ACCELERATING CITY EQUITY (ACE) PROJECT

EQUITY INTO ACTION: A STARTER KIT

FIRST EDITION

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FOREWORD

At the heart of our pursuit for a healthier world lies the recognition that equity is an essential building block for achieving sustainable urban development. While today, discussion of equity is ubiquitous, there are few resources that break down the theory into actionable steps. Our *Accelerating City Equity (ACE) Project: Equity into Action Starter Kit* offers an approachable, simple, and practical guide for users to drive equity in their work regardless of sector, discipline, or geography.

Distinct in its research methods, the *ACE Project's Starter Kit* draws on a rich tapestry of global insights, distilling 40+ years of learning from more than 200 international equitable development leaders into actionable strategies and inspiration. We break down the meaning of equity to its fundamental building blocks and identify practices that fuel comprehensive equitable development. Personal insights, stories, and case studies are highlighted throughout the kit, and also in short videos online.

The innovation of this *Starter Kit* is not only capturing lessons from remarkable communities in various corners of the world, but learning directly from residents and community members about their lived experience driving equitable change themselves. We have seen that development that puts people at the center increases the chances of long-term positive impact.

This *Starter Kit* is an invitation to reimagine our shared urban spaces with people at the center. A human-driven method guarantees that every neighborhood has a bedrock of equity and inclusiveness, which will yield significant gains for our economies, ecosystems, and collective well-being.

Even amidst great political, social or environmental challenges and limitations, we can all transform our futures.

Thanks to the generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, our ACE Project learnings are more than a collection of insights—they offer a springboard for inspired action. We invite you to join us on our journey towards building a more just and equitable world, where health and well-being are accessible to all, by design.

Giselle Sebag, MPH, LEED AP
Executive Director, International Society for Urban Health

So much of our daily lives depend on where we live—from how easy it is to get to our jobs, grocery stores, and doctors, to how comfortable and socially connected we feel in our neighborhoods. The quality of our food, schools, and infrastructure, such as roads, water, and broadband are also linked to where we live. Even how much power we have in local politics and policies is anchored in place.

We have learned over the last several decades that neighborhood conditions are critical to our health and wellness, even affecting how long we will live—in fact, more important than our genes or access to medical care.

We now know, too, that US urban policies such as redlining, historic and exclusionary zoning, land ownership policies, and racial covenants, have secured the wealth and health of predominately white and wealthier individuals at the expense of people with lower incomes and people of color.

How would things be different if equity were the "driver" of urban development? On the Global Ideas for US Solutions team at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we look to solve knotty problems by finding inspiration across the globe, because we believe that good ideas have no borders. We challenged the International Society for Urban Health to find and amplify global examples of urban development where equity was at the center—based on the premise that urban development is only sustainable if it is grounded in equity.

This Starter Kit, and series of short videos that capture the voices of practitioners and community members alike, are the culmination of deep research and engagement with communities across the world. They are a critical first step in helping practitioners and policymakers see what's possible when equity is foregrounded in urban development efforts and how to get started.

The new vision for sustainable equitable urban development means focusing on people first, and place second. For example, transport should be about how people get around, not how cars move. It will include solutions that address multiple challenges simultaneously—such as caring for all of our children, our planet, and creating age-friendly communities. Our urban design will reflect the priorities of those who have historically been left out of decisions despite being directly affected by them.

The decisions we make today will last for centuries. As the adage goes, "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Sharon Z. Roerty, MCRP/PP/AICP
Senior Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

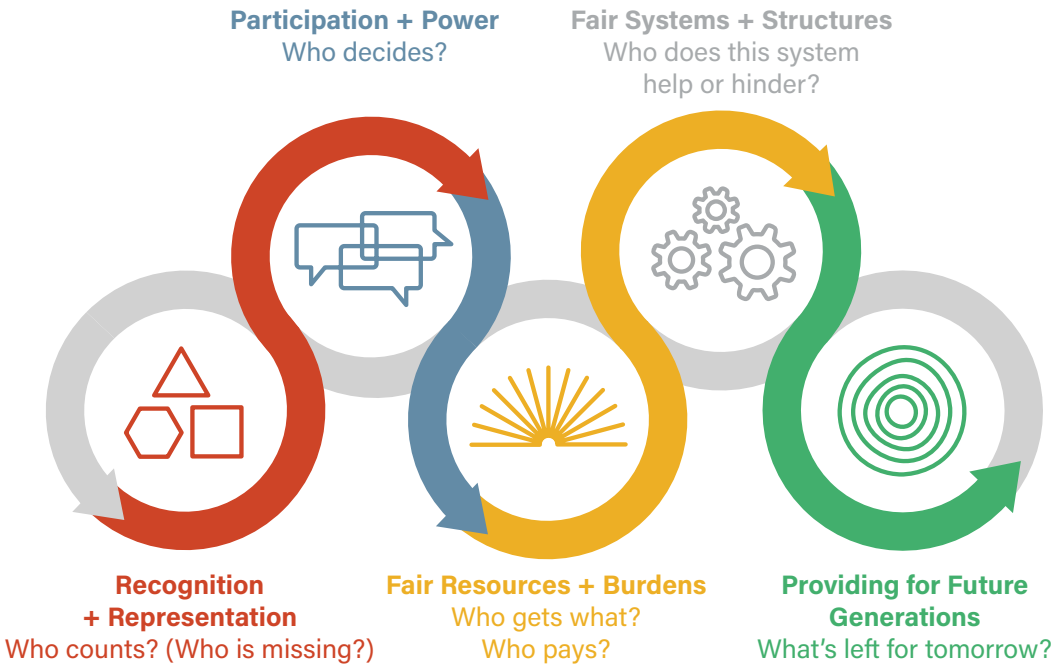
OVERVIEW

FIVE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EQUITY AND FIVE PRACTICES TO ADVANCE EQUITY

EQUITY MEANS...

We all have what we need to thrive, no matter who we are and where we live, now and for generations to come.

FIVE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EQUITY



FIVE PRACTICES TO ADVANCE EQUITY

1. Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives.
2. Strengthen community participation and power.
3. Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly.
4. Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems.
5. Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today.

FIVE PRACTICES TO ADVANCE EQUITY EXPANDED

Recognition + Representation

Who counts? (Who is missing?)

1 Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives

- All are counted in official data and statistics. The impacts of different issues on different groups are understood and recognized.
- All identities, histories, experiences, contributions, and rights are acknowledged and respected.
- All are visible and represented in societal domains, such as politics, media, culture, education, and business.
- All are fairly represented in decision-making bodies and other positions of power.
- Particular attention to groups more likely to be excluded, e.g. minoritized ethnic, racialized or religious groups, women, younger or older people, gender and sexual minority groups, disabled people, people without homes or addresses.

Participation + Power

Who decides?

2 Strengthen community participation and power

- Community members are actively involved in the processes that affect their lives. They have the capacity to influence decisions, shape policies, and hold positions of authority.
- Community members make decisions, lead initiatives, and collaborate with government and others on the issues that affect their lives.
- Community members participate in designing, planning, and implementing initiatives.
- Community members are collectively organized or networked amongst themselves and with wider networks and movements.
- Community assets and strengths are used to meet community needs.
- Communities have ownership and control over key resources.

Fair Resources+ Burdens

Who gets what? Who pays?

3 Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly

- Everyone can access good-quality services, infrastructure, resources, and amenities essential for fulfilling basic and higher needs.
- Everyone has opportunities to engage in activities that contribute to thriving, such as education, decent work, and leisure.
- The benefits and costs of policies and initiatives are fairly distributed.
- Groups or neighborhoods that need most support are prioritized.
- No community is disproportionately exposed to environmental or social harms.

Fair Systems + Structures

Who does this system help or hinder?

4 Address systemic barriers and shift to new, fairer systems

- Institutional and organizational arrangements, policies and practices that hold problems in place and lead to unfair outcomes over time are changed, removed, or dismantled.
- New structures are introduced that sustain better outcomes for everyone.
- Fair, collaborative, transparent, and trusted working relationships are cultivated between communities, local government, and other key actors, leading to fair and just power dynamics and relations.
- Mental models, narratives, and norms support fair outcomes for all.

Providing for Future Generations

What's left for tomorrow?

5 Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today

- The long-term consequences of present policies and actions are formally considered in decision-making.
- Nature is protected and restored, not exploited.
- Mechanisms to build intergenerational wealth are in place, particularly for groups who have faced barriers to doing so.
- Other forms of community wealth are maintained and built, e.g., human capabilities, skills, and knowledge; culture and traditions; community bonds and networks; local buildings and landscapes.

Alternate Terms: Recognitional Equity, Participatory Equity, Distributional Equity, Systemic and Structural Equity, Intergenerational Equity

1 INTRODUCTION

Equity means we all have what we need to thrive, no matter who we are or where we live, now and for future generations.

We can do this by working *with* communities as well as *for* communities — putting people at the center of both process and results.

We've learned from communities, city governments, and other organizations that when they collaborate and use **one or more of these five practices**, they make effective progress towards equity.

1. Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives.
2. Strengthen community participation and power.
3. Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly.
4. Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems.
5. Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today.

WHAT'S IN THIS STARTER KIT?

This "starter kit" provides a simple introduction to equity for practitioners who want to advance equity in their work, including:

- A definition of equity, including five building blocks for equity
- Five practices for advancing equity, drawing on insights from the Accelerating City Equity (ACE) community
- Case studies from the ACE community
- Tools to support practitioners to develop strategic approaches to advancing equity
- Additional equity resources

WHO SHOULD USE THIS STARTER KIT?

This starter kit has been developed for people working in **local government**, **non-governmental organizations**, **community-based organizations**, and **philanthropic foundations**, who are seeking to advance equity through their work. However, we hope anyone working to build fair, healthy cities and places will find it useful.

HOW TO USE THIS STARTER KIT

This starter kit is flexible and adaptable to a wide variety of needs and uses. You can work through it all from beginning to end, or dive into the sections most relevant to your immediate need.

Looking for:

- A basic introduction to equity? *See Section 2, Section 3, and Tool 1.*
- Case studies of communities and cities working to advance equity around the world? *See Section 4.*
- Guidance on developing a strategy to identify and tackle inequities relevant to your work? *See Tool 4.*
- Ideas to make an existing initiative more equitable? *See Tool 6.*
- Ideas for measuring progress towards equity? *See Tools 7 and 8* and *Further Resources: Measurement to Advance Equity*

We strongly encourage you to do the exercises with community members affected by your work, as well as other local stakeholders. Use the materials in whatever way works best for your community and organization. We'd love to hear about your work and experience using this kit, and any feedback or suggestions to improve it. Write us at: equityproject@isuh.org

2 WHAT WE MEAN BY EQUITY

Through the ACE Project, we've learned that **equity means putting people and their communities, contributions, and needs at the center of both process and results**. Efforts to improve equity have often focused primarily on allocating resources fairly, and on achieving certain results. As important as that is, we've learned from the ACE Project that involving communities in the process – as leaders or as partners – is crucial.

Equity means we all have what we need to thrive, no matter who we are or where we live, now and for future generations.

We can do this by working *with* communities as well as *for* communities — putting people at the center of both process and results.

We've found it helpful to think of equity in three ways:

1. As a desired state or outcome we can aspire to: **We all have what we need to thrive, no matter who we are or where we live, now and for future generations.**

2. As a set of five building blocks we can work towards or strengthen:

   - **Recognition and Representation** (*recognitional equity*): Everyone is seen, valued, and represented.
   - **Participation and Power** (*participatory equity*): Everyone has a say in the political, economic, and social processes that shape lives and communities.
   - **Fair Resources and Burdens** (*distributional equity*): Everyone has access to the material and social resources and opportunities needed to live healthy, happy lives.
   - **Fair Systems and Structures** (*systemic and structural equity*): Societal and institutional rules, practices, resource flows, power dynamics, and norms serve everyone.
   - **Providing for Future Generations** (*intergenerational equity*): We are good ancestors, leaving resources and wealth for future generations.

3. As a set of five action-oriented practices that communities, governments, cities, funders and other actors can collaborate on, to strengthen these building blocks:

   - **Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives.**
   - **Strengthen community participation and power.**
   - **Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly.**
   - **Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems.**
   - **Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today.**

These are drawn from research from around the world[1] and from the many lessons learned from the ACE community. They are illustrated in the graphic that follows.

