



Approaches to Equity

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Executive Summary

Equity for Children (EFC), a global initiative based at The New School in New York City, initiated the Approaches to Equity study in 2013 to investigate views about the concept of equity by leaders of international organizations, foundations and research institutions. The findings set the stage for a common understanding of equity and contain recommendations for policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

While there is broad consensus among stakeholders about using the equity approach to address extreme poverty, distinctions exist in the interpretation and implications of equity and how to attain it. A common understanding of equity's meaning is essential, for it provides a framework for collaboration across sectors -- among politicians, policymakers and practitioners who will utilize these ideas to address the ultimate goal of greater equity around the world for all. The equity approach provides a shared vision for government, civil society, academia and all stakeholders.

Equity involves redressing systems so that they are more inclusive. It is broadly defined in terms of fairness and avoidance of unnecessary deprivations. Both these characteristics involve circumstances that individuals are born into such as economic status, place of birth, race and gender.

Inequity is frequently manifested as barriers to accessing services. **The most cited reason to pursue an equity agenda is to realize human rights. Other outcomes of the equity approach include improving economic growth, cost efficiency, sustainability and social cohesion.** At its heart, the equity approach addresses the needs of people who suffer from multiple, overlapping deprivations—those who are the worst off. This calls for an inter-sectoral approach that addresses needs holistically. A majority of study respondents describe the strongest demographic priorities as children living in poverty, the most vulnerable segments of society and early childhood. This view reflects the fact that children are disproportionately vulnerable to disadvantages and deprivations. Within the most excluded groups, respondents note, children reached in early childhood have the greatest potential to avoid long lasting deprivations and thereby end the cycle of poverty.

Based on the study findings, EFC promotes 10 key recommendations to move equity forward:

1. **Put children at the center** of policy agenda and include the most disadvantaged
2. **Prioritize** community- and context-based approaches, not top down “one size fits all” processes
3. **Disaggregate** data by sex, age, race, ethnicity, income, location and disability
4. **Ensure** participation by marginalized and disadvantaged populations, especially the voices and concerns of children and youth
5. **Invest** in inclusive social protection strategies as key components of social policy
6. **Address** inequities and macroeconomic structures by focusing on progressive taxation, anti-corruption measures, illicit financial transfers and tax evasion
7. **Establish** holistic and inter-sectoral policy approaches that respond to multi-dimensional and overlapping deprivations experienced by children at each age
8. **Develop** measurable goals to monitor progress that narrows social and economic gaps between the least and most advantaged children. Expand long term evaluations and longitudinal studies.
9. **Incorporate** an equity lens into institutional, organizational and policy frameworks
10. **Develop** a cohesive terminology of equity’s key components for a shared understanding among stakeholders working toward equity

Introduction

The Approaches to Equity study emanates from Equity for Children's (EFC) goal to advance a social justice agenda for children and strengthen the impact of programs and social public policies addressing children's wellbeing through the equity and human rights approach.

National averages of poverty reduction, hunger, child mortality and education, while positive overall, mask the true data when disaggregated: viewed in segments by low and high income, rural or urban areas, ethnic groups or gender, huge disparities still surface showing that deprivation affects children twice as much as it does the rest of the population.ⁱ

- 70 percent of the world's poorest people live in middle income countriesⁱⁱ
- The top 20 percent of the world's population enjoys more than 70 percent of total income and 50 percent of children live below the \$2/day international poverty lineⁱⁱⁱ
- Two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women^{iv}
- Indigenous people worldwide have a lower life expectancy than the general population^v
- Children with disabilities are more at risk of sexual violence^{vi}

How do we reduce inequalities for children? How do we create a more equitable world for children? More and more organizations, academics and social movements are analyzing inequalities, focusing their programs on the most disadvantaged and urging governments to act through adequate, equity-focused policies and laws. In the last five years, equity has emerged as a major concern. Many books and documents have been written, theories have been created, conferences have been held and the debate on equity continues. The concept of equity is gaining momentum as an approach to guide policies and programs. It is picking up where the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) leave off, particularly among international stakeholders.

This study contributes to a common vision of a more equitable world and how to achieve it. The analysis

reveals central tenets of equity as seen by influential stakeholders who share their perspectives about inequity's root causes and challenges, as well as their recommendations for evidence-based strategies to achieve equity.

EFC advocates for an equitable world as every person's right. More discussion and action are needed to address the core elements of inequality and inequity. There is a high acceptance of equity as a guiding principle for national and international development. Equity-focused approaches have gained support as the best way to reach society's most vulnerable groups. Also, the MDGs are under discussion, presenting an opportunity to lay the groundwork for a more equal world. World leaders are responding to the progress and lack thereof related to the MDGs.

See: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/beyond2015-overview.shtml>.

EFC is part of this movement through direct action and support of initiatives and programs that advance the agenda of children's rights and equity. Visit the EFC Approaches to Equity page www.equityforchildren.org/approaches to see:

- Interviews about equity with leaders of international organizations, researchers, and foundations
- Summary abstracts of international organizations' institutional papers on equity
- Key institutional documents on equity and equality, available for download
- Links to key additional resources on equity and children
- A matrix of key terms and a condensed view of international organizations' interpretations of equity, including equity's definition, determinants, manifestations, characteristics, target populations and underlying theories.

Methodology

EFC monitored major voices about equity and equality through its Approaches to Equity study in 2013 and 2014. Initial research focused on the concept of equity and how it is viewed by stakeholders in the context of the Post-2015 MDG agenda. By analyzing key institutional reports and conducting interviews with senior professionals in policy and programming from the World Bank, UNICEF, WHO, UNWOMEN, UNDP, Save the Children and others, as well as with researchers and foundation leaders, the project evolved into a discussion of the emerging equity framework, with gathered reflections, consensus and common understandings. Stakeholders responded to EFC's central question: How is equity perceived by the international development community and what will equity mean going forward?

EFC conducted a qualitative review of major international organizations' reports on the topic of equity and interviewed senior policy officials at those same organizations. The initial outcome included posting the interview summaries on EFC's website. In the project's second phase, EFC conducted interviews

with foundation leaders and researchers, adding to the body of interviews and shedding light on strong trends among the stakeholders' perceptions. The research team then added an exploratory, quantitative component to the study.

Nearly all interviews were completed at the time of the quantitative analysis, so a degree of interpretation was required to code participants' responses. Not every participant was asked the same question. Therefore, the analysis included a careful scan of each of the 22 interviews and nine report summaries in order to tally the most common responses. Then, responses were clustered into the findings below in ***bold and italics***. (See Appendix 1 for a list of all questions.)

Participants

10 International Organizations

9 Researchers

5 Foundations

Key Findings

1. What is equity as a concept?

This study reveals that those interviewed conceptualize equity in terms of ***fairness and avoidance of unnecessary deprivations, social justice and the Capability Approach***.

