Unpacking social equity in food system transformation

Creating conversation on how practitioners and institutions can rethink and operationalize Social Inclusion, Gender Equity and Just Transition

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Discussion paper

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Content

Abstract

Current food systems are unsustainable and inequitable, therefore the concept of social equity increasingly features in the food system transformation discourse in the Social Sciences Group at WUR. However, technological and economic outcomes are often prioritized. Even though some promising social equity initiatives exist, they are often poorly articulated in strategies, not prioritized and not well operationalized at organizational and programme levels.

This paper invites the reader to discuss, to re-frame and to operationalise the different components of social equity in the food system with greater depth. It aims to inspire a way forward, by reflecting on how practitioners and institutions can better understand and contribute to social equity outcomes in food system transformation processes. It provides an overview of social equity in food systems by unpacking it into three key concepts namely - social inclusion, gender equity and just transition - by exploring how these concepts, their usage and interpretation impacts social equity goals. By examining the current narratives, the understanding and use of these key social equity concepts, this paper argues that the current usage of these terms is either as 1) a catch all term that is ambiguous, 2) an add-on to projects to appear 'politically correct', or 3) used with a limited understanding leading to insignificant outcomes. Therefore, it examines what is missing in both discourse and practice and proposes that social equity and its underlying themes need to be incorporated as strategic issues, at the centre of projects, and as a goal or outcome that is integrated into the core of transformation initiatives. It proposes key messages to underpin the usage and implementation practices of these concepts for food system transformation.

In conclusion, the paper proposes to articulate social equity more firmly in Food System models and transformation narratives. In addition, it gives recommendations on how to take the social equity narrative forward in organizational strategies, knowledge development, roles, resource allocation and partnerships. This provides a way forward in shaping the discourse and work around social equity in the food system. As the challenge of social inequity in the food systems of the world continues, continuing with business as usual will lead to missing out on opportunities to have a cutting edge understanding and practices of food system transformation, sustainable transitions and positive societal impact.

Members of rural development organisations in Laos discussing power relations (Thies Reemer, 2016)

1. Introduction

With the increasing recognition that current food systems are not only unsustainable but also widely inequitable, calls for transforming food systems are increasingly made from a social equity perspective (Juskaite and Haug, 2023). This trend can be recognized in the increasing number of events related to social equity issues in the food system domain[1]. Although there are plenty promising initiatives, social equity is often poorly articulated in strategies, and in many cases not well operationalized at organizational and programme levels. This paper aims to inspire a way forward: offering language to use, proposing focus and creating conversation.

This introductory chapter provides a rationale for focusing on social equity from a food system perspective. It also reflects on strategies in Wageningen University and Research (WUR) and its Social Science Group (SSG). Finally, it gives an overview of three concepts that are part of the social equity narrative and reasons for focusing on these.

Social equity refers to the fair, just and eq uitable access, and distribution of resources and opportunities in food system transformation processes. This includes the absence of systematic disparities between social groups who have different levels of underlying social advantage or disadvantage (Klasen and Murphy 2020). It examines why certain groups experience harmful effects from food system transformation processes and projects, and explores options to address them. Crafting "equitable food systems," has multiple meanings depending on the context; the interpretation of inequity and the change embedded in it are not often shared by different actors. Food systems use different strategies which end up creating winners and losers (Juskaite and Haug, 2023);because there are always trade-offs to take into account. Usually, the already marginalised groups are losing in these trade-offs. Social equity needs to be taken explicitly into account when trade-offs are being negotiated decided upon. Addressing power dynamics among food systems actors is essential, as power pinpoints and reinforces inequities in food systems in terms of food security and socio-economic benefits (Klasen and Murphy 2020).

Rationale and questions

The UN Food Systems summit and the many dialogues and initiatives that followed, provided a momentum worldwide to re-think and re-define food systems. With challenges such as climate change adaptation high on the agenda, policies are being adapted, roadmaps developed and actions taken to shape food system transformation (FST). As such, it is becoming a mainstream development strategy. Strides have been made in tackling poverty and hunger on a wider scale. However, amidst these efforts, two large constituencies are at risk of being excluded and 'left behind' to experience inequalities, vulnerabilities and discrimination in the process of transforming food systems. These are: small-scale, self-employed rural producers including farmers, herders and fisherfolk accounting for three billion people globally; and some two billion men and women engaged in the informal economy who are currently unable to meet basic food requirements (Ruben et al, 2021).

Social equity as a concept and outcome is at the centre of the Social Sciences Group (SSG) at WUR. The Social Science Research Groups[2] and University's research teams express the centrality of inclusion and equity in their strategy updates (WEcR, 2022 and WCDI, 2023). While SSG and other research groups within WUR make efforts to achieve some social equity outcomes in research and project implementation, these efforts are few, ad hoc and often not seen as a priority. Quality assurance on project acquisition and publications is shallow: there is a lack of consistency in the use of concepts and terms and there are no checks and balances in place to ensure that social equity related issues are well captured. Even though the concepts of inclusion and equity are widely used, they are often not well explained; framed in different ways; or left open to interpretation. In practice, WUR often drifts towards prioritization of more technological, environmental or economic oriented outcomes in the food system; while some efforts have been made towards implementing initiatives aimed at achieving social equity goals, overall, there is continued subpar realization of social equity related goals. Ignoring this would mean missing out on opportunities to create more societal impact.

1] For example dialogues on Just Transition, decolonising knowledge partnerships (epistemic justice), Governing Sustainability Transitions (WCSG conference 2024), webinars and events about gender dimensions in living income interventions, political economy in the relations between people, nature and food production, 5th Global Food Security Conference "towards equitable, sustainable and resilient FS", and many more.

2] Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR) and Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), from 2025 merged as Wageningen Social and Economic Research (WSER)

A clear way forward is currently missing and more focus is needed to fill the knowledge and action gap of social equity in food system research, learning and project implementation.

This paper therefore seeks to answer the overall question: **How can practitioners and institutions better contribute to social equity outcomes and processes in Food System Transformations (FST)?** It focuses on three sub-questions:

- What are the current narratives and uses of key social equity concepts, and what could be a way forward for social equity in FST?
- What key messages could underpin the use of these concepts in FST?
- What are the implications for practitioners and institutions?

To answer these questions, this paper provides an overview of how social equity in food systems can be unpacked into three key concepts; how these concepts are currently understood; what is missing and what that implies for contributing better to social equity as knowledge institutes. This is relevant for SSG research groups, as well as more universally, for food system change agents to understand the necessary conditions and capabilities for desired food system transformation. The three key concepts are:

1) social inclusion,
2) gender equity
3) just transition

The **current use** of these concepts is sketched based on how these are reflected (both on paper and from experience) in WCDI courses, WUR projects and publications[3]. This is compared with the frameworks, concepts and implementation tools that are currently in use, with reflections on what might be missing. In conclusion, ways forward are proposed as actions to focus on and **key messages** with visuals to help connect and embed social equity within food systems thinking. These are meant to inform future strategies of the new Wageningen Social and Economic Research (WSER) institute to contribute better to social equity outcomes.

Unpacking social equity in 3 concepts

In 2022 and 2023 respectively, WEcR and WCDI updated their strategic orientations. The title, vision, mission and focus is indicated in the two boxes in this section. Although the wording is different, the social equity agenda

is embedded in both strategies. Social equity is literally in the title and mission of WCDI, and in the WEcR strategy in "safe and just operating space" and "wellbeing".
It is proposed to use Social Equity as the umbrella concept, as this links to a wider discourse, and unpack this into three main concepts (social inclusion, gender equity and just transition), also to make it easier to operationalise "Safe and Just operating space". The reason

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3] Based on a light mapping of course and project materials, publications, WUR website and reflections with colleagues. It took considerable effort to find and bring information to the surface, which in itself indicates a lack of consistency and priority for social equity.

for choosing these three concepts is to enable clarity and shared understanding, as well as deliberate action on social equity in delivery areas:

- The concept of social inclusion follows WUR's commitment[4] to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Social inclusion** is operationalised in the pledge to Leave No One Behind[5] in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The **gender equity** concept acknowledges the magnitude of gender disparities, and the influence these have on how food systems operate and transform.

- The **Just Transition** concept is in line with the centrality of transitions and transformation processes in the work of WEcR and WCDI in the agri-food domain. It speaks to both the climate change adaptation community as well the FST community (Coninx et al 2023). It also aligns with the epistemic justice narrative that addresses unfair treatment in research, knowledge, understanding and participation in food system practices (Glaser and Likoko 2023).

Therefore this paper considers these three concepts as closest to the mandate, vision and work of the social sciences research institute, and the university as a whole whose tagline commits to "improving the quality of life". The framing of the tree concepts does not mean other concepts should not be used, it simply aims to give focus and direction.

4] See https://wur.nl/en/
5] Ref UN Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) framework

Coffee farmers in Bukonzo Joint Cooperative Union in Uganda evaluating social equity changes (Thies Reemer, 2013)

2. Social inclusion, gender equity and just transition narratives

Social inclusion refers to the exclusion of individuals and groups from society's political, economic, and societal processes, which prevents their full participation in the society in which they live (Atkinson and Marlier, 2010). It is also the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights (UNDESA, 2016). However, in projects and papers related to food systems, social inclusion generally implicitly referred to as an outcome rather than a process. **Gender equity** on the other hand focuses being "fair" to women and men, emphasizes on equitable sharing of burdens and benefits, and acknowledges that women and men have different needs and need different intervention actions in food system transformation processes. Lastly, **Just transition** encompasses the recognition of potential adverse and unintended consequences resulting from transformation processes in the food system. It involves proactively anticipating these effects and taking action to ensure equitable distribution not only of the benefits but also the costs and risks associated with these changes. This includes acknowledging existing inequalities and power dynamics that often result in the marginalization of certain individuals and groups. Just Transition emphasizes the deliberate inclusion of marginalized groups, recognizing that transitions impact all social groups and necessitate the involvement of all actors, with marginalized groups typically bearing disproportionate burdens. (Arjen Buijs, WUR).

Despite these definitions, the current usage of these terms is either as 1) a catch all term that is ambiguous; 2) an add-on to projects to appear 'politically correct', or; 3) used with a limited understanding, leading to insignificant outcomes.

This chapter examines what is missing currently in both discourse and practice. It proposes that going forward social equity and its underlying themes need to be better understood and clearly articulated. These can then be incorporated as strategic issue, at the centre of projects with measurable goals or outcomes that are integrated into at the core of transformation initiatives. Table 1 provides a summary of the current application of the three concepts and what is needed to go forward.

For transformative change to happen in the food system, norms, values and mindsets need to change with regard to these three concepts, and the overall social equity narrative; if mental models do not change, transformative change will not happen. A lack of mindset changes also leads to reproduction of these mindsets across generations. Furthermore, the UN Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) for development initiatives advocates for the need to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems in order to redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress; resulting in groups of people being left behind (UNDP 2006).

Social inclusion narrative

The word "inclusion" is over-used and underdefined (Gonzalez & Boef 2023). Organisations and individuals increasingly are investing in learning and defining what inclusion means for them and how their experiences can be furthered by embracing inclusion, both as a process and outcome. In papers, projects and courses on food systems and sector transformation, inclusion refers to many things. It can mean "nature inclusive", inclusion of perspectives or groups, mainly smallholder farmers, "the poor", women and young people. Impact and outcomes are often claimed to be "inclusive", without stating what that means. Phrasing it as "social inclusion" is already a step forward. Viewpoints, motivations and reasons for using these words or actual strategies in design and implementation of projects differ greatly, and are often poorly articulated. Inclusion is often understood in terms of trade-offs with other goals; as an overwhelming challenge; or as a "soft thing" that is hard to negotiate with consortium partners.

