback mechanism? Please provide details.**

*In the explanation, please highlight the extent to which this system is available to and used by minoritised staff and any efforts made by your organisation to make this accessible to minoritised staff.*

<b>YES</b>	
<b>NO</b>	
Explanation	Evidence Provided

**Equity Index assessment/ scoring guidelines**

Based on the responses received in through the pilot assessment framework, the following scoring guidelines apply:

1. The organisation has not provided staff with any opportunities to anonymously provide feedback on how equitable the culture of the organisation feels.
2. The organisation has provided staff with irregular opportunities to provide feedback on how equitable the culture feels, however only some of the channels are anonymous.
3. The organisation has provided staff with regular but infrequent opportunities to anonymously provide feedback on how equitable the culture feels and openly shares the results with all staff members.
4. The organisation has provided staff with regular and frequent (at least annual) opportunities to anonymously provide feedback on how equitable the culture feels, and openly shares the results with all staff members.

**Practical resources**

This short [resource](#) from Acas provides high-level guidance and templates on collecting feedback from employees.

**Indicator I-2.3 | Has your organisation dedicated resources (human and/or financial) to promote internal equity in the UK office? Please provide details of what these resources are, including percentage of expenditure dedicated to this purpose from your annual budget and number of staff dedicated to these initiatives.**

<b>YES</b>	
<b>NO</b>	
Explanation	Evidence Provided

--	--

**Equity Index assessment/ scoring guidelines**

Based on the responses received in through the pilot assessment framework, the following scoring guidelines apply:

1. The organisation has not dedicated any resources to promoting internal equity in the UK office.
2. The organisation has dedicated minimal resources at a junior level only to promoting internal equity in the UK office.
3. The organisation has dedicated resources at both a junior and senior level, with some optional activities open to all staff members.
4. The organisation has dedicated resources, including at the senior leadership level, to promoting internal equity that includes activities that involve all staff members.

**Practical resources**

CIVICUS has produced a list of [10 diversity and inclusion practices](#) that can give organisations inspiration about what resources they could/should dedicate.

# Part III: External indicators

*This section measures equity in your organisation’s engagement with external actors and partners, with a particular focus on those based in the Global South.*

<b>Indicator E-1.1   How many organisations from the Global South do you currently partner with across your projects? (organisations registered in the Global South owned by nationals of the country and staffed in majority by nationals of said country in the Global South). In your explanation, please clarify which countries these organisations are registered in.</b>	
<b>Response (Please provide a number)</b>	
<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>
<b>Equity Index assessment/ scoring guidelines</b>	
We have not scored this indicator for now, as scoring could potentially incentivise ‘bid candy’ practices where Southern partners are brought on board to increase numbers but are not meaningfully engaged (see indicator below).	

<b>Indicator E-1.2a   Are partner organisations from the Global South meaningfully engaged in the design, co-creation, management, decision-making and implementation of a project?</b>	
<b>Design and co-creation (Yes/No)</b>	
<b>Management, including project Executive/Senior management (Yes/No)</b>	
<b>Implementation (Yes/No)</b>	
<b>Decision-making at the strategic and operational level (Yes/No)</b>	
<b>Funding decisions (Yes/No)</b>	
<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>

--	--

**Equity Index assessing/scoring guidelines**

These indicators can be challenging to score across several projects, and are also potentially the hardest for organisations to evidence, as it encompasses all stages of the project cycle. The standard should be set high, with organisations only able to achieve the highest score in cases where partners are fully involved, as per the following scoring guidelines.

1. Global South partner is not consulted or involved at any stage of the project’s implementation.
2. Global South partner is consulted at several stages of the project’s implementation and involved in some of them.
3. Global South partner is fully involved in some but not all aspects of project delivery
4. Global South partner is fully involved in all aspects of project delivery (apart from any that it considers outside of score).

