Global Health Equity Network: Action Guide

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

The Global Health Equity Network brings together private sector executives, academics and civil society leaders to advance a collective vision of zero health gaps. Achieving a world with zero health gaps aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), creating a future where climate and human sustainability become a reality. The network's vision is to ensure all individuals have a fair and just opportunity to fulfill their human potential in all aspects of health and well-being. This means that to achieve health equity, there are no differences in healthy years in a person's lifespan, within and across communities.

Today, though, these health inequities are widespread and the direct impact on a healthy lifespan is well documented. The challenge is clear, but the solutions have been elusive. This action guide – informed by existing literature, leaders across civil society, private sector and academia, and incorporating best practices from network members across industries and regions – is meant to be part of the solution. It is not exhaustive and intentionally emphasizes the actions that have direct healthy lifespan impact. There are other actions, programmes and initiatives that will have positive impact on one's organization, but have lesser healthy lifespan impact. This is not an intent to de-prioritize those actions, but rather to prioritize what works to achieve a future with zero health gaps.

The Global Health Equity Network has designed this guide around the four domains of health equity activation: organization, offerings, community and ecosystem. It can be used by C-suite and other executive leaders to identify the actions they could take today across each of these domains. This includes both short- and long-term actions and assumes varying levels of health equity maturity within an organization. The goal is that leaders take a close look at their business, understand the actions they are already taking to activate health equity, and consider where they are best positioned to take further action across the potential options below.

The guide is meant to provide a list of options for each organization to customize their unique approach to activating health equity. This repository will continue to grow and evolve over time as new actions are identified and as partners continue to innovate, finding new ways to address the age-old challenges of health equity. A full citation of sources leveraged in compiling this list is included at the end of this document.

Every organization has a unique role in society and can create unique impact, whether on the earliest determinants of health or the last-mile delivery of care. It all starts with fundamental action that sets the stage for longer-term health equity progress that can be sustained. This includes designing leadership objectives around addressing health equity, and collecting data to see impact variation across and within the workforce and communities served based on gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. Once the system is in place to understand the inequities that exist and have alignment across the organization to focus on addressing them, it creates the opportunity to drive further impact. This action guide serves as a tool to enable organizations to build on that foundation to take health equity another step further.

Actions for the organization

–   Use workforce demographics data, inclusive of race, ethnicity, language, and disability (REALD) and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) identifiers, to identify and address gaps between employee health outcomes, including through the selection of comprehensive and appropriate benefits for your workforce

–   Provide quality, affordable and accessible health and well-being benefits for workers across the full value chain including affordable, comprehensive health, dental, and vision insurance or benefit coverage; paid maternity, paternity, family and medical leave; affordable and quality childcare; mental health and well-being support; and access to high-quality foods, housing, transportation and internet

–   Sponsor transparency and fair labour practices for workers of all demographics across the value chain

–   Ensure workers across your value chain earn at least a living wage

–   Communicate the importance of prioritizing care for one's physical and mental health, focusing on removing stigma associated with seeking care

–   Support holistic employee well-being through offering nutritious foods in the workplace setting, mental health services, financial and benefits literacy education, and more

–   Invest in physical environment modernization and site selection that promotes healthy buildings and healthy working environments

–   Provide upskilling and career development opportunities, including for underrepresented groups like women, to improve financial well-being

–   Assess and address pay equity, including based on gender and race to promote equal opportunity for all

–   Improve protection of personal data during collection and use to improve privacy of individuals' medical information

–   Adapt and scale data capture, analysis, and monitoring processes to understand your organization's health equity impact

–   Include health equity indicators in stakeholder reporting along with sustainability and social responsibility to monitor ongoing health equity progress

Actions for offerings

–   Remove offerings that negatively impact health from product portfolios

–   Support access and affordability for existing offerings that positively impact health, including using culturally inclusive modifications (e.g. translation of packaging)

–   Include diversity and inclusion principles in the evaluation of offerings to improve acceptability of the offerings for all populations

–   Identify and correct bias in existing algorithms for products and services

–   Assess and mitigate the environmental impact of offerings (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, etc.)

