

## **Equity Action Collaborative Founding Charter: Guiding Principles and Structure**

### **Introduction**

The Equity Action Collaborative (EAC) and all its Committees and Action Groups are a project of Initiative for Equality (IfE). While IfE takes responsibility for initially structuring and convening the EAC, the organizations and individuals who participate are responsible for the strategies they develop, the decisions they make, and the ways in which they carry out these decisions and strategies. IfE's founding principles emphasize broad-based democratic participation and collective action. It is our intention that the Equity Action Collaborative will represent a good example of these principles in action, and that all the participants will take ownership of the decisions and activities of their committees and Action Groups.

### **Goals & Objectives of the Equity Action Collaborative**

The formal goals of the EAC are:

1. to develop a strategic action plan for achieving the objectives spelled out in the Equity Treaty;
2. to coordinate a "collective impact" approach in which various organizations around the world take responsibility for action on various parts of the plan.

To accomplish these goals, we can pursue the following specific objectives:

- a. to identify a set of key issues that are central to achieving objectives in the Equity treaty
- b. to reach out to organizations and individual activists and scholars working on these key issues around the world, and establish formal or informal relationships through our Action Groups
- c. to work together with these organizations and individuals to develop joint strategies around the key issues
- d. to share information and assistance among the Action Groups efficiently and effectively

### **Role of Coordinating Committee**

The role of the EAC Coordinating Committee (CC) is to facilitate and oversee the process leading to accomplishment of the above goals and objectives, as follows:

- 1) participate actively in setting, implementing, and evaluating the vision, goals and ongoing process for the EAC
- 2) reach out to organizations and individuals who may be interested in becoming involved in the different Action Groups
- 3) initiate, convene, facilitate and empower the Action Groups, providing a platform for their communication and coordination
- 4) be aware of and sensitive to the culture of the participation process for the Coordinating Committee and the Action Groups, specifically recognizing and working appropriately with power

dynamics, guaranteeing the integrity of the process, aiming for transparency, respect, and willingness to learn from others

5) generate the initial statement of principles, process and problem-resolution protocol for the Coordinating Committee and Action Groups, and revise these over time as needed, with input from the Action Groups

6) identify appropriate, applicable models of leadership in order to facilitate the entire process and to guarantee its integrity

7) provide leadership training for Coordinating Committee and Action Group members as funding allows

8) ensure authentic reflection on the process and outcomes of the Equity Action Collaborative project, and respond as needed to protect the integrity of the process

9) serve as a reliable and trusted point of contact for fellow Coordinating Committee members as well as for the Action Groups

### **Members of the Coordinating Committee**

The Coordinating Committee shall consist of not less than 4 and not more than 12 members. This role requires people who are process-oriented, interested in facilitating genuine dialogue and democratic decision-making, and willing to participate on a regular basis. It is important to work towards diverse regional, gender, age and ethnic representation on the CC. The CC will be constituted as follows:

- (1) Five members appointed by IfE
- (2) One member designated by each Action Group

Members may be asked (by a supermajority vote) to leave the Committee if their participation or lack thereof makes it difficult for the Committee to engage effectively in democratic decision-making.

### **Coordinating Committee Meetings**

The coordinating committee shall meet monthly and, whenever possible, at a regular time, in order to avoid lengthy procedures for establishing meeting dates. At each meeting, we will:

- agree to an agenda
- choose a meeting facilitator to lead the discussion
- choose a note-taker to ensure good minutes
- keep a list of tasks to accomplish before the next meeting
- set the time and date for the next meeting

## **Statement of Principles, Process & Problem Resolution Protocol of the Equity Action Collaborative**

### **Principles:**

Each person involved in the process is equally valued.

Each person should be heard respectfully, his or her ideas considered, and a reply given.

Decisions of the group should be made democratically, with an attempt to reach consensus through dialogue, but, failing that, by a supermajority vote of at least 60% of seated members of the group or committee.

Decisions of the EAC determine actions and positions that will be taken collectively by the EAC and its Action Groups, but are not binding on the organizations participating in the collaborative.

Problem resolution should be attempted at the lowest or most immediate level (i.e. between individuals or within an Action Group) before being taken to a higher level.

### **Process:**

Action Groups shall be formed around key issues as identified by the Coordinating Committee.

Invitations shall be made widely, and any organization working toward the stated goal may participate in that Action Group.

One member of each Action Group shall also be a member of the Coordinating Committee, in order to maintain communications between that Action Group and the larger collective.

Once an Action Group broadly represents its constituencies, it shall begin writing a Strategic Plan, identifying clearly defined objectives, goals, strategies, timelines, and commitments for moving towards the Principles and Commitments of the Equity Treaty ([https://www.initiativeforequality.org/images/equity\\_treaty\\_june\\_2012.pdf](https://www.initiativeforequality.org/images/equity_treaty_june_2012.pdf)).

Action Groups should communicate regularly, as decided by the group, and may communicate and collaborate through email groups, google docs, forums, blogs, e-newsletters, and teleconferences. A set of platforms and tools will be made available for these uses by Initiative for Equality (IfE) (<https://www.initiativeforequality.org/>).