Apart from a social responsibility grounded in the pledge to Leave No One Behind[6], social inclusion needs to be framed as a core issue and as a prerequisite for food system transformation. Transformation is a radical idea. Not a tweak, but a complete rethink of the attributes of a food system, including its purpose, rules and power structures (Dengerink et al. 2022) for better social, economic, food and nutritional security and environmental outcomes. For such processes, it is not enough to work with power holders and usual suspects, it requires the brains, ideas, commitments and actions of all groups in

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6] LNOB, SDGs

Table 1: Current use and way forward for social equity narratives in the food system

	Current use & application	Going forward	
Social inclusion	• Catch-all term: amorphous meaning	• Process of improving terms of participation in society	
	• Reaching smallholders, women and youth	• Engaging diverse marginalised groups, considering depth of engagement; scale of outreach and sustainability of impact	
	• Focus on Trade-offs of inclusion	• Focus on synergies created through inclusion	
	• A one-time effort to get people on the list	• An ongoing process that requires sustained commitment and concerted effort	
	• A charity for marginalized groups	• Recognizing and addressing systemic injustices and creating environments where everyone can thrive	
	• A "Zero-Sum Game: that requires taking away opportunities or resources from privileged groups	• Creating inclusive societies benefits everyone by promoting fairness, equity, and shared prosperity	
	• Positive but a daunting thing to implement	• Prerequisite and core strategic issue for food system transformation	
Gender Equity	• Gender equity is about giving women advantages over men	• While women have historically faced more barriers, gender equity efforts benefits society as a whole	
	• Gender equity is a women's issue	• About women, men and other gender identities, intersectionality and power; this includes looking at the relationships between them, the structures that determine their relationships, and questioning norms , values, mental models and mind shifts needed.	• Explicitly taking into account the diversity of strategic interests of these groups and assessing the costs of exclusion in the food system/ society
	• A social responsibility	• A strategic issue at the core of food system transformation	
	• Not our core business	• Integral part of what a transformative approach means	
	• Outreach to women in interventions	• Gender equity is more about dismantling systemic barriers and biases that disproportionately affect certain genders.	
Just Transition	• Sharing benefits and burdens for a fair transition in a country, a region, a system or a sector	• Addressing adverse social impacts of good intentions to adapt to climate change (maladaptation) and transform food systems	
	• Re-skilling and re-employing workers in coal-based industries	• Contextually adaptive integrated justice approach: recognising values and cultures of different groups, sharing costs and benefits of transitions, having every voice heard and participate, intergenerational justice reflections that learn from harms done in the past and makes compensations, as well as reflects on the impact for future generations	
	• Evolving concept when it comes to operationalising	• Involving adverse social impacts of transitions across country and sector borders; and calculating the societal costs of unfair transitions.	
	• Recognition of adverse effects of the various stages of food system transition processes with no clear action to address them	• A core principle of any food system transformation process; to prevent the social impacts of inaction	

society, irrespective of their socially ascribed identity, their socio-economic status, their location, vulnerability to shocks or how governance instruments treat them (Meixner & Spitzner 2022).

Social inclusion can be understood both as a process and as an outcome. We recognise that inclusion is not inherently good. In food systems, total exclusion in all dimensions is in fact rare (Hickey and du Toit, 2007). What really matters are the terms and conditions of how individuals and social groups participate in the food system, in programmes and policies or initiatives aiming to change the food system. The five factors of Leaving No One Behind in pursuit of the SDGs (see UNSDG, 2019 – see figure 1) guide us to understand the grounds based on which individuals and groups can be excluded. Where these factors intersect, one finds people who are likely to be furthest left behind.

The Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform (RBET) framework developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the CGIAR ,is an example of a framework that can be used to understand how much agricultural development projects contribute to women's

Figure 1: Five factors of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), UNDP 2018
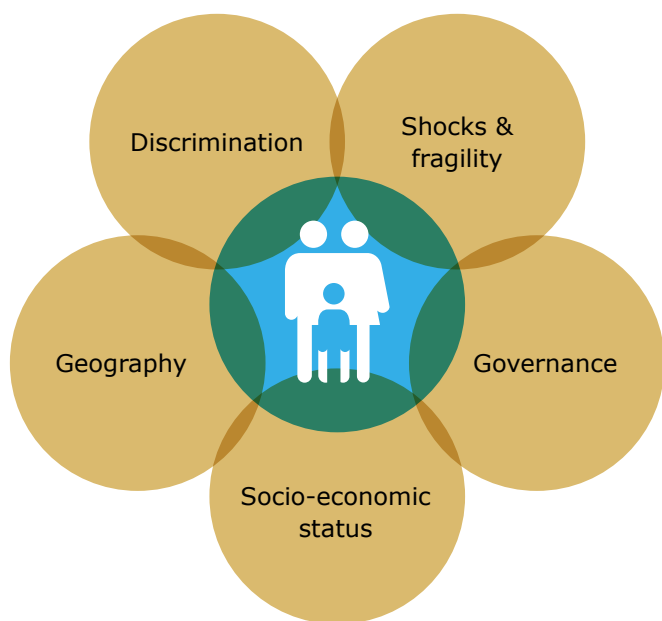
empowerment (Malapit et al, 2020). It clarifies project plans and strategies for promoting social inclusion by distinguishing approaches that reach women participants, by including them; those that **benefit** women, through an improvement in their initial circumstances; those that **empower** women, by investing their ability to make and implement strategic life choices; and those that **transform** gender relations within and outside the household, community, market, and state by changing communal beliefs and attitudes.

Gender Equity narrative

Programmes, projects and courses use different concepts in an inconsistent way, or consider them as the same. Terminologies such as: women's empowerment, gender equality, gender empowerment, gender equity are used interchangeably. Several biases are noted, including "gender" meaning "women", or gender relations being restricted to monogamous married hetero couples. Women are often described as a homogenous group. Discrimination based on gender is often seen as separate from other factors, meaning, that an intersectionality lens -that links gender biases to social exclusion to other social relations, involves reflecting on multiple forms of discrimination - is often missing. Although true commitment to these topics is demonstrated in several initiatives, often a gap exists between plans and implementation. Institutions and projects that working towards gender equity, often mention that measures to reach women in research and interventions are included. Sometimes this involves increased benefits for women,

however often a deeper understanding of empowerment is missing. Long term and sustainable gender equity require a deeper understanding of empowerment, gender relations, gender norms and structural causes of inequality. While understanding changes in gender relations and communal gender structural barriers is important, it often is absent in project implementation plans. Additionally, gender equity efforts are seen as the sole responsibility of gender experts rather than a collective action of all actors.

The use of the gender equity concept acknowledges the magnitude of gender disparities, and the influence this has on how food systems can transform. A large volume of research has been produced in the last few decades showing that women are key actors in every part of food systems amongst others as farmers, processors, wage workers and consumers. Despite this, the evidence shows that women's contribution and decision making is undervalued, underpaid and overlooked (Pathak 2022). This affects not only women themselves, it also makes programs less effective and leads to inefficient use of resources. Achieving gender equity in food systems has shown to result in better food security and nutrition, and more just, resilient, and sustainable food systems for all.

Gender equity in the food system transformation context is understood as a combination of substantive equality of opportunities and outcomes for all groups; non-discrimination (de jure and de facto) against individuals or groups; and the fair and equitable distribution of costs, burdens and benefits. We recognise that gender equity contributes to other outcomes such as in the areas of food and nutritional security, health, economic wellbeing and environmental sustainability. Gender equity is also a goal in itself. Shifting towards more transformative approaches requires the collection of gender disaggregated data to identify gender disparities in the food system, track progress towards gender equity goals, and inform policies and programmes for effective interventions and synergy building.

Just transition narrative

Many different perspectives of Just Transition are currently in use (Wang and Lo, 2021). A very common perspective comes from the climate change interventions in the energy sector and is used often in the context of energy transitions: a labour-oriented concept, involving the need for re-employment and re-skilling of workers in coal-based industries. This involves a focus on a transition in a

country or a sector, without looking at impacts of the transition beyond these.

Another perspective include just transition as a governance strategy, as a theory of sociotechnical transition, a public perception or an integrated framework for justice. In general, there is a notion that just transition – like social inclusion – refers to leaving no one behind. Increasingly, policy makers and civil society organisations are calling to put this principle of justice into practice from international to local levels (Coninx et al, 2022). It can be politically sensitive since it is related to underlying power relationships and currently privileged groups may protest against this.

Despite the momentum for just transition in the policy arena, most of the frameworks that guide transition and transformation in food systems do not necessarily address the emerging justice concerns.

The work of social sciences research groups centres around transitions and transformation processes in the agri-food-climate domains. This is triggered by the challenges of our times, like food insecurity, climate change and increasing inequality and insecurity. Transitions, or efforts to contribute to food system transformation, can cause new injustice or aggravate existing injustice, and therefore there is a strong call from policy makers to make sure transitions are taking place in a more just way (Coninx et al, 2022).

Just Transition brings a holistic framework that can be applied to policy and programmatic levels. It brings a lens of different types of justice across time and scales. WUR has developed an operational framework to address the increasing attention for just transitions policies and roadmaps worldwide (Coninx 2023). An additional advantage is that Just Transition as a concept is used both in communities and institutions working on climate change adaptation and food systems transformation. Just transition is understood as an operational framework shaping policies and practices in support of transition processes.

It involves **4 types of justice**:

- Recognitional Justice: whose values and culture are recognised, considered and represented?
- Distributional Justice: How are (societal) costs and benefits shared?
- Procedural Justice: Is every voice heard, and does every voice participate?
- Restorative Justice: Whether, and how compensation for harm is done?

The concept involves an element of **time** as the different types of justice both apply to future generations (consequences of actions now for future generations) as well as harm done to specific groups and individuals in the past.

Importantly, Just Transition is understood at **different scales**: local regional and global. Efforts to transform the food system in for example the Netherlands may have negative social impacts elsewhere in the globe that need to be monitored, acknowledged, anticipated, prevented or addressed.

The Just Transition concept helps us to have an eye for adverse social impacts of systems transformations initiatives. In our pursuit of FST, we need to move away from "compensation add-on" programs such as in response to the adverse effects of sanctioned deforestation for farming and firewood, to inherently planning and allocating resources to implement just, pre-emptive and participatory approaches that reflect on intended, unintended, positive and adverse implications of FST. Just transition approaches break through silos of time, scale and stakeholder interests. People that work with transition and FST frameworks need to integrate these justice elements where they are missing.

3. Key messages on social equity in food system transformation

Concluding from the previous chapter, this chapter provides a summary of key messages on the different themes in social equity. These key messages are recommended as the way forward and for shaping the discourse and work around social equity in the food system.

For Social Science Research Groups these key messages are proposed for shaping the social equity narrative and creating clarity in research, knowledge co-creation, knowledge use and education for professionals.

Social inclusion key messages

See inclusion as a process
Total exclusion is rare in food systems, however inclusion is not inherently good. We need to focus on inclusion as a process of improving the terms based on which people or groups are participating in the food system.

Make it explicit and transparent
We need to articulate what we mean by social inclusion. How we deal with deprivation, disadvantage and discrimination based on multiple factors including i) socially ascribed identity, ii) socio-economic status, iii) geography; iv) governance, and v) vulnerability to shocks. We need to justify who we engage with and who not, making our contributions and limitations transparent.

Embrace synergies with other outcomes
Investing in social inclusion creates better conditions for lasting economic, environmental and food & nutritional security outcomes in the food system. With this mindset of engaging disadvantaged and marginalised groups, the design and implementation of policies and interventions in the food system can shift fundamentally. It draws the attention to synergies rather than trade-offs, possibilities rather than problems.

Acknowledge the balancing act
There are always constraints of time, budget and context in the daily reality of programmes or initiatives related to food systems transformation. It is a balancing act between the different marginalised groups that can be targeted; how deep to engage with them (reaching them, enabling them to benefit or enabling them to empower themselves); how many of them; and the sustainability of positive impacts or benefits for them.

These key messages are visualised in Figure 2, showing the four dimensions of the Inclusion Wheel: 1) the target audience (questioning which disadvantaged individuals and groups are targeted by a programme or initiative, referring to the LNOB framework); 2) the depth of engaging with them (reaching, benefitting, empowering, transforming), 3) the scale (the numbers of people directly and indirectly engaged), and 4) the sustainability of the positive changes these groups experience.

Figure 2 illustrates the balancing act between these dimensions along with the other key messages above, with practical elements of direct outreach, indirect outreach and groups not targeted by food system transformation programmes or initiatives.
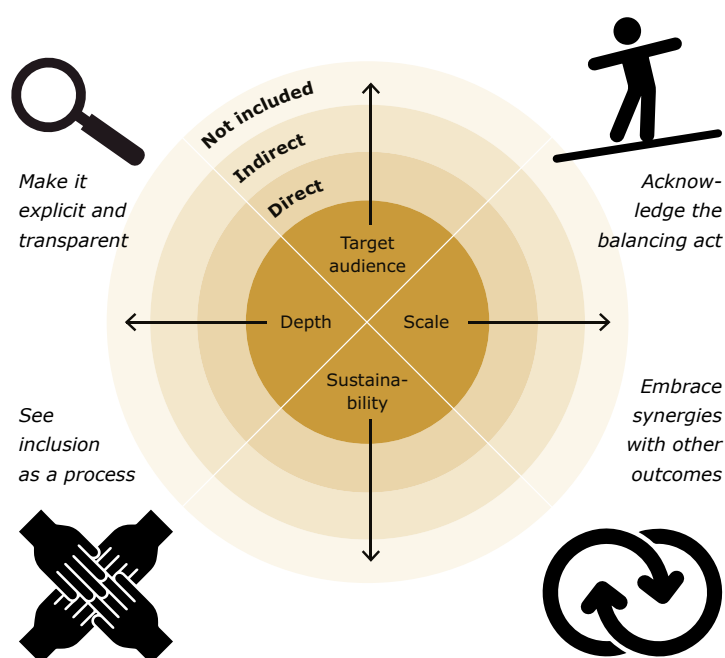

Figure 2: Key social inclusion messages, building on the Inclusion Wheel

Gender equity key messages

Gender equity as a gamechanger

Move from gender equity as merely a social responsibility and treat gender equity as a strategic issue. We need to position gender equity as a gamechanger for achieving all other food system outcomes such sustainable & resilient livelihoods, social equity, food & nutritional security & planetary health.

