



Annual Report of the Executive Director July 2015 to June 2016

During its twelfth year, the Global Social Observatory continued with active engagement in support of multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue, and to promote collaboration and action on global social issues. The GSO Action Plan for 2015-2016 has included the following four items:

- a. Addressing the Post-2015 Development Agenda
- b. Collaborating with partners on non-communicable diseases
- c. Following up with lessons learned on conflict of interest
- d. Exploring innovative approaches to reduce inequality

This report provides a summary of the GSO activities on each of these items. Additional information can be found in the biannual newsletter (June 2015, December 2015 and June 2016) that has been sent out to GSO members and friends and is also available on the GSO website (www.gsogeneva.ch). The newsletter also includes commentary on the Geneva international scene and a calendar of upcoming events.

Addressing the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Since 2013, the GSO has been promoting a multi-stakeholder, inter-active and cross-cutting approach to the Post-2015 Development Agenda. As the Millennium Development Goals were reaching their fifteen-year targets in 2015, the focus of the “world of development” was shifting to a post-2015 world. The MDGs had served as a successful mobilizing tool but had their weaknesses – in uneven outcomes, in perceptions of an incomplete agenda, in not having had a far-reaching and inclusive process for choosing the goals, in the absence of clear financing vehicles. In the early stages of the deliberations for a new set of Sustainable Development Goals, there were numerous and even competing consultation processes. The GSO focused on promoting a better understanding of linkages among the various thematic priorities. Starting with a series of webinars in 2013 and 2014 researched and presented by GSO interns, the GSO convened several roundtable events and panel discussions in 2014 and 2015 to stimulate cross-cutting dialogue among stakeholders from the UN system, NGOs, private sector and academia in Geneva. The GSO even organized sessions at the WTO Public Forum each year on linking an SDG-related theme to trade.

In September 2015, and after an extensive and inclusive multi-year consultative process, the UN General Assembly finally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. The enthusiasm for the new Agenda - and for the new approach to “multi-stakeholderism” that dominated discussions at many of the events - permeated the celebratory atmosphere. The GSO was able to capture this spirit for some first-hand reporting and analysis of the implications for the Geneva international scene.



As described in the GSO Annual Report for 2014 to 2015, the GSO was active in facilitating a collaborative approach for Geneva-based engagement with the 2030 Agenda even before the eventful outcome at the UN General Assembly in September 2015. This included outreach to the United Nations Office at Geneva to be associated with its efforts to promote a Geneva-based focus on cross-cutting and multi-stakeholder partnerships on the Sustainable Development Goals. The annual GSO General Assembly in June 2015 included a panel with participants from UNOG, ILO, WWF International and Graduate Women international. A report of that panel discussion is included with the 2015 General Assembly Minutes.

Following the September Summit in New York, the GSO continued to stimulate cross-cutting dialogue – in collaboration with the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development at the WTO Public Forum on 2 October 2015; through participation at the annual gathering of the Committee on World Food Security in Rome on 12 to 15 October 2015; and through the convening of an informal brainstorming session on transitioning from the process for developing the SDGs to a process oriented to the development of indicators for the SDGs and targets. This latter process, in the hands of the UN Statistical Commission, had a timeline of completion by March 2016, but with clear signals about the content of these indicators well before then. Thus, the GSO Management Committee requested a further more structured brainstorming session to articulate the appropriate GSO role in supporting the operational implementation of the SDGs. This was held on 19 February 2016, and a report summarizing this discussion is available on the GSO website.

Spinning off from this February session, a GSO Working Group (thanks to Beris Gwynne, Katherine Hagen and Cecile Molinier) has developed the following five-point action plan for the GSO:

1. The GSO will conduct a mapping exercise based on the activities of Geneva-based organizations that are developing cross-cutting approaches to implementation strategies on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. The GSO emphasis is on what is happening in the Geneva international scene, putting it into a global context but also recognizing the ways in which the Geneva setting can be harnessed for multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration at the national and community levels.
3. The GSO will adapt its information services to deliver news and analysis on these activities to diplomatic missions of developing countries, civil society and other stakeholder groups.
4. The GSO will also work with UNOG and others in the Geneva international scene to facilitate dialogue opportunities on various sub-clusters of SDGs to complement and stimulate emerging initiatives with a cross-cutting and integrating approach.
5. The GSO will apply its expertise on alignment of interests in multi-stakeholder initiatives to analyse and disseminate a knowledge base on best practice and sustainability of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This action plan is now being distributed to prospective partners and sponsors.

The GSO also benefited from collaboration with a team of graduate students in an applied research seminar at the Graduate Institute, culminating in a paper on “Opportunities and Challenges for Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Linking Climate Change with the Post-2015



Development Agenda”. The paper is available on the GSO website, along with a summary of the features of mutually beneficial partnerships. The biggest advantage of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, they concluded, is “their flexible, informal and decentralized structure through which they can potentially link the local realities and practices with the global environmental and development norms and policies”. Our thanks for Elin Andersson, Simoa Hernelyova and Veronica Pedroni for their excellent work and contribution to the GSO information based on multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Collaborating with Partners on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

GSO work on NCDs included roundtables in 2011 and 2012 and a colloquium series in 2013. The GSO Management Committee recognized that the lessons learned from that series could be adapted to further projects, and this has been the impetus for several outreach activities in 2015 and 2016. The GSO has been supporting the NCD Alliance ever since 2011 and active in many of their events. In 2015, the GSO became affiliated with the Global Coordinating Mechanism for NCDs at the World Health Organization, and has initiated a dialogue with the Global Health Council in advocating for multi-stakeholder engagement in the global campaign on the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases. The GSO has participated in GCM “dialogues”, of which there were two in 2015 and one scheduled for later in the year in 2016. The GCM also convenes regular webinars and information sessions on its various working groups.

