



## **STRENGTHENING THE GLOBAL AGENDA 2020-2030 DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC CRISIS AND BEYOND**

### **REVISED GLOBAL CONSULTATION**

The three global partners in *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* announced in 2018 that there would be a process to develop the themes or pillars for the second decade 2020-2030 concluding with the world conferences in 2020. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic makes it appropriate to implement some changes to the consultation arrangements.

*The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* is the main platform for advocacy and action of the three global bodies. It provides a unique opportunity for social work and social development practitioners and social work and social development educators to unite, promote, voice, articulate and agree priorities in social, economic, political, and environmental areas.

The organisations have been reflecting on the process for developing the second decade of *The Global Agenda* in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the major social, economic and political changes which have already taken place so quickly. The long-term consequences are not yet fully understood but it is now clear that the pandemic has severely disrupted social and economic life and will continue to do so. Things will not be the same and we have to take that into account in our reflection. **We all need to take account of these unprecedented disruptions and to ensure that our Global Agenda themes covering the coming decade are relevant to the changed circumstances.**

The three global bodies are determined to continue working together on a shared *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* throughout the current decade. This commitment is not only a response to the impact of the pandemic but also to the duty to uphold and promote the core values and priorities of our organisations and members. The Global Agenda brings together the main concerns of our three organisations and is therefore even more important as a basis for advocacy and action during the current global social, economic crisis.

Given the global crisis, and the necessary focus on managing the consequences of the global pandemic, it will be impossible for many individuals and organisations to devote time and energy to the process required to reach agreement about the themes for the next ten years. We believe there would be risks if we tried to do that because there is so much uncertainty about the future shape of politics, the economy and social relationships.

**Nevertheless, the organisations are confident that the experience of the pandemic so far has confirmed and re-emphasised the relevance and timeliness of the messages from the Global Agenda 2010-2020. The global definition of social work and the shared ethical principles remain sound and must be assertively promoted in this new context.**



We also recognise the continuing relevance of the four pillars of *The Global Agenda 2010-2020*:

- Promoting social and economic equalities
- Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples
- Promoting community and environmental sustainability
- Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships

Whilst these pillars remain relevant, the global community also needs to reflect and identify a structure of pillars that make sense in a new decade and a new environment.

There is no doubt that the global shock of the pandemic will be long-lasting and probably transformative. The nature and scale of the shock will vary according to the circumstances in each country but will have an impact on economic activity, levels of poverty and social relationships. That shock is made more profound by the global failure to address the social inequalities and vulnerabilities identified by social workers and others in previous Global Agenda reports and many other documents, as well as reports of the United Nations and its agencies.

All these and many other consequences of the pandemic point to the need to take stock of the new context and to allow more time for reflection and consultation on the precise formulation of The Global Agenda themes for the next decade.

## **REDISCOVERING THE IMPORTANCE OF GLOBAL SOLIDARITY**

It is already clear that the pandemic has highlighted the reality of global interconnectedness and the value of social solidarity. Pandemics do not respect borders. For most people the main social support has been their immediate community, whether geographical, familial or intellectual. The value of public services has been recognised with renewed enthusiasm by people in many countries. Social solidarity within communities, countries and regions and across the world has become more real but is also being strongly tested; global solidarity in protecting our collective futures has become the need of the hour.

The three global partner organisations therefore propose to recognise the value of solidarity as the foundation for *The Global Agenda 2020-2030* but also as a specific focus of The Global Agenda in 2020-2022, recognising not only the impact of and learning from the Covid-19 pandemic but also the long-standing realities of economic and social inequalities, failures in social protection and continuing social injustice.

### **Reflections On Social Solidarity**

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic is already showing us that another form of societal organisation is needed, that respects human rights, equality and social justice. We also see, in the rapid social and economic responses of governments to this crisis, that a different form of organisation is both possible and desirable.

The three organisations believe, based on research and practice experience, that this different social order can be created if all social forces at international level are engaged collectively and work together for thriving societies.



At this particular time of human history, with the unprecedented scale of the global pandemic being reported all over the world through social media, it has become obvious to everyone that the interconnectedness of societal life at a global level is more than a subject of academic discussion. It affects daily life for millions around the world. While at some level, the need for organic solidarity at a family and group level is demonstrated, on another level, the need for a global, multi-layered solidarity is being shown to be essential for everybody's health, safety and wellbeing.

Therefore, in these exceptional days of our history, it seems important to our global bodies that we work together to address, articulate, conceptualize and practice all forms of solidarity at all levels.

Solidarity can take many forms and is understood differently in different cultures. For example, basic human solidarity can involve interest groups, family and friends who share a common purpose and outlook and it can also be created in human institutions, such as community organisations and professional bodies. Examples of ways in which solidarity can be understood in the context of the pandemic crisis include:

**Global solidarity:** More than ever before, the global community is coming together to fight the pandemic, showing collective responsibility to contain and control the spread, with some notable exceptions. In the next phase, that solidarity should be sustained to enable the rebuilding of the economic health of nations severely hit by the health pandemic. This highlights the importance of multilateralism and peace building.

**Community solidarity and the role of state:** Formal state institutions can play a key role in building and sustaining community solidarity but this is less effective in an environment of eroding or very limited health, welfare and social protection mechanisms. The response to the pandemic illustrates the crucial role of the state in ensuring that all people have access to economic, health and welfare security.