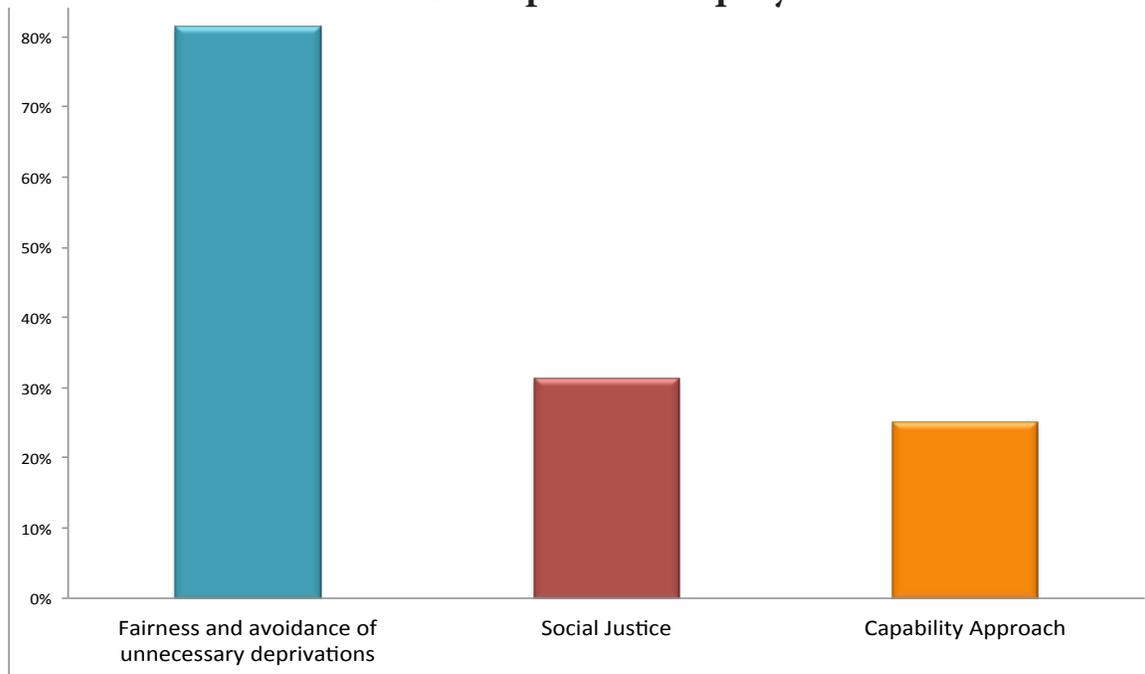
Respondents stated most often that equity can be described conceptually as fairness. Equity's embodiment of fairness draws a distinction from that of equality. Instead of equal treatment through policies and programs, equity draws on the idea that those who need more should receive more. Both fairness and avoidance of unnecessary deprivations are concepts having to do with circumstances beyond an individual's control-- such as place of birth, race and gender. Equity aims to redress exclusion. Ritu Sadana of the World Health Organization, describes equity in a health context, remarking that "Health equity is the 'absence of unfair and avoidable or remediable differences in health services and outcomes among groups of people.'" The emphasis on deprivations that are avoidable, unnecessary or remediable

is fundamental to the equity approach.

Francisco Ferreira of the World Bank highlights the development of the Inequality of Economic Opportunity Index created to measure poverty using the equity perspective. He explains: "Both try to capture the idea of how far we are from the ideal of equal opportunities, a world in which children and adults have the same chances as everybody else, regardless of their family circumstances, their race, gender, where they were born or how rich their parents are... [All] inequality amongst children reflects inequality of opportunity." This finding implies that an equity framework means that the most vulnerable must be prioritized in order to level the playing field because without special targeting, the same groups of people are left out of multiple forms of services.

Selim Jahan of the United Nations Development Program explains that equity and equality are prerequisites for social justice, commenting, "Equity and equality are of

Conceptions of Equity



necessity if we want to ensure social justice and fairness”. The genesis of equality and equity as concepts of social justice arises from evolving philosophies of societal organization and distribution of wealth and services. From natural law to the modern concept of rights, the pursuit of a socially just distribution continues. The central theories underlying the equity paradigm provide a theoretical background for the concept of equity and its relevance in today’s highly unequal world.

Read “Equity and Social Justice: A short introduction” at <http://www.equityforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/FinalPaper-EquityandSocialJustice-AnIntroduction-1.pdf>

Likewise, Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach, which was referred to both explicitly and descriptively by respondents,

captures a level of injustice and unfairness in which some groups are denied the opportunity to realize their full capacity, based on inborn characteristics. Selim Jahan comments, “The basic idea behind this approach is that there has to be equality in terms of access to productive resources and capabilities to make a level playing field.” Hinke Haisma of the University of Groningen adds an example of how the Capability Approach is utilized in her research on child growth, stating “We try to address questions such as: What are the capabilities of mothers? Of children? And how do these capabilities affect health outcomes in the end? That, in a sense, is our framework related to equity.” Across the board, equity is defined both by an equal starting point and by how society measures deprivations, taking into account multidimensional poverty indicators.

Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach:

The Capability Approach is an economic theory on social welfare developed by Amartya Sen in the 1980s. With respect to equity, influence from the Capability Approach can be seen through the concept that poverty is being multifaceted beyond income levels. Sen maintains that each individual is born with unique capabilities based on many factors and is also faced with multifaceted barriers. Sen holds that inborn capabilities, or an individuals’ capacity to reach their full potential, are not necessarily met with opportunity which would allow an individual to realize that capability. Viewing development as freedom, Sen supports development as a vehicle to bring the uniquely specific opportunities needed to address the unique needs of people living in poverty.

"I think it's important to distinguish equity from equality. I would use equality to talk about children's rights and human rights, as universal standards. As I understand it, there is no absolute standard for equity. Equity is a concept for what is considered fair or just. Equity is a relative measure."

-Richard Morgan, Post 2015 MDG Agenda

"[Equity]...is the practical manifestation of trying to realize equality. It recognizes that not everyone can be equal because of physical differences, social differences, and so on and so forth. But equity is the way to try and realize the principle of equality in the most practical and pragmatic way. So I think predominantly equity relates to access to services and treatment, whereas equality is the overarching principle."

-Jessica Espey, Save the Children

2. What is meant by equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes with respect to equity?

One of the main points of contention derived from the research is interpreting the contrast between "equality of opportunity" versus "equality of outcomes". Both were mentioned frequently. Whereas equality is often associated with the provision of access to services such as education and health care, equity implies the redress needed to level the playing field for all. The concept of equity relates to "equality of outcomes" because it makes the most vulnerable people the priority – those who suffer from multiple, overlapping deprivations. The term "equality of outcomes" also seems closely related to Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. Again, the connection is in the notion of a level playing field rather than the supply of services. Jessica Espey, Save the Children UK explains, "[Equity is]...the practical manifestation of trying to realize equality. It recognizes that not everyone can be equal because of physical differences, social differences, and so on. But equity is the way to realize the principle of equality in the most practical and pragmatic way. So I think that equity relates to access to services and treatment, whereas equality is the overarching principle." This perspective adds to an understanding of the distinction between the conceptions of equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes, in its focus on the results rather than the provision of services.

"Of the two concepts I find equity more practical and implementable. It is more realistic because under equality you are suggesting that everybody will have exactly the same outcome, exactly the same value, which is not the case in reality. With equity, however, you are saying that everybody should have fair and proportionate allocations based on their particularities and circumstances. To define equity is to provide the same, equal outcome."