Equity as a State of Being

We all have what we need to thrive, no matter who we are or where we live, now and for future generations.

Five Building Blocks for Equity

Who counts? (Who is missing?)	**Recognition + Representation** We are all seen, valued, and represented.
Who decides?	**Participation + Power** We all have a say in the political, economic, and social processes that shape our lives and communities.
Who gets what? Who pays?	**Fair Resources + Burdens** We all have access to the material and social resources and opportunities needed for healthy, happy lives.
Who does this system help or hinder?	**Fair Systems + Structures** Societal and institutional rules, practices, resource flows, power structures, and norms serve everyone.
What's left for tomorrow?	**Providing for Future Generations** We are good ancestors, leaving resources and wealth for future generations.

Five Practices to Advance Equity

- Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives
- Strengthen community participation and power
- Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly
- Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems
- Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today

The next section expands on the Five Practices and shares insights and examples from the ACE Community.

Definitions of Equity

We see this people-centered approach in many definitions of equity. For example:

- *From Equinet Africa*: "Equity in health implies addressing differences in health status that are unnecessary, avoidable and unfair… EQUINET seeks to understand and influence the redistribution of social and economic resources for equity-oriented interventions. EQUINET also seeks to understand and inform the power and ability people (and social groups) have to make choices over health inputs and their capacity to use these choices towards health."[2]
- *From the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*: "Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care."[3]
- *From the World Health Organization*: "Equity is the absence of unfair, avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically or by other dimensions of inequality (e.g. sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation)… Health equity is achieved when everyone can attain their full potential for health and well-being."[4]
- *From the Urban Strategies Council*: Equity is "fairness and justice achieved through systematically assessing disparities in opportunities, outcomes, and representation and redressing [those] disparities through targeted actions."[5]

Such definitions have several themes in common:

- **Equity is fundamentally about fairness and justice.** It's unjust when people have fewer opportunities or experience worse health or economic outcomes because of who they are or where they live.
- **Targeted approaches, not just one-size-fits-all approaches, are needed.** Because people have different circumstances, bring different strengths, face different barriers, and need different things.
- **Representation, participation, agency, and power matter.** Equity is not realized through access to material opportunities and resources alone, but also through being represented and having a say.

Our definition of equity – **"We all have what we need to thrive, no matter who we are or where we live, now and for future generations"** – includes these themes and adds a link to the definition of sustainability: "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[6]

3 FIVE PRACTICES TO ADVANCE EQUITY

INSIGHTS FROM THE ACE COMMUNITY

In this section, we:

Expand on the Five Practices to Advance Equity, sharing insights from the dozens of sustainable development projects ("Bright Spots") in the ACE community.

1. Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives.
2. Strengthen community participation and power.
3. Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly.
4. Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems.
5. Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today.

Outline the different roles that local and national governments, community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs, and built environment practitioners can play in advancing equity.

1. RECOGNIZE AND REPRESENT EXCLUDED EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

"We develop indicators based on what the community thinks is necessary for the future."[7]

— Dr Danny Gotto MD, Founder & Executive Director, Innovations for Development, Uganda

Recognition + Representation

- All are counted in official data and statistics. The impacts of different issues on different groups are understood and recognized.
- All identities, histories, experiences, contributions, and rights are acknowledged and respected.
- All are visible and represented in societal domains, such as politics, media, culture, education, and business.
- All are fairly represented in decision-making bodies and other positions of power.
- Particular attention to groups more likely to be excluded, e.g. minoritized ethnic, racialized or religious groups, women, younger or older people, gender and sexual minority groups, disabled people, people without homes or addresses.

Recognition and representation help people to feel a sense of belonging and to participate in society. When decision-makers know what different groups need, it helps ensure the right choices are made.

ACE Bright Spots tended to use research and data collection to ensure excluded groups were seen, valued, and represented. Specific practices included:

- **Starting projects by listening to communities.** Identifying and listening to a wide range of community members, not just community leaders. Identifying the diverse groups and perspectives within the community.
- **Collecting data that tells a detailed, rounded story about different groups.** Disaggregating data to uncover variations between groups. Collecting a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, including techniques to capture lived experiences, narratives, visual and audio data. Capturing strengths and assets, not just vulnerability and deprivation.
- **Working to understand context, history, and upstream causes of poor outcomes**, such as affordability, accessibility and quality of key services.
- **Respecting different experiences and worldviews.** Integrating perspectives previously excluded or overlooked, such as indigenous knowledge or the perspectives of children.
- **Involving communities in gathering and interpreting data, and ensuring they were able to access it.** Engaging in community-led research, co-produced research, or participatory research techniques such as participatory mapping or Photovoice.
- **Linking community data into institutional decision-making.** Using local-level information to guide institutional policies, planning, and delivery.

"[We engage in community mapping because we] wanted the community to know more about their community as part of their advocacy and to get funding from the city. Now we are recognized by the city, we are visible in the maps. And the government is also using our data for assessing flood risk."[9]

— Ruby Papeleras, National Community Leader, Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines

"Combining creative and joyful stories with results from mixed methods might be the most effective way to assist in shifting [poor] social conditions and spatial inequalities that shape our health."[8]

— Dr. Gregor Mews, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia

Selected examples in the ACE Bright Spots Library:

- Everyday photos of lived experience to influence local health planning and budgeting, EQUINet and the Ministry of Health, Lusaka, Zambia
- Citywide community mapping helps make poor communities more visible and influential, Citywide Mapping and Shelter Planning, Muntinlupa City, Metro Manila, Philippines
- Community-led mapping of food vendors in Nairobi's informal settlements to gather evidence on and discuss experiences of urban food security, Nairobi, Kenya
- Tracking the impacts of armed violence in 16 slums, De Olho na Maré, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Collecting disaggregated data on the health needs, resources, and priorities of Asian American populations, NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health, USA

2. STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND POWER

"You don't impose on people. You want to be invited by people who are as enthusiastic as you are." [10]

— Dr. T.H. Culhane, co-founding director, Solar Cities (Watch video interview here)

Participation + Power

- Community members are actively involved in the processes that affect their lives. They have the capacity to influence decisions, shape policies, and hold positions of authority.
- Community members make decisions, lead initiatives, and collaborate with government and others on the issues that affect their lives.
- Community members participate in designing, planning, and implementing initiatives.
- Community members are collectively organized or networked amongst themselves and with wider networks and movements.
- Community assets and strengths are used to meet community needs.
- Communities have ownership and control over key resources.

Participation and power matter because people should have a say in the decisions that shape their lives, communities, and places, and the ability to influence choices that help everyone be healthier and happier.

Every ACE Bright Spot involved active community participation at a minimum, and in many cases the community was a key partner or the leader of the project. This involved creating spaces and mechanisms for communities to get involved from start to finish. For example, governments used participatory planning, budgeting, design, governance, and monitoring processes. Continuing community engagement throughout implementation allowed for ongoing learning and accountability.

Many ACE Bright Spots also supported community organizing and network-building as an end in and of itself, to help increase collective engagement, agency, power and influence. This involved supporting community members to self-organize to engage in immediately useful activities, such as community mapping or financial savings groups. It also involved supporting them to establish connections with broader networks and movements.

In both cases, "bridging organizations" – typically NGOs – played a crucial role in building trusted relationships with communities, facilitating spaces for participation, and supporting communities through the process.

"I have seen so many bad slums in my life... when you went there people are so poor... But once there's a change... they're okay. It is the system that is the slum. People are not."[11]

— Somsook Boonyabancha, Chairperson, Asian Coalition For Housing Rights; Former Director, Community Organizations Development Institute, Bangkok, Thailand (Watch video interview here)

Other tactics included:

- Using creative strategies to engage hard-to-reach groups, such as families of young children or people with mobility challenges
- Compensating community members for participating in consultations
- Working with local NGOs and respected community members to help build trust
- Providing leadership and advocacy training
- Using community contracting models that require hiring local labor or setting up implementation committees with representatives of the community
- Formalizing governance structures, such as advisory boards or committees, to involve representatives from the community
- Organizing communities around resources, such as financial savings groups or collective land ownership

"You need to start by organizing people little by little until 90% of them feel it's the right direction and they want to be part of it. So, instead of one architect doing plans in an ivory tower, get the people involved in the planning."[13]

— Somsook Boonyabancha, Chairperson, Asian Coalition For Housing Rights; Former Director, Community Organizations Development Institute, Bangkok, Thailand (Watch video interview here)

"The decision-making lies with [the women we work with.] We are only supporting them to unmask their leadership potential, give them technical information, give them the resources that are required."[12]

— Aprajita Singh, Advisor, Mahila Housing Trust (Watch video interview here)

Selected examples in the ACE Bright Spots Library:

- Involving parents and children in planning and organizing play streets, Local Play Every Day, Brisbane, Australia
- Addressing child marriage in Roma communities through Roma mediators, Antwerp, Belgium
- Delivering a national warmer homes program through Māori and Pacific service providers, Healthy Homes Initiatives, New Zealand
- Participatory planning and action in frontline health services, Lusaka, Zambia
- Engaging representative, diverse groups of caregivers to co-design and participate in governing a city program to shift the burden of care work, District of Care System, Bogotá, Colombia
- Organizing women in poor urban communities to connect and engage in collective mapping, surveys, and savings groups, Lumanti Support Group for Shelter, Kalaiya, Nepal
- Organizing women in poor urban communities at multiple levels to represent their communities in city-level processes, Cooling Homes in Informal Settlements, India

3. DISTRIBUTE RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND BURDENS FAIRLY

"We're very passionate about making the places where you get good food, also the places where you socialize."[14]

— Ryan Smolar, Co-Director, Long Beach Fresh, California (Watch video interview here)

Fair Resources and Burdens

- Everyone can access good-quality services, infrastructure, resources, and amenities essential for fulfilling basic and higher needs.
- Everyone has opportunities to engage in activities that contribute to thriving, such as education, decent work, and leisure.
- The benefits and costs of policies and initiatives are fairly distributed.
- Groups or neighborhoods that need most support are prioritized.
- No community is disproportionately exposed to environmental or social harms.

Resources, opportunities, and burdens matter. Healthful food, a safe home, ways to get around, clean water, school, jobs, friends, culture, income and wealth help everyone live well and be happy. Equally, no community should experience disproportionate pollution, heat, violence, insecurity, or other burdens, nor pay excessively for the costs of policies and initiatives.

Practices in ACE projects included:

- **Improving access to services, infrastructure, and amenities that contribute to quality of life, prevent future problems such as poor health, and have multiple benefits for society and environment.** These can be thought of as upstream, multi-solving initiatives. Examples: public green space with amenities and community programming, food markets and urban agriculture, affordable or upgraded housing, sanitation and waste management, environmental jobs, cultural opportunities, and active and public transportation.
- **Taking targeted, tailored approaches appropriate to the context and the specific need.** Asking communities what they needed and wanted. Identifying and prioritizing groups or neighborhoods who needed greatest support or who tended to experience greater exclusion, such as disabled people or young people.
- **Paying particular attention to spatial inequity.** Many cities and places are spatially unequal, meaning that everything from waste management and transportation, to jobs and cultural amenities, to pollution, heat, and flood risk, are distributed unequally across different neighborhoods. Understanding where disparities existed at a neighborhood (or even street) level was therefore an important first step, followed by locating key resources, services and amenities within easier reach of their intended users.
- **Investing in a community's own resources.** This included access to knowledge, employment or entrepreneurial opportunities, and skills-building. It also included supporting communities to own or to control – not only access – resources, such as funding and land.

"Our cities are divided, spread apart. We don't have access to the things we need right where we live."[15]

— Ryan Smolar, Co-Director, Long Beach Fresh, California (Watch video interview here)

Three models of fairer distribution of resources came up repeatedly. We feature examples in the case studies in the next section.