A longer-term initiative is still being developed, in collaboration with the Global Health Council, to combine the GSO and GHC support for action against NCDs with an application of the trust—building reference note and toolkit on prevention and management of conflict of interest that the GSO developed for the SUN Movement in 2013 to 2015. A concept note has been shared with GHC, and a proposal is under development.

Following Up with Lessons Learned on Conflict of Interest

As reported last year, the GSO completed a two-year project on the prevention and management of conflict of interest for the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement in April 2015. The purpose of the project was to undertake a transparent process to address the issue of conflict of interest in the context of the SUN Movement, in order to ensure that all stakeholders could contribute fully to achieving the Movement’s objective of delivering better nutritional outcomes for mothers and children.

As it has with programs to address HIV/AIDS, diabetes and non-communicable diseases, the GSO created a neutral space for all stakeholders committed to working together through the SUN Movement to end maternal and child under-nutrition, to build a mutual understanding of each stakeholder’s objective; to prepare guidance on the practical meaning of engagement in the SUN Movement; and to explore ways to manage conflicts of interest that may arise. The final work product for the project was a reference note and toolkit on the prevention and management of conflict of interest in the SUN Movement. It features the



trust-building process of defining COI, setting up transparent disclosure procedures for prevention of COI, establishing a risk-based approach and due diligence for identifying and managing COI when it arises, and applying a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of the process.

Since the completion of the project, the GSO has supported discussions with the Global Health Council for the development of a follow-up adaptation of the reference note and toolkit to the NCD setting, as discussed in the previous section of this Annual Report. The SUN Movement itself is promoting implementation through workshops at its annual Global Gatherings and with a COI Working Group in which the GSO is participating.

Meanwhile, the issue of conflict of interest has been addressed in a new WHO Framework for Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA) that was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2016. The GSO is evaluating how its work relates to the FENSA provisions, in particular the definitions of COI and adaptations of risk assessments and due diligence. This new policy at the WHO will have significant bearing on COI prevention and management in the SUN Movement as well as in any NCD campaigns.

Exploring Innovative Approaches to Reduce Inequality

The fourth item on the GSO Action Plan for 2015 to 2016 is intended to facilitate exploration of new issues for GSO engagement that could benefit from the basic mission of the GSO. This mission is to facilitate dialogue and disseminate information on social issues in order to encourage stakeholders to engage in a broadened search for solutions and policy coherence. The GSO Management Committee identified a potential need for a Geneva-based dialogue or information-sharing on the challenges associated with inequality both between and within States. The GSO Management Committee has held a few discussions on this issue, with consideration directed to evolving policies for a social protection floor but also to the impact of climate change on inequality. More recently, the growing concerns about migration and the record number of people who are displaced from their home communities are adding to the breadth of this issue. No specific initiative is yet being developed, but the GSO remains open to further consideration of this issue.

Related to the broad challenges of inequality are the challenges of addressing gender inequalities. The GSO Executive Director has been honoured to be invited to join the International Geneva Gender Champions and has attended several events in support of this programme. The GSO has also joined with Women@TheTable to submit a joint proposal for a workshop on gender and trade at the 2016 WTO Public Forum. The specific focus of the proposal is “Women’s Economic Empowerment and Trade: Contributing to the Deliberations and Recommendations of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment”. The 2016 WTO Public Forum will be held from 27 to 29 September 2016. At the annual 2016 GSO General Assembly, furthermore, the Members and Friends of the GSO are invited to participate in an informal dialogue on gender equality, with special guests Caitlin Buchman-Kraft (founder of Women@TheTable), Sultana Khanum



(consultant on nutrition for health and development) and a representative from the ILO Gender Bureau.

Changes on the GSO Management Committee

Members of the Management Committee currently have two-year terms and can be re-elected without limit to the number of terms. It should be noted that Constance Thomas (2014 to 2016), Linda Carrier-Walker (2015 to 2017) and Chiedu Osakwe (2015 to 2017) have effectively resigned from the Management Committee prior to the completion of their terms. We thank them for their support of the GSO and wish them well in their future endeavours.

The following members were elected or re-elected for two-year terms in 2014 and are up for re-election for a two-year term from 2016 to 2018:.

Ralph Doggett (Secretary/Treasurer)
Katherine Hagen (Executive Director)
Mustapha Kamal Gueye (Member)
Julia Tanijoki-Seyer (Member)

The GSO Management Committee recommends the election of the following individuals as members for a two-year term from 2016 to 2018:

Beris Gwynne (Member)
Cecile Molinier (Member)

The following members hold current two-year terms from 2015 to 2017:

Deborah Vorhies (President)
Manzoor Ahmad (Member)
Mark Halle (Member)