

**NORDIC VOICES
FOR GLOBAL
SOLIDARITY:
VISION PAPER**

June 2026

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Nordic Council
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PAST



Illustration: Tani Dibasey

What Does Solidarity Mean?

A deep understanding of solidarity in the context of global action requires distinguishing it from charity, saviourism, and nepotism. Acts of kindness or humanity should not be confused with solidarity, though finding shared humanity or connection with the natural world provides nutritious ground for solidarity.

As opposed to an obligation, solidarity is an active choice. It requires something more than reflection, words and rhetoric. Choosing solidarity means to envision a future that looks different than the present. Solidarity demands a deep understanding of who we are and how we are connected as the natural world, people, societies and civil society actors. It requires recognition of our joint fates and a decision to face that fate together as equals.

Solidarity is not something that is decided only by the party who wants to show or do solidarity. You cannot 'do solidarity onto someone'. In equal partnerships based on solidarity, the action taken is understood and accepted as solidarity also by the recipient. Real solidarity has to be valued by all actors involved.

Solidarity implies action without the expectation of something concrete or immediate in return. It builds on a deeper understanding of our connection. This understanding requires active reflection and deep listening. It requires mutual accountability and shared responsibility, as well as a willingness to take risks. Solidarity cannot be abandoned when times get tough. Sometimes solidarity comes at a cost: a calculation of what the consequences, positive and negative, of the solidarity action will be and deciding to go ahead despite the cost, even if and when all consequences

cannot be determined beforehand. It requires active change and taking a stand.

For civil society organisations to act in solidarity, they must show that they are principled about their principles. Global solidarity requires acknowledging historical injustices and understanding how present inequalities have been shaped by past and ongoing systems of power, extraction, exclusion, and domination. Solidarity extends beyond present generations and beyond humanity itself. It includes responsibilities toward future generations, ecosystems, biodiversity, and the planetary systems that sustain life.

Concretely, acting in solidarity can be seen in who takes up space, in acknowledging who is not in the room rather than speaking on behalf of others, and in a willingness to absorb risks oneself rather than externalising or shifting them onto partners, particularly those with less power. A sharing of power recognises that knowledge, leadership, and solutions emerge from all parts of the world. Solidarity can also be reflected in a commitment to share resources rather than moving ahead alone and leaving others behind. Solidarity requires a sense of connectedness and shared purpose, as well as a commitment to begin with ourselves: to improve our own practices, strengthen the relationships we build, and reflect on how we mobilise solidarity.

What Future World Can Solidarity Lead to?

Through actions towards solidarity, we may achieve real change and a different kind of future.

By acting in global solidarity, we can move towards a world of increased wellbeing, where quality of life is no longer a privilege for a few, but a reality for people across the world. Policy is founded on shared futures and shared responsibilities. We deliver on a world where people's lives are characterised by safety, dignity and hope.

In such a world, resources are evenly distributed. Everyone has enough. Access to basic services is guaranteed. There is a new definition and understanding of what is shared which is based on solidarity. It is no longer about what is yours or what is mine, but about what is ours. Solidarity is experienced through trust, mutual care, respect, and the confidence that communities will not face challenges alone. Sustainability is linked with justice and the continuous building and rebuilding of trust, belonging, and democratic inclusion to ensure that inequalities are not reproduced. Solidarity has evolved from being reactive and crisis-driven toward being preventative, structural, and sustained.

Applying global solidarity, the decentralisation of power and remodelling of hierarchies has strengthened the civil society ecosystem. The scope of civil society is broader, and engaging in civic action is the new normal, closing the gap between political and civic activity. Opportunities to engage at the local level are available to everyone. Young people are active participants and leaders in shaping just and sustainable futures.

A world based on global solidarity leads to a situation where taking action is the new normal. This is understood in relation to the breaking down of a division between political and civic activity. Civic activity and caring for common goods go hand in hand, and appeal to communities that have time and energy, as life is no longer only about survival. Participation in civic activity is something most people strive for; the movement is joyful and energising.

What has Changed when We Do Solidarity?

One of the biggest changes has been in the definition and holding of power.

It has been recognised that power has become too concentrated and needs to be dismantled. Within civil society, power and money are no longer linked. Resources have been distributed more evenly. A decolonisation process of power and current systems, reflections and questioning of privilege, has been tough, but a necessary part of the process.

How power is exercised has also changed, and direct democracy plays a more central role. There is broader understanding of how structural violence - including poverty, exclusion, racism, displacement, environmental destruction, and economic inequality – needs to be addressed as a barrier to lasting peace.

Change has been founded on a deeper understanding of universal rights and historical perspectives on rights. Stories from a multitude of perspectives are being shared and listened to. As many communities in the Global South are already living with overlapping challenges like climate change, economic hardship, and conflict, futures thinking has stemmed more strongly from lived experiences rather than abstract policy visions alone.

Time is used differently; ensuring that everyone feels like they have time for listening and creating understanding is a shared priority. Creating spaces for listening is done jointly. Investment into listening has generated more curiosity, leading to

more listening and the creation of a positive self-feeding cycle. Learning is not only through formal education but through arts and creative thinking. Art and play are essential as drivers of change and facilitators of unlearning harmful practices and assumptions and relearning restorative ones.

Creativity and play have also made it easier to understand one's position in the system more deeply, to critically reflect on it and to act on the opportunities that one's positionality may offer.

The courage and power for change have come from the joining of civil society movements, investment into community, connection and the exchange of knowledge. Breaking down siloes, recognising the interconnected nature of challenges and investing into mutual exchange have built stepping stones for local autonomy and grassroots activism to grow stronger.

Cooperation and connection has fuelled a sense of shared responsibility and collective resilience. Active participation, equality and respect for people, animals and nature have become positive reinforces of progressive action.

To get there, we need to act on solidarity and walk the talk. We need to take on hard conversations and critically engage with our own role to achieve changes. The path will not be the same for everyone, but we hope we can provide some inspiration.

NORDIC VOICES FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY: Background

In 2026, the platforms, Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment, Danish Global Focus and Finnish Development NGOs Fingo implemented a project entitled “Nordic Voices for Global Solidarity”. The project was funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers’ funding programme Demos.

The aim of the project was to support Nordic civil society actors, particularly those working on international development, to reimagine and realign. The reimagining focused on the meaning of global solidarity within the context of Nordic social sustainability and a just transition. The realignment involved breaking out of silos and strengthening knowledge exchange beyond our usual circles.

To do so, we gathered people living in Nordic countries that in different ways engage with global solidarity through their art, their work, their free time or their personal experience to share experiences, knowledge and to discuss

– both in-person and in online sessions. Our vision gives a glimpse into conversations on solidarity held during the project period.

A key part of the process was letting go of reliance on words and text and giving space for feelings and embodiment. Thus, the final product of the process could not be a report. Art is a central part of the vision and its implementation.

The following encompasses conversations and information that has been harvested throughout the project’s main components. We sincerely thank everyone who has participated and contributed along the way.

Survey on *Perceptions of Global Solidarity*

At the start of the project, we carried out a survey to obtain data on how different Nordic civil society actors view global solidarity. 186 civil society actors participated across Finland, Norway and Denmark, casting a total of 5083 votes. The survey was carried out on [Voxit](#) and included a number