1. **People-centered, multi-functional, local spaces.** Initiatives that bring resources and services together in a defined, conveniently located area, to improve access and address multiple dimensions of wellbeing and environment. (Starter Kit case studies: Long Beach Fresh Crop Swap, California, USA; Kibera Public Space Project, Nairobi, Kenya)
2. **Tangible, multi-solving solutions designed by or with the community.** Solutions such as cooler roofs, briquettes made from waste, or urban gardens that make change visible, genuinely meet the needs of the community, and engage communities as active actors. (Starter Kit case studies: Cooling Homes in Informal Settlements, India; Vale Encantado Biodigester, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Long Beach Fresh Crop Swap)
3. **Targeted universalism.**[16] Initiatives intended to benefit everyone living in an area but including specific measures to support particular groups.[17] (Starter Kit case study: Healthy Homes Initiative, New Zealand)

Selected examples in the ACE Bright Spots Library:

- Equipping waste pickers with e-bikes to increase recycling and improve livelihoods, City of Fortaleza, Brazil
- Connecting young people affected by gun violence to living wage green and community jobs, PowerCorpsPHL, Philadelphia, USA
- From waste to organic briquettes to address flooding in Bwaise slum, Kampala, Uganda
- Supporting urban agriculture in Nairobi County, Nairobi, Kenya
- Advancing racial equity in transportation planning and policy, Denver, USA

See also the Case Studies.

4. ADDRESS SYSTEMIC BARRIERS AND SHIFT TO NEW, FAIRER SYSTEMS

"We don't see [community mapping] as a project. It's a continuing process for the city government and community to collaborate."[18]

— Ruby Papeleras, National Community Leader, Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines

Fair Systems and Structures

- Institutional and organizational arrangements, policies and practices that hold problems in place and lead to unfair outcomes over time are changed, removed, or dismantled.
- New structures are introduced that sustain better outcomes for everyone.
- Fair, collaborative, transparent, and trusted working relationships are cultivated between communities, local government, and other key actors, leading to fair and just power dynamics and relations.
- Mental models, narratives, and norms support fair outcomes for all.

Systems are the rules, relationships, and norms that keep societies running as they do. Structures are the setups that decide who gets what and who's in charge. These can either hold problems and inequities in place or promote fair outcomes for all.

ACE projects frequently sought to change systems and structures. They touched on all categories of system change: structural change (policies, practices, and resource flows), relational change (relationships and connections, and power dynamics), and transformative change (mental models).[19] Practices observed:

- **Using community-level projects to influence policies and mental models.** Examples: Evidence from community projects was used to advocate for funding and for changes in policy, such as housing standards or urban planning guidelines. Successful community-level projects were used to change narratives, such as the link between housing and health, or the ability of people living in poverty to change their own conditions.
- **Building community power by putting key resources under community control or ownership, and by connecting communities working on similar projects.** Examples: Community-owned waste management systems and collective ownership of land. Networks of communities working on similar issues within and between countries.
- **Strengthening cross-sector or cross-group relations and collaboration in order to serve community goals.** Examples: Supporting different ministries or city departments to work together to serve a specific group or need. Supporting community residents to collaborate across class lines.

"Do the project in such a way that the project [creates relationships] and changes the city."[20]

— Somsook Boonyabancha, Chairperson, Asian Coalition For Housing Rights; Former Director, Community Organizations Development Institute, Bangkok, Thailand (Watch video interview here)

"In Thailand, we were able to set up a new kind of public institution where government supports people to lead their own initiatives. We have government funding, and we open up space for communities [all over Thailand] to come together and link into a network. You let people help people. The networks are doing government work."[21]

— Somsook Boonyabancha, Chairperson, Asian Coalition For Housing Rights; Former Director, Community Organizations Development Institute, Bangkok, Thailand (Watch video interview here)

Selected examples in the ACE Bright Spots Library:

- Advocating for state policies that encourage communities to grow and prepare their own fresh food, working in coalition with others around California, Long Beach Fresh, California.
- Using community evidence to integrate insulation and other warm homes standards into national housing standards, Healthy Homes Initiative, New Zealand.
- Creating an intersectoral commission with a citizen participation mechanism, District of Care, Bogotá, Colombia
- Building community power around the country through networks, Community Organization Development Institute, Government of Thailand

See also the Case Studies.

5. STEWARD RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, INCLUDING THE CHILDREN OF TODAY

"Creating a just world long-term should also mean creating a slightly better world in a couple of minutes."[22]

— Ramon Marrades, Director Placemaking Europe, Valencia, Spain (Watch video interviews here)

Providing for Future Generations

- The long-term consequences of present policies and actions are formally considered in decision-making.
- Nature is protected and restored, not exploited.
- Mechanisms to build intergenerational wealth are in place, particularly for groups who have faced barriers to doing so.
- Other forms of community wealth are maintained and built, e.g., human capabilities, skills, and knowledge; culture and traditions; community bonds and networks; local buildings and landscapes.

Providing for future generations means living within environmental limits (e.g., related to climate change, biodiversity, or changes in land use). It also means protecting and building financial and other forms of wealth.

"In our work, we've seen that it takes three generations to rise out of poverty. Consistently you have to ensure that three generations are economically active, and not affected by other vulnerabilities like health or cyclones. Then in the third generation you come out."[23]

— Bijal Brahmbhatt, Executive Director, Mahila Housing Trust
(Watch video interview here)

We found few examples of preparing for future generations in the ACE community, which may mean this is difficult to do. We did see initiatives that:

- **Combined immediate economic benefits with long-term environmental thinking.** (e.g., circular economy projects),
- **Improved quality of life for young children and their families or invested in youth** (e.g., public spaces for caregivers and families; youth employment initiatives)
- **Built community wealth** (e.g., through collective housing and land ownership)
- **Drew on Indigenous knowledge.** Long-term stewardship of land and nature are common priorities in Indigenous knowledge. The ICCA Consortium estimates that 21% of the world's land has remained ecologically intact under the stewardship of Indigenous peoples or local communities, compared to 14% of the world's land protected by countries.[24]

Outside the ACE community, examples include:

- **Institutional mechanisms for promoting long-term planning and making decisions that take future impacts into account.** A pioneering example is Wales' Well-being and Future Generations Act, a legally binding mandate for public bodies in Wales to formally consider the long-term impacts of their decisions. Another is the Doughnut Economics model, a framework for sustainable development that balances human prosperity and environmental limits.
- **Frameworks for understanding, preserving, and building the range of long-term assets that exist within a community.** An example is the Community Capitals Framework, which outlines seven forms of community capital: natural, cultural, human, social, political, built, and financial.[25]

Selected examples in the ACE Bright Spots Library:

- Creating public spaces where families with young children can thrive, Urban95, Lima, Peru
- Listening centers to promote mental health for adolescents and young people, San Antonio de los Cobres, Argentina
- Building Healthy Communities, including youth leadership, Coachella Valley, California, USA
- From waste to organic briquettes to address flooding in Bwaise slum, Kampala, Uganda

EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY IN ADVANCING EQUITY

Initiatives to advance equity in a place can be coordinated by local and national government, community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs, or built environment practitioners. They all have different and complementary strengths. And all can work with community members to advance equity.

Actor	Example strengths	Example ways to involve community members
Local and national government, e.g. the systems of public administration for countries, cities, towns, and other places	Working at a large scale Delivering public services Allocating public investments Set and implement policy and regulation	Participatory governance, budgeting, planning, mapping, design, and other participatory processes
Community-based organizations (CBOs), e.g. a local organization set up by and for the residents of a particular area to serve and represent their needs	Close ties to the local area and to local residents Expert knowledge of local assets and conditions Entrepreneurial ingenuity in resource-constrained situations	Ensure their members are represented in change processes the CBO is participating in Collect local data
Other civil society organizations (CSOs), e.g. international, national, and local non-profits, charities and social enterprises, universities and think tanks, philanthropic foundations	Serving as trusted partner or liaison Conducting research and advocacy Convening and connecting people and organizations	Some types of NGOs can play a crucial "bridging role" to build trusted relationships with communities, hold space for participation, connect communities with others and with resources, spot opportunities for community members, facilitate learning and advocacy, and much more
Built environment practitioners, e.g. urban planners and designers, architects, developers	Strategic and technical expertise related to the built environment	Facilitate processes for engaging with local communities throughout the development of an initiative, plan, or project

4 CASE STUDIES

This section features seven case studies from the ACE network, illustrating a diverse range of approaches to improving equity, by government, NGOs, and community-based organizations. Despite their diversity, each case study illustrates the following good practices for advancing equity in a place:

1. Tackles multiple building blocks of equity at once
2. Works to improve health and wellbeing by improving a key 'upstream' resource in the built or social environment
3. Involves the community as leaders or partners in the initiative
4. Solves for multiple challenges at once

Initiative	Location	Target 'upstream' resource	Key strategies for advancing equity
Government-coordinated			
District of Care	Bogotá, Colombia	Travel time and access to services	People-centered, multi-functional, local spaces Participatory governance and design
Healthy Homes Initiative	New Zealand	Housing	Targeted universalism Community implementation
Baan Mankong**	Bangkok, Thailand	Housing	Community organizing and planning Community-informed multi-solving solution
NGO-coordinated			
Long Beach Fresh **	California, USA	Food	People-centered, multi-functional, local spaces
Cooling Homes in Informal Settlement, Mahila Housing Trust **	Ahmedabad and several cities, India	Housing	Community organizing Community-informed multi-solving solution
Kibera Public Space Project, Kounkuey Design Initiative	Nairobi, Kenya	Public space	People-centered, multi-functional, local spaces Community organizing Community-led design and implementation
Community-based organization-coordinated			
Vale Encantado Sustainable Favela Network**	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Waste management, Energy	Community-led, multi-solving solution

** See interviews about these case studies at https://acehealthequity.org/stories-from-the-field/

CASE STUDY

DISTRICT SYSTEM OF CARE, BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

CITY GOVERNMENT

LATIN AMERICA

TIME AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

Alleviating the burden of unpaid caregiving by organizing services around caregivers' needs and locations

KEY STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation

Improving the status of a group

Participation and Power

Participatory governance

Fair Resources and Burdens

People-centered, multi-functional areas located within easy reach

Fair Systems and Structures

Cross-agency and cross-sector relationships

Institutionalizing the programme

Providing for Future Generations

Improving well-being of caregivers of young children

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION

Secretariat of Women's Affairs, City of Bogotá, Colombia

OTHER COLLABORATORS

Secretariats of Health, Education, Culture, Recreation and Sports, and Social Integration, caregivers, Whirlpool and other private sector actors, universities, local civil society organisations, National Training Service, UN Women, the Government of Sweden, Open Society Foundations, IFC/World Bank, UNDP, UN ECLAC

LOCATION

Bogotá, Colombia

SUMMARY OF THE CHALLENGE AND THE SOLUTION

In Bogotá, 30% of all women are full-time unpaid caregivers. Most are low-income, have not been able to go to secondary school, and lack free time to care for themselves. Though education and self-care services exist, they tend to be spread out across the city, and women are not able to leave their caregiving roles to attend. The District CARE System seeks to "recognize, redistribute and reduce care work" by establishing easy-to-reach centers, or CARE Blocks, where caregivers can access recreational and educational services alongside caregiving services for those they care for.

"To reduce gender gaps, women need to have a louder voice and greater participation, and that is just what we're doing with the District Care System in Bogotá. We have to re-think our policy and infrastructure, to place women at the center, to help alleviate the burden of unpaid care and give them more control over their own outcomes."[26]

— Claudia López, Former Mayor of Bogotá (2020-2023)

TARGET 'UPSTREAM' RESOURCE

Travel time and access to services

MULTISOLVING BENEFITS

Gender equality, caregiver wellbeing, access to education, economic development

COMMUNITY OF CONCERN

Full-time unpaid caregivers

MECHANISM(S) FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Focus groups and interviews during the design phase
Participatory governance for the program
Local roundtables across the city

ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TARGET ACTION

Conducted focus groups and interviews with caregivers from different populations

Identified target locations for CARE Blocks by means of a prioritization index comprising demand for care (% of disabled people, elderly people, and children under 13), caregiver density, poverty, and participatory budgets that voted for care initiatives.

ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation: Boost recognition of caregiving with "CARE School for Men" to teach household management skills to men and other household members.

Participation and Power: Create a participation mechanism for a diverse group of caregivers with different ethnicities, abilities, and LBGTQ+ identities in the program's governing commission.

Fair Resources and Burdens: Provide caregivers easy access to services via CARE Blocks located within a 15-20 minute walk of potential users, in existing public spaces. CARE Buses and Home Delivery cater to those in remote or home-bound situations.