--Benard Aigbokhan, Ambrose Alli University

" We envision equity as being very much about fairness and equal opportunity. But then the issue of choice is also important and relevant. This is simply because it is imperative that the opportunities exist, but then which opportunities people take and don't take in some respect is also a matter of choice."

--Hinke Haisma, University of Groningen

Equity vs. Equality

Equity conceptualizes **how** to achieve equality:

Equity refers to the redistribution of resources and services

Equity entails the people with the least receiving more than those who are better off

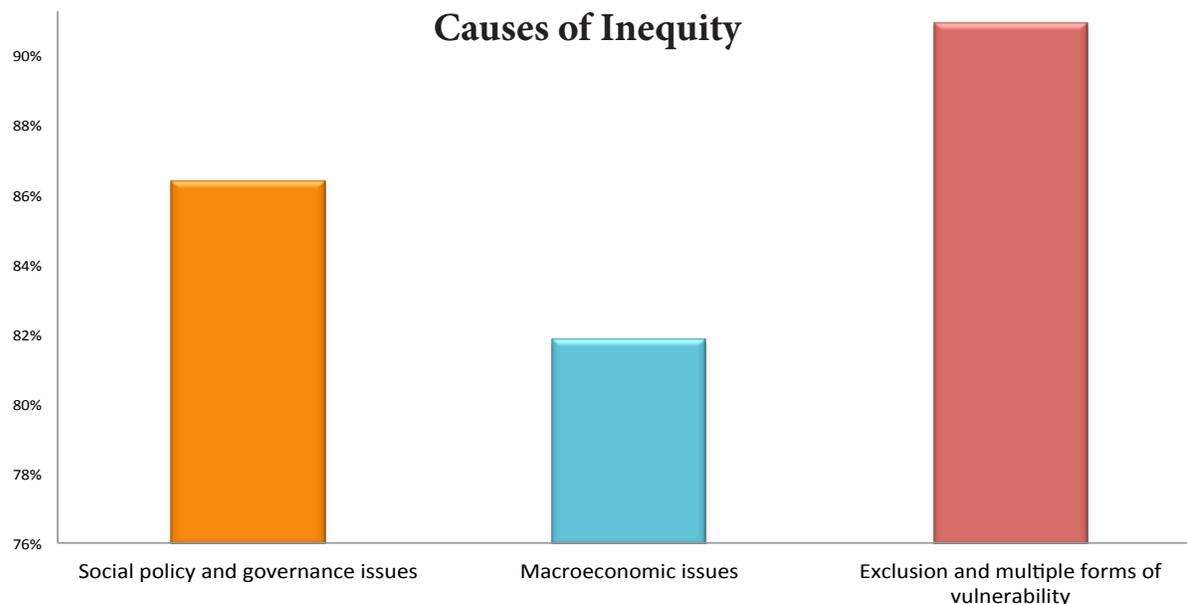
Equity places a focus on individualized needs rather than centralized services

Equality conceptualizes **what** the end goal is:

Equality refers to an equal condition. It assumes people have even opportunities. This is only possible through equitable measures since people are born into conditions with uneven opportunities

3. What causes inequity?

The most frequent responses to the question “What causes inequity?” were *exclusion and multiple forms of vulnerability, social policy and governance issues and macroeconomic issues*.



The cause of inequity is perhaps the most important aspect of understanding equity. With this question EFC set out to uncover the underpinnings of the equity approach and what it tries to address. As with all the interview questions, this one was asked open-endedly, without response options. A high rate of consensus emerged, clustered around three responses that reveal the most fundamental structural issues with which the equity approach is concerned. The findings point to exclusion at the root of inequity. Multiple forms of exclusion, including lack of voice in political systems, cultural exclusion and lack of access to capital markets are examples of inequity’s underpinnings. Overwhelmingly, respondents’ views reveal that inequity is rooted in systemic discrimination based on group characteristics--often termed horizontal inequalities-- such as ethnicity, location, religion, gender and race. Horizontal inequalities differ from vertical inequalities, which have to do with income inequality and are exclusions that emerge from social discrimination.

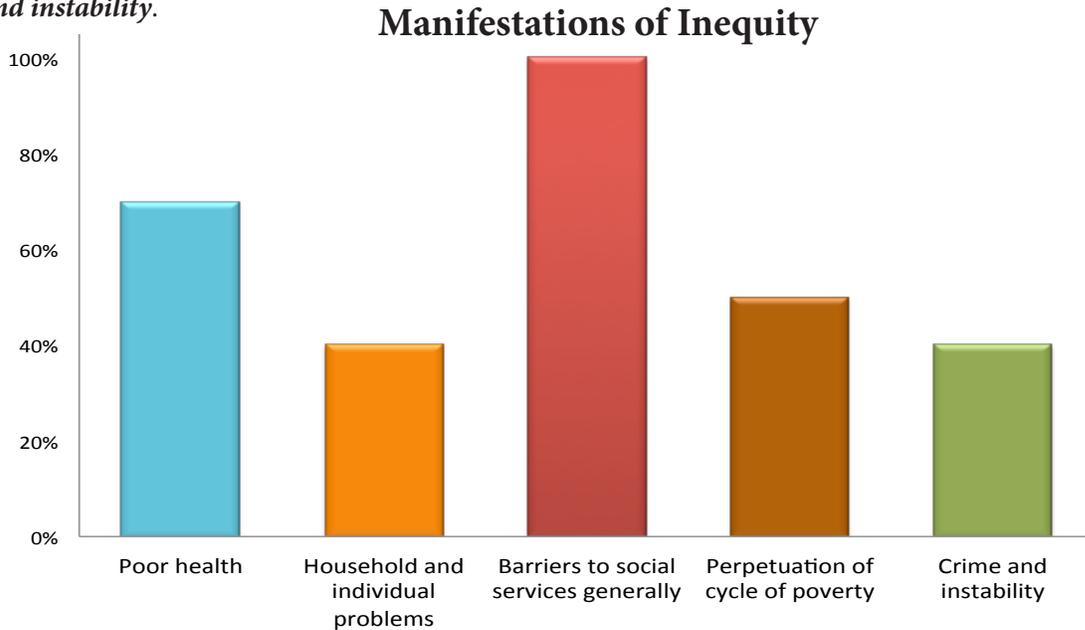
Social policy and governance issues systematize these biases and result in lack of access to services like health care, education and other forms of social programs. Often, respondents emphasized, the same groups of people suffer from numerous social exclusions and deprivations in addition to being income poor and

therefore have disproportionately fewer opportunities to break the cycle of extreme poverty. Emma Samman of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), adds, “When looking at how different aspects of inequality may or may not overlap... it is important to look at how inequalities are experienced in different dimensions and how these relate to one another.”

