



## Annual Report of the Executive Director June 2016 to May 2017

During its thirteenth year, the Global Social Observatory continued with its basic mandate in support of multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue, and to promote collaboration and action on global social issues. The GSO Action Plan for 2016-2017 has included the following four items:

- a. Addressing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- 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 2016 and January/February 2017) that has been sent out to GSO members and friends and is also available on the GSO website ([www.gsogeneva.ch](http://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**

A little bit of history first: The Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000 for a fifteen-year period, proved to be more successful than anticipated. The momentum to support a broadened set of goals to replace them by 2015 started several years before this target date. The GSO facilitated dialogue and collaboration on many of the global social issues that were being considered for this new platform. Starting as early as 2012, the GSO promoted a multi-stakeholder, inter-active and cross-cutting approach to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, now described as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The GSO focused on promoting a better understanding of linkages among the various thematic priorities. These efforts are covered in previous annual reports.

Through this past year, the GSO has been active in encouraging a collaborative approach for Geneva-based engagement with the 2030 Agenda. This has included outreach to the United Nations Office at Geneva and to the UN Development Programme. And the GSO is well briefed and engaged with the newly formed SDG Lab at UNOG and supports the 2030 Geneva Ecosystem.

The main elements of GSO support have been articulated in a five-point action plan as follows:

1. The GSO will be available to 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.

Most of the focus this year has been on the third and fourth points of the action plan. The GSO General Assembly special session in 2016 featured a gender-based discussion with several Geneva-based participants that helped guide some further outreach by the GSO on gender partnering. In collaboration with Women@TheTable, the GSO convened a panel on women's economic empowerment and trade for the 2016 WTO Public Forum. This was further followed by the GSO Executive Director moderating a panel on trade and women's economic empowerment on International Women's Day, 8 March 2017.

It is as a result of building on these activities that the GSO Management Committee determined to integrate a focus on gender with linkages to agriculture, food security and trade to explore how partnering might emerge for "Disruption as a Force against Hunger" at the 2017 GSO General Assembly session. Furthermore, the GSO is more than ever positioned to engage in partnering possibilities across multiple sectors, SDGs and stakeholder groups. This is the core of the GSO mandate.

### **Collaborating with Partners on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**

The GSO has worked in this area for several years, and it remains an area of interest. Discussions were held in late 2016 with the Global Health Council for a possible collaboration in the future. In the past, 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.

### **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. The GSO continued to support the SUN Movement through its Conflict of Interest Working Group, which operated through 2016 but has not been renewed in 2017.

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.

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 work on a Global Compact for Migration 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.

### **Changes on the GSO Management Committee**

Members of the Management Committee currently have two-year terms.

The following members are completing two-year terms from 2015 to 2017 and have agreed to be re-elected for another two-year term from 2017 to 2019:

Deborah Vorhies (President)



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Manzoor Ahmad (Member)  
Mark Halle (Member)

The following has agreed to serve her first two-year term for 2017 to 2019:

Susan Brown (Member)

The following members are serving a two-year term from 2016 to 2018:

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

The following member has offered her resignation half-way through her two year term of 2016 to 2018:

Beris Gwynne (Member)

The Management Committee Members express their appreciation for her generous service and wish her well in her future endeavours.