Fair Systems and Structures: Incorporate the program into the city's framework with legal status and a dedicated budget line in the City Development Plan. Create the multi-stakeholder, intersectoral CARE Alliance to offer support and propagate care strategies locally and globally.

RESULTS TO DATE

By September 2022, over 200,000 had used 20 CARE Blocks, 2 CARE Buses, and CARE Home Delivery. By end of 2023, 20 additional CARE Blocks were to be operational. As of December 2022, educational courses saw 12,000+ participants, with 500 women earning high school diplomas. A regular user reported, "Nowadays, my stress levels go down automatically [when I go there]."[27]

CASE STUDY

HEALTHY HOMES INITIATIVES (HHI), NEW ZEALAND

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

OCEANIA

HOUSING

Improving children's health by working with families and multiple government agencies to create warmer, drier homes

KEY STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation

Disaggregated data

Co-research with communities, integrating Indigenous approaches

Respecting cultural approaches and attitudes to housing

Participation and Power

Delivered by community partners, in close collaboration with households

Fair Resources and Burdens

Targeted universalism

Fair Systems and Structures

Community-based evidence used to influence national policy

Cross-agency collaboration

Providing for Future Generations

Targets children under 5 and pregnant people

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION

Ministry of Health, New Zealand

LOCATION

New Zealand

OTHER COLLABORATORS

Māori and Pacific health social service and energy efficiency providers, University of Otago, BRANZ

SUMMARY OF THE CHALLENGE AND THE SOLUTION

In 2013, New Zealand had one of the highest rates of rheumatic fever in the developed world, found almost

exclusively among Māori and Pacific people and linked to crowded, damp, cold housing and deprivation. In response, the Ministry of Health established the Healthy Homes Initiatives, implemented by Māori and Pacific providers who work with at-risk families to create warmer, drier, healthier homes. Interventions range from curtains and insulation, to support with power bills, accessing entitlements, and relocating to better housing. Given its success in 11 regions on the North Island, the program is now being rolled out to the entire country.

> **"Everyone deserves a warm, dry, healthy home. By improving housing conditions, people are healthier and more likely to stay in school or in work, while also relieving pressure on the health system."**[28]
>
> — Associate Minister of Health Ayesha Verrall

TARGET 'UPSTREAM' RESOURCE

Housing

MULTISOLVING BENEFITS

Respiratory and cardiovascular health, family life, energy efficiency

COMMUNITY OF CONCERN

Māori and Pacific families, who are more likely to be living in crowded housing with poor conditions

MECHANISM(S) FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The program is delivered by predominantly Māori and Pacific providers, who partner with families as active actors.

ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TARGET ACTION

Eligible families (children with health risks, low-income families, pregnant people) are offered a visit from an assessor, who works with the family to carry out a housing assessment and create an individualized action plan.

ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation: Work with the University of Otago to generate an evidence base for improved housing policy that presents separate results for Māori, Pacific and overall populations. Build Māori research capacity and weave Māori frameworks, values and processes into the research.

Participation and Power: Engage Māori and Pacific providers to deliver the interventions. They take a "by community, for community" approach, developing trusted relationships with the families and supporting the families to become active actors in improving their own housing conditions.

Fair Resources and Burdens: An example of targeted universalism. HHI is part of the government's broader housing strategy. While HHI aims to ensure warm, dry, and healthy homes for all New Zealanders, it provides tailored support for Māori and Pacific families by taking a culturally responsive approach to support families to implement a mix of interventions, and assisting them in accessing their entitlements.

Fair Systems and Structures: Use the community-based evidence to enact national healthy housing standards. Promote cross-agency collaboration and relationships

Providing for Future Generations: Targets children under 5 and generates climate mitigation co-benefits through energy efficiency.

RESULTS TO DATE

As of October 2022, more than 31,000 children and pregnant people and 111,000 of their family members had been supported through HHI, of whom 94% identify as Māori or Pasifika. Their hospitalization rates were reduced by nearly 20% and were shorter and less severe; they also had fewer GP appointments and prescriptions. Positive effects were also seen on school attendance and employment. ROI was achieved within one year.

CASE STUDY

BAAN MANKONG CANAL UPGRADING, BANGKOK, THAILAND

GOVERNMENT

ASIA

HOUSING AND LAND TENURE

Improving wellbeing and addressing flooding by improving canalside housing through participatory planning

KEY STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation

Communities gain legitimacy by operating under a recognized structure

Participation and Power

Collective action throughout, from participatory planning to negotiating with the government

Fair Resources and Burdens

Multi-solving solutions

Fair Systems and Structures

Focus on building institutional structures to build and harness community power and channel funding and knowledge to communities

Providing for Future Generations

Collective land ownership for lasting community wealth

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION

Community Organization Development Institute (CODI)

LOCATION

Bangkok, Thailand

OTHER COLLABORATORS

Canalside communities, Canal Housing Development Network, Bangkok Metropolitan Authority, Treasury Department, universities

SUMMARY OF THE CHALLENGE AND THE SOLUTION

Communities living in informal canalside settlements in Bangkok had insecure housing and were being blamed for flooding. The Baan Mankong Program represented

"a dramatic change in the role of government – from a provider of housing to facilitator of community-driven local housing co-production."[29] Through community-led planning, mapping, advocacy and construction, residents were able to secure housing on long-term collective land leases, bringing strengthened social structures and management systems, and improved flood control and healthier, more beautiful environments.

TARGET 'UPSTREAM' RESOURCE

Housing

MULTISOLVING BENEFITS

Better living conditions, flood risk mitigation

COMMUNITY OF CONCERN

Communities living in informal settlements near canals in Thailand

MECHANISM(S) FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Participatory planning, mapping and design
Community organization

ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TARGET ACTION

Project was led by the communities and based on their needs and wants

Watch videos related to this case study at: https://acehealthequity.org/stories-from-the-field/master-class-1/

ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation: The community's work was recognized as legitimate because it took place under the CODI umbrella. Because of the success and multiple benefits of the canalside upgrading work, canalside residents also saw themselves, and were perceived, as legitimate development partners.

Participation and Power: Everything was done as a group. Canalside communities organized into committees and conducted their own surveys, mapped their settlements, worked with architects to develop designs and plan their upgraded communities. They also negotiated collectively with the government for land tenure.

Fair Resources and Burdens: Flexible finance from government budgets were channeled via CODI to the communities, who decided how to use them. The communities also negotiated long-term leases. Widened canals and sturdy walkways supported improved flood mitigation action.

Fair Systems and Structures: Fairer power dynamics and strengthened relationships within the communities and with other communities and the government via CODI. Norms around low-income housing have changed – it's now seen as a structural issue that can be resolved.

Providing for Future Generations: New amenities were introduced by the canals that impacted those of all generations, e.g. kindergarten, welfare centers, etc.

RESULTS TO DATE

Over 100 communities along three canals, including thousands of families, benefited from upgraded housing and land tenure.

"This merging of public policy, government funding, local partnerships, and the creative energy of large numbers of poor communities creates not only a lot of good housing projects, but an inclusive, citywide platform for collaboration that can address many other urban development issues as well."[30]

— Somsook Boonyabancha and Thomas Kerr

CASE STUDY

LONG BEACH FRESH CROP SWAP, NORTH LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA, USA

NGO

NORTH AMERICA

FOOD, PUBLIC SPACE

Improving health and social cohesion by connecting local farmers, food businesses, and households to increase access to fresh, nutritious food

KEY STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation

Celebrating different food cultures

Participation and Power

Asking communities what they need and want

Using community assets to meet community needs

Fair Resources and Burdens

People-centered, mixed-use areas

Fair Systems and Structures

Collaborating on policy advocacy with a wider network of organizations with similar goals

Providing for Future Generations

Reducing food waste

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION

Long Beach Fresh

OTHER COLLABORATORS

Sowing Seeds of Change Urban Farm, GROW2ZERO Farms, Nehyam Neighborhood Association, Kiva, Long Beach Organic, MAYE Center, Growing Experience Urban Farm, Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services, UC Master Gardeners, LB Makers, The California Endowment

LOCATION

North Long Beach, California

SUMMARY OF THE CHALLENGE AND THE SOLUTION

Although they live in one of the most productive agricultural regions of the world, residents of North Long Beach lacked local access to healthy and affordable food. Local leaders created Long Beach Fresh (LBF) to improve the local food system and foster greater social connection among residents. LBF catalyzes collaboration between community members, non-profits, schools, businesses, and government to "accelerate, catalyze, and organize the growing, cooking, selling, sharing and buying of good food across our city."

TARGET 'UPSTREAM' RESOURCE

Food and public life

MULTISOLVING BENEFITS

Health, social cohesion, climate mitigation

COMMUNITY OF CONCERN

Communities in Long Beach living in neighborhoods lacking sources of affordable, fresh food

MECHANISM(S) FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

LBF serves as a bridging organization, convening local residents and community-based food system stakeholders to facilitate collective change through projects and policy efforts.

ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TARGET ACTION

Targeted 3 neighborhoods with the highest levels of obesity, diabetes and asthma in the region. Asked residents why they weren't eating more healthful food (cost and local availability) and for ideas to change this. They came up with the idea for a local meet-up for residents to share garden-grown fruits and vegetables. This "crop swap" is now a vibrant market where hundreds of pounds of fresh produce are exchanged weekly.

"There's all this untapped potential in the food system that needs to get out. It just needs someone to coordinate it."[31]

— Ryan Smolar, Long Beach Fresh

ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Participation and Power: Ask residents what they need and want. Find community members looking for opportunities and support them to blaze new paths. Examples: connecting gardeners with land, local markets with health department grants to improve their refrigeration, or food start-ups with capital.

Fair Resources and Burdens: Work to iron out inefficiencies in the food system by mapping needs and resources, cataloguing assets and best practices, facilitating capacity-building. Make gardens and markets the heart of their communities with arts, culture, and community-focused design.

Fair Systems and Structures: Advocate for incentives and policies to support urban agriculture and home-based food businesses. Join 22 other food policy councils in a statewide and national network that advocates for policies to improve community supply and access to fresh food and shares innovations.

RESULTS TO DATE

As of December 2022, Long Beach Fresh had built a springboard for the local food movement, promoted affordable, nutritious, small batch and diverse food options to 5,000 residents a month, served as the primary convener for 125+ local food stakeholders, and put on educational events to bring 800+ community members together annually.

Watch videos about this case study at https://acehealthequity.org/stories-from-the-field/master-class-4/

CASE STUDY

COOLING HOMES IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS, INDIA

NGO

ASIA

HOUSING

Boosting earnings, improving family life, and increasing climate resiliency by co-designing cooler roofs

KEY STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation

Household-level data

Participation and Power

Social organization

Participatory design

Fair Resources and Burdens

Multi-solving solution

Fair Systems and Structures

Community-based evidence used to influence policy

Solutions-based advocacy

Providing for Future Generations

Building community wealth

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION

Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT)

OTHER COLLABORATORS

Yatin Pandya, Footprint, University of Chicago, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Georgia Institute of Technology, National Research Development Corporation, HT Parekh Foundation, Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH), Centre for Advanced Research in Building Science and Energy (CARBSE), Hasit Ganatra, ReMaterials, Inc., Eco Shelter USA, Ahmedabad-Gujarat, Bhopal and Madhya Pradesh Governments, National Research Development Corporation

LOCATION

Seven cities across India—including Ahmedabad, New Delhi, and Jaipur

SUMMARY OF THE CHALLENGE AND THE SOLUTION

MHT supports women living in poor communities across seven Indian cities, to organize and to collaborate to address their most pressing challenges, according to their own priorities. Recently, MHT has been working with women to find sustainable cooling solutions at home in the face of scorching temperatures that frequently reach daytime temperatures of 38°C (100°F). Many poor women work from home, so excessive heat is both a health hazard for women and a threat to the financial stability of entire families, when it is simply too hot to work at home. In consultation with the families, engineers developed a novel roofing strategy that both cooled the home and created additional living space on the flat roof.