Alicia Ely Yamin of Harvard University comments on the role of macroeconomics: “The way in which global aid and trade rules are set, the way in which revenues are collected in much of the global South, the way revenues are avoided by many transnational corporations and the way in which this international framework is set, I find, have an enormous effect on equity within and between countries.” Alicia Yamin’s statement captures another key aspect of understanding how inequity comes into being. In addition to more equitable social policy and the necessary redistribution strategies to support it, many respondents highlighted neoliberalism and austerity measures as contributing to inequities. When economies favor the private sector and cutting social spending, the most vulnerable are left with even less. Social policy stands at the forefront of the equity framework, but economic policies are equally essential.

4. What are the manifestations of the way inequities are experienced?

All respondents answered that the way inequity is experienced by the most vulnerable populations, or how inequity is manifested, is as *barriers to accessing services*. Three quarters of the interviewees referred to *poor health*. Nearly half of respondents pointed to the *perpetuation of the cycle of poverty, household and individual problems and crime and instability*.



This finding suggests that equity relies mainly on the social policies of governments, which in turn provide social services. Benard Aigbokhan of Ambrose Alli University provides an example: “[G]overnments tend to provide more facilities and services in urban areas than rural areas. As a result, children in urban areas often have access to higher quality services than children in rural areas... Those people who benefit more also have higher quality services such as education, health and recreation. As a consequence, the people with less capability to capture the State’s services also receive less. People do not have an equal voice and equal access to resources.” Paul Dornan of Young Lives sees barriers to accessing services beyond the limitations of location, highlighting that: “We also need to understand inequities as existing within systems, not only in exclusion from them.” Social exclusion from services such as girls facing disproportionate barriers to attend school based on local gender expectations, or less-reliable and efficient water and sanitation networks among ethnic minorities, are examples. Nicholas Alipui of UNICEF comments on the need to change strategies to achieve universality of services for the most marginalized. Noting that previous strategies were insufficient to connect services with those groups that remain excluded, he states: “It is clear that the same strategies that got us to 80 percent coverage are now woefully inadequate to achieve the ambitious results we need to help us reach universal coverage even with proven

interventions”.

Saraswathi Menon of UN Women adds, “[T]he equity dimension is related to the fact that those who are discriminated against are far more vulnerable to violence than others...”, furthering the idea that societies must “address the inequities faced by those who are far more vulnerable due to lack of access to important services and support systems.”

Poor health as a manifestation of inequity was raised frequently by respondents. WHO’s conceptualization of social determinants of health explains why it is more frequently cited than others, such as lack of education. Ritu Sadana explains the organization’s view that health issues are rooted in the political, economic, social and environmental realm, creating “socially-patterned health differences.” This idea also raises the issue of barriers to services. Health issues are seen as a prime manifestation of inequities resulting from intersecting deprivations that surround the same groups of people. Ritu Sadana remarks, “Some countries have policies that worsen social determinants, which can increase inequities, whereas others mitigate these. Increasingly, when countries or cities have good policies in place, they show that health inequities can be narrowed.” This too, reflects the respondents’ overwhelming view that barriers to social services, especially health, are the primary manifestation of inequity.

5. Who are the target demographics to reach in order to improve equity?

The question of who to reach as a priority was met with equal responses of *the most vulnerable segments of society* and *those in early childhood (birth-five)*. Additionally, respondents noted *children and adolescents, early childhood and girls*.

The findings reflect a commonly held understanding among experts in the field that children are disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. Many respondents noted that within the most excluded groups of people, reaching children in early childhood has the greatest potential to avoid deprivations with long-lasting impact and to end the cycle of poverty.

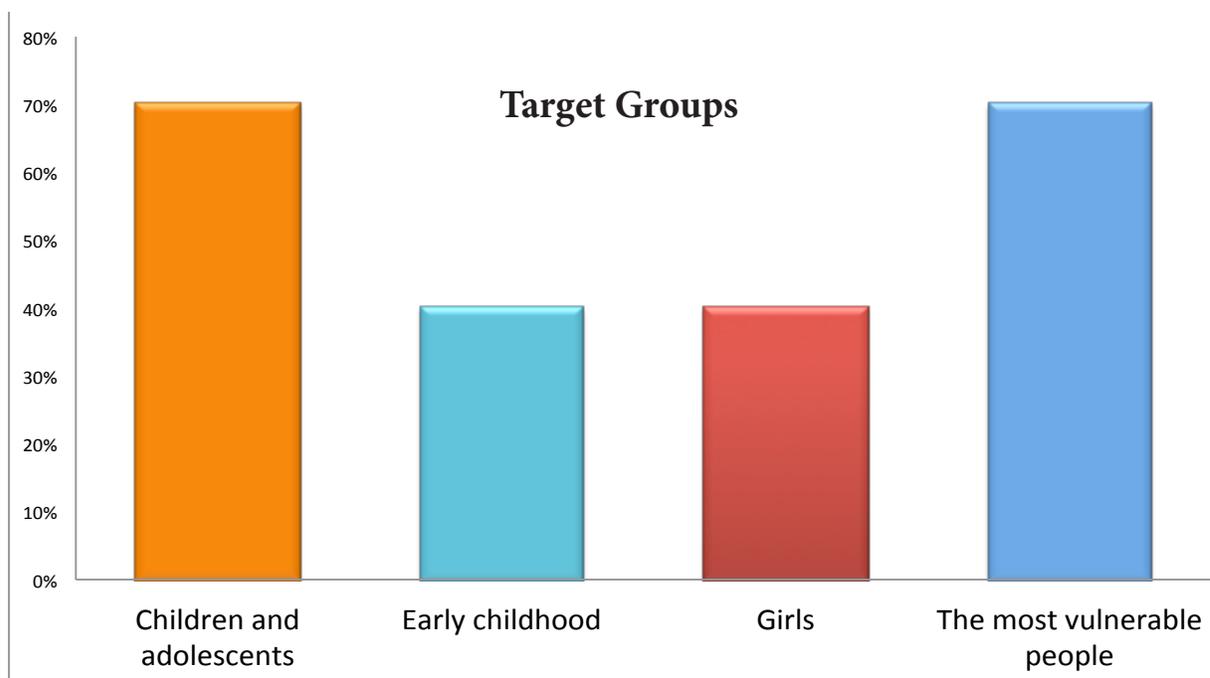
Jessica Espey notes, “Inequalities in early stages of life have very significant effects on physical and cognitive development, which has a range of subsequent effects.”