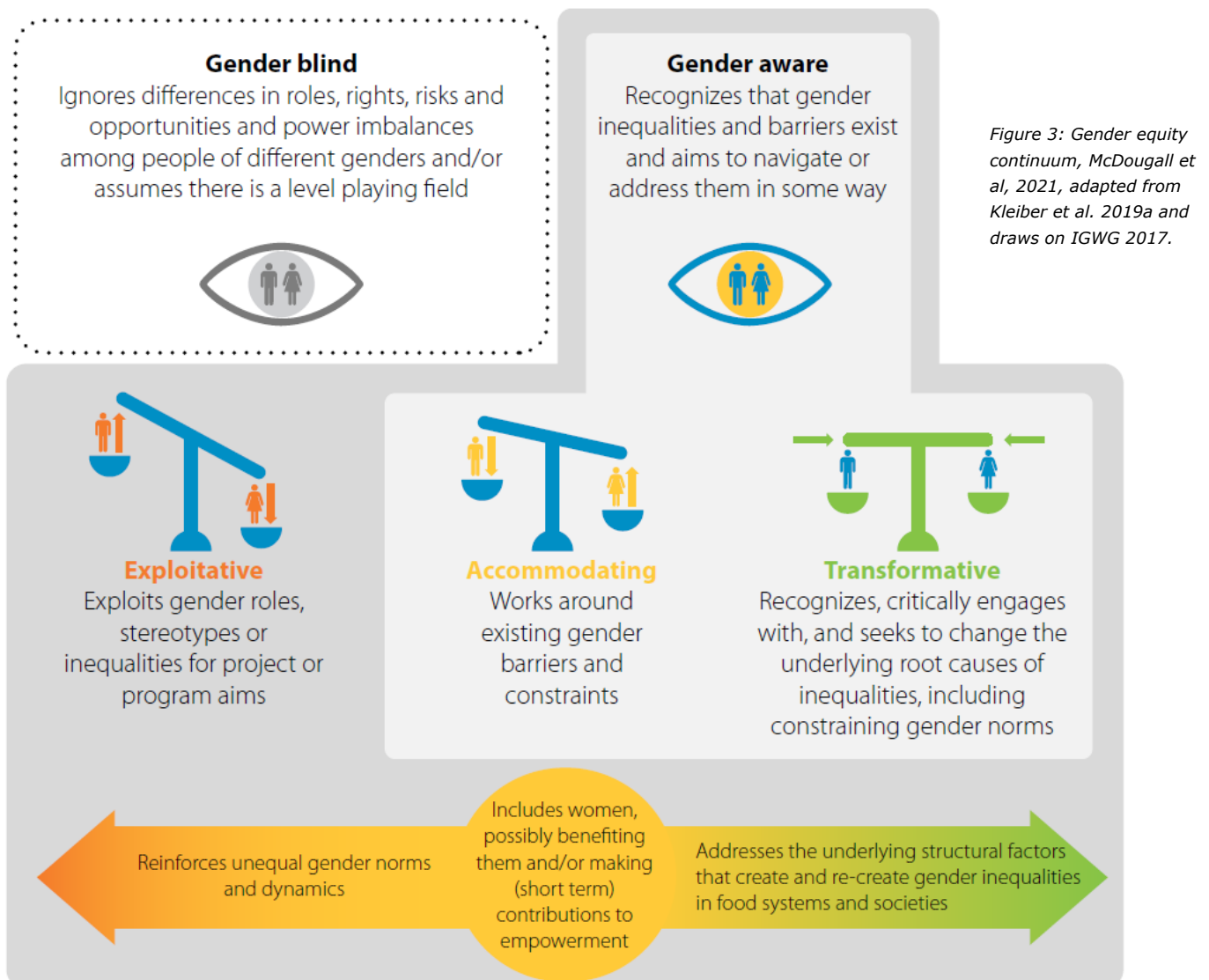**Gender transformative approaches tackle root causes**

There is need to go beyond the recognition of gender constraints and address root causes. Gender Transformative Approaches bring 'critical awareness' of gender roles & norms, challenge the distribution of resources & allocation of duties; address the power in the food system.

The Food system is a gendered system

Gender influences the ways in which men and women experience food systems drivers and outcomes. Hence food system transformation efforts need to incorporate an intersectional lens in recognizing that shocks and vulnerabilities affect men and women in different ways, so that interventions are responsive to the complex realities of people's lives.

Gender equity is multidimensional

Transforming food systems in equitable ways requires changes in different dimensions: agency and gender equality at the individual levels (capacities, awareness) and systemic levels (laws, policies); both at the formal side (access to resources and opportunities) and the informal side (norms, values, practices).

Gender blind
Ignores differences in roles, rights, risks and opportunities and power imbalances among people of different genders and/or assumes there is a level playing field

Gender aware
Recognizes that gender inequalities and barriers exist and aims to navigate or address them in some way

Figure 3: Gender equity continuum, McDougall et al, 2021, adapted from Kleiber et al. 2019a and draws on IGWG 2017.

Exploitative
Exploits gender roles, stereotypes or inequalities for project or program aims

Accommodating
Works around existing gender barriers and constraints

Transformative
Recognizes, critically engages with, and seeks to change the underlying root causes of inequalities, including constraining gender norms

Reinforces unequal gender norms and dynamics

Includes women, possibly benefiting them and/or making (short term) contributions to empowerment

Addresses the underlying structural factors that create and re-create gender inequalities in food systems and societies

Two visuals are particularly helpful to illustrate these messages:

1. Gender Transformative Approaches are on the far end of the **gender equity continuum** (see Figure 3). On the other end of the spectrum are gender exploitative (or harmful) programmes that reinforce inequitable gender norms and stereotypes, or disempower certain people in the process of achieving programme goals. A gender transformative programme actively seeks to build equitable social norms and structures in addition to individual gender-equitable behaviour, giving sufficient attention to the specific needs of men, women and youth, and their limited access to resources, including capital, land, time or even the right to make decisions. Understanding where a programme or project is located on this spectrum requires investigating all aspects of programmes: inception and design, processes and systems, and monitoring and evaluation.

2. The **Gendered Food Systems Framework** is an adaptation of Food System models to indicate structural gender inequality and different domains in which gender inequality can be experienced. Food systems drivers (biophysical ,environmental, technological and infrastructural, political, economic, sociocultural, and demographic factors) are shaped by structural gender inequalities as well as gendered shocks and vulnerabilities. The framework helps to acknowledge these. Collecting gender disaggregated data is important to help identify gender disparities, track gendered trends in the food system and progress made towards gender equity goals, and to inform policies and programmes. Food system components interact with multidimensional gender inequality (Quisumbing et al 2021) and this obviously needs to be addressed across food system components in the formal to informal, and individual to systemic dimensions.

Figure 4: Gendered food system (Quisumbing et al 2021)
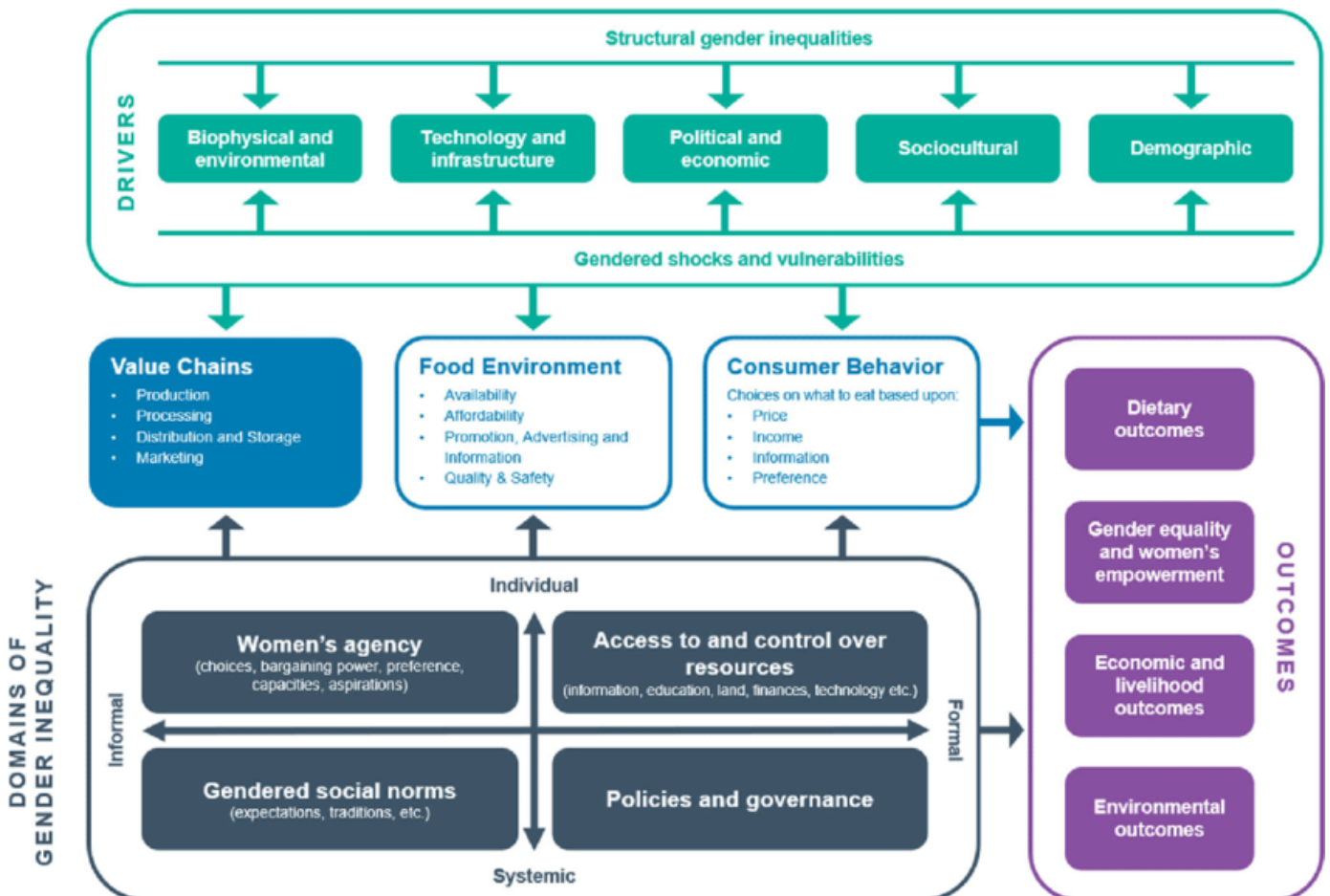
Just transition key messages

The burdens and benefits of transitions need to be equitably shared

Transition affects all social groups, yet marginalised groups have the highest risk of being adversely affected in political and societal struggles. Marginalised groups need to be recognised and purposefully included in a way their voices are heard and respected. The benefits and the burdens of transitions need to be shared in an equitable way.

Harm done in the past and future generations need to be considered

Harm done to marginalised groups in the past need to be acknowledged and addressed as a precondition to involve them in transition efforts. Likewise, impacts on future generations need to be estimated and managed.

**Acknowledge that solving a problem here may cause more harm somewhere else**
Adverse social impacts of transitions should not only be addressed in a country or a sector, impacts beyond boundaries need to be recognised and prevented or addressed.

Just transition visuals: The scope of **Just Transition** diagram (Figure 5) illustrates the three messages above by showing the 4 types of justice (Recognitional, restorative, procedural and distributive) placed in the time dimension. Recognitional justice –respect for different cultures, values and the socio-political context of affected groups – in the past, present and future generations. Restorative justice – to acknowledge and compensate for

harm done in the past. It highlights the importance of addressing historical injustices, ensuring fair decision-making processes, and promoting equitable outcomes to transition to a more sustainable and equitable future.