TARGET 'UPSTREAM' RESOURCE

Housing

MULTISOLVING BENEFITS

Economic opportunity, climate adaptation

COMMUNITY OF CONCERN

Women living in poor urban communities

MECHANISM(S) FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community-based organizations (CBOs), Community Action Groups (CAGs), and a city-wide community board to represent the urban poor in city dialogues and policymaking

Community representation on the MHT Board and staff

Community participation in the design of the cool roofs

ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TARGET ACTION

Communities made the decisions throughout, from deciding to tackle roofs, to how the roof was designed

ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Recognition and Representation: Carry out detailed household surveys assessing poverty and well-being, covering basic services and housing. This data highlights community needs to authorities.

Participation and Power: Facilitate three layers of community organization to represent the needs and wants of neighborhood families, lead local efforts, and represent the urban poor in city-level dialogues and policymaking. Ensure community participation in the design of the roofs.

Fair Resources and Burdens: Design roofs that cooled the house and created additional living space. Design financial products to support women to buy the roofs. Support communities to access existing welfare policies. Take a "sociotechnical approach" combining technical expertise with a social lens

Fair Systems and Structures: Focus on offering solutions rather than criticizing government. Following the success of the first projects and MHT-facilitated community advocacy, there is a now a Cool Roofs policy at state and national level.

Providing for Future Generations: Focus on supporting women to own productive assets so they can build and pass wealth down to their children.

RESULTS TO DATE

300+ families co-invested in the cool roofs. 30% of those families either started a new or expanded an economic activity as a direct result of having a better quality roof.

Watch a video about this case study at: https://acehealthequity.org/stories-from-the-field/MHT

"We have one foot and two hands on the ground—and we use the rest of our resources to make sure the women get what they need. We support *their* priorities."

— Aprajita Singh, Mahila Housing Trust Advisor

CASE STUDY

KIBERA PUBLIC SPACE PROJECT, NAIROBI, KENYA

NGO

AFRICA

PUBLIC SPACE

Combining access to services, economic activity, community life and reducing flood risk in community-designed public spaces

KEY STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Participation and Power

Participatory design

Building community networks

Fair Resources and Burdens

People-centered, multi-functional areas

Fair Systems and Structures

Community-based evidence used to influence policy

Providing for Future Generations

Combining environmental measures with economic opportunity

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION

Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)

LOCATION

Nairobi, Kenya

OTHER COLLABORATORS

Andolo Bridge Community Group, Anwa Junior Academy, Arup, Buro Happold, Engineers Without Borders UK, Gifted Hands, Kibera Action Group Organisation (KAGO), Kibera Christian Initiative, Kibera United For Our Needs (KUFON), New Nairobi Dam Community, Riverside Usafi Group, The S.U.N. Centre

SUMMARY OF THE CHALLENGE AND THE SOLUTION

Kibera, with 250,000 people, faces overcrowding, poor sanitation, high crime, and flooding. It also has many assets, including entrepreneurship, a strong social fabric, and extensive community activism. KDI partnered with residents to create Productive Public Spaces providing essential services, flood mitigation, and income-generating programs to enhance skills.

"I think the assumption is, if you're working with poor people, they don't have ideas. When you come to Kibera, the people who live in Kibera are experts in their own right." [32]

— Caroline Owala, Kounkuey Design Initiative board member and former Kibera resident

TARGET 'UPSTREAM' RESOURCE

Public space

MULTISOLVING BENEFITS

Civic engagement, Climate resilience, Economic Development

COMMUNITY OF CONCERN

Residents of the Kibera slum, Nairobi

MECHANISM(S) FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community-led design, planning and implementation, facilitated by the bridging organization (KDI)

ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TARGET ACTION

Run workshops to support residents and local groups to design site interventions using resident-identified solutions. Hold sessions and trainings for Kibera's community members, youth, and leaders to guide planning and enact tested strategies for enhancing livelihoods and reducing flood risk.

ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Participation and Power: Work with community-based organizations who are responsible for construction and management. Nurture a network of community leaders across the public spaces who share knowledge and support each other.

Fair Resources and Burdens: Set up "Productive Public Spaces" that make it easier for residents to access sanitation and laundry facilities, recreation space, community space with WiFi, and small businesses, combined with sustainable drainage infrastructure to help reduce flood risk.

Fair Systems and Structures: Collaborate with residents, agencies, CSOs, NGOs, governments and universities to advocate for better policies and practices and establish an online platform to share community-led responses and adaptive strategies. After two years of lobbying, the Nairobi government is now launching a formal upgrading process for Kibera that will incorporate the perspectives of residents.

Providing for Future Generations: Combine climate mitigation and adaptation measures such as solar powered heating and rainwater harvesting with immediate economic and service opportunities for the community.

RESULTS TO DATE

So far, 11 new climate-resilient public spaces have been established, comprising 35% of all purpose-built public spaces in Kibera, delivering enhanced flood protection infrastructure and resources for more than half of Kibera's 250,000 residents and increasing access to essential services for over 10,000 people. A network of over 250 community leaders has also been established.

CASE STUDY

VALE ENCANTADO SUSTAINABLE FAVELA NETWORK, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION

LATIN AMERICA

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENERGY

Transforming food waste and sewage into biogas in a community far away from city services

KEY STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Participation and Power

Community-led and community-implemented

Fair Resources and Burdens

Multi-solving solution

Technology transfer

Providing for Future Generations

Combining environmental measures with economic opportunity

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION

Vale Encantado Resident Association

LOCATION

Vale Encantado, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

OTHER COLLABORATORS

Dr. T.H. Culhane, Solar CITIES, Baltazar Morgado, Viva Rio, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Theresa Williamson, Catalytic Communities

SUMMARY OF THE CHALLENGE AND THE SOLUTION

Vale Encantado is an informally built community in a forest in the heart of Rio de Janeiro. The residents of Vale Encantado – collaborating with engineers from the local University, international partners, and experts in biodigester construction – built their own biodigester and waste collection system from local materials. The

biodigester uses sewage water to produce slurry that is used in community gardens and the selective collection of food waste generates biogas that is used by the neighbors' association, which draws revenues from sustainable tourism, to cook meals for visitors. The project evolved over several years, with different infusions of funds, and in conjunction with other community projects for solar power and environmental awareness training that engaged approximately 100 residents. For example, when families carry one bag of food waste up the hill to the neighbors' association, they are given two loaves of bread in return.

TARGET 'UPSTREAM' RESOURCE

Waste management and sanitation

MULTISOLVING BENEFITS

Energy, economic development

COMMUNITY OF CONCERN

The residents of Vale Encantado, a 150-year-old, 140-person community in Rio de Janeiro's Tijuca rainforest, one of the largest urban rainforests in the world

MECHANISM(S) FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community-led, community-driven project
Community participation in construction

ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TARGET ACTION

Project was community-driven, initiated and led by the head of the residents' association, based on what he and his neighbors needed.

ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EQUITY

Participation and Power: Project was community-driven, initiated, and led by the head of the residents' association, based on what he and his neighbors needed.

Fair Resources and Burdens: Community leadership interaction with international organizations and academia to transfer knowledge and technology to practice in building a biodigester system.

RESULTS TO DATE

The initiative enhanced water, sanitation, health, life quality, financial security, government relations, and rainforest ecology. The community now thrives on sustainable tourism, showcasing their biodigester, waste system, gardens, and a biogas-powered restaurant.

> **"We see Vale Encantado as an incubator of new ideas. These ideas are born within the community and with the help of friends, they become reality."** [33]
>
> — Otávio Barros, President of the Vale Encantado Resident Association and Head of the Vale Encantado Cooperative

Watch a video about this case study at:
https://acehealthequity.org/stories-from-the-field/master-class-5/

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5 TOOLS FOR PUTTING EQUITY INTO ACTION

A selection of prompts and exercises for working through some of the concepts in this Starter Kit and supporting your efforts to integrate equity into your work. They can be used separately or in combination.

Wherever possible, use these tools in a participatory way, with representatives from the different groups or communities affected by the work.

TOOL 1: Prompts for considering equity

TOOL 2: Examining underlying beliefs, assumptions, and approaches

TOOL 3: Understanding who may be left behind or who is further from thriving

TOOL 4: Choosing approaches for working on equity

TOOL 5: Continuum of approaches for the Five Practices to Advance Equity

TOOL 6: Making existing initiatives or projects more equitable

TOOL 7: Measuring equity – why, what, how

TOOL 8: A framework for connecting actions to improve equity with better health and wellbeing outcomes

Adapt this material in ways that work best for your community, organization, or culture. We'd love to hear about your experience using these tools, feedback, suggestions, and other tools you've found useful at equityproject@isuh.org.

TOOL 1: PROMPTS FOR CONSIDERING EQUITY

What are you looking for?	Prompt
Inspiration	**An aspirational vision for equity** Equity means we all have what we need to thrive, no matter who we are or where we live, now and for future generations. **Discussion questions:** How does this statement apply to your place, your issue, or your community or group? Why or why not?
A quick assessment of the equity dynamics in a situation	**Five questions to assess who is and who isn't at risk of being left behind** ▪ Who counts? Who is represented? Whose story is being told? (Who is missing?) ▪ Who decides? (Who doesn't have a say?) ▪ Who gets what? Who pays? (Who doesn't own or have access to resources? ▪ Who does the system help or hinder? ▪ What's left for tomorrow? **Discussion questions:** Think about these questions as they apply to your place, your issue, or your community or group. Who is and who isn't (or relatively less) at risk of being left behind?
A way to diagnose gaps	**Five challenges that lead to inequity** ▪ Lack of visibility or representation ▪ Lack of agency, influence, or power ▪ Lack of resources or opportunities; disproportionate bearing of costs or exposure to hazards ▪ Structural or systemic obstacles to progress ▪ Short-term approaches **Discussion questions:** How do these challenges affect your place, your issue, or your community or group? Who do these challenges affect?

A way to assess what's working and what isn't when it comes to equity in a context	**Five building blocks of equity** ▪ *Recognition and representation:* Everyone is seen, valued, and represented. ▪ *Participation and power:* Everyone has a say in the political, economic, and social processes that shape our lives and communities. ▪ *Fair resources and opportunities:* Everyone has access to the material and social resources and opportunities they need to live healthy, happy lives. ▪ *Fair systems and structures:* Societal and institutional rules, practices, resource flows, power dynamics, and norms serve everyone. ▪ *Providing for future generations:* We are good ancestors, leaving resources and wealth for future generations. **Discussion questions:** Consider these five building blocks for equity. Do you think these hold in your place, for your issue, or for the community or group you are working with? Why or why not?
A checklist to assess your strategy or initiative for advancing equity	**Five practices to advance equity** ▪ Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives. ▪ Strengthen community participation and power. ▪ Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly. ▪ Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems. ▪ Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today. **Discussion questions:** To what extent are you engaged in these practices? Are other organizations or individuals engaged in these practices? What opportunities exist to build these practices into your work? Where will you prioritize?
Equity-related goals	**A set of goals against which to measure progress** ▪ Eliminate unfair and avoidable differences (a) between groups, or (b) between a group and an aspirational universal goal for all ▪ Improve recognition of differences ▪ Improve representation ▪ Increase community participation ▪ Build community power ▪ Distribute resources and burdens more fairly ▪ Change policies, practices, resource flows, power dynamics, relationships, and mental models[34] ▪ Reduce contributions to negative environmental indicators, e.g., GHG emissions or water pollution ▪ Build community wealth **Discussion questions:** Which of these goals are you working towards? What metrics could you use to measure progress? How can you do this with the active participation of the communities affected by the work?

A way to make the case for working on equity, or to understand why people might disagree	**A set of values, beliefs, and assumptions** ▪ All people have equal value, regardless of identity or background. ▪ Opportunities in life shouldn't be fundamentally determined by one's identity or background. ▪ There are many valid ways of being, experiencing, knowing, and doing. ▪ People have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. ▪ Communities are full of untapped capacity and energy, experts in their own lives, and important actors in social change. ▪ There is enough for everyone. ▪ Some people aren't thriving because of discrimination, past decisions, or history affecting the group(s) they belong to. ▪ Change can ONLY happen with grassroots action. **Discussion questions:** Which of these do you agree or disagree with? How about your partners, stakeholders, opposition?
A way to explain what is different about taking an equity-focused approach	**Equitable approaches** Working on equity means... ▪ ...working with the explicit goal of ensuring no one is left behind by your work, no matter who they are or where they live. ▪ ...strengthening representation and power, as well as access to resources. ▪ ...taking targeted rather than one-size-fits all approaches, because people are starting from different places and need different things. ▪ ...paying attention to process (how the work is done, governed, who it involves), as well as outcomes. **Discussion questions:** How does your work resemble or differ from these approaches?