Equity for Children’s Alberto Minujin adds that “poverty reduction must start with children” because “children are... the most affected by poverty and one of the most vulnerable groups.” Developing robust social programs that reach young children and improve their development early in life is understood to have exponential benefits, as

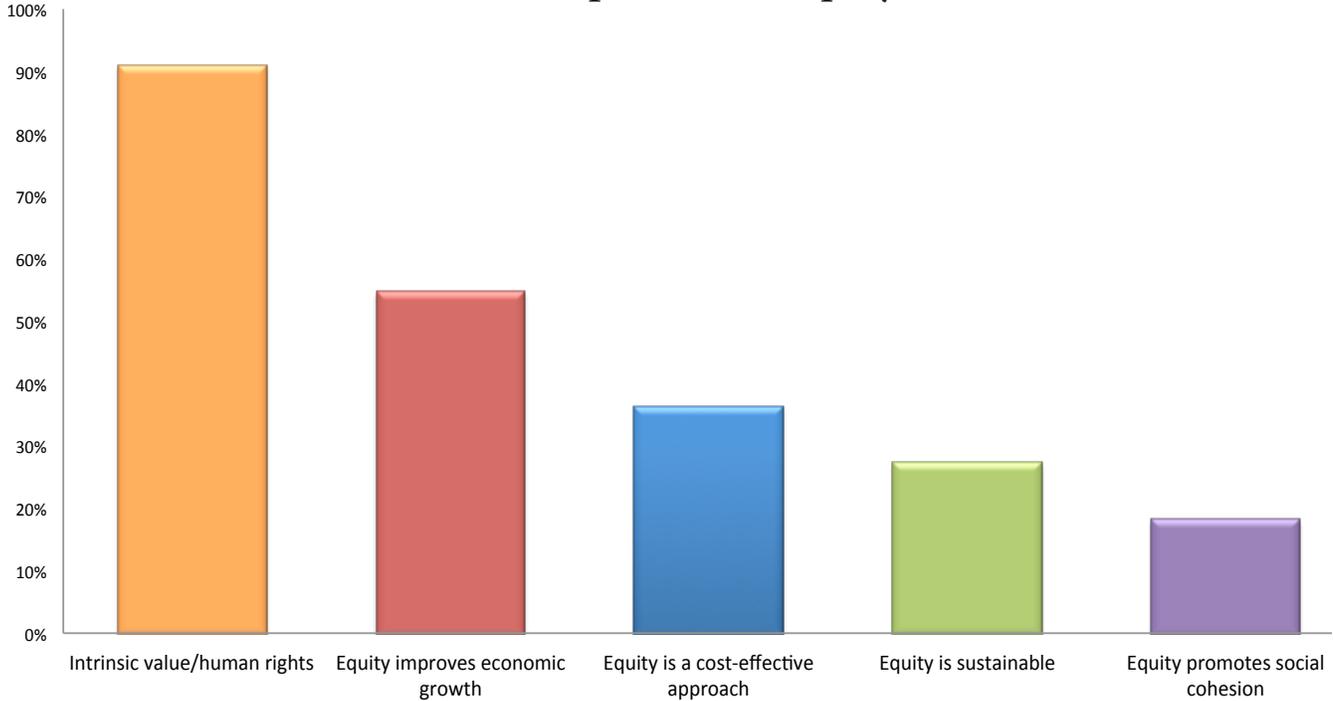
opposed to trying to rectify developmental deficiencies later in life. Respondents frequently explained that early childhood interventions are needed and are a matter of human rights, efficiency and cost savings.

The most vulnerable segments of society are largely described as those suffering from multiple forms of deprivation, echoing the findings about inequity’s causes. The most vulnerable are often income-poor as well as ethnic, racial and religious minorities, girls, people from rural and environmentally vulnerable locations and children.

Keetie Roelen from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) adds: “Compounding factors of inequality and deprivations add up and identify particular groups as much more vulnerable and marginalized... certain groups in our society are really affected by multiple disadvantages [making it] difficult... to reach out and pull them out of that condition.” The equity framework requires first knowing who are society’s most vulnerable and then designing policies and programs to reach them.



The Importance of Equity



6. Why is equity important?

The study found that the importance of pursuing an equity agenda is seen by almost all as a way to **realize human rights**, but that there are other positive outcomes from equity on a society. Some of these include: **Equity is beneficial to improving economic growth; equity is a cost effective approach; equity is a framework promoting sustainable results; and equity promotes social cohesion.**

According to respondents, the equity framework matters because of the realization of human rights. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child addressed this by name by recognizing the centrality of universal human rights. Nicholas Alipui comments, “The most important thing...about equity is that it is the most practical expression of the human rights approach to programming.” UNICEF, like the majority of

respondent organizations, advocates the “equity refocus” to aid the most disadvantaged and excluded.

Jessica Espey stated that rights are paramount in Save the Children’s mission. She emphasized the importance of speaking with politicians and policymakers to convince them of the relevance of this approach for policy and financial support. With equity, one can “make a slightly more pragmatic and instrumental case that appeals to those who are more politically conservative, who might not be swayed by rights arguments”, she added. The impact on economic growth, cost efficiency, sustainability and improved social cohesion in more equitable societies exemplifies these arguments.

7. What are the challenges for the equity agenda?

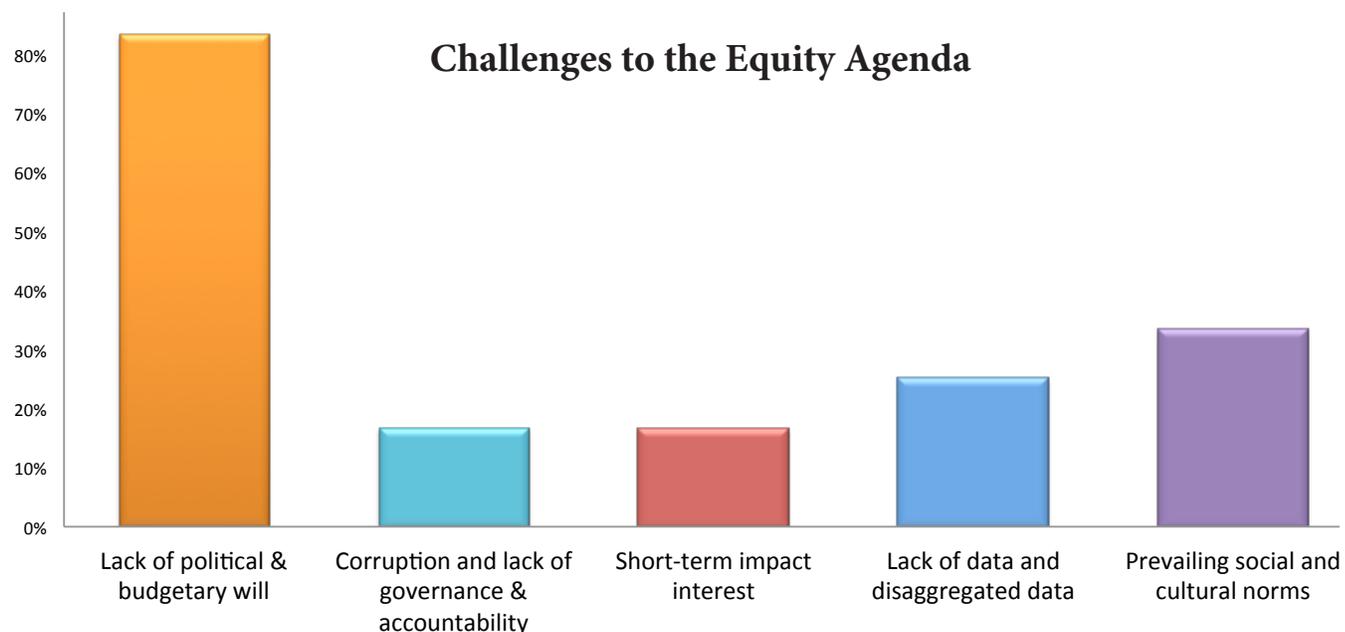
The vast majority of respondents indicated a *lack of political will and a subsequent lack of budgetary allocations to equity programming within countries* as the biggest challenge and barrier. *Prevailing social and cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination and social exclusion* and *lack of disaggregated data within countries to justify equity-focused programs* were also cited. Other frequently noted challenges were *corruption and lack of governance and accountability* and *donor priorities looking at short-term impacts resulting in dispersion of small vertical projects*.