The visual operational framework in Figure 6 for Just Transition illustrates how to move from policy to practice.

Figure 5: the scope of Just Transition
(adapted building on Coninx et al, 2022)
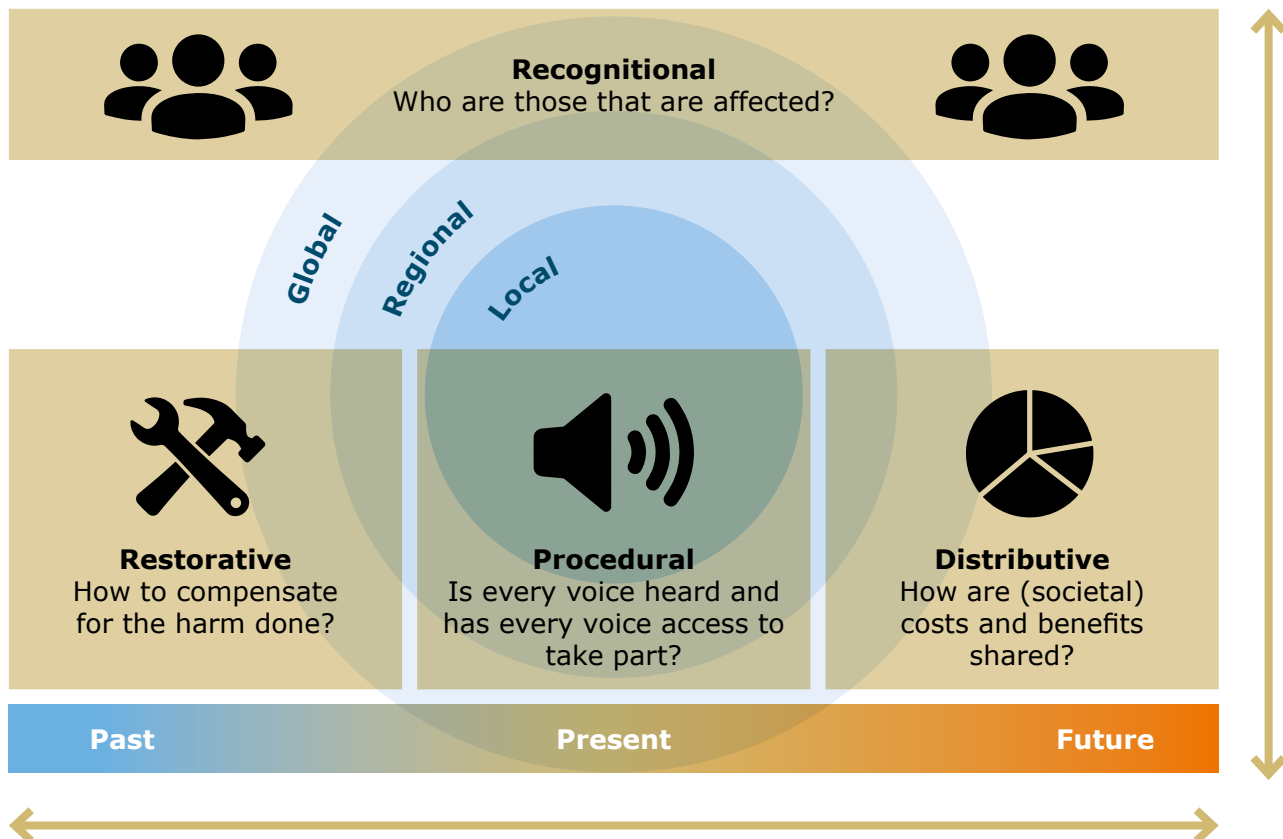
To make sure transitions are more just, we need an operational framework to offer structure and guidance.

The operational framework consists of four steps that aim to:

Understand the current situation, in terms of injustices and their causes.

Envision how a more just situation could look.

Make decisions that weigh synergies and trade-offs for fair outcomes.

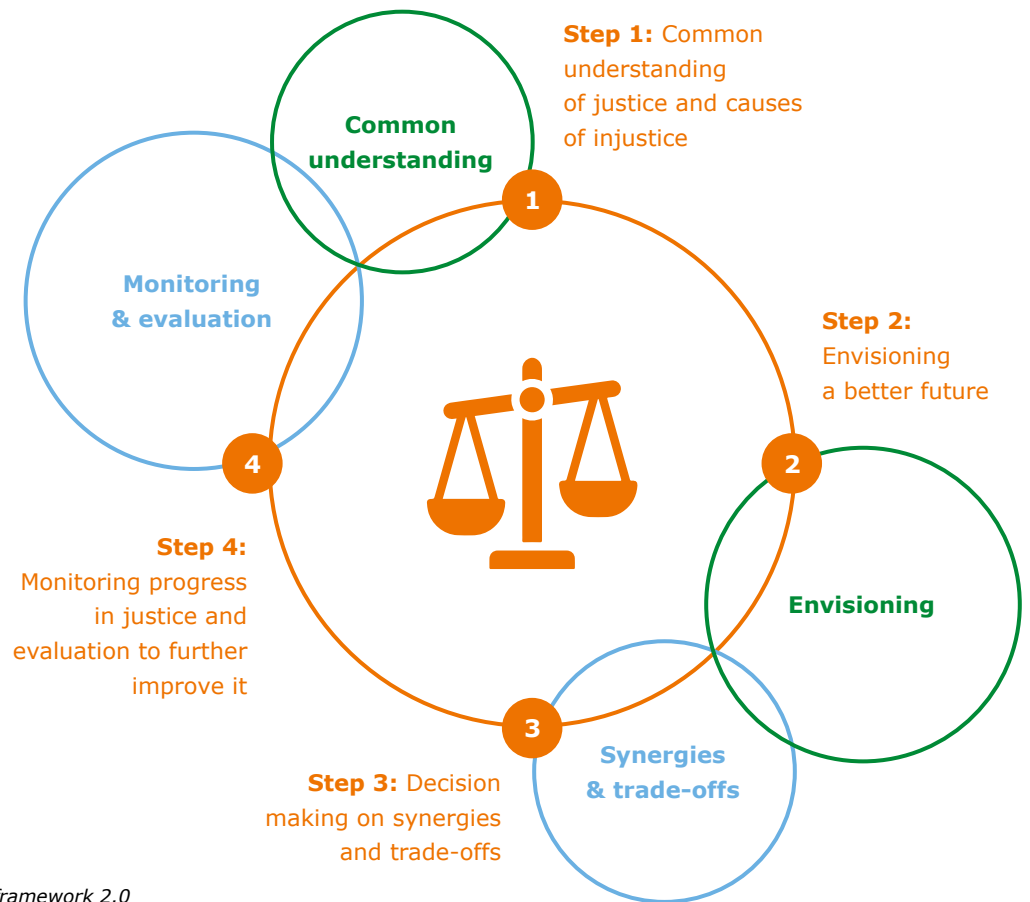Continuously monitor progress and re-evaluate to promote ongoing justice.

Step 1: Common understanding of justice and causes of injustice

Step 2: Envisioning a better future

Step 4: Monitoring progress in justice and evaluation to further improve it

Step 3: Decision making on synergies and trade-offs

Common understanding

Monitoring & evaluation

Envisioning

Synergies & trade-offs

1

2

3

4

Figure 6: Just transitions operational framework 2.0 (Coninx et al, 2022)

Women members of farmer cooperative reviewing gender equality achievements in Yumbe, West Nile, Uganda (CEFORD, 2014)

4. Social equity recommendations

Social inequity plays out in food systems. The increasing recognition of this has led to more initiatives, expertise and examples on social equity within the agri-food domain system, also within WUR. This is not limited to the Social Sciences group only. Yet, as shown in chapter two and three, it needs to go much further. Although food systems transformation calls for a holistic approach, policies and programmes easily fall back to their technical and their "disciplinary silo" comfort zones.

Continuing with business as usual will lead to missing out on opportunities to have more societal impact and to work on the cutting edge of what needs to be understood about food system transformation and sustainability transitions. This chapter therefore outlines the following propositions:

1. Articulate social equity more firmly in Food System models

In order to trigger and inform professionals and teams working within the agri-food domain to take social equity to the operational level (project design, implementation and evaluation), a good start is to articulate Social Equity more clearly in Food System models. Multiple models are in use at WUR, the most common being the conceptual Food System Model by Van Berkum et al. (2018). This model combines social and economic outcomes in one box "socio-economic" – often visually supported by a money symbol. Since the social dimension is not well articulated,

the food system outcomes – when translated into research and projects – often leave out the social dimension. This is further aggravated when negotiating with partners. Those with a strong economic agenda tend to be more powerful in partnerships than partners with a social equity agenda. The proposition is therefore to:

➔ Include a specific social equity outcome (in a separate box as the economic)[7] to back up professionals and teams to include the social equity agenda in project resource allocation, planning and implementation. See for example Zurek M. et al, 2018 and the SUSFANS toolbox (Kuiper, M. et al 2018) that explicitly includes social equity as part of food system assessments. Articulate the scope of this outcome beyond the fair distribution of costs and benefits in a food supply chain.

➔ Clarify and articulate social and cultural drivers that influence food system activities[8] so that professionals and teams can use this when identifying leverage points for change (leading to design of interventions, workplans and budgets).

➔ Unpack the social dimension of the food system activities that is often hidden in general terms like "enabling environment" and "institutions". It is important to reflect on how to operationalise social equity to a point where we can monitor it's achievement systematically.

Figure 7: Example of how the Food System Framework of van Berkum et al could be adapted to articulate social and economic outcomes and drivers more strongly
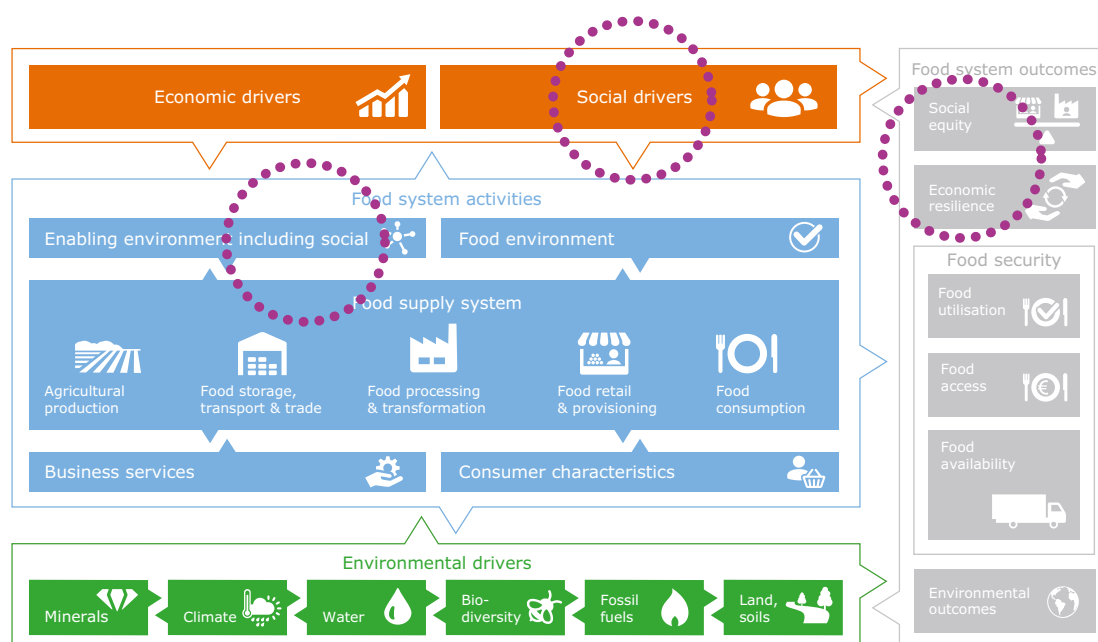
## 2. Take the Social Equity narrative forward in organisational strategies and knowledge agendas

Organisational strategies, knowledge agendas and core themes are a good starting point for embedding Social Equity in food system transformation intervention processes; they can help in capturing and anchoring current trends and current thinking about food systems transformation into cutting edge interventions and operationalizable strategies. Therefore:

- Beyond the strategy of the new Social and Economic Research Institute in the Social Sciences Group of WUR, the Social Equity narrative needs to come back in the mission and reflected in the vision **and in having a strong collective organizational ambition**. The key messages in Chapter 3 are proposed for unpacking the vision and mission further in the strategy document, using social inclusion, gender equity and just transition as the main pillars. The "Safe and Just Operating

Space" concept can be applied under the broader social equity agenda for specific parts of the new institute.