TOOL 2: EXAMINING UNDERLYING BELIEFS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND APPROACHES

Working on equity implies a set of beliefs and assumptions that may not be shared. It also means using approaches that may contrast with current approaches.

By examining these beliefs, assumptions, and approaches, we can better understand areas of disagreement or tension, and find ways to move forward or to bring more nuance to our work.

To help you do this, below is a selection of contrasting pairs of assumptions followed by discussion questions.

A. Beliefs and assumptions that challenge or support equity

Equity building block	Beliefs and assumptions that challenge equity	Beliefs and assumptions that support equity
All	Some people matter more than others.	All people have equal value, regardless of identity or background.
All	We can't do much about some people thriving and others not thriving. It's just how the world is.	We can make choices and take actions that support more people to thrive.
Fair systems and structures	When people aren't thriving, it's usually because of something they did or didn't do.	When people aren't thriving, it's often down to discrimination, past decisions, or history.
Recognition and representation	There are a very small number of valid ways of being, experiencing, knowing, and doing.	There are many valid ways of being, experiencing, knowing, and doing.
Participation and power	Communities are inactive beneficiaries of development work and charity.	Communities are full of untapped capacity and energy, experts in their own lives, and important actors in social change.
Participation and power	Policymakers, funders, and other professional decision-makers are usually best placed to make decisions.	People have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.
Participation and power	Policy change matters most.	Lasting social change requires grassroots action.
Fair resources and opportunities	There isn't enough to go around.	There is enough for everyone.

Discussion questions

- Which of these beliefs do you / your organization / your stakeholders hold?
- These beliefs and assumptions represent extreme positions. If you were to plot each pair on either end of a spectrum, where on the spectrum would you / your organization / your stakeholders sit? How would your / their position differ depending on the context?

B. Approaches that challenge equity if used entirely on their own, vs approaches that support equity

Equity building block	Approaches that have their place, but may challenge equity if used entirely on their own	Approaches that support equity, but need to be used in combination with other approaches
Fair resources and opportunities	Universal policies and solutions	Targeted solutions for different groups of people, depending on their needs and strengths
All	Fix problems after they've happened	Prevent problems before they happen
Fair systems and structures	Deliver specific services or solutions	Work to change systems and structures
Providing for future generations	Focusing on short-term gains	Aiming for long-term sustainability
Participation and power	Top-down approaches	Grassroots, participatory approaches
Fair systems and structures	Focus on achieving specific outcomes	Focus on building relationships and networks
Fair resources and opportunities	Solve just one issue	Solve for multiple issues at once

Discussion questions

- For each pair of approaches, which of the two best represents the way you work? If both approaches are represented, what's the relative weighting (for example, would you say your work is 75% top-down and 25% participatory)?
- Are there opportunities to build in more "approaches that support equity" into your work?

TOOL 3: UNDERSTANDING WHO MAY BE LEFT BEHIND OR WHO IS FURTHER FROM THRIVING

A key first step is understanding who may be left behind or who is further from thriving.

1. What group(s) may be left behind?
2. What challenges does the group face?
3. What assets and strengths does the group have?

Be sure to consult and include the perspectives and experiences of affected groups and communities in discussions and information gathering.

First, identify who may be left behind.

Two ways to do this: (version A) from the UN's Leave No One Behind Framework and the Othering and (version B) Belonging Institute's Targeted Universalism Framework.

Version A works well if you are starting from the perspective of a *place*, (e.g., a city, town) or a *group*, (e.g. women living in poor urban communities in India) and are trying to identify groups or subgroups who are at risk of being left (further) behind. Version B works particularly well if you are starting from the perspective of an *issue* or *sector*, (e.g. air pollution, economic development).

a. **Who's at risk of being left (further) behind?** Consider these five factors[35] that lead to exclusion:

- Discrimination on the basis of assumed or imposed identity or status, e.g. gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, residency or citizenship status, political affiliation
- Geography, e.g., isolation, risk, or exclusion due to location
- Vulnerability to shocks, e.g., violence or conflict, climate change, environmental disasters
- Governance, e.g., ability to participate in government and decision-making, civic space, access to information
- Socio-economic status, e.g., access to public services or resources, people living in the informal sector, people without addresses

Gather information on who is affected by these factors. ***Who is most affected by one or more of the factors? Who is affected by multiple factors? In what ways are these groups at risk of being left behind?***

b. **Who's further from thriving?**[36] Define a universal, population-wide goal, such as reducing air pollution in a city. ***How are different groups of people or segments of the population are doing relative to that goal? Who is experiencing disparities?***

Second, consider what's not working and what's working for the group(s).

Some questions to support this analysis. What's most relevant for the place, issue or sector you are working in?

1. **To what extent are the group's experiences and perspectives recognized and represented?**

   Examples of areas for recognition and representation: data, statistics, rights, legislation, policies, institutions, decision-making bodies, positions of power, societal domains such as politics, business, media, communications, culture

2. **To what extent is the group able to participate in or influence the processes that shape lives, places, and communities?**

   Examples of areas for participation and influence: governance, policymaking, and resource allocation processes; data collection and research; initiatives to improve local health and well-being; community organizing, campaigning, advocacy, networking and movement-building; access to funding and other resources

3. **To what extent can the group access quality resources and opportunities? How exposed is the group to burdens and costs?**

   Examples of resources, opportunities, burdens and costs: access to infrastructure, resources, public services, amenities, programs; environmental burdens such as pollution, heat; costs such as taxes, cost of living increases, costs of transitioning to a clean economy

4. **To what extent do structural or systemic conditions pose obstacles for the group?**

   Examples of structural or systemic conditions that may pose obstacles: government, institutional, or organizational rules, regulations, and priorities; practices, procedures, or informal shared habits; the allocation and distribution of money, people, knowledge, information, infrastructure and other assets; the quality of relationships, connections and communications between different actors; the distribution of power and influence among individuals and organizations; norms, narratives, and other habits of thought.[37]

5. **What might be the future impacts of current actions on the group's resources or conditions?**

   Examples of community resources or conditions that may be affected by current actions: natural resources, cultural capital, human capital, social capital, political capital, financial capital, built environment capital.[38]

Third, consider the assets and strengths the group brings.

Involve the community in leading and contributing to the change by having them assist in mapping. Search the web for community asset mapping guides. Examples of community assets:

- Physical assets (public spaces, schools, local enterprises)
- Social assets (community groups, networks)
- Human assets (skills, experiences of community members)
- Cultural assets (local traditions, history).

TOOL 4: CHOOSING APPROACHES FOR WORKING ON EQUITY

Questions to consider when choosing opportunities for working on equity:

1. **What do the Five Practices to Advance Equity look like for your place, issue, or group?** Consider the context as well as the challenges and strengths of the group(s) who may be left behind.

   For example: "Strengthen community participation and power" could look like this:

   - *In a place: "Create opportunities for informal sector workers to participate in providing public service and lead projects."*
   - *For an issue: "Involve excluded communities in campaigning on this issue."*
   - *For a group: "Support the community to self-organize and to connect with wider movements and networks."*

Five Practices to Advance Equity

1. Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives.
2. Strengthen community participation and power.
3. Distribute resources, opportunities, and burdens fairly.
4. Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems.
5. Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today.

2. **Which of these practices are most needed? Which is likely to have most impact?** Again, consider the context as well as the challenges and strengths of the group(s) who may be left behind.

3. **Who else is working on these practices?** You might choose actions that fewer people are working on. Or you might choose actions where there are many people working on them, but choose an approach that adds value, or partner with others.

4. **Which practices are best suited to you?** Consider your role relative to others, and who might be a good partner. Optionally, use **TOOL 5** to think through your approach to each Practice or consult the **Five Practices to Advance Equity** and **Case Studies** for inspiration and ideas.

5. **Which practices will you prioritize?**

TOOL 5: THINKING THROUGH YOUR APPROACH TO EACH OF THE FIVE PRACTICES TO ADVANCE EQUITY

This tool represents each of the Five Practices to Advance Equity through a sample continuum from "less emphasis" to "more emphasis." (Adapt as needed.)

Use this tool to plot and visualize your approach to each practice, indicate what practices you have prioritized, and indicate what you are not doing.

How much emphasis will you place on each of the Five Practices to Advance Equity?

Less emphasis **More emphasis**

Recognize and represent excluded experiences and perspectives

Focus on aggregated or averaged data, pay minimal attention to who is represented in decision-making or influencing

Ensure data reveals a range of experiences, effectively represent excluded perspectives in decision-making or influencing

Strengthen community participation and power

Inform communities | Consult communities | Communities have significant influence | Communities lead

Distribute resources, opportunities and burdens fairly

Focus on one-size-fits-all initiatives, with little attention to relative distribution of benefits and burdens

Target initiatives according to individual or group needs

Prioritize groups based on need, shift costs to those who can afford it, choose multisolving solutions

Address systemic obstacles and shift to new, fairer systems

Acknowledge systemic and structural obstacles, but focus elsewhere

Navigate obstacles within existing systems and structures

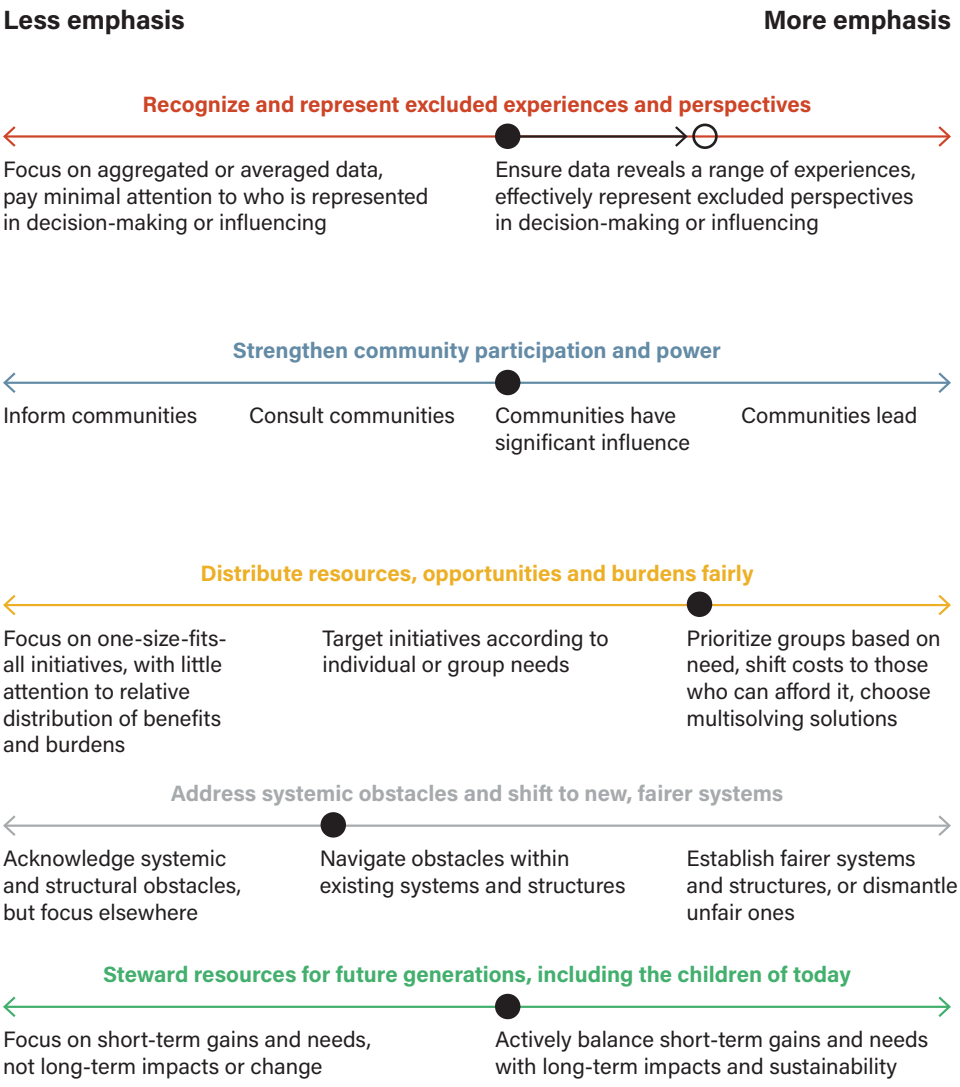
Establish fairer systems and structures, or dismantle unfair ones

Steward resources for future generations, including the children of today

Focus on short-term gains and needs, not long-term impacts or change

Actively balance short-term gains and needs with long-term impacts and sustainability

Example: Healthy Homes Initiative, New Zealand



Spectrums for community engagement and participation

What options are available for community participation?