A careful written record should be maintained for all Action Group meetings and discussions.

Action Groups may take on additional members and tasks as democratically agreed upon.

### **Problem Resolution Protocol:**

Disputes may arise within an Action group, between action groups, or between the Coordinating committee and one or more action groups.

Problem resolution should first be attempted at the most immediate level (e.g. between individuals or within an Action Group) through an open sharing of ideas, receptive listening, and discussion of all options for resolution.

If a dispute cannot be resolved at the most immediate level, then the next organizational level should discuss the matter and attempt to reach a resolution that everyone can agree to (preferably by consensus, but if not, then by a vote of at least 60%). The Coordinating Committee may be asked or may step in to facilitate discussions and mediate a resolution.

If a dispute cannot be resolved, then the Coordinating Committee will investigate facts, listen to all viewpoints, and make a decision in accordance with its stated role and principles described above-(preferably by consensus, but if not, then by a vote of at least 60%). The decision, along with a written explanation of facts and reasons, will be provided in writing to concerned parties.

## **Work of Action Groups**

The substance of the EAC is the work of the Action Groups. Everything else is done to support and facilitate their work. These Action Groups will need to be evolutionary and self-organizing, in the sense that IfE or the Coordinating Committee of the EAC cannot form the groups or direct their work: it is up to the participants in the Action Groups to work towards the success of their activities. Some groups will form, succeed and grow; others will fail or quit; others will never form in the first place. The job of the EAC Coordinating Committee is to invite, support and facilitate their formation and success, not to control the outcome.

## **Purpose and Role of Action Groups**

The purpose and role of each Action Group is as follows:

- to bring together representatives of various organizations or individual activists and scholars working on one issue or set of closely inter-related issues
- to jointly develop clear shared goals and objectives for this issue; these may be more detailed – or in addition to, but not in conflict with – those specified in the Equity Treaty
- to draft a written Strategic Plan for achieving the identified goals and objectives
- to facilitate regular communication and information-sharing between the various organizations and individuals working on this issue
- to provide a platform for coordinating the work being done on this issue, for monitoring progress, and for discussing and revising the strategies as needed
- to assist one another and collaborate as decided by the Action Group

## **Topics of Focus for Action Groups**

One of the main ways the EAC Coordinating Committee can facilitate the formation and success of the Action Groups is by making very careful initial choices about the focus of each Action Group.

Criteria for choosing which issues to focus on first should include some synthesis of the following:

- the issue is central to the topic of inequality globally
- the issue is global, but there is not currently much coordination between various groups
- very little work is being done on this important issue
- a group of partners has proposed to work on this issue
- IfE already has a project or resources developed on this topic
- IfE has the capability to make a significant contribution and help to move the issue forward

## **Charter of Action Groups**

Each Action Group will have its own written Charter. A preliminary version of each Charter will be written by the EAC Coordinating Committee. Once the Action Group is formed, its Charter will be rewritten by members of the group, to include:

- a statement of shared goals and objectives for this issue
- a written Strategic Plan for achieving the identified goals and objectives
- a summary of their operational approach including frequency and method of meetings, governance and decision-making, platforms for sharing information and collaborating, and other practical details

### **Members of the Action Groups**

Each Action Group shall consist of not less than 5 and not more than 20 members. If an Action Group grows larger, it may split into specialized subgroups which send delegates to the main Action Group meeting. It is important that each Action Group has good regional, gender, class, age and ethnic representation as well as a cross-section of the kinds of organizations and individual activists and scholars working on this issue around the globe.

Members of each Action Group will be appointed as follows:

1. In the initial stage (before there are 5 members), the Coordinating Committee will appoint members to the Action Group, or seat delegates chosen by an appointed member organization.
2. Once there are 5 members and the Action Group is functioning, the Action Group itself can find and appoint additional members, or seat delegates chosen by an appointed member organization.

### **Assessment Metrics for EAC**

The success of the EAC will be monitored on a semi-annual basis by the Coordinating Committee, and on an annual basis by the Board of Directors of IfE, using the following metrics:

1. are there at least 3 Action Groups formed and operating in the first year? (number to be reassessed annually)
2. are participants satisfied with the process and protocols of the EAC, and are Action Groups progressing appropriately, as expressed in a semi-annual poll and request for feedback?
3. has each Action Group made at least one identifiable contribution to moving its issue forward globally or in a critical region of the world?

**Adopted this 20<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2013, by a unanimous vote of the Equity Action Collaborative Coordinating Committee:** Ara Beittoei, Betta Rossi, Carmit Lubanov, Deborah Rogers, Patricia Paixão.

**Adopted as revised (page 5, line 3) this 23rd day of March, 2014, in a meeting of the IfE Board of Advisors**

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**For more information on the Equity Action Collaborative, go to:**

<https://www.initiativeforequality.org/index.php/2011-11-22-23-04-03/equity-action-collaborative>  
**or email the Coordinating Committee at:** [info@initiativeforequality.org](mailto:info@initiativeforequality.org).