–   Modify sales targets to incentivize equitable access of offerings through variable pricing models for marginalized groups

–   Invest in innovation, research and development pipelines that target unmet health needs for underrepresented groups

Actions for the community

–   Assess the impact of organization and offerings actions on the community

–   Identify and support other organizations engaged in health equity investments and programmes, including community-based organizations

–   Assess the impact of existing grants and philanthropic investments to confirm the outcomes are meeting the needs of the community

–   Create economic opportunity for the communities you work in, including hiring employees from local communities where possible and focusing on youth through pipeline programmes

–   Make ongoing investment and collaboration choices based on drivers of health gaps identified in community needs assessments

Actions for the ecosystem

–   Promote health equity through all advocacy and policy investments and positions, including supporting government officials who advocate for health-promoting policies

–   Collaborate with vendors and suppliers from marginalized or vulnerable groups to improve financial well-being for marginalized groups

–   Leverage established distribution channels to support local economies and reduce your climate impact

–   Advocate for high-quality affordable housing for underrepresented groups to improve their well-being, safety and access to economic opportunity

–   Advocate for high quality, accessible and affordable early care and education for children to improve health and well-being from an early age

–   Advocate for increased support of public health infrastructure to improve community access to quality healthcare

–   Update your supplier selection process to include health equity benchmarks and qualifying criteria

–   Partner with and support organizations that are making active efforts to prioritize health equity

This tool can also be used to inform industry best practices, serving as the foundation for industry-specific actions. Over time, each industry can build its own guide. Actions for specific industries include:

Healthcare

– Require care management for drivers of health, including referrals to social services and other support, as part of all patient care plans

– Target local community grants further upstream to help address the community's social needs by funding social services and programmes

– Partner with community and faith-based organizations to offer access to healthcare and support services in alternative settings, ensuring quality healthcare for the hardest to reach and most vulnerable communities

– Enable culturally competent, accessible, and affordable care (e.g. offering virtual care for patients without transportation, hiring or training multilingual care team members, etc.)

– Support ongoing post-pandemic global health architecture strengthening efforts to include collaborative investment in primary and preventative healthcare services, including essential immunization

– Prioritize the strengthening of health information and disease surveillance systems via reporting of timely and high-quality data, such as social-risk screening rates as part of the Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting programme

Life sciences

– Integrate health equity and sustainability impacts into commercial strategies across therapeutic areas

– Invest in product development of therapeutics that seek to address health inequity

– Increase diversity and inclusion in clinical trials by advocating for equity in research, with regards to trial participants, investigators and staff

– Deploy health equity initiatives that enable pharmacoequity across all business units, with a focus on reporting and oversight; pharmacoequity means that all patients, regardless of race, class, or availability of resources, have access to the highest quality, evidence-based medical therapy indicated for their condition

– Create incentive programmes to reward manufacturers, prescribers and pharmacies that create and demonstrate an ability to reduce pharmacoequity issues

– Provide medication use and benefits information on accessible digital devices and promote tele-pharmacy solutions in high needs areas

Financial services

– Promote financial inclusion for unbanked or underbanked groups

– Support access to financing for essential health services

– Partner with local organizations to support underserved patients with financial services (e.g. tax preparation, financial literacy, insurance benefits education, etc.)

– Consider creation of investment funds that include health equity as a core criterion

– Build and amplify new benchmarks for what quality investment in health equity looks like

Consumer and retail products

– Assess how your product portfolio impacts human health across demographic groups

– Promote access and affordability of health-related products

– Develop standards for ethical and transparent marketing that enables consumers to make health-promoting decision, including nutrition labels, side effects, etc.

– Invest in health equity focused product development that is marketed and sold in communities and regions where it is most needed

Technology

– Develop standards and infrastructure to maintain data, including disaggregated data, algorithms, and products that consider downstream health equity implications

– Create application programming interfaces (APIs) and open standards that can be used to share data, gain insights, and rapidly set up health equity programmes at other technology companies

– Design products that can directly improve health equity

– Consider community access and usability needs with all technology products developed

– Integrate privacy-by-design into digital products and services and prevent deliberate infringements or accidental breaches of privacy, including children's privacy

– Implement terms of services that adhere to the highest standards of ethics, privacy and safety in relation to the design, engineering, development, operation, distribution and marketing of digital products and services

Energy and resources

– Develop energy equity plans to foster safe living environments for customers regardless of income level (e.g. access to heat or air conditioning)

– Measure and map electricity rate affordability to understand and address access to energy (e.g. support access to refrigeration/healthier foods, limit choices between purchasing necessary heat/air-conditioning vs groceries, etc.)