**Background resources**

A [survey](#) administered by the West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI) as part of the Reimagining the INGO (RINGO) project found that 85% of Global South CSOs stated that their relationship with INGOs is not mutually beneficial. The results are more nuanced, and show that there is some appreciation for the work done with INGOs, however comments provided as part of the survey make clear that project implementation is often done in a way that disregards the CSOs priorities, preferences and knowledge. There is some evidence to show that organisations from parts of the Global South would like to work in partnership with Northern organisations (the RINGO survey found that “global south CSOs want INGOs to act primarily as co-implementers of projects and programmes.” But they would like this to be done in an equitable and mutually beneficial way.

One mechanism UK organisations can use to assess whether their partnerships are equitable is the [Power Awareness Tool](#), building on the concept of the Ladder of Participation.

**Indicator E-1.2b | Do you have mechanisms through which you regularly collect feedback from your partner organisations about the state of the partnership and if yes, does your organisation proactively respond to the feedback and suggestions received? Please provide details and examples.**

Explanation	Evidence Provided

**Equity Index assessment/ scoring guidelines**



Based on the responses received in through the pilot assessment framework, the following scoring guidelines apply:

1. Global South partner is not given any opportunities to provide feedback, formal or informal.
2. Global South partner is given informal opportunities to provide feedback.
3. Global South partner is given informal and formal opportunities to provide feedback, but only within the context of a specific project.
4. Global South partner is given informal and formal opportunities to provide feedback explicitly about the state of the partnership.

**Background resources**

A [study](#) produced by the Rethinking Research Collaborative has noted that southern CSOs face several barriers and challenges in working with global north organisations to deliver research projects. As the study notes, “CSOs in the global South often find themselves the target of one-way capacity development interventions from Northern partners, rather than also being given formal opportunities to share their own skills and knowledge to educate or re-educate other members of the research partnership. Whilst research capacity varies from one country to the next, it may be important to gauge the commitment of Northern partners and funders to mutual learning throughout the partnership.”

There are several assessment tools in use that could be used or adapted to assess the extent to which a partnership on a particular programme is equitable. These include:

- The [Pando Localization Learning System](#), which contains four measures based on leadership, mutuality, connectivity, and financing.
- Community-led Development [Assessment Tool](#)
- Community-led [Assessment Tool](#)
- The Dignity Project’s [Proximate process respectfulness scale](#) (PPR).

**Indicator E-1.3 | What percentage of the total project value of your three largest projects in the last 12 months has been given to partner organisations from the Global South?**

Response	
Explanation	Evidence Provided

**Equity Index assessment/ scoring guidelines**

We have opted not to score this indicator for the pilot in the absence of a benchmark. However, what we are looking out for in future is that UK prime organisations are paying global South partners fairly and equitably in accordance with what they have been contracted to deliver.

**Background resources**

In the context of the UK consultancy sector, this indicator is important because we know that 90% of UK aid is provided to UK firms, and only a miniscule percentage goes to organisations from one country from the global South, which is India (Source: Data provided by FCDO, March 2021).

The call for a more equitable distribution is not only limited, of course, to programme or project delivery. The Shift the Power community launched the [Manifesto for Change](#):

1. Embrace a vision of a “good society” built around core values of equality, democracy and sustainability and a set of organizing principles based on global solidarity and distributed leadership.
2. Cast off the restrictive framework of “international development,” which is defined by money and power and which creates artificial barriers between communities and movements in the global north and south.
3. Move away from a system that is preoccupied with quick “solutions,” and is premised on and organized around the transfer of funds. Change how we approach, and seek to measure, the notion of success.
4. Creatively find ways to unlock the inherent power of communities in determining their own development course – however they define it – and let the language of “beneficiaries” and “recipients be a thing of the past.
5. Move away from “building capacity” as defined by external actors and requirements, towards community organizing and movement building, where “capacity” equates to relevance, rootedness and constituency.
6. Ensure that external funding recognizes, respects and builds on local resources and assets, rather than over looks, undermines or displaces.
7. Expand our horizons beyond money as the central driver of change, and place greater value on other kinds of infinite non-financial assets and resources (knowledge, trust, networks etc)
8. Change the language we use so that it enables new ways of working and thinking, rather than constrains them. And challenge the dominance of English.
9. Change ourselves. We need both humility and boldness, and to be ready to challenge our own power and to listen to and work with others.