- In the use of **concepts and terms**, the strategy should not only be specific about the more technologically or natural science- oriented concepts, but also about the social concepts. The messages and narratives in the previous chapters support this.

- To prevent to social equity agenda to evaporate into the economic agenda, which tends to happen in Food System models using the "socio-economic" narrative, communication about the new institute should use "**Social and Economic research**". With social equity clearly articulated in its strategy, it will be easier for other WUR institutes to prevent working in silos and connect[9] with each other's work. Continuous capacity development in the organisation is necessary – developing social equity guides alone does not shift mindsets.

Figure 8: Example 2 of how the Food System Framework of van Berkum et al could be adapted to articulate social and economic outcomes and drivers more strongly

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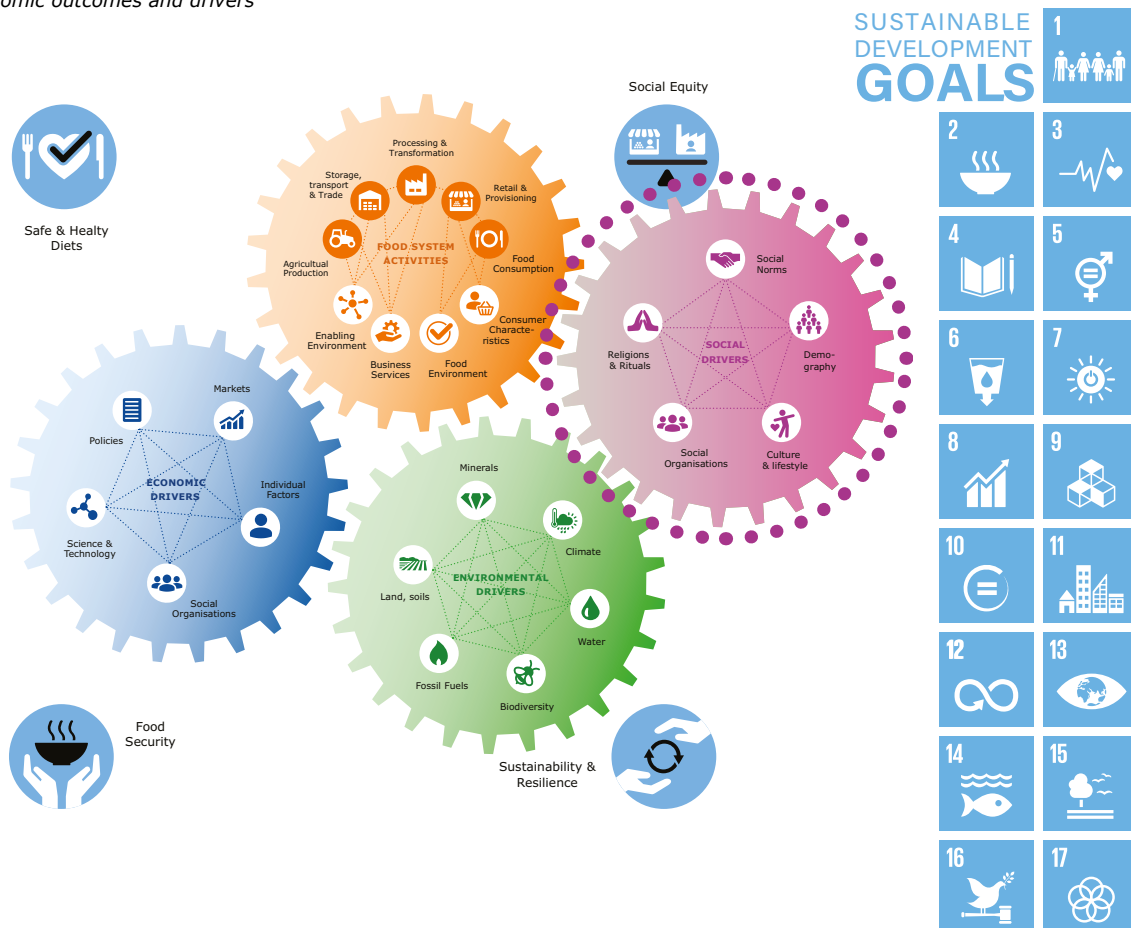
9] In the case of WUR for example to connect PSG work on Transformative Bioeconomics and regenerative food systems, and ESG to connect their climate justice / just sustainability transition work with SSG.

- The setting of research themes typically involves integrated technological, natural sciences and social sciences dimensions. To prevent silo's, research themes should not be linked directly to one discipline only. Yet, if social equity is "mainstreamed" in research themes as a "cross-cutting issue", it is likely to become invisible and therefore hard to operationalise. Apart from (away) mainstreaming, there should also be themes with an explicit social equity agenda. This will trigger teams to develop specific research questions, activity and allocate resources to social equity in food systems transformation.

3. Articulate roles in ensuring consistency in social equity

For institutes to implement their strategies[10], the roles of their leaders and managers need to be articulated to ensure that social equity commitments are implemented and taken forward in operations, for example:

- Regular feedback and tracking of social equity outcomes by institute managers and staff can support for the intentional pursuit of social equity outcomes in resource mobilisation and implementation.

- Recruitment of new staff should deliberately look out for relevant expertise and motivation to contribute to social equity in food system transformation.

- Investment in capacities based on the continuous identification of implementation and discourse gaps. A mindset shift towards diversity, inclusivity and equitable food systems practices requires deliberate investment in the capacities of organizational and partner expertise. The development of "How to do" guides can support this and enable colleagues, teams and partners from all disciplines to integrate social equity in design, partnerships, capacities, implementation, evaluation and learning. Beyond staff training, it is also important to invest in organisational learning by establishing spaces for learning and knowledge exchange specifically on social equity issues, just like this is already the case for other disciplines. Such platforms can also foster collective action for acquisition and partnerships.

10] F.e. the existing WCDI and WEcR strategies, but also the to be developed strategy of the new Social and Economic Research Institute in WUR

Social change theatre in Bangladesh (Thies Reemer, 2016)

4. More deliberate resource acquisition and partnerships for social equity

- Resource acquisition is often initiated from groups working on specific Food System Outcomes. Treating Social Equity much more as an **outcome** of Food System Transformation – as also argued in proposition 1 – is a pre-condition. More deliberate resource acquisition for social equity focused food system work is necessary to enable more expertise and research to be developed around the topics. This requires pro-active acquisition and exploring opportunities beyond traditional clients and donors. Achieving social equity outcomes as part of food system transformation requires a continuous reflection on why donors do not or hesitate to fund activities towards social equity outcomes as the main goal and not as a peripheral activity in food system transformation.

- A major rethink is necessary on **partnerships** to align with the current trends of putting social equity more at the centre of food systems thinking. At the time of establishing a partnership (e.g. for a food systems research, initiative or programme), a moment needs to be built in to reflect on power relations, agenda's and capacities within the partnership. Corporate voices and perspectives tend to be louder than those of civil society and representatives of marginalised groups. Acknowledging this power imbalance implies deliberately engaging partners who have an **intrinsic social equity agenda, expertise and commitment**. Having the right capacities and voices on board – and managing these – leads to a more balanced focus on different food system outcomes. It requires an extra effort that will not happen automatically, it requires checks & balances and leadership. For example: asking a gender expert to "engender" proposals a few days before submission should be changed into constructive involvement in proposal development from the start. It is also necessary to build the awareness and importance of social equity with the client, partners and donor network.

- Likewise, "**walking the talk**" in the social equity agenda also does not happen automatically: beyond Social Safety efforts, it is essential for WUR institutes to apply the same checks & balances regarding epistemic justice when partnerships are designed.

Social change theatre in Bangladesh (Thies Reemer, 2016)

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Annex I: Findings of mapping key topics in course materials, papers and projects

In this annex additional information and links are provided for the three key topics social inclusion, gender equity and just transition. For each of the three topics some key definitions, conceptual frameworks and tools that have been used in courses, reports, and materials in WCDI and other WUR institutes are indicated.

I. Social inclusion

a) Definitions

The words "inclusive" and "inclusiveness" are used frequently in the context of food systems and food systems transformation. Within the social sciences research institute it is used in papers, course titles and materials and project design documents.

A study by WCDI on how to improve the direction and practice in the transformation of agro-food sectors (see transforming sectors) also looks at the food system dimension. The study looks at:

- concepts, definitions and frameworks in literature,
- how inclusion is reflected in sector and food system frameworks and programmes, and
- what helps and inhibits professionals to promote inclusiveness.

Regarding definitions, the study concluded that in general "inclusion" is over-used (in titles of courses, projects, papers, yet under-defined. It is used as a catch-all term that can mean many different things. It is also used interchangeably with "women's empowerment" and "gender equity".

When talking about definitions, it is therefore good to start with "Social Exclusion", defined here as the "involuntary exclusion of individuals and groups from society's political, economic, and societal processes, which prevents their full participation in the society in which they live" (Atkinson and Marlier, 2010). A number of frameworks are useful to understand on what grounds social exclusion generally occurs (see below).

"Social inclusion" is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights (UNDESA, 2016). Yet, in most materials in courses, projects and papers related to food systems, social inclusion generally implicitly referred to as an outcome rather than a process.

b) Conceptual frameworks

The following conceptual frameworks were found in WUR's repository on the topic of social inclusion.

The UN **Leave No One Behind (LNOB) framework** (UNDP, 2018) aims to establish a common understanding of the challenge of rising inequalities and pervasive discrimination and seeks to put forward a common program for action. It entails a focus on three closely related but distinct concepts: 1) equality (in opportunity and outcomes for all groups), 2)non-discrimination (against identified individuals and groups) and 3) equity (fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities). This framework focuses on systematically identifying and addressing both horizontal and vertical inequalities. The framework, provides recommendations for projects/intervention implementations.
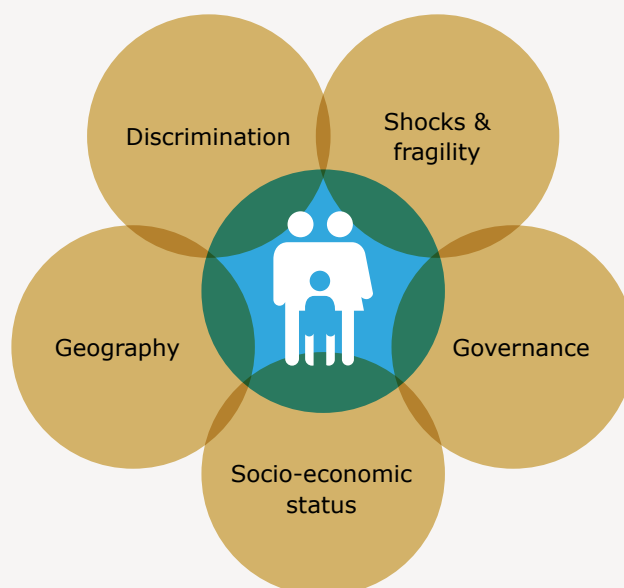

Figure 9: The five factors of Leave No One Behind, UNDP 2018

The framework offers countries a practical way to implement the Leave No One Behind core principle of the SDGs. It can be applied to facilitate national/local dialogue and assessments that shed light on who is being left behind and why in any country or sub-national context. Although incomplete, all countries have some degree of evidence corresponding to each of the five factors. By collecting, comparing and contrasting information across factors, while ratcheting up investment in disaggregated data, countries can seek to illuminate some of the systematic disadvantages and deprivations that leave or threaten to leave segments of society behind. With such an understanding, countries can, in turn, better shape and sequence interventions to tap SDG synergies; accelerate progress among the furthest behind; and fill gaps in essential data, financing and capacities.

The **Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform** framework (see also Pyburn & Van Eerdewijk, 2021) is often used in a gender equity context, yet it is really helpful in explaining social inclusion. Many projects implicitly assume that effectively reaching disadvantaged groups is sufficient to benefit and empower them. While counting and facilitating their participation is important, programs that only record the number of participants may miss important intrahousehold and community dynamics that might dilute or redistribute program benefits away from disadvantaged groups. The reach, benefit and empower framework can help to make the scope of a project transparent. While it makes a crucial point of not only counting the numbers during M&E, it does not then really give ideas on how to go beyond reaching.

a) Implementation tools

The following section lists down the implementation tools (from within WUR and outside WUR) that could be relevant while working on social inclusion.

