

EQUINET

Regional network for Equity in Health in east and southern Africa

www.equinet africa.org

The Regional Network on Equity in Health in east and southern Africa (EQUINET) is a network of professionals, civil society members, policy makers, state officials and others within the region who have come together as an equity catalyst, to promote and realise shared values of equity and social justice in health.

EQUINET networks people to overcome isolation, give voice and promote exchange and co-operation using bottom-up approaches built on shared values. We have come together in a spirit of self determination and collective self reliance working through existing institutions in east and southern Africa, and with regional organizations, including intergovernmental forums - the Southern African Development Community and the East Central and Southern African Health Community - , parliament forums – SEAPACOH- and professional and health civil society forums.

EQUINET is fostering a forum for dialogue, learning, sharing of information and experience and critical analysis. We do this to build knowledge and perspectives, shape effective strategies, strengthen our voice nationally, regionally and globally and our strategic alliances to influence policy, politics and practice towards health equity and social justice.

'Equity in health implies addressing differences in health status that are unnecessary, avoidable and unfair. In east and southern Africa, these typically relate to disparities across racial groups, rural/urban status, socio-economic status, gender, age and geographical region. EQUINET is primarily concerned with equity motivated interventions that seek to allocate resources preferentially to those with the worst health status (vertical equity). 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.'

EQUINET SC 1998

The network through its consortium institutions stimulates and supports research. Knowledge on different dimensions of health equity is built through policy analysis, equity analysis, literature and data review, legal analysis, field research studies and participatory reflection and action studies. We publish various publications, and communications tools listed later. A searchable database of EQUINET and other publications is provided on the EQUINET website, with about 10 000 documents downloaded monthly. EQUINET institutions provide training, methods workshops and mentoring.

Every four years, a regional conference is held, with the third regional conference held in September 2009 (see www.equinet africa.org/conference2009/index.php)



Our history

Post independent east and southern Africa has had a longstanding policy commitment to equity in health. The Southern Africa regional meeting in 1997 on 'Equity in Health—Policies for Survival in Southern Africa' in Kasane, Botswana recognised the need to translate this commitment into analysis, policy and practice. EQUINET was formed in 1998 to work in the region and support the newly formed SADC Health sector (as it was called at the time) in doing this.

From a small network of institutions from within southern Africa EQUINET has expanded to cover 16 countries in east and southern Africa, with a steering committee. 18 institutions in the region. Several thousand people have been involved in EQUINET training, research, policy dialogue and information activities.



EQUINET has implemented work between 1998 and 2009 that has aimed to shape, inform and support the development and implementation of policy measures and capacities to revitalise, build and consolidate national health systems that are based on principles of universality, comprehensiveness and solidarity, centred on a strong state and public sector in health, organised around the active participation and involvement of communities within a democratic system and delivering on the social right to health. We have developed work on economic and trade policy and health; rights to health; fairly financing health systems; valuing and retaining health workers; equitable responses to AIDS and organising peoples power for health. To systematise and consolidate this diverse body of work, in 2007 the EQUINET steering committee produced the book "Reclaiming the Resources for Health: A Regional analysis of Equity in Health in east and southern Africa", available at www.equinet africa.org/bibl/docs/EQUINET%20Reclaiming%20the%20Resources%20for%20Health%20in%20ESA.pdf.

EQUINET has collaborated in its work with institutions in and beyond the region and with UN institutions, particularly WHO. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the many institutions within the region to the work and resources of the network, and the support of international partners, individually acknowledged in each report.

What is the current focus of EQUINET work?

The evidence to date suggests that in many ESA countries, widening national inequalities in wealth block poor households from the benefits of growth, while substantial resources flow outwards from Africa, depleting the resources for health. While many of the actions to address this lie outside the health sector, health systems can make a difference, by providing leadership, shaping wider social norms, demonstrating health impacts and promoting work across sectors. Health systems themselves need to be organised equitably, by raising revenue on the basis of ability to pay, redistributing resources on the basis of need, strengthening district and primary health care systems, deploying, retaining, and motivating health workers and creating the conditions for social empowerment in health.