– Limit utility cuts during periods of extreme heat or cold when underserved populations are at greatest risk of weather-induced health issues

– Partner with community-based organizations to understand population needs and promote energy security for high medical need populations (e.g. users of oxygen tanks, nebulizers, insulin)

– Provide information to customers on what they can do during times of extreme heat or extreme cold, especially if there are power outages

– Connect low-income customers to weatherization and energy efficiency programmes, especially those that eliminate energy-related hazards

– Monitor and update older housing with proper heating equipment to limit risk of fires/carbon monoxide poisoning

– Assess existing or potential environmental health impact of extractives and production on local communities on a routine basis

– Invest in resilient infrastructure to limit risk of power outages, especially in low- and middle-income countries

Civil society

– Advocate for the health-related needs of constituents to private sector companies and other community members to create awareness and mobilize equity efforts

– Partner with private sector to create channels for community leaders to escalate needs and priorities into private sector investment choices

– Promote innovation in activating health equity amongst stakeholders by providing trainings, facilitating access to funding and supporting knowledge exchange/peer learning

– Drive accountability of private sector companies by engaging in policy work to institute standards for health equity

Resources used to inform action guide development

- Deloitte Chief DEI Officer Forum 2022

- BDHEA Playbook

- Driving Health Equity in the Workplace | American Heart Association

- Deloitte Health Equity Strategy Playbook

- PATH_Equity_Benchmarks_June2022-external.pdf (amazonaws.com)

- Lighthouse Action on Social Justice Through Stakeholder Inclusion | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

  - Board Duties in Ensuring Company Engagement with Affected Stakeholders (weforum.org)

  - How_Corporate_Boards_Can_Engage_Affected_Stakeholders_to_Secure_Human_Rights_2022.pdf (weforum.org)

- Vision for Health Equity in CDC's Global Work

- Healthcare equity strategy for US health plans | IBM

- Google's commitments to racial equity

- Data for Health Equity: Unlocking Health for All - The Rockefeller Foundation

- UNICEF's Family-Friendly Workplaces

- Using data to save lives: The Rockefeller Foundation, UNICEF and partners launch $100 million Precision Public Health Initiative - UNICEF UK

- HELA100: The Henrietta Lacks Initiative

- Health Equity Framework - ETR

- Health Equity -- Global (who.int)

- IDH Roadmap on Living Wages - IDH - the Sustainable Trade Initiative (idhsustainabletrade.com)

- Education and Skills | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

- Reskilling Revolution: Preparing 1 billion people for tomorrow's economy | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

- Harvard SOGIE Health Equity Research Collaborative

- health equity – Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies

- The Health Equity Roadmap | Equity (aha.org)

- Roadmap | Pathways to Population Health Equity (publichealthequity.org)

- Health Equity Roadmap: Overview | Wellesley Institute

- Health Equity Roadmap: How CEOs can take a methodical approach to addressing health disparities | Health Evolution

- Achieving health equity: a roadmap to eliminating disparities | Economist Impact

- Roadmap to Reduce Disparities | Advancing Health Equity (solvingdisparities.org)

- How to boost inclusive investment in global health | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

- Health Equity | The Joint Commission

- New guidance promotes equity and restoring balance to transform the global research partnership ecosystem | UKCDR

- 13 leaders on health equity initiatives launched in the last year (beckershospitalreview.com)

- Heat or Eat? Cold-Weather Shocks and Nutrition in Poor American Families | AJPH | Vol. 93 Issue 7 (aphapublications.org)

- Energy Equity & Health | PNNL

- What is civil society and what can it do for health? - Civil society and health - NCBI Bookshelf (nih.gov)

- Pharmacoequity: A New Opportunity for Managed Care Pharmacy | AMCP.org

- Mapping innovation thinking, culture, and practice in civil society (sdgwatcheurope.org)

- Health equity impact assessment | Health Promotion International | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

- Health Equity -- Global (who.int)

- Health Equity: Why It Matters and How to Achieve It (healthcatalyst.com)

- Impact - Health Equity Initiative