**Technology and knowledge solidarity:** The asymmetry in global access to knowledge and technology undermines solidarity and strategies to respond to the global crisis. This crisis has proved that, in a networked global society, vulnerabilities can be reduced by shared knowledge and technological support. In a knowledge society, no social justice can be ensured without knowledge justice.

**Solidarity between generations:** There is an inequality in the distribution of resources between generations seen perhaps most strongly in the misuse of the physical resources of the earth, lack of respect for the natural environment and the failure to act decisively on the threat of climate change. Social solidarity requires environmental solidarity.

**Respect for all within community solidarity:** Existing social divisions become exacerbated in situations of crisis. Solidarity within and between communities is an essential pre-requisite for addressing shared vulnerabilities. Solidarity also implies challenging racism, stigmatisation, isolation and discrimination. These solidarities can be sustained by civil society organisations, corporate organisations and other actors in the social sector. Solidarity is needed to facilitate and mediate respect for human rights.



Other approaches to understanding and describing solidarity are also possible and not mutually exclusive.

Between now and the end of August 2020, the global bodies are inviting people to send suggestions about the elements of solidarity which could provide a focus for World Social Work Days and for national and international organisational activity during 2020-2022 leading up to global events in 2022. What does solidarity mean to you?

## **GLOBAL AGENDA FOR SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT 2020-22**

The suggested pillar for this first two years of the decade recognises the importance of social solidarity as the foundation of social work and social policy and as a worldwide experience in the context of responding to the pandemic.

### **Possible Theme Descriptors 2020-22**

The Global Agenda themes or pillars for World Social Work Day - and for regional and global conferences - must be sufficiently general to be used in all countries and situations but must also be useable in every local situation. A clear descriptor is needed as a basis for messaging and for national and international campaigns through the two years. The theme has to be expressed in a few words which can be used in a poster and on a website.

The following options are offered for consultation and to stimulate reflection and discussion.

The organisations invite you to indicate which you prefer from the following or if you wish to propose an alternative:

- A Reaching out and implementing all forms of solidarity**
- B Promoting connections between peoples & strengthening solidarity**
- C Recognising global connectedness and nurturing social solidarity**

## **THE GLOBAL AGENDA 2022-2030**

The Global Agenda for the whole decade will be grounded in the concept of solidarity but will need to identify integrated but separate pillars as a focus for World Social Work Days, conferences, publications and advocacy. The intention of IASSW, ICSW and IFSW is to agree four more pillars covering each two year period for the rest of the decade. These pillars will be endorsed by mid-2022. The consultation on those pillars will therefore continue over the next 24 months. A process for the consultation will be developed and shared with all stakeholders during the coming months.

The intention is to identify thematic pillars that have global relevance. Each pillar should relate to the different groups of service users and the range of social problems which can be listed as sub-themes.



## **CONSULTATION**

We are inviting consultees to:

- endorse a single descriptor of the solidarity pillar for 2020-22 (A, B or C above) or propose a different wording
- provide feedback on the description and elements of solidarity proposed for 2020-22. What does solidarity mean to you?
- propose themes/pillars for each two year period which give a focus for The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development 2022-2030.

Please send your feedback to the Global Agenda Task Force at the special email address: [globalagendaswd@gmail.com](mailto:globalagendaswd@gmail.com)

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29 May 2020



## **APPENDIX IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC – INITIAL OBSERVATIONS**

The already observed consequences of the global pandemic illustrate the scale of its impact. These and other factors will influence the shape of the debate about The Global Agenda and the focus of professional reflection. The impacts below are not exhaustive:

### **CONSEQUENCES OF THE VIRUS ALREADY OBSERVED IN ALL COUNTRIES**

- thousands of deaths, resulting in increased anxiety about social gatherings, collective grief and a sense of personal vulnerability
- weaknesses in health and social services exposed
- changed social attitudes to risk and inflection, including widespread wearing of masks and avoidance of personal contact in social situations
- stigmatisation, blaming and conflict within and between communities and countries
- significant threats to basic essentials such as water, food and shelter
- significant challenges to human rights in emergency laws and government powers
- major economic dislocation with loss of employment and business activity, exposing the absence of effective systems of social protection in most countries
- changed patterns of economic activity
- disruption to education at all levels with schools closed in many countries
- disruption to social work education and training and introduction or expansion of new teaching methodologies at short notice which tend to exacerbate inequalities especially relating to access to digital devices
- experience of new forms of community solidarity and mutual aid
- new forms of religious observance which do not depend on social gatherings
- substantial increase in national debt.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF THE VIRUS ALREADY OBSERVED IN ECONOMICALLY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

- experience of new forms of economic structures in many countries, including the introduction, in effect, of state paid national minimum incomes and substantial increases in social security payments in some countries (often without national discussion or the usual political processes)
- changed attitudes to and experience of work, including new acknowledgement of the importance of many key workers, many of whom are traditionally low paid and low status
- changed work patterns with increased home working for some
- accelerated switch away from local shops, supermarkets and shopping malls to online deliveries
- changed relationships between the public and some professional groups, including substantial increase in phone-based and online medical and social consultations and less reliance on face-to-face activity

### **PROBABLE FUTURE GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES**

- post-traumatic stress in all countries arising from social distancing and quarantine
- political turbulence in some countries as a result of economic and social dislocation
- reaction against globalisation, strengthening of nationalism and fear of foreigners and tighter controls at borders, including challenge to multilateral institutions
- recognition of the reality of global inter-connectedness and strengthening commitment to global institutions
- preference for health and welfare security as more important than economic growth

29 April 2020