For Practice 2: Strengthen community participation and power, there are many useful spectrums or continuums that have been developed to help governments, NGOs and communities assess or target a specific level of participation. One of the first such tools was the influential Ladder of Citizen Participation developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, which shows how public institutions and officials share or deny power to residents.

We like the tools developed by Facilitating Power (USA) and Catalyse (New Zealand). Links to these can be found in Further Resources, under "Power and Participation."

TOOL 6: MAKING EXISTING INITIATIVES OR PROJECTS MORE EQUITABLE

Use this tool if you already have an initiative or project that you want to make more equitable. Consider the questions, then choose one or more actions to make the initiative more equitable. Optionally, you can also map your project on the continuum in Tool 4, and brainstorm ways to strengthen your emphasis on one or more of the Practices.

Building block of equity	Where do things stand in terms of your initiative?	What action can you take to make the initiative more equitable?
Recognition + Representation	Who is being represented, and who isn't? Who is being counted, and who isn't? Whose perspectives are being shared, and whose aren't?	How can you better recognize and represent excluded perspectives and experiences in the initiative?
Participation + Power	Who is making decisions and who is participating in the initiative? Who isn't?	How can you involve communities further in governance, design, or implementation?
Fair Resources + Burdens	Who will be benefiting from the initiative's intended outcomes? Who will be incurring costs? Who isn't?	Can the distribution of benefits and costs be made fairer for excluded or marginalized groups? Can the initiative be targeted to better meet the needs of groups that are further behind? Can the initiative be adjusted to solve for other problems?
Fair Systems + Structures	What structural or systemic obstacles might get in the way of people benefiting from the initiative's intended outcomes?	How can you help people better navigate these obstacles? Are there opportunities to tackle these obstacles directly or provide alternatives?
Providing for Future Generations	Have you considered the sustainability of and the potential long-term impacts of your initiative?	What can you do to enhance the sustainability of your initiative? Can you build in more consideration of the long-term impacts of your initiative?

TOOL 7: MEASURING EQUITY – WHY, WHAT, HOW

Working towards equity means expanding traditional approaches for **why**, **what** and **how** we measure change and **what we do** with the measurement data. It means:

- Prioritizing communities as active designers, partners, and audiences for the research,
- Disaggregating data, measuring changes in how outcomes are distributed, *and* in other enabling factors for equity such as representation, power, and structural change (e.g., the building blocks of equity), and
- Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to capture more rounded perspectives and lived experiences.

To start thinking through your approach to measuring equity, read through the table below. Discuss what you are currently doing and what you could add to your approach, considering the following questions:

1. Which of the building blocks of equity is the work seeking to change?
2. How might that change be measured? What matters to the communities and what works in the context?
3. How can communities be involved in designing, leading, and/or carrying out the research?
4. What participatory methods are available? What qualitative and quantitative approaches could be used to capture more rounded perspectives?
5. What combination of short-, medium-, and long-term measures can be used? Consider short-term measures to track implementation over the course of a project or initiative; medium-term measures to provide insights into progress towards meaningful change; and long-term measures to assess the impact of an initiative in terms of its broader goals.
6. How can the data be used to report back to and/or to benefit communities? How will the communities have access to the findings?
7. How can the data be used to improve the work?
8. How can the data be used to advocate for policies and practices that further advance equity?

You can use or adapt **TOOL 8: Connecting actions to improve equity with better health and wellbeing outcomes** to develop a measurement framework.

Measuring equity in an equitable way is a rich and emerging area of work, and this is only the briefest of introductions. A few additional resources, primarily from the USA, New Zealand, and Canada, plus research covering other regions in the world, are included for further exploration under **Further Resources**.

Contrasting traditional and equity-promoting approaches to measurement

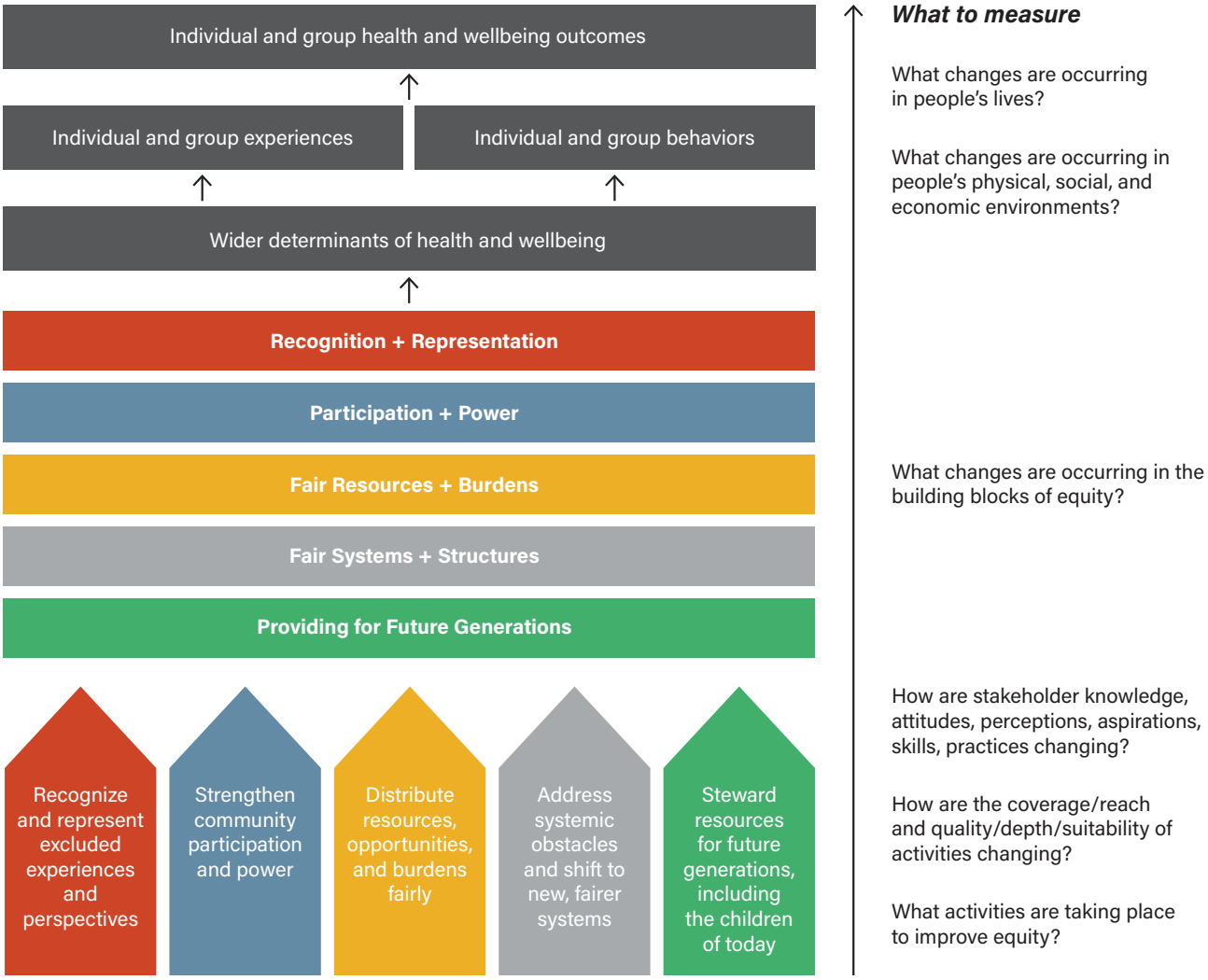
Aspect of measurement	A traditional approach to measurement will tend to center on...	An equity-promoting approach to measurement will ALSO integrate, or potentially prioritize...
Why we measure	Being accountable to funders Assessing impact after we've finished	Being accountable to the communities we work with Improving the work as we go along
What we measure	Measure what matters to funders Collecting average or aggregated data Measuring changes in aggregate outcomes	Measure what matters to the community Collecting disaggregated data Measuring changes in the distribution of outcomes Measuring changes in enabling factors such as recognition, representation, participation, power, structures and other system conditions, provision for future generations
How we measure	Led and carried out by professional researchers Quantitative methods	Participatory research methods Mixed methods, qualitative methods
What we do with the data	Publish findings in academic journals and publications aimed at decision-makers	Share findings with the communities that participated in the research Use the insights gained to improve the work Use the insights gained to advocate for changes in policies or practices that further advance equity Communicate transparently with the community, policymakers, and other stakeholders about results (positive and negative), challenges, and next steps

TOOL 8: A FRAMEWORK FOR CONNECTING ACTIONS TO IMPROVE EQUITY WITH BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES

Why work on equity? To improve people's lives – the best measure of which is improvements in health and wellbeing. The diagram below illustrates how actions to improve equity connect to improvements in health and wellbeing, by influencing the physical, social and economic environments.

You can use or adapt this tool to develop a measurement framework, or to structure discussions.

A framework for connecting actions to improve equity with better health and wellbeing outcomes



6 FURTHER RESOURCES

A small selection of resources on equity and its different building blocks that we came across in the course of developing this Starter Kit. Further recommendations welcome: equityproject@isuh.org

Resources from the Accelerating City Equity community

Accelerating City Equity Project: An Active-Learning Resource Center
https://acehealthequity.org
Short case studies and videos from around the world, offering insights from experienced practitioners and practical guidance to drive greater health equity. From the International Society for Urban Health.

Loewenson, R., Gibson, M., Gotto, D., and Chayikosa, S. (2023). ***Equity dimensions in initiatives promoting urban health and wellbeing in east and southern Africa.***
https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1113550
Lessons learned from East and Southern Africa on local process and design features that promote different dimensions of equity.

Placemaking Europe Toolbox
https://placemaking-europe.eu/toolbox/
Curated resources for creating better places, engaging communities, and making lasting placemaking efforts.

Equity as applied to different sectors and disciplines

Braveman, P., Arkin, E., Orleans, T., Proctor, D., and Plough, A. (2017). ***What Is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?***
https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2017/rwjf436997
Publisher: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Princeton, NJ, USA
Issue brief aiming for greater consensus about the meaning of health equity and the implications for action. From the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of Health Action Framework.

United Nations Development Programme (2018). ***What does it mean to leave no one behind? A framework for implementation.***
https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Brochure_LNOB_web.pdf
Identifies five reasons for exclusion. Framework for national governments and stakeholders to take action to leave no one behind from progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mahendra, A., King, R., Du, J., Dasgupta, A., Beard, V., Kallergis, A., and Schalch, K. (2021). ***Seven Transformations for More Equitable and Sustainable Cities.***
https://www.wri.org/research/7-transformations-more-equitable-sustainable-cities
Publisher: World Resources Institute, Washington, DC, USA
Synthesis of six years of research on how prioritizing more equitable access to core urban services can improve life for billions of marginalized people and generate economic and environmental benefits for everyone.

World Bank (2020). ***Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design.***
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design
Publisher: The World Bank Group, Washington, DC, USA
Geographies covered: International
Sets out practical approaches, activities, and design guidelines that show how to implement a participatory and inclusive design process that explores the experiences and uses of the city from the perspective of all citizens: women, men, and sexual and gender and other minorities.

Kania, J., Williams, J., Schmitz, P., Brady, S., Kramer, M., and Splansky, J. (2022). ***Centering Equity in Collective Impact***
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/centering_equity_in_collective_impact

Samari, D. and Schmitz, P. (2023). ***Collective Impact Racial Equity Toolkit.***
https://collectiveimpactforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Racial-Equity-Toolkit.pdf
Publishers: Stanford Social Innovation Review and Collective Impact Forum, USA
Five strategies for how collective impact initiatives can center equity, accompanied by a toolkit to help staff and partners operationalize the strategies.