Many respondents noted the importance of elevating equity to the level of national politics. Some explicitly connected budgetary allocations to political agendas.

Richard Morgan of the Post 2015 Millennium Development Goals Agenda expressed that the main challenge facing the equity agenda “is an issue of political will, in the sense that the investments required to obtain the data need to be prioritized”. This indicator is also closely tied with the idea that donor priorities seek short-term impacts and “low-hanging fruit” in order to appeal to the middle class for votes.

Jessica Espey highlights the connection between donor priorities and political motivations: “If you look at the Millennium Development Goals, policymakers and politicians are eager to achieve things quickly in their short-term political cycles and if they are going to get the best results from targeting the easiest to reach and they get the highest numbers of people getting access to services, they will do that. Often this is at the expense of those who are most vulnerable and hardest to reach.”

One recommendation about data collection is to combine research methods instead of relying on quantitative data only. This will take disaggregated data to an even further, more nuanced level. Juliana Martinez Franzoni, University of Costa Rica, adds: “Inequality has to do with power structures that are not easily quantifiable... it is often about not losing the sense of the whole.” Disaggregating data correlates strongly with clearer perceptions of intersecting, multidimensional deprivations. By examining those who have been excluded historically from services more closely, necessary budgetary allocations and needs-based programming will follow.



8. What are the key recommendations for the equity agenda?

Introducing *efficient social policies* is seen by the vast majority of respondents as a priority to counteract growing inequalities, followed by *addressing macroeconomic structures* and *taking measures against discriminatory norms and practices, investing in further research and data collection and prioritizing community-based and context-based approaches*.

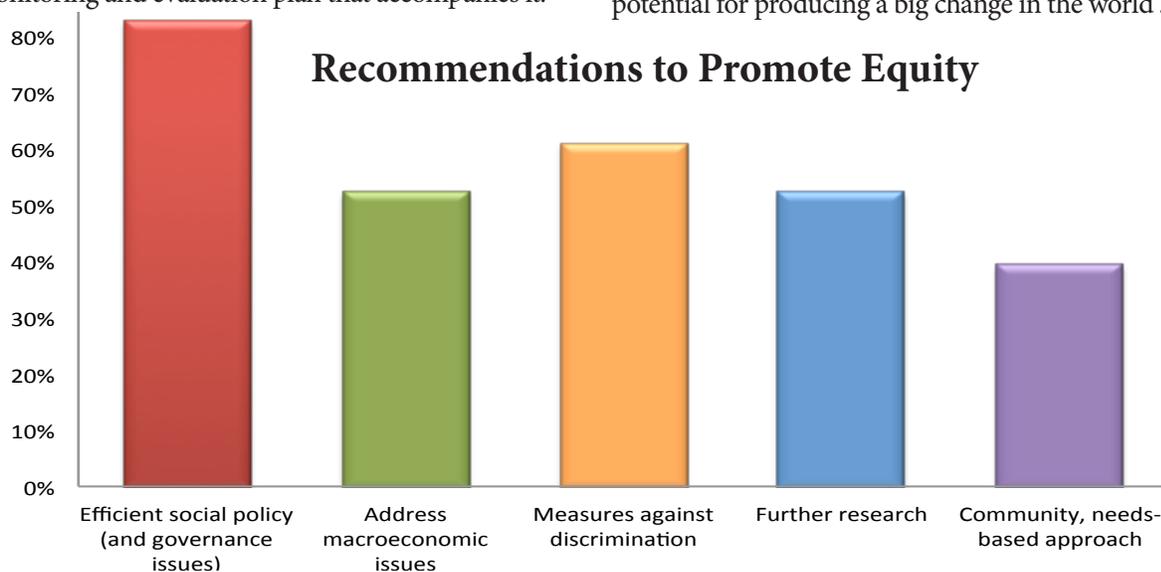
Responses to this question are of utmost importance for further advocacy. They provide a perspective for future policies and programs. Social policy and fair frameworks of redistribution are the primary areas for focusing the equity agenda. Respondents advocated strengthening equitable budget allocations and social cash transfers as part of social protection. Addressing macroeconomic structures through progressive taxation and combating capital flight to generate fair redistribution is viewed as an important backdrop to effective social policy. The respondents express strong sentiment against austerity measures.

Respondents widely see the need for more research and data about the people living in extreme poverty. The call for greater disaggregated data collection relates to the need for more sophisticated targeting. They stress the importance of nationally gathered data about vulnerable groups, in order to track inequities. Context-based approaches rather than top-down processes in programming, policy making and monitoring are recommended in order to provide services by targeted need.

Keetie Roelen suggests that the most marginalized be engaged in developing policymakers' understanding: "It is ... very important that, before implementation, policy makers engage in a dialogue with critical groups in an effort to think more broadly about the design of the policy and the monitoring and evaluation plan that accompanies it.

This creates a feedback mechanism, or learning loop, enabling early findings and unintended effects to be factored into program design and adjustments. There is a need for more action research in the implementation and delivery of programs." These suggestions address elements of exclusion in research.

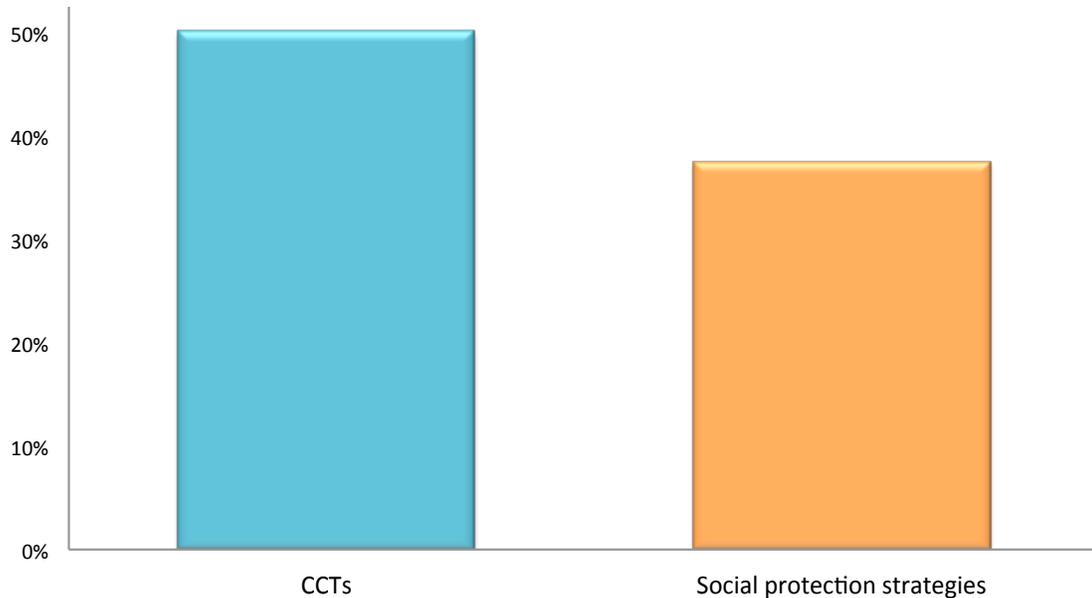
The foundation leaders interviewed for this project expressed an additional component to the rationale for targeted investment in children and youth leadership. Margaret Hempel of The Ford Foundation commented, "Very often, when it comes to young people, other people are speaking for them rather than creating a space for them to be speaking on their own behalf. Designing solutions that incorporate youth leadership and advocacy are important in that regard." Researchers and international organizations agreed that children and other marginalized populations should be engaged in programs and policies aimed at them, but their notion of youth leadership is slightly different and places an even greater value on programs targeting the most vulnerable populations. Kathy Hall of the Summit Foundation said: "[W]e believe young people are agents of change...This next generation is a large one and they have not yet made all the choices that will impact the economic and political issues of their time and thus trying to influence them while they are young seems the most sound..." She refers to youth "not just as clients or beneficiaries of programs, but also as agents of change themselves, as active participants..." This framing reflects not only the process that Keetie Roelen mentioned regarding monitoring and evaluation, but shows promise in stakeholders' belief that doing so is a powerful contributor to breaking the cycle of poverty. Alberto Minujin also emphasizes the importance of children's participation, "[C]hildren have agency and a potential for producing a big change in the world".