The **Inclusion Wheel** (see Figure 11), developed in the framework of sector transformation programmes, is meant to support teams to set targetting, outreach and inclusion strategies. It assists teams to be transparent and deliberate about who the target audience is, and who is directly included, indirectly included and not included – based on the 5 factors of Leaving No One Behind. This applies also to the depth of engagement (using the RBET framework above), and the scale of outreach, and triggers teams to design strategies for sustainability of changes and impact experienced by these groups.

Toolkit: poverty targeting, gender and empowerment: This "how to do" note provides guidance in addressing targeting, gender equality, and women's empowerment in the context of the IFAD project design cycle, from initial preparatory work to the design mission and report writing. Although it primarily focuses on gender, it can also be applied to a wider group of excluded people.

Reached	Accessing Resources and Benefits	Empowerment	Transformation
Number of participants reached in different roles	Increased opportunities/abilities to use resources and/or benefits	Strengthened abilities to make strategic life choices and voice concerns	Deep enduring change toward gender equality including changed gender norms

Figure 10: Gender Outcomes Typology. Source: Kleiber et al. (2019) and CGIAR Research Programme on Fish Agri-Food Systems (2020) based on Johnson et al. (2018)

The UN LNOB Guide provides a framework for:

- Operationalizing the LNOB pledge to leave no one behind using a step-by-step approach
- Adapting and employing relevant tools from across the UN System to assess who is left behind and why; sequencing & prioritizing solutions; tracking and monitoring progress; and ensuring follow-up and review
- Integrating this methodology into UN programming and policy support for Member States.

FAO guide integrating intersectionality in projects: This guide uses a didactic (questioning) method applicable to the design and implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects, plans, and programmes. It integrates intersectional aspects in each phase, for gradual implementation of actions through an inclusive and participatory approach. Guiding questions are provided and applied to a case of a migrant woman to map out the basis of exclusion. This can help program designers reflect on the social dimensions of the problem and the invisible dimensions.

Towards food systems transformation - five paradigm shifts for healthy, inclusive and sustainable food systems: Food systems must serve different societal, public health and individual nutrition, and environmental objectives and therefore face numerous challenges. Considering the integrated performances of food systems, this paper highlights five fundamental paradigm shifts that are required to overcome trade-offs and build synergies between health and nutrition, inclusive livelihoods, environmental sustainability and food system resilience. The paper is very useful for compelling arguments for social inclusion.

d) What is missing for practitioners and institutions to promote social equity outcomes?

Despite the narrative of WUR contributions to the SDGs, the Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) framework is hardly applied.

Concrete "How To Do" guides for social inclusion based on experience in work related to food systems are missing. Very little lessons from applying these frameworks and tools in practice were found. There is a need for clarity in what we mean by social inclusion in food systems projects. This includes a framework that tackles social exclusion from a food system perspective with pathways for action and guidance how to address it in the project implementation cycle.
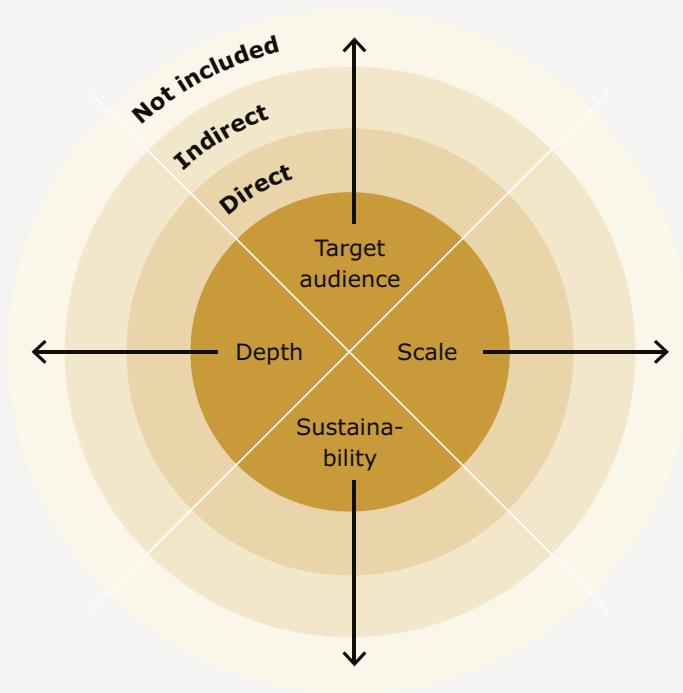

Figure 11: Inclusion Wheel providing a starting point for inclusion strategies and outreach plans in programmes (from transforming sectors)

II: Gender equity

a) Definitions

A very common way to define gender equity is by referring to the differences between sex and gender, like in the table below.

Sex	Gender
Biological	Cultural
Physical (got by birth)	Socialization/learned
Universal /Fixed	Varies from place to place
Not changeable	Can be changed over time

Common definitions for gender, gender mainstreaming, and empowerment are:

Gender	Socially constructed differences attributed to men and women
Gender main-streaming	Making the concerns and experiences of women and men integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs; and ensuring equality of opportunity for increased effectiveness and sustainability
Empowerment	A process through which people, who are currently denied the ability to make strategic life choices, are enabled to take advantage of equality of opportunity

The focus is often on improving the position of women to improve the gender balance, for which both men and women need to be engaged. Women are not a homogeneous group and conflicts of interest may also occur between women. What is the difference between gender equality versus equity? The table below provides a comparison:

Gender equality	Refers mainly to equality of opportunity. • Equal rights • Equal access to resources (land, credit, etc) • Equal opportunities for learning, participating in decision making, working, etc. • Equal value for contributions by men and women to society
Gender Equity	Refers mainly to outcomes. • Being "fair" to women and men • Equitable sharing of burdens and benefits • Women and men have different needs and need different actions • Compensate for historical disadvantages
Gender Justice	Combines equality of opportunity and equitable outcomes. Links more strongly to legal frameworks. Is less neutral, more activist.
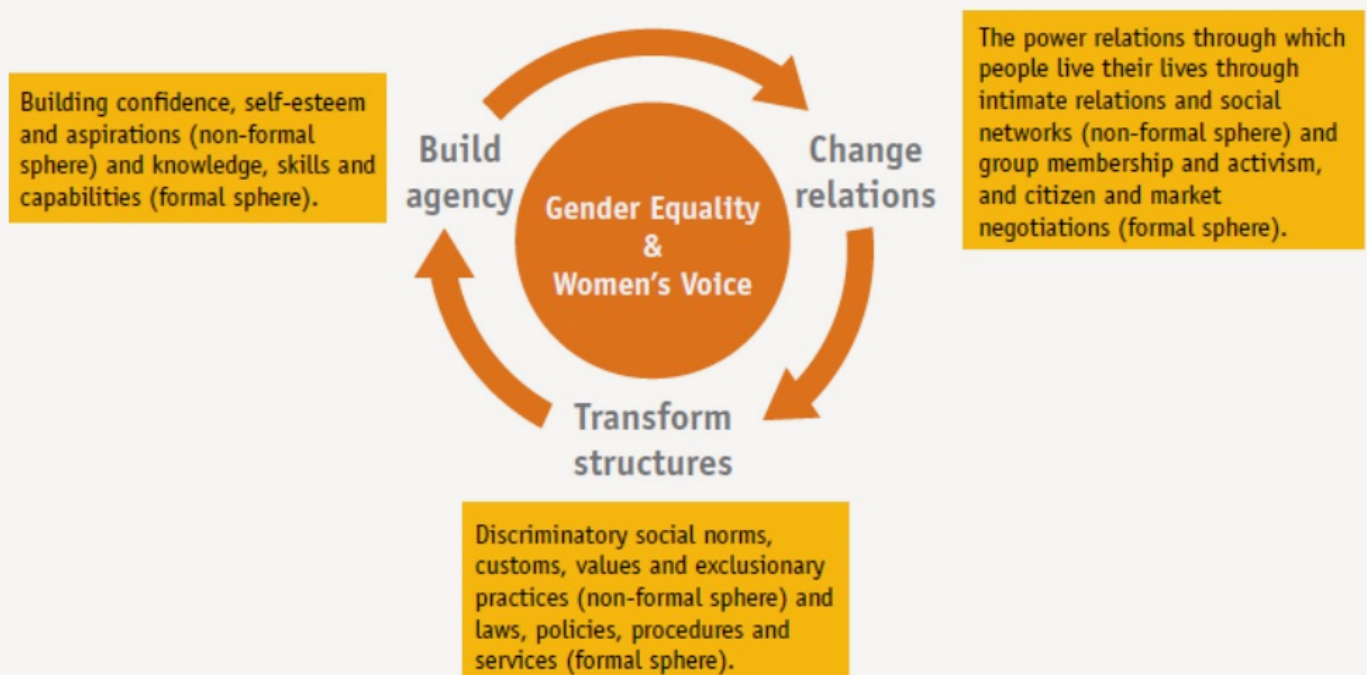
Figure 12: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Framework by CARE (2016)

b) Conceptual frameworks

Gender Equality Framework (GEF) by CARE
(L.Sterrett, 2016) a) build agency of people of all genders and life stages, b) change relations between them and c) transform structures so that people of all genders live life in full gender equality. The framework can be adapted to food system transformation.

The **Gender Equality Continuum** (IGWG, 2017) provides a reflection and assessment framework to place initiatives and programmes on the ladder from gender blind to gender transformative. Awareness of the gender context is often a result of a pre-program/policy gender analysis. "Gender aware" contexts allow program staff to consciously address gender constraints and opportunities, and plan their gender objectives. Programme designers and implementers can use the framework for planning how to integrate gender into their programs/policies. Under no circumstances should programs take advantage of existing gender inequalities in pursuit of health outcomes ("do no harm!"), which is why, when printed in color, the area surrounding "gender exploitative" is red, and the arrow is dotted.

Gender Transformative Approaches (UNICEF, 2020): GTA is a framework designed to target the underlying causes of gender inequality. This requires a keen understanding of the power dynamics and structures that reinforce gender exclusion and inequality in the specific contexts and sectors in which WUR works. It incorporates actions that aim to transform those dynamics and structures, thus promoting change in social attitudes.
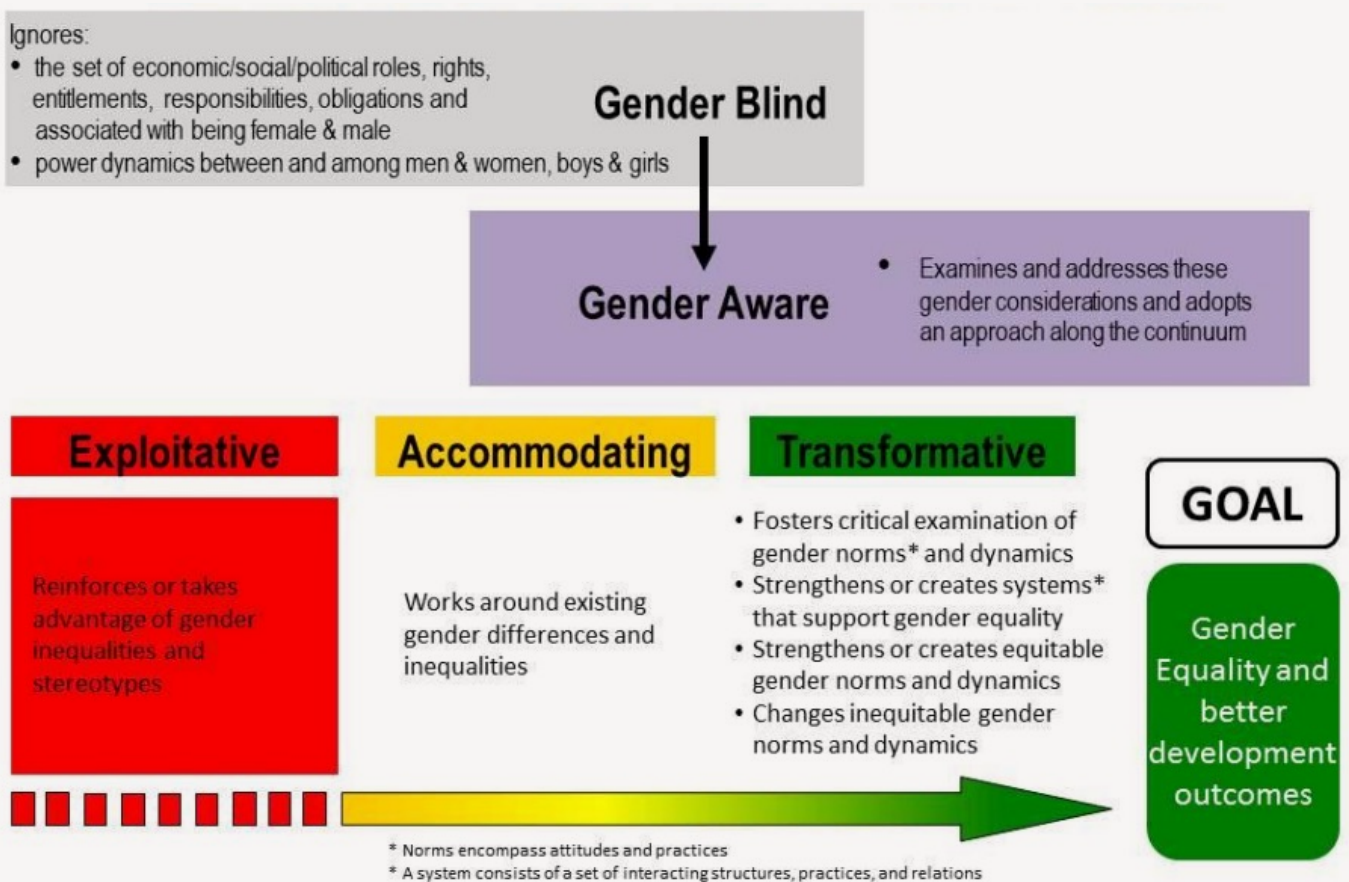
Figure 13: Gender Equality Continuum (IGWG, 2017)

The Conceptual model of women and girls' empowerment by the KIT and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provides key elements of empowerment as Agency, Institutional structures and Resources, and unpacks each element.

