

**Annual Meeting of the General Assembly
of the Global Social Observatory
220 Route de Ferney, Le Grand Saconnex, Switzerland
Tuesday, 18 June 2013**

Annual Report of the Executive Director
July 2012 to June 2013

During its ninth year, the activities of the Global Social Observatory (GSO, formerly known as the Geneva Social Observatory) continued its active engagement with the global campaign against non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and in support of multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue, collaboration and action. The GSO convened a Colloquium Series on NCDs and participated in consultations convened by the WHO on the development of a monitoring framework, global targets and indicators and a revised global action plan on NCDs. The GSO published a report on lessons learned regarding multi-stakeholder collaboration at the conclusion of the Colloquium Series. Subsequently, the GSO launched a new project on a “Consultation Process on Conflict of Interest in the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement”. The GSO has also organized a preliminary webinar on the thematic consultations leading up to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and is preparing further activities on this topic.

Meanwhile, the GSO Management Committee adopted a statement of principles for the GSO to clarify its role in facilitating a neutral space for multi-stakeholder dialogue on contentious social issues. The Committee adopted a new membership policy and presented a complete revision of the statutes for approval at an extraordinary session of the General Assembly in September 2012. Finally, this report provides updates on changes in the GSO leadership.

The GSO Colloquium Series on Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration on NCDs

As summarized in last year’s report, the GSO built on a successful series of roundtables in 2011 with the formation of a GSO Working Group on NCDs that met on a near-weekly basis to organize the 2012 GSO Colloquium Series on NCDs. This started with a “Launch Event” for the Colloquium Series on 10 January 2012, with a new participatory format, the “café politique” format. This format was repeated in three additional Colloquium events on 31 March, 3 July and 30 October 2012. These were supplemented with an “Afternoon Tea” event on 16 May 2012. Participants also adopted a “Statement for Multi-Stakeholder and Multi-Sectoral Engagement on NCDs” in January 2012 that was used as the basis for continuing inputs and updates on the Colloquium Series in the WHO consultation process.

The broadened participatory format of the Colloquium Series culminated in a set of six lessons learned about multi-stakeholder engagement as follows:

- The multi-stakeholder approach is an umbrella for meaningful dialogue
- Perceptions of conflict of interest must be dealt with through an inclusive approach
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration requires everyone to operate beyond their respective roles
- People-centered care is the starting point for a systemic social and health care approach to NCDs
- A life-course approach integrates healthy lifestyles with prevention, treatment and care and further reinforces the need for a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach.
- The issue of equitable access to prevention, treatment and care requires a central role for governments.

These lessons were shared with WHO Executive Board members in January 2013 and presented once again in an informal consultation event organized by the WHO in March 2013. The GSO was recognized for being in the forefront of learning about multi-stakeholder engagement and notes that the global plan of action adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2013 incorporated the GSO position that conflict of interest issues must be addressed for all stakeholders and not just the private sector. We are hopeful that further opportunities will arise for sharing these lessons learned and pursuing the action items for further learning and collaboration.

The GSO Working Group on NCDs was a valuable asset in preparing the Colloquium Series. The GSO is most appreciative of the volunteer service of its members. Funding for the Colloquium Series came from Medtronic, Sanofi and Eli Lilly, as well as in-kind support from Unilever, and we are most grateful to all of them.

Consultation Process on Conflict of Interest in the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement

As we reported last year, the GSO was already preparing to apply its basic participatory format to a new project involving nutrition and health in support of the UN inter-agency initiative on Scaling Up Nutrition. The possibility was first raised at the Rio+20 Summit in June 2012, and formal negotiations were initiated in October 2012. A full proposal was submitted to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in January 2013, and approval was officially granted in April to implement a consultation process on Conflict of Interest issues associated with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The project will run from April 2013 to February 2015.

The purpose of the project is to undertake a transparent process to address the issue of conflict of interest within the context of the SUN Movement, in order to

ensure that all stakeholders can contribute fully to achieving the Movement's objective of delivering better nutritional outcomes for mothers and children. The Movement is supporting government-led, multi-stakeholder initiatives in over 40 countries. As it has with programs to address HIV/AIDS, diabetes and non-communicable diseases, the GSO is creating 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 project is organized around three objectives – (1) mapping the issues regarding the Principles of Engagement for the SUN Movement; (2) establishing and implementing a consultative process to adopt a guidance note on the Principles of Engagement and conflict of interest; and (3) implementing the guidance note in specific enhanced learning exercises. The mapping exercise has been completed, and the first consultation event occurred on 13 June 2013. Additional consultation events will occur on 25 July and 16 October 2013. The enhanced learning exercises will be convened on dates yet to be determined in 2014.

Post-2015 Development Agenda

Looking beyond this exciting project for the SUN Movement, the GSO initiated an interest in promoting a multi-stakeholder approach to the Post-2015 Development Agenda with a webinar in April 2013. The webinar presented an analysis of the outcomes and participant groups in the eleven thematic consultations underway for the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The webinar was conducted jointly with the Council for Multilateral Business Diplomacy, and future cooperative projects are being explored. The Post-2015 Development Agenda provides the GSO with a timely framework for furthering its work in support of multi-stakeholder collaboration on NCDs, universal health coverage, intellectual property rights, food security and nutrition, climate change and water resources management, as well as more broadly in the areas of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Management Committee Actions

As noted in last year's report, the Management Committee started a process in February 2012 of developing a basic statement of principles for multi-stakeholder engagement and broadened it to include guidance for membership policy. These were further discussed in May 2012, with specific revisions of a draft statement of principles and instructions for a new membership policy and a review of the GSO statutes. In September 2012, the Management Committee approved the statement of principles to reinforce the GSO commitment to inclusiveness in its membership and activities. The Committee also approved a new membership

policy that includes an option for corporate memberships. A preliminary list of prospective members was approved in subsequent meetings of the Committee, and some progress has been made in bringing in new members. More remains to be done.

The September 2012 meeting also coincided with the extraordinary session of the General Assembly to adopt a comprehensive revision of the statutes. This required transmission of the revised statutes to the Geneva Registre de Commerce that turned out to be a longer process than anticipated. All current members of the Management Committee had to submit their acceptance in original of letters of appointment to the Committee and a copy of their official passports. This was finally completed in April 2013. The main difference now is that the GSO is officially recognized as the Global Social Observatory rather than the Geneva Social Observatory. However, for purposes of the GSO's accreditation at the United Nations, the name change will take yet another year because the deadline had passed in April for approval of the name change by the relevant committee of the Economic and Social Council there. So we continue to operate with UN badges listing the GSO as the Geneva Social Observatory.

Changes at GSO

The Geneva Social Observatory has been fortunate to have a wide array of supporters who have contributed their time and resources to GSO programmes. The most substantial contribution of time has come from HRI, and efforts have been made to cover the costs incurred by HRI, at least in terms of specific project outputs. In addition, members of the GSO Management Committee have been actively involved in specific endeavours for the GSO, including their expertise on budgeting, auditing, or otherwise managing the GSO accounts.

We note with appreciation the services of Linda Carrier-Walker, Martin Watson and Deborah Vorhies whose terms on the Committee come to an end in 2013. We hope that Linda will agree to a new two-year term on the Committee. Martin has announced that he will not seek another term, and we hope the General Assembly will pass a resolution in appreciation of his service. Deborah's term as President of the GSO was extended one year in September 2012 to allow for coterminous terms for Committee membership and Presidential office. We are recommending that she be re-elected as both a member of the Committee and President for a two-year term as provided in the revised statutes. In addition, Manzoor Ahmad was welcomed back to the Committee in November, and we hope he will continue with a new term.