Within this context, the EQUINET steering committee has identified five priority areas of focus for work, bringing together these cross cutting, interconnected streams of work, that is

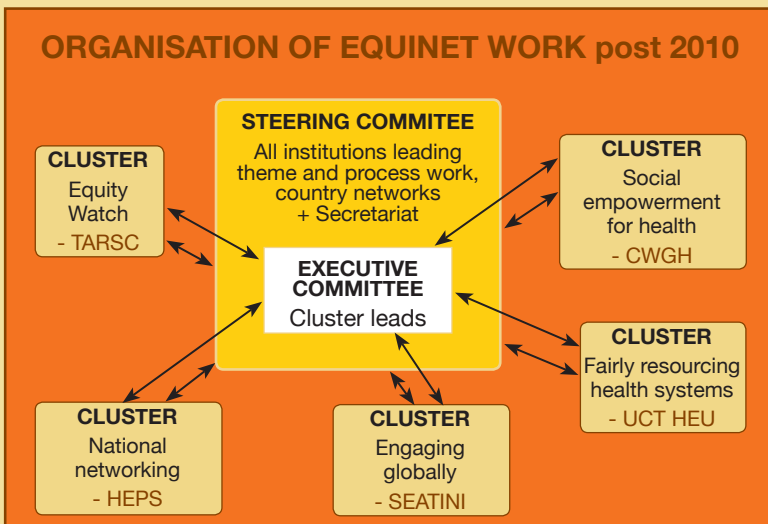
1. Empowering communities and health workers to build primary health care oriented health systems
2. Fairly resourcing national health systems
3. Engaging globally on regional priorities for health equity
4. Implementing health equity analysis as an Equity watch within the region, and
5. Strengthening and supporting national networking and capacities to advance health equity.



How is EQUINET governed and organised?

EQUINET is a consortium of institutions, governed by a steering committee of institutions leading key areas of work from within and beyond east and southern Africa. These institutions lead key areas of theme work, or processes, or co-ordinate country health equity networks. The **steering committee** has representatives from academic, government, civil society, parliament and non profit institutions co-ordinating theme, process and country activities in the network. The steering committee provides overall co-ordination of the network, including the strategic review and evaluation, policy dialogue and overall direction of the network, and hosts the regional conference.

The areas of work are organised into five clusters ie: social empowerment, fairly resourcing health systems, global policy engagement, equity watch and country networking. The leads of these clusters make up an **executive committee** that plans, oversees, administers, accounts and reports on the day to day work of the network.



The steering committee communicates regularly electronically and meets biannually and the management committee meets annually. The secretariat for the network is at Training and Research Support Centre, a non profit institution in Zimbabwe that carries out health and social policy training and research work (www.tarsc.org) .

EQUINET publications, website and newsletter

EQUINET produces various types of publication including:

Policy papers and briefs:	Policy analysis, research and summaries to support policy development. This also includes parliamentary briefs
Discussion papers	Research, reviews and analysis to stimulate and support debate on current issues.
Participatory research reports:	Papers from participatory action research activities
Equity Watch reports:	Regional and country level equity analyses
Training materials	Various training and capacity building materials.
Meeting reports	Reports from EQUINET workshops, conferences
Resolutions	Resolutions from meetings and conferences
Newsletter	The EQUINET newsletter provides monthly briefings on work published and underway on equity in health, on activities and opinions and policy debates. Subscription requests can be emailed to www.admin@equinetafrica.org

A new series of publications are now being produced, including the Equity watch reports, the recently published exhibit and book on community photography as an 'eye on equity', and inputs to film and radio work. EQUINET publications are available on our website www.equinetafrica.org and a CD Rom is available that includes all publications from 1998 to 2009. .

On the website at www.equinetafrica.org you can download EQUINET publications and other publications, read the EQUINET newsletter, obtain information about upcoming meetings and conferences, find calls for research proposals and grants available for research; and be notified of training available through the network.

The website also has a fully searchable annotated bibliography of nearly 2000 publications on equity in health in east and Southern Africa at www.equinetafrica.org/bibl/ .

For further information on EQUINET

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