Pro-WEAI (Malapit et al., 2019): A project-level WEAI (or pro-WEAI) is a tool that can be used in agricultural development projects to identify key areas of women's (and men's) disempowerment, design appropriate strategies to address identified deficiencies, and monitor project outcomes related to women's empowerment. The 12 pro-WEAI indicators are mapped to three domains: intrinsic agency (power within), instrumental agency (power to), and collective agency (power with). The domains include autonomy in income, self-efficacy, attitudes about intimate partner violence against women, input in livelihood decisions, ownership of land and other assets, access to and decisions on financial services, control over the use of income, work balance, and Visiting important locations (Quisumbing et al., 2023).

See also Gender and Food Systems, Avenues for Transformation?

Gender @Work (Analytical Framework – Gender at Work, n.d.): The Gender at Work Framework highlights the interrelationship between gender equality, organizational change, and institutions or 'rules of the game' held in place by power dynamics within communities. The top two quadrants are related to the individual. On the right are changes in noticeable individual conditions, e.g., increased resources, voice, freedom from violence, and access to health and education. On the left, individual consciousness and capability – knowledge, skills, political consciousness, and commitment to change toward equality. The bottom two clusters are related to the systemic. The cluster on the right refers to formal rules as laid down in constitutions, laws, and policies. The cluster on the left is the set of informal discriminatory norms and deep structures, including those that maintain inequality in everyday practices. While it provides visible dimensions (both formal and informal) that are important to be looked
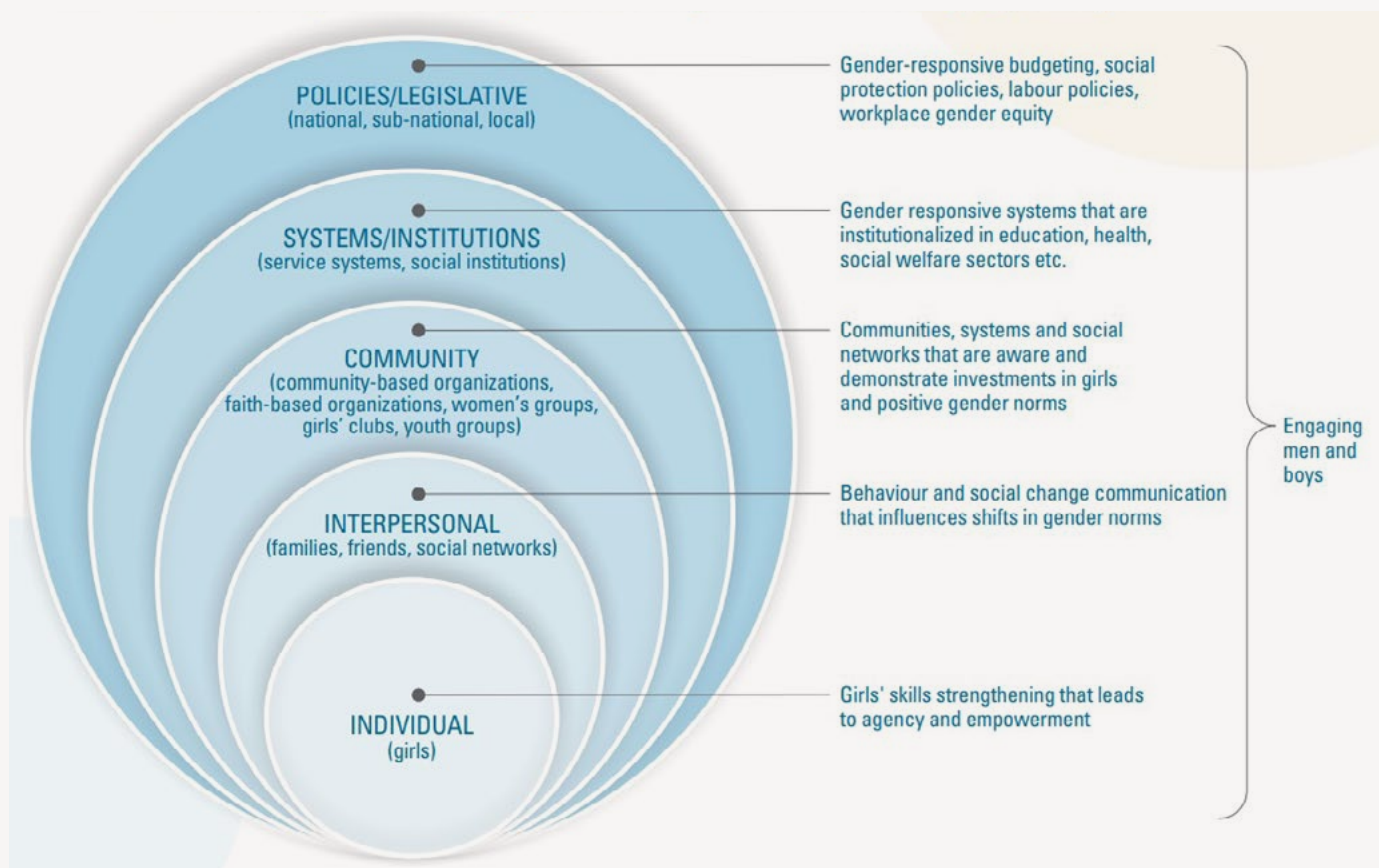

Figure 14: The Social-Ecological model and opportunities for gender-transformative peogramming (UNICEF 2020)

at to achieve gender equality, establishing a link of G@W framework with the food system framework can be quite abstract for someone who is not an expert in the topic.

At the policy level, the following Bridging the Gap publication provides ways forward to position women at the centre of food system change.
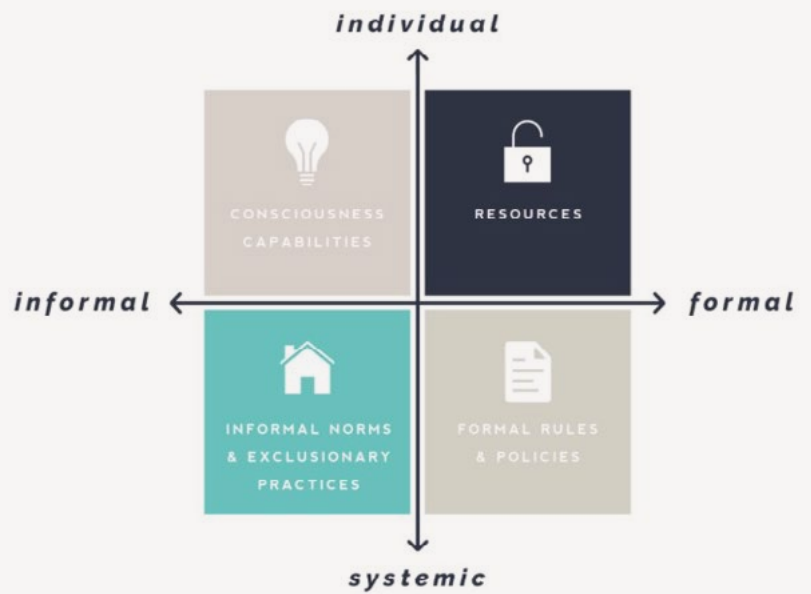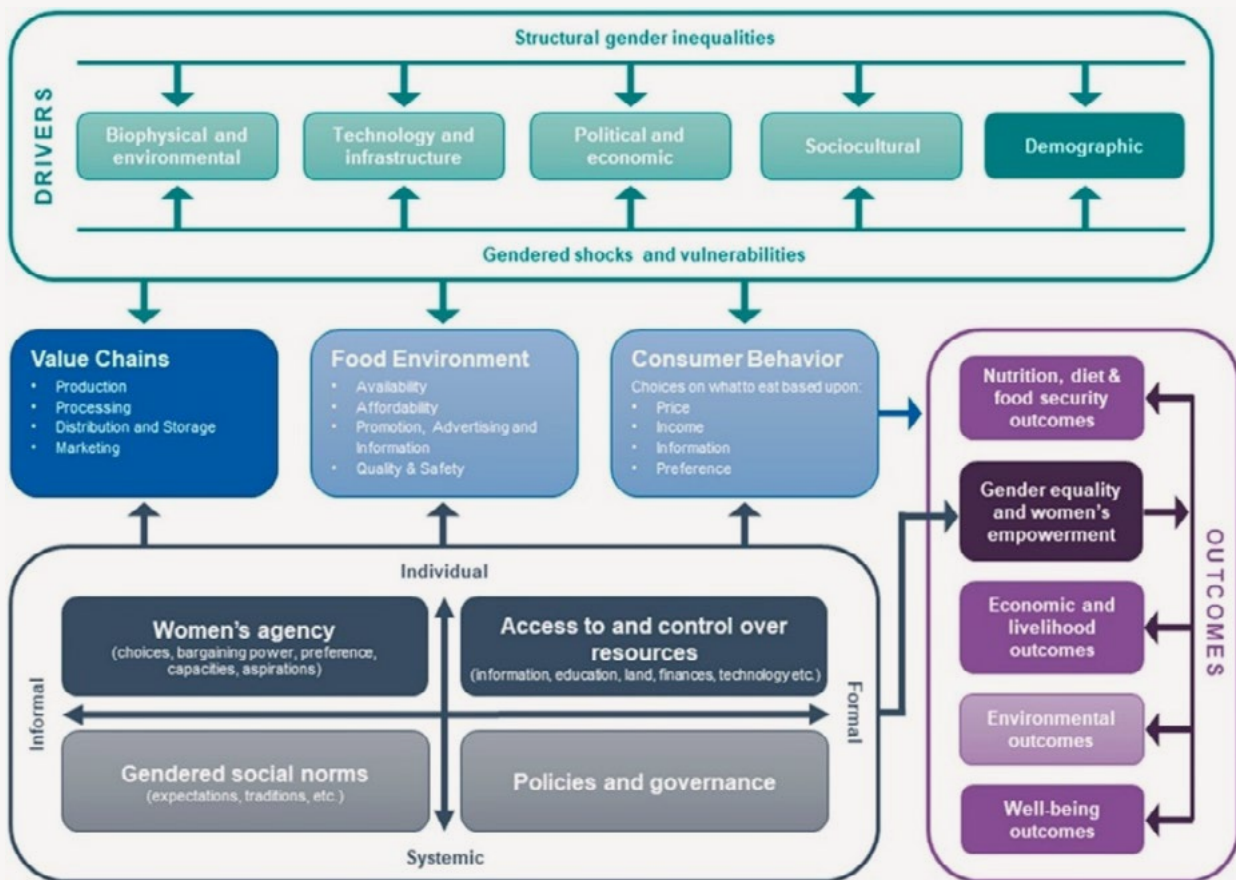
Figure 15: Gendered Food Systems diagram (Quisumbing 2021)

c) Implementation tools

The following section lists down the implementation tools (from within WUR and outside WUR) that could be relevant while working on gender equity.