9. What is the evidence of best practice for the equity approach?

When asked for evidence of best practice relating to equity, *half the interviewees* named *Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) and social protection strategies*.

Evidence of Best Practice



This question addresses effective and proven strategies within the equity framework, given that the equity approach is relatively new. It was posed explicitly to researchers and foundations only, however UNICEF, UNDP, and Equity for Children mentioned CCTs positively in their institutional papers. Nicholas Alipui mentioned social protection and cash transfers. Social protection strategies are emphasized in answers detailed throughout this study and underlie the redistributive nature of the equity framework.

Nonet T. Sykes of the Annie E. Casey Foundation introduced the concept of “targeted universalism”, which relates closely to the equity approach’s objective of reaching the most vulnerable. Much like Nicholas Alipui described taking on new strategies to reach those groups that have previously been omitted from interventions, Ms. Sykes sees “re-thinking the strategy” as a good way to develop better outcomes.

Ritu Sadana adds that evidence has shown “you must level-up across society and not only narrow the gap between the best and worst off”. She explains that, especially related to health, elevating services for all social groups is the desirable alternative to deteriorated services, or “leveling down”, to the lowest common denominator.

CCTs are cited numerous times as a model program with promise in the equity framework. The concept involves distributed cash that is designed to offer incentives for households to change a behavior – such as sending a child to school or receiving vaccinations -- and to infuse the home with additional money. The frequency with which respondents cited this approach may align with the suggestion of targeting equity interventions. The CCT model should be weighed within the context and multidimensional indicators of a given population. Viewing CCTs as universally rectifying inequity is contentious. Respondents’ views on the way in which equity is monitored add additional context. Objectives in CCT programs vary, as do the target populations the CCT program seeks to reach. Keetie Roelen comments on a concern regarding the model: “[A]n observation that I find... worrying is that there are many programs that [are] design[ed] very much based on assumptions about what works for particular vulnerable groups-- these include children or marginalized women. A good example of that is conditional cash transfers... We do not actually know to what extent these results can be attributed to the aspect of conditionality; giving out cash without conditions has positive impacts as well. Little is known about the potential negative effects of conditionality.”

10. How should equity be monitored?

The most frequent responses about how to monitor equity are to *include marginalized populations in policy making – especially children*, so that their voices are included in the oversight of programs, *using multiple methods* and *taking into account negative outcomes*.

EFC asked the researcher-respondents this question to identify how best to gauge equity’s progress. It is a question that touches on best practices and overlaps with answers to question 8.

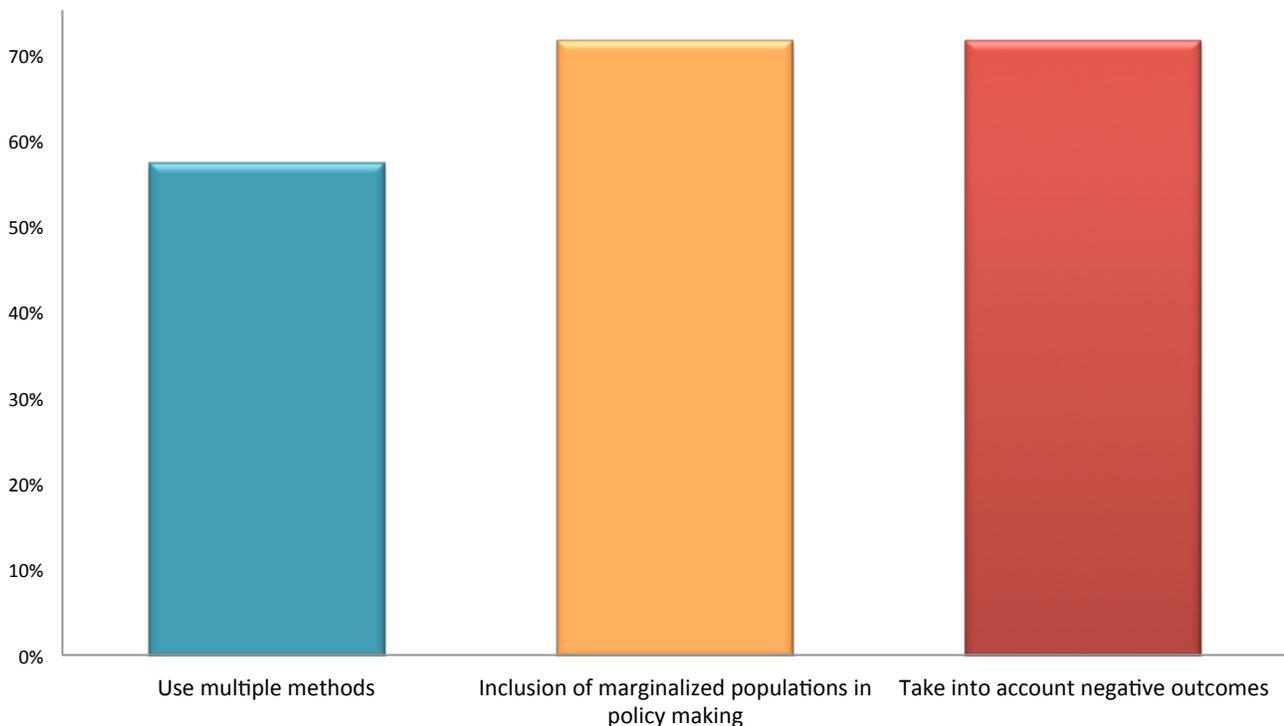
These findings support the inclusive nature of the equity framework and prioritizing those who suffer from the most deprivations. Juliana Martinez Franzoni explains, “I think we need to do better at combining the qualitative and quantitative tools and techniques available. We probably need to also give more voice to those involved –including children! I don’t see much progress in that regard. I think we could do better.” Incorporating representative voices of the most vulnerable populations is an important theme in understanding equity.