Shah, S. (2022). ***Centering equity and justice in climate philanthropy.***
https://learningforfunders.candid.org/content/guides/centering-equity-and-justice-in-climate-philanthropy/
Publisher: Candid Learning, USA
Geographies covered: USA and international
Field guide with insights and case studies to support climate funders in using a climate justice lens.

FrameWorks Institute, ***Talking about equity.***
https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/issues/equity/
Resources on what to emphasize and what to avoid when talking about equity – primarily in a US context.

Measurement to advance equity

Empowerment Evaluation
https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/empowerment-evaluation
Brief description of the field of empowerment evaluation, a community-based approach to monitoring and evaluation that aims to foster self-determination, sustainability and social justice.

Inspiring Communities – New Zealand (2023). ***Evaluating and Learning About Community-led Change: A principles-based approach.***
https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-05-22-evaluating-cld-toolkit-v6.pdf
Practical tools for measuring the implementation of Community-Led Development (CLD).

Martin, C. and Lewis, J. (2019) ***The State of Equity Measurement: A Review for Energy Efficiency Programs***
https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101052/the_state_of_equity_measurement_0_0.pdf
Publisher: Urban Institute, USA
Opens with an excellent general discussion of measuring equity, including examples across housing, health, education and environment.

Knight, B. and Sahai, C. (Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace, 2019). *Measuring Social Change*
Geographies covered: International
Thoughtful discussion on a more "a process-driven approach to measurement that aims to capture more nuanced ways of detecting outcomes", from discussions with CBOs, NGOs, INGOs, international funders, philanthropy networks and support organizations around the world.

Booth-Tobin, J. and Ito, J. (2023). *Measuring Progress Towards Community Power*
Publisher: Stanford Social Innovation Review, USA.
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/measuring_progress_toward_community_power
Short piece on three interrelated scales at which grassroots organizations are building power: societal, base, and organizational capacity.

Cabaj, M. (2014). *Evaluating Collective Impact: Five Simple Rules.*
https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/Evaluating%20Collective%20Impact%205%20Simple%20Rules.pdf?hsLang=en
Publisher: The Philanthropist, Canada.
Five simple rules to consider in evaluating collective impact efforts.

***Equitable Evaluation Initiative* (USA)**
https://www.equitableeval.org/
Geographies covered: USA
A 2019-2024 initiative exploring, prototyping, and advancing a new, equity-centered frame for evaluative thinking. Includes a set of principles.

Recognition and Representation

ARISE: Accountability in Urban Health (2019–2024)
https://www.ariseconsortium.org/
Geographies covered: Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Sierra Leone
Action research program led by Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK, working to harness the capacity of poor people in informal urban settlements to collect, analyze, and communicate their experiences of inequities, wellbeing, health and governance.

IDEA Maps Network (2020–ongoing)
https://www.ideamapsnetwork.org/
Geographies covered: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, India, Indonesia
Research network of community mappers, demographers, and spatial data scientists working to improve approaches to "slum" mapping.

Leonard, M. (2021). *Exploring the Costs of Uncounting.*
https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2021/02/17/exposing-the-costs-of-uncounting-a-review-essay/
Publisher: LSE Blog
Review of two books, *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Perez and *The Uncounted* by Alex Cobham, on the consequences of a lack of demographic representation in data.

Lamont, M. (2023). *Seeing Others: How Recognition Works—and How It Can Heal a Divided World*
Publisher: Simon & Schuster, USA
Geographies covered: USA
Harvard sociologist Michèle Lamont unpacks the power of recognition—rendering others as visible and valued.

People Powered: Global Hub for Participatory Democracy
https://www.peoplepowered.org/
People Powered is a global hub for participatory democracy, or the direct participation of community members in making the policy decisions that affect their lives.

Power and Participation

8-80 Cities and Bernard van Leer Foundation (2017). *Building Better Cities with Young Children & Families.*
https://www.880cities.org/portfolio_page/portfolio_pagebuilding-better-cities-with-young-children-and-families/
Geographies covered: International
Innovative techniques for engaging with a hard-to-reach group: young children and their families.

González, R. (2018) *Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership.*
Publisher: Facilitating Power, USA
https://movementstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Spectrum-of-Community-Engagement-to-Ownership.pdf
A tool to assess community engagement efforts to advance community-driven solutions.

Bijoux, D. (2018). *Participation Continuum.*
Publisher: Catalyse, New Zealand
https://www.catalyse.co.nz/_files/ugd/dad9d7_08fadfaee3ba4eaaa58c754d58aaefba.pdf
A tool developed from the lens of indigenous evaluation practices to help understand what kinds of participatory approaches are useful in a specific situation.

The Movement for Community-Led Development
https://mcld.org/
A global network of networks with a shared mission to shift power so that low-income communities successfully achieve their own visions and goals. Includes resources and tools for assessing progress.

Loewenson, R., Kaim, B., Chikomo, F., Mbuyita, S., and Makemba, A. (2006). *Organising People's Power for Health: Participatory Methods for a People-Centred Health System.*
https://www.equinetafrica.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/EQUINET_PRA_toolkit_for_web.pdf
Publishers: Training and Research Support Centre (TARSC, Zimbabwe), Ifakara Health Development Centre (Tanzania), and the Regional Network on Equity in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET)
Participatory methods toolkit for raising community voices through health research and training communities to take effective action.

Batliwala, S. (2019). *All About Power: Understanding Social Power and Power Structures.*
https://commonslibrary.org/all-about-power/
Publisher: CREA, Delhi
A primer for activists who want to explore how power impacts their work in order to design strategies from a more comprehensive, shared definition and analysis of power as it operates in society.

National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (2018). *Power Moves.*
https://ncrp.org/Power-Moves
Publisher: NCRP, USA
Power, whether through organized people or organized money, is the force that changes systems, and changing systems is the only way to achieve equitable outcomes for all communities. A toolkit for helping funders to work more effectively to build, share, and wield power.

Fair Resources and Opportunities

Multisolving Institute
https://www.multisolving.org/
Geographies covered: Various
Research, tools, and stories that help accelerate multisolving – when people work together across sectors to address multiple problems with one policy or investment.

powell, j., Menendian, S., and Ake, W. (2019). *Targeted Universalism: Policy and Practice.*
https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism
Publisher: Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley, USA.
Geographies covered: USA
Roadmap for designing policy that serves excluded groups by re-imagining the range of implementation strategies needed to accomplish the universal goal.

Fair Systems and Structures

English, R. (2020). *Influencing for Impact Guide: How to Deliver Effective Influencing Strategies.*
https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/influencing-for-impact-guide-how-to-deliver-effective-influencing-strategies-621048/
Publisher: Oxfam GB, UK
Tools to support effective influencing, advocacy and campaigning strategies that tackle the structural causes of poverty, inequality and environmental crisis, aiming to shift unequal and unjust power relations, and change policies, practices, attitudes, behaviours and social norms.

Kania, J., Kramer, M., and Senge, P. (2018). *The Water of Systems Change.*
https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/
Publisher: FSG Advisors, USA
An actionable model for funders and others interested in creating systems change, particularly those who are working to advance equity.

The School of Systems Change
Based in UK
https://schoolofsystemchange.org/systems-change/why-systems-change
Center of learning for systems change.

Providing for Future Generations

Doughnut Economics Action Lab
https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics
Based in UK and working globally
First outlined by Kate Raworth in a 2012 Oxfam report, the Doughnut consists of two concentric rings: a social foundation, to ensure that no one is left falling short on life's essentials, and an ecological ceiling, to ensure that humanity does not collectively overshoot the planetary boundaries that protect Earth's life-supporting systems. Between these two sets of boundaries lies a doughnut-shaped space that is both ecologically safe and socially just: a space in which humanity can thrive.

Krznaric, R. (2021). ***The Good Ancestor.***
https://www.romankrznaric.com/good-ancestor
Publisher: Ebury Publishing, London
Geographies covered: Various
Six ways in which we can all learn to think long, expand time horizons, and sharpen foresight.

Swiderska, K., Argumedo, A., Song, Y., Rastogi, A., Gurung, N., Wekesa, C. and Li, G. (2021). ***Indigenous knowledge and values: key for nature conservation.***
Publisher: IIED, London
Geographies covered: China, Kenya, India, Peru
https://www.iied.org/20351iied
Briefing on the ways in which Indigenous values and worldviews promote balance with nature and social equity and can lead to effective, locally owned, equitable and cost-effective conservation outcomes.

McAllister, T., Macinnis-Ng, C. and Hikuroa, D. (2023). ***Indigenous knowledge offers solutions, but its use must be based on meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities.***
Publisher: The Conversation
Geographies covered: New Zealand
https://theconversation.com/indigenous-knowledge-offers-solutions-but-its-use-must-be-based-on-meaningful-collaboration-with-indigenous-communities-201670
Explores the Māori concept of kaitiakitanga, or the "principle and practices of inter-generational sustainability." Encourages Western-trained scientists to work in partnership with Māori and meaningfully acknowledge Māori values and knowledge in their work in conservation and resource management.

ENDNOTES & IMAGE CREDITS

ENDNOTES

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IMAGE CREDITS

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Grow with my Neighborhood project in Bogotá, Colombia. Photo courtesy of Nathalie Guio.
Turia Gardens in Valencia, Spain. Photo courtesy of María Blau.
Women in India. Photo courtesy of Mahila Housing Trust.
Upgrading dilapidated collective housing without displacement in Vinh City, Nghe An Province, Vietnam. Photo courtesy of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights.
Bixby Knowls farmers market on March 31, 2022. Photo courtesy of Brian Feinzimer
St John's school in Kibera, Nairobi. Photo courtesy of Kounkuey Design Initiative

Page 5 (Foreword)

Cooling homes in informal settlements in India. Photo courtesy of Mahila Housing Trust

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Re-ciclo: e-cargo tricycles program for recyclable waste collectors in Fortaleza, Brazil. Photo courtesy of the Fortaleza Municipality.

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Long Beach Fresh Crop Swap, California, USA. Photo courtesy of Social Environmental Entrepreneurs

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Vale Encantado community, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo courtesy of Otávio Barros.

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Citywide mapping and shelter planning in Muntinlupa City, Philippines. Photo courtesy of Technical Assistance Movement for People and Environment, Inc.

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Canal-side communities development program in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo courtesy of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

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Community-led housing and community space development in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo courtesy of Platform of Community Action and Architecture

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PowercorpsPHL, a program that engages out-of-school or out-of-work youth with living wage jobs in energy, green infrastructure, and community-based careers in the City of Philadelphia, USA. Photo courtesy of PowerCorpsPHL

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Re-ciclo: e-cargo tricycles program for recyclable waste collectors in Fortaleza, Brazil. Photo courtesy of the Fortaleza Municipality.

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After massive floods in 2011, 12 communities along Klong Bang Bua in north Bangkok were the first to negotiate a collective land lease and begin the upgrading process of their neighborhood block by block. Photo courtesy of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

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Grow with my Neighborhood project in Bogotá, Colombia. Photo courtesy of Nathalie Guio.

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District System of Care in Bogotá, Colombia. Image courtesy of Paula Guevara.

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Canal-side communities development program in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo courtesy of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

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Vale Encantado Sustainable Favela Network, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo courtesy of Otávio Barros

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Kibera Public Space Project, Nairobi, Kenya. Photo courtesy of Kounkuey Design Initiative

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Long Beach Fresh Crop Swap, California, USA. Photo courtesy of Social Environmental Entrepreneurs

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ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR URBAN HEALTH

The International Society for Urban Health (ISUH) is the only global nonprofit organization bringing together leaders from across academia, government, philanthropy, the nonprofit, and private sectors to translate evidence into action to achieve a healthier, more equitable urban future for all people, in all communities, worldwide.

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ABOUT THE ACCELERATING CITY EQUITY (ACE) PROJECT

ISUH's Accelerating City Equity (ACE) Project is a global learning exchange to mainstream equity into sustainable urban development policy and practice. Through storytelling and the exchange of knowledge and practical experience among a global community of practice, the ACE project is identifying how equity—improving the health and well-being of all residents, not just a few—can drive sustainable development in cities worldwide. Our online active-learning resource center consolidates the project's learnings, tools, and available resources to date. The ACE Project was launched in 2022 thanks to the generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ACCELERATING CITY EQUITY PROJECT

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