The Global Alliance for Communities is a coalition to drive targeted outcomes to shift development and social entrepreneurship towards a more equitable paradigm that values locally-rooted leadership. The Alliance will take forward the following [policy asks](#):

1. Increase available funding (private and public philanthropy) to leaders of color, push for greater accountability on racial equity among funders.
2. Invest in and develop proximate leaders, valuing local knowledge and approaches.
3. Rethink how we measure effective solutions and contribute research to the knowledge base and evidence base around the power of proximate leadership.

**Indicator E-1.4 | Does your organisation have international offices? If so, is your organisation registered and does it pay taxes in countries where projects are being implemented?**

Response	
Explanation	Evidence Provided
Equity Index assessment/ scoring guidelines	

Based on feedback from our peer reviewer, this indicator needs to be treated carefully. We do not want to incentivise UK-based organisations to register in every country where they deliver projects and crowd out local and national organisations. The scoring for this indicator is binary:

1. Organisation does not pay any taxes and is not registered in accordance with local and national laws.
2. Organisation pays taxes and is registered in accordance with local and national laws.

**Indicator E-1.5 | Are members from your Global South partner organisations represented in meetings with donor organisations and with what frequency?**

Explanation	Evidence Provided

**Equity Index assessment/scoring guidelines**

See resources above for E-1.2a and E-1.2b.

## Part IV: Any other relevant information

**Would you like to share any other information with us, about the efforts that your organisation has made towards equity? Is so, please describe it here and provide supporting documentation.**

*We invite you to provide us with an overview of your approach to equity, any unique HR and/or organisational policies that promote equity within your organisation and across your partnerships.*

# Scoring guidelines

## Scoring

We will assign indicator ratings according to the Equity Index Rating Scale. Each of the two components from our Assessment Framework (see Table 1) will receive a percentage score based on the total number of points that they have accumulated against each of the indicators within the component. Each indicator will be scored between 1-4. These scores are notional and are not statistical measurements, but rather an assessment of the extent to which assessed organisations reflect equitable practices internally and externally.

## Rating Scale

Rating	Score	Explanation
<i>Fully met</i>	4/4	Organisation has strong and consistent equitable practices in all areas. Full documentary evidence is available.
<i>Partially met with moderate improvements needed</i>	3/4	Organisation has made strong commitments towards equitable practices. However, these are not practiced consistently.
<i>Partially met with substantial improvements needed</i>	2/4	Organisation has made some commitments towards equitable practices. However, these are not practiced.
<i>Unmet</i>	1/4	Organisation has made no commitments towards equity nor do its practices reflect a path toward equity.

The scores are based on The Equity Index’s review of documentation, verification of existing practices, and information provided by the Organisation. In making assessments, The Equity Index will factor in the structure, size and trajectory of each Organisation.

Indicator Rating System	<b>4 = Fully Met</b>	<b>3 = Met, but with some improvements needed</b>	<b>2 = Partially met with substantial improvements needed</b>	<b>1 = Unmet</b>
Component Rating System	The average score across indicators is <b>above 3.2.</b>	The average score across indicators is <b>between 2.6-3.2.</b>	The average score across indicators is <b>between 1.5-2.5.</b>	The average total score for indicators is <b>below 1.5.</b>



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

**Alex Martins:**  
[alex@theequityindex.org](mailto:alex@theequityindex.org)

**Saagarika Dadu-Brown:**  
[saagarika@theequityindex.org](mailto:saagarika@theequityindex.org)

**Lorriann Robinson:**  
[lorriann@theadvocacyteam.co.uk](mailto:lorriann@theadvocacyteam.co.uk)