Respondents suggest monitoring and learning from all initiatives’ results, including outcomes that are negative as well as positive. Dena Kimball of the Kendeda Fund highlights the usefulness of “tak[ing] into account a whole set of negative evidence, of practices that did

not work” and noted community-based strategies that fail because of a top down approach. Alejandro Acosta, International Center of Education and Human Development (CINDE), explains, “We need to better understand the mechanism of what the cause is for things to go in one direction or in the opposite direction. I believe bad practices have an equal potential to teach us valuable lessons as good practices”. Given the targeted characteristics of the equity framework, pursuing equity entails a greater understanding of context and need for the most vulnerable populations.

Keetie Roelen points to the importance of a “true integration of mixed methods”, because “each method aims to capture different elements and the sequencing of methods can help to build on the strength of each method. When we talk about children, it is imperative to include important elements such as the perceptions and opinions of children themselves. This must be done in a useful manner, not in a tokenistic way.”

How to Monitor Equity



EFC's Key Recommendations

The following 10 recommendations are based on the findings of this study and shall provide inputs for Government, Civil Society and the Private Sector on equity based policy making and programming:

1. **Ensure** that policies and interventions explicitly include the most excluded and disadvantaged populations and put children at the center. Investing in children living in poverty from an early age on is the best investment in order to break the cycle of poverty.
2. **Prioritize** community-based and context-based approaches rather than top down and “one size fits all” processes in programming, monitoring and policymaking.
3. **Incorporate** the equity lens for evidence-based programming and policy, which requires the systematic collection of disaggregated data by sex, age, race, ethnicity, income, location and disability.
4. **Advocate** the equity approach and participation by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations in planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and policies, particularly the voices and concerns of children and youth. They are not only beneficiaries but also agents for social change.
5. **Invest** in inclusive social protection strategies as a key component of social policy, as it will improve the lives of the worst off, giving positive outcomes to children.
6. **Focus** on policies and programs for poverty reduction and equity and, simultaneously, address macroeconomic structures through progressive taxation, anti-corruption measures, illicit financial transfers and tax evasion.
7. **Establish** holistic, life-long responses and inter-sectoral policy approaches that address multi-dimensional and overlapping deprivations experienced by children.
8. **Develop** measurable goals in order to monitor progress that narrows social and economic gaps between the least and most advantaged children. Expand long term evaluations and longitudinal studies.
9. **Incorporate** an equity lens into institutional, organizational and policy frameworks, much as has been done about gender in the last decades. This requires intensive investment in capacity building within organizations and governments about equity-based programs, policies and using the equity lens.
10. **Develop** a cohesive terminology of equity's key components for a shared understanding among stakeholders working toward equity.

Appendix 1

Desk Review Questions:

1. Definition of equity
2. Determinants or causes of inequity
3. Manifestations
4. Characteristics of the organization's individual approach in programming/recommendations
5. Target demographic-what populations of people the organization tries to reach
6. Justification and theories underlying the organization's approach

International Organization Questions:

1. What are the main components of equity? (Define equity.)
2. What has changed about development policy with equity?
3. Do you think equity can be achieved?
4. What does your organization do to achieve it?
5. What would you like other organizations to do to promote equity?
6. Comments on children within the equity framework
7. Reaching universality
8. Main challenges in implementing the equity approach

Researcher Questions:

1. What do you think about current concepts of equity and equality? What is your perspective on these existing concepts? What concept/theory do you use?
2. From your point of view, what are the main causes of increasing inequities at the local, regional and global level?
3. What are three key results or recommendations of your research on equity which policy makers and practitioners should know of? On what evidence do you base those?
4. Do you have evidence in your area of research of "innovative best practices" in terms of policies and programs that have achieved more equity for children?
5. What are good methodologies or practices to capture and monitor equity for children in your area of research?

Foundation Questions:

1. What does equity for children mean for your organization and why is it important?
2. What programs do you fund that promote equity and are there criteria that guide this selection?
3. What evidence-based strategies of your organization have the greatest impact on addressing inequities for children?
4. What can be done in the future to increase the impact more?
5. What are major challenges for your organization to address matters of equity and how can those be resolved in the future?
6. How has the landscape for funding evolved over the years with relation to children and equity?

Appendix 2

List of Participants*

*Interviews occurred between April 2013 and July 2014 and titles/organizations date to that time.

International organizations interviewees:

Nicholas Alipui, Director of Programs, United Nations Children's Fund, New York, USA

(since 2014: UNICEF Senior Advisor of Post 2015 Millennium Development Goals Agenda)

Jessica Espey, Senior Research and Policy Advisor, Save the Children UK, London (Since 2014: Program Leader, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, New York, USA)

Francisco H.G. Ferreira, Lead Economist, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Selim Jahan, Director, Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Program, New York, USA

Sarawati Menon, Director Policy Division-UN Women, New York, USA

Ritu Sadana, Lead Specialist, Ageing and Life Course, World Health Organization, Switzerland

Researchers:

Alejandro Acosta, Director, International Center of Education and Human Development (CINDE), Colombia

Benard Aigbokhan, Professor of Economics, Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria

Miles Corak, Professor of Economics, University of Ottawa, Canada

Paul Dornan, Senior Policy Officer, University of Oxford, Young Lives, United Kingdom

Hinke Haisma, Associate Professor in Population and Child Health, University of Groningen, Holland

Juliana Martinez Franzoni, Associate Professor, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica

Keetie Roelen, Research Fellow and Co-Director of the Centre for Social Protection, The Institute of Development Studies, United Kingdom

Emma Samman, Research Fellow, Overseas Development Institute, United Kingdom

Alicia Ely Yamin, Director of Program on Health Rights of Women and Children, Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights Office, University of Harvard, USA

Foundations:

Kathy Hall, Senior Program Officer for Empowering Youth: Girls' Equality and Adolescent Reproductive Health, Summit Foundation, Washington, D.C., USA

Margaret Hempel, Director for Gender, Sexuality and Reproductive Justice, Ford Foundation, New York, NY, USA

Dena Kimball, Executive Director, Kendeda Fund, Atlanta, GA, USA

Nonet T. Sykes, Senior Associate, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD, USA

Brian Wilcox, Senior Program Associate, William T. Grant Foundation, New York, NY, USA

Institutional Report Summaries:

Equity for Children

Oxfam International

Post 2015 MDG Agenda

Save the Children

The World Bank

UNFPA

UNICEF

United Nations Development Programme

World Health Organization

End Notes

ⁱ savethechildren.org/uk/sites/default/files/images/Born_Equal.pdf (p. ix)

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} <http://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/libraries/Ending%20Poverty%20in%20Our%20Generation%20Africa.pdf>

^v Ibid

^{vi} Ibid

^{vii} Sen, Amartya (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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^{viii} These responses emerged from the question “How do you characterize equity?”. Because the responses were contentious and contained different interpretations of equality of outcome and equality of opportunities, response numbers have been omitted.

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