1. Gender transformative approaches FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2020): Gender transformative methodologies are a suite of participatory approaches, methods, and tools that encourage critical reflection and examination among women and men of gender roles, norms, and power dynamics. This compendium contains 15 practical good practices.
2. **Pro-WEAI** (Martinez & Seymour, 2018): also provides practical monitoring and evaluation tools.
3. Evidence pathways to gender equality and food systems transformation
4. Power: A practical tool to facilitate social change (Hunjan & Pettit's. 2011): The handbook is for people, within organizations, networks, or within community groups, who want to explore power in relation to achieving change in the interests of the communities they are working with. Its purpose is to help facilitate discussions about issues concerning power to deepen understanding of the causes of social problems and the various change strategies.
5. Power Scan a practical guide to power dynamics in West Africa, provides 5 interlinked clusters for conducting power analysis
6. Systems, power and gender, Perspectives on Transformational Change (the power dispersal dandelion)
7. **Gender audit tools** such as: ILO gender audit and Oxfam gender audit

Gender equity: While looking for applications of the concept of gender equity in food system projects, the following project examples can be used to reflect:

1. **Overall Gender Strategy Dhaka** (Naco et al., 2020): This document examines gender dynamics within Dhaka's food system and presents a strategic roadmap for addressing women's issues and gender-related challenges within the project, considering the influence of COVID-19. Section 1 offers background information on the Dhaka Food System (DFS) project and gender concerns prevalent in the urban food system. Section 2 delves into gender issues within the project's context, with a focus on the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Section 3 explores the frameworks and models utilized to analyze and strategize for the development of gender-responsive food systems. These frameworks and models are integrated into the Theory of Change (ToC). The ToC identifies strategic pathways that lead to actionable steps aimed at reaching and benefiting more women, fostering their empowerment, and facilitating their meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

2. **Mapping gender and women-focused initiatives in the agriculture sector** (Yohannes et al. 2022): Ethiopia hosts a variety of public, private, and international organizations dedicated to gender mainstreaming. These entities possess a wide range of experiences and accomplishments in promoting gender equality and empowering women. The study provides a comprehensive overview of the approaches, experiences, and platforms established to tackle gender inequality and promote women's empowerment in the country.

3. **Resilient Agriculture for Inclusive and Sustainable Ethiopian Food Systems** (Abate & Schaap, 2022): this baseline report gives an example how data on women's and youth empowerment can be collected and analysed at the start of a project, amongst other outcome areas.

d) What is missing for practitioners and institutions to promote social equity outcomes?

The following components have been identified as missing from the compilation:

1. Gender strategies are often approached in a narrow way, focusing on women (or women and youth) as a homogenous group. An intersectional approach is generally missing, bringing in other aspects of identity such as ethnicity, cultural identity, household composition, location
2. While examples of gender analysis within project needs are present in projects, a comprehensive WUR approach to integrating gender into food system projects was not found. Given our commitment to inclusive food system transformation, it is imperative to develop such a proposition.
3. Additionally, considering the various components within the food system, there is a need for a toolkit. Although there exists a diverse range of tools currently in use, there is a lack of a cohesive compilation that facilitates easy identification of tools to address gendered power imbalances across different components of the food system.

To address these it is recommended to:

1. Articulate gender equity goals more clearly in projects and programmes, with 'minimum must have' criteria in design and implementation stages, with checks and balances.
2. Adapt gender frameworks to food systems programmes and components, not only in theory but also based on learning from practice. Utilize the framework as a basis to curate a comprehensive collection of tools aimed at addressing gender-related challenges within each component outlined.

III: Just transition

This section presents an overview of the definitions, conceptual frameworks, and tools pertaining to Just Transition as identified within WUR reports and materials. It mainly draws from the KB research "Just transition: scientific base for bringing principles into practice (2021-2022)[14] . Additionally, it delves into an analysis of potential gaps in this compilation, offering insights into areas that warrant further exploration. Moreover, it offers assessments on strategies to address these identified gaps and enhance the completeness of the discourse on Just Transition.

a) Definitions

Various definitions of "just transition" were extracted from the documents and websites reviewed to compile relevant materials on the subject. It's worth noting that multiple definitions have been identified, highlighting the importance of establishing a unified definition in WUR.

- While Just Transition has gained prominence and widespread usage, a definitive, universally accepted definition remains elusive within the scientific community. The concept of justice, from which Just Transition derives, is rooted in four primary types: recognitional, distributive, procedural, and restorative justice. These interconnected forms of justice, while possibly overlapping to some extent, serve to enrich our comprehension and furnish a foundation for nuanced insights and, significantly, for targeted strategies and actions.

- Just Transition encompasses the recognition of potential adverse and unintended consequences resulting from transformations in the food system and adaptation to climate change. It involves proactively anticipating these effects and taking action to ensure equitable distribution not only of the benefits but also the costs and risks associated with these changes. Central to the concept is acknowledging existing inequalities and power dynamics that often result in the marginalization of certain individuals and groups. Therefore, Just Transition emphasizes the deliberate inclusion of marginalized groups, recognizing that transitions impact all social groups and necessitate the involvement of all actors, with marginalized groups typically bearing disproportionate burdens. (Arjen Buijs, WUR).

Recognitional
Who are those that are affected?

Distributive
How are (societal) costs and benefits shared?

Procedural
Is every voice heard and has every voice access to take part?

Restorative
How to compensate for the harm done?

b) Conceptual frameworks

This section outlines the conceptual frameworks extracted from the reviewed documents to elucidate the approaches adopted within WUR concerning Just Transition.

Framework 1 This WUR report from stakeholder dialogues delves into the operationalization of just transition by addressing several key questions:

- **Just for whom?** The focus is on ensuring just transition for disadvantaged groups, including countries in the Global South.
- **Just by whom?** There is no consensus among governing bodies such as the European Union or the United Nations regarding responsibility for implementing just transition initiatives.
- **Just? Why (still) not?** Without a clear definition of "justice," policymakers may struggle to recognize the indirect and complex social impacts of climate and food policy initiatives.
- **Just? How?** Various approaches are discussed, ranging from local self-organization tools to macro-level strategies. It is suggested that bridging silos between different communities, such as the Human Rights and Sustainable Development communities, could enhance the implementation of just transition initiatives.
- **Just start or finish?** There is ongoing debate about what constitutes a just transition, but this does not hinder policymakers and practitioners from utilizing it as an evolving concept. However, there is a call for the development of an operational framework to guide just transition efforts and ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups.

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14 See the Just Transition Webpage of WUR

Framework 2 This [Just Transition Brochure](#) explores examples of the implementation of just transition, such as in the food system transition in Birmingham and energy initiatives. It focuses on how stakeholders are engaged in these processes, rather than providing specific tools or frameworks. Additionally, there is no mention of any concrete tools, and the document lacks a figure illustrating the framework discussed.

While the operational framework provides a comprehensive overview of how to approach Just Transition in large-scale projects involving food and climate change, it does not offer specific tools for implementation. Instead, it serves as a guide for considering justice aspects throughout the transition process.
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Framework 3 An [operational framework to make transitions just](#) is provided in an extensive research report. The framework consists of four steps: common understanding, envisioning, synergies & trade-offs, and monitoring and evaluation. This framework is designed to be adaptable to various processes and contexts and is centered around key questions aimed at raising awareness of injustice and identifying ways to improve justice in transition processes.

Examples of these questions include:

- Who is experiencing uneven burdens and benefits, and why?
- How do stakeholders perceive justice and transitions?
- What are the values, norms, perceptions, and worldviews of groups involved in the transition process?

To make sure transitions are more just, we need an operational framework to offer structure and guidance.

The operational framework consists of four steps that aim to:

Understand the current situation, in terms of injustices and their causes.

Envision how a more just situation could look.

Make decisions that weigh synergies and trade-offs for fair outcomes.

Continuously monitor progress and re-evaluate to promote ongoing justice.

Common understanding

Monitoring & evaluation

Step 1: Common understanding of justice and causes of injustice

Step 2: Envisioning a better future

Step 4: Monitoring progress in justice and evaluation to further improve it

Envisioning

Step 3: Decision making on synergies and trade-offs

Synergies & trade-offs
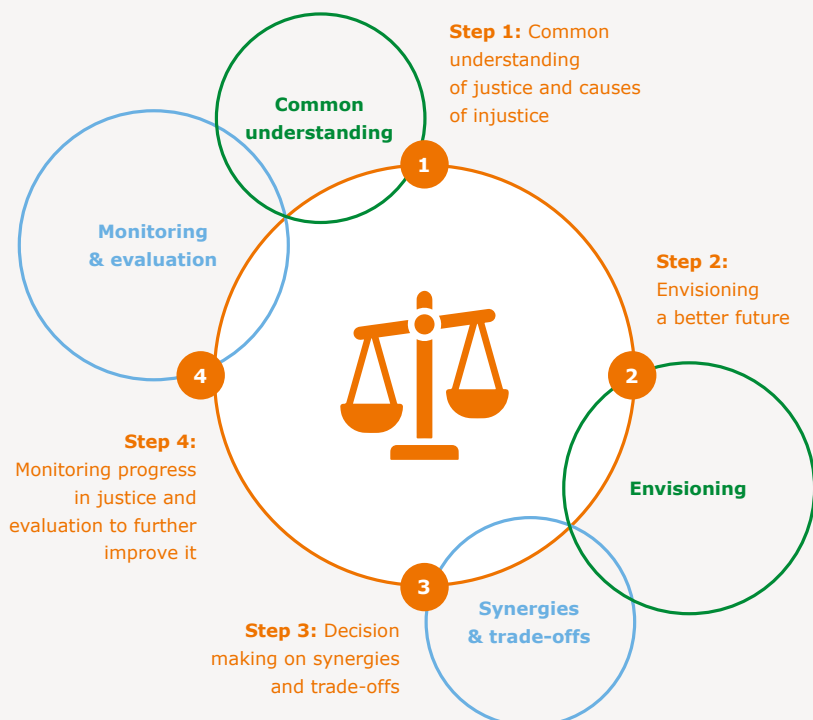
Figure 17: operational framework for Just Transitions (Coninx et al, 2022)

c) Implementation tools

The following list of resources link more closely to practice or provide concrete toolkits to work on Just Transition:

- Principles for Just Food system transitions: This report presents 10 guiding principles for achieving just food system transitions, examining their implications for desired outcomes, planning processes, systemic changes, and tensions management.
- Just_show_it_and_then_you_know it: This article highlights the necessity of measuring transitions and the importance of indicators for assessing just transition initiatives. It briefly mentions the concept of utilizing maps as a potential method for measuring just transition.
- Unpacking "the how" of just transition practices: This is a report from an online dialogue on Just Transition facilitated by Wageningen University & Research, which convened practitioners, scientists, and experts from approximately 10 countries.
- Foodshift Transition Toolkit designed to facilitate Just Food System Transitions.
- Various toolkits provided by The Climate Justice Alliance, focusing on the climate change perspective
- Toolkit for city leaders: this tool kit is designed for city leaders, with a focus on addressing climate change. It offers valuable insights for exploring how just transition principles can be applied beyond policy-making contexts.

d) What is missing for practitioners and institutions to promote social equity outcomes?

The topic of just transition is relatively new in the way it is applied beyond transitions from coal-based energy. Within WUR various teams and groups are taking the topic forward, there is momentum and willingness. The following components are identified as missing from the overview:

1. A unified WUR definition of just transition: a clear and concise definition specific to WUR's perspective on just transition is necessary to encapsulate its meaning and significance within the organization.
2. Operational toolkits for implementing just transition: Despite discussions about ideas for developing such toolkits, there is a notable absence of practical tools that can be utilized to operationalize just transition initiatives within projects.
3. Documentation of just transition in food system projects: While there are references to the application of just transition principles in projects like the Dhaka Food System Project, concrete documentation of these efforts is lacking. More comprehensive documentation and analysis in this area is needed.

The following is proposed to address the identified gaps:

1. Develop a WUR definition for just transition: Establishing a concrete definition specific to WUR can provide clarity and guidance for implementing just transition initiatives within the organization's context.
2. Create figures for frameworks lacking visual representation: For frameworks that currently lack visual illustrations, developing figures can enhance understanding and facilitate communication of complex concepts.
3. Bring together and/or develop implementation tools for just transition: While conceptual frameworks have been utilized in previous projects to identify injustices, there is a need for practical tools that can be customized to meet specific project requirements. A lot has been developed already that needs to be brought together and adapted under the Just Transition umbrella, to enable more effective implementation of just transition principles.
4. Just Transition should be a basic principle in all transition efforts. Actively integrating just transition principles into food system projects can enhance organizational experience and contribute to addressing socio-economic inequalities within the food system.

Colophon

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