

**Fiesole 2025**  
**Learning from the Past,  
Informing the Future**

**Equitable Partnerships**  
**A Cultural Relations Perspective**

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**International  
Federation of  
Library  
Associations and Institutions**

# What is Cultural Relations?



## Mutuality, trust and cultural relations

Martin Rose and Nick Wadham-Smith

*‘To us, mutuality provides a way of eschewing one-way traffic in cultural relations, of giving equal value to differing cultures, and of ensuring that benefit accrues to all parties in the building up of long-term, sustainable relationships built on trust. We believe that in applying this principle, the sum of human relationships will be strengthened’*

Martin Rose & Nick Wadham Smith, Mutuality, Counterpoint publication for British Council staff, 2004

Equitable partnerships not  
power relationships

# SDGs

## Framework for Sustainable & Equitable Partnerships

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



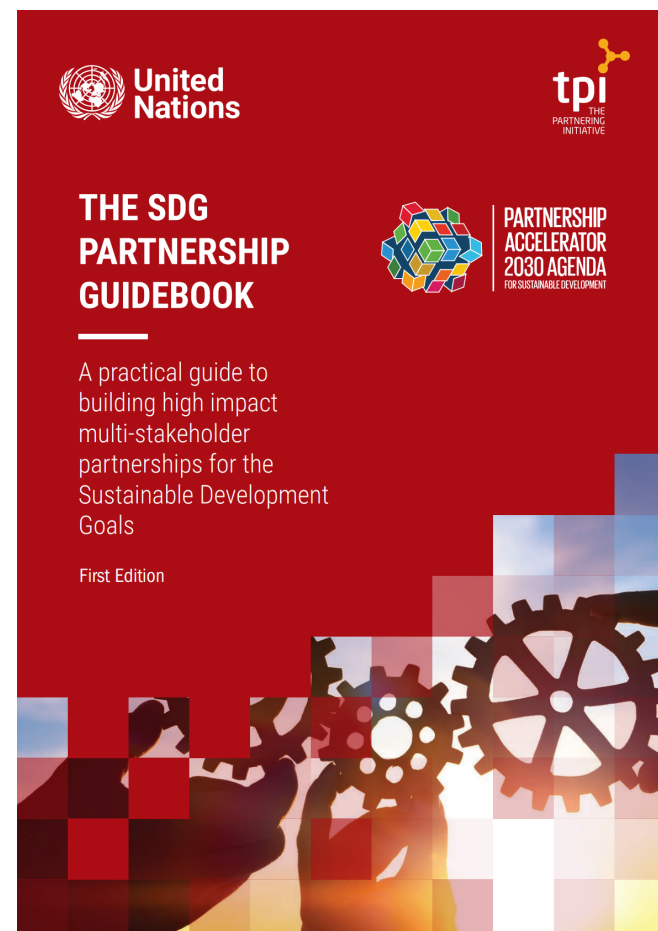
# SDG4 (Education) & SDG17 (Partnerships)



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development



[2698SDG\\_Partnership\\_Guidebook\\_1.01\\_web.pdf](#)

# Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit

## Case study from The Association of Commonwealth Universities

### Key findings include:

1. Existing tools generic and not systematically evaluated for effectiveness in addressing equity.
  2. Little guidance on South-North or South-South partnerships and no tools explicitly designed for equity in South-North research partnerships identified.
  3. Researchers often lacked awareness or training in using tools, and their use was often driven by funder requirements.
  4. North-North assumptions exacerbated in South partnership
  5. No one had a monopoly on inaccurate assumptions.
  6. **Equity is key. If a research partnership is to have maximum impact it should function on a fair and level playing field**
- <https://www.acu.ac.uk/our-work/projects-and-programmes/equitable-research-partnerships-toolkit/erpt-2024-introduction/>

# Toolkit for Equitable Partnerships

## Association of Commonwealth Universities

### **1. Build understanding and awareness tools**

- Equity Café
- Recognising & Assessing Assumptions
- Multiple Perspectives on Equity
- Matrix Ranking

### **2. Stakeholder identification & Analysis**

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment
- Skills & Roles Assessment questionnaire

### **3. Envisioning, Achieving and Assessing Desired Partnership impact**

- SWOT Analysis
- Partnership Vision Strategy and Governance questions
- Imagining and Understanding Equitable Research Impact

### **4. Research Study – Design and Implementation**

- Emancipatory Boundary Critique
- Research Costs Listing
- Managing Ethical Dilemmas of Frontline Research Staff
- Research Partnership Agreement Template
- Equitable Protection of Intellectual Property

### **5. Monitoring Evaluation and Learning**

- 1, Co-developing a Theory of Equity-related Changes
- 2. Partnership Equity Check

### **6. Checklists**

- Actioning the TRUST code checklist
- Participation in Research Checklist
- Partnership checklist for Global North and South Academics

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# Working through assumptions...

## **Assumption:**

European partners will implement capacity strengthening exercises and this will ensure the partnership is equitable

## **Justified? Fair?**

European partners all agreed that the partnership would be equitable if they developed and implemented interventions to strengthen the capacity of the African partners. The African partners all agreed that this approach was neither fair or justified. They believed that they should also develop capacity building exercises for the European partners, who could learn from them, not only about the local context but also about innovative methodological approaches they had designed.

## **Impact?**

The assumption affects equity because it fails to recognise the skills African members of the partnership contribute.

## **Solution?**

African and European partners could and should both play a role in developing the capacity of other partners and having their own capacity built. Funding for both types of capacity development activity should be included in the budget.

# Partnerships & IFLA (2+2=5 or more...)

- . We all benefit from win-win Equitable Partnerships
- . More broadly and beyond research, helpful to think of our gaps and what we bring to the table - 4 'I's of partnership -: Investment, Influence, Innovation, Impact
- . Partnerships matter to IFLA - we are a complex network of partnerships, and so many of the lessons we can draw will also apply to ourselves.

Libraries represent a **pre-existing,**  
**versatile, recognized, inclusive**  
infrastructure for building a better **future**  
for all, **alone or in partnership** with  
others



# Key crunch points & challenges

- . Learning to work with discomfort – the risks of a self-image that prioritises universalism and liberalism (what blind spots does this create)
- . Seeing through the difference and learning to look for commonalities and build on these
- . Learning to change the ways we work to make them more inclusive of others
- . **Challenge 1:** how can we build equitable partnerships with actors outside of the library field, such as those working on education, digital, health etc?
- . **Challenge 2:** how can we build equitable partnerships at the regional level as a global organisation?
- . **Challenge 3:** how can we, as a very diverse membership, build equitable partnerships with members who have very different circumstances, levels of resources, needs and expectations of us?
- . **Challenge 4:** how can we tread the path between the tyranny of 'common sense' and the assumption that, nonetheless, there are things that bring us together as a field

**THANK YOU**

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