

Six guiding principles to support equity in global health programmes

Health equity is about recognising and addressing people's different health needs. To support this, it is critical to understand how wider systems and structures have led to unequal allocation of resources, power and opportunity, driving avoidable and unfair differences in health outcomes. It is more important than ever to consider how health systems, policy and programmes reach and impact people with different characteristics in different circumstances. Thinking about principles can help guide decision-making on where to invest resources to maximise the benefit for the most vulnerable and help build a fairer world.

About this K4DD fact sheet

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1. Focus on the most marginalised to leave no one behind

Identifying, prioritising and reaching those who face the largest barriers in accessing services, resources and equal opportunities is fundamental for progressing towards health equity and preventing those groups from being further excluded.

Practical tip: Gather evidence to identify political, social and economic factors which determine marginalisation in a specific context. Identify the barriers to reaching marginalised groups and take action to ensure there is additional resourcing and support for these groups.

Useful resources

- ▶ FCDO 'Defining 'marginalised'' (factsheet)
- ▶ ARISE 'Using social mapping to identify the most vulnerable groups' (blog)

2. Remember that health is a human right

Grounded in principles of fairness and social justice¹, an equitable, rights-based approach to health² holds governments to account for progressively correcting the conditions that prevent people reaching the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This includes ensuring access to quality health services and addressing root causes and ill health such as poverty and discrimination.

Practical tip: Identify and work with political champions and civil society to advocate for health equity and support in holding governments to account for upholding human rights

Useful resources

- ▶ R4D 'How to identify – and work with – government champions' (blog)
- ▶ GAVI 'Civil society: driving increased equity in immunisation' (blog)

¹Social justice refers to equal rights and equitable opportunities for all, encompassing a wide range of issues and advocating for fair treatment of all people regardless of their identity characteristics.

²See this WHO Fact Sheet for more information: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-rights-and-health>

3. Adopt an intersectional approach

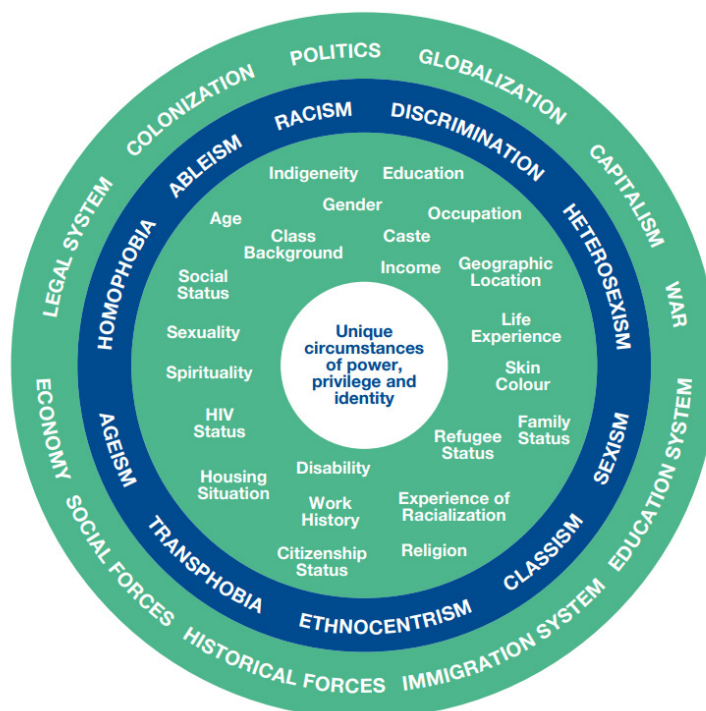
Addressing health inequity requires attention to the ways that different aspects of identity (e.g. gender, (dis)ability, class, race) intersect to shape health outcomes in the context of broader systems of power (e.g. historical, social, economic forces). This approach helps us to think about how different axes of social disadvantage shape disease risk and experience, and to identify strategies to address power structures which uphold oppression and privilege.

Practical tip: Collect, analyse and utilise disaggregated data, supported by intersectional analysis tools and matrices, to explore the experiences of different groups in society and address overlapping systems of disadvantage.

Useful resources

- ▶ Gender and Public Health Emergencies 'Gender analysis and Covid-19 matrix' (introduction and tool)
- ▶ LSHTM 'PENDA Covid-19 Disability inclusive WASH checklist' (tool - .csv file)

Figure 1: Intersectionality wheel showing how individual characteristics and social and structural processes interact.



Source: Incorporating intersectional gender analysis into research on infectious diseases of poverty: a toolkit for health researchers. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO

4. Localise through participatory ways of working

Engaging with marginalised communities directly affected by health issues is essential for designing, delivering and monitoring effective and contextually relevant programmes. Working together with in-country stakeholders in equitable partnership can also help to mutually strengthen capacity, promote local ownership, and support advocacy for pro-equity goals.

Practical tip: Use inclusive participatory methods, such as community action plans, advisory groups and visual participatory methods (e.g. Photovoice), to centre lived experiences of people directly impacted by a health issue and facilitate opportunities for advocacy.

Useful resources

- ▶ Policy Lab 'People-centred and participatory policy making' (blog)
- ▶ REDRESS '5 steps of community engagement' (guide)

5. Strengthen integrated systems for health service provision

Moving towards a primary health care approach, which extends beyond disease-specific programmes and services, can help to bring health and wellbeing closer to communities where it is needed most. It ensures healthcare is delivered in a holistic, person-centred way that respects people's preferences throughout the life course.

Practical tip: Engage with national governments to map how health interventions fit within the broader health system and identify opportunities for integration, and advocate for a primary health care approach.

Useful resources

- ▶ WHO 'Integrated people-centred health services' (factsheet)
- ▶ REDRESS 'Integrating mental health and neglected tropical diseases' (case study)

6. Support collaboration across different sectors

Ongoing collaboration across sectors including with key stakeholders in environment, economy, education, gender/inclusion, transport and food systems, as well as strategic links with the health systems, is essential for transforming the social, economic and physical living conditions which drive inequities in health.

Practical tip: Work with technical experts to conduct political economy analyses, identify strategic collaborations and build multi-sectoral partnerships through a Health in All Policies approach, particularly with sectors that may currently have an explicit focus on health.

Useful resources

- ▶ APHA 'An introduction to Health in All Policies' (guide)
- ▶ WaterAid 'Political Economy Analysis' (toolkit)

Additional useful resources

- ▶ K4DD Health Equity Fact Sheet (guide)
- ▶ What is intersectionality? (video)
- ▶ How to do (or not to do)... gender analysis in health systems research (research paper)
- ▶ Incorporating intersectional gender analysis into research on infectious diseases of poverty - a toolkit for health researchers (toolkit)
- ▶ Measuring disability using the Washington group questions (guide)
- ▶ Gender responsive monitoring and evaluation for health programs, interventions and reforms (guide)
- ▶ Supporting equitable partnerships in global health – a toolkit for participatory health research methods (toolkit)
- ▶ Shifting Power in Global Health: Equity, Leadership and Change (podcast)
- ▶ Understanding political economy analysis and thinking and working politically (guide)
- ▶ Health systems resilience in fragile and shock-prone settings through the prism of gender equity and justice: implications for research, policy and practice (research paper)
- ▶ Political economy analysis of health financing reforms in times of crisis: findings from three case studies in south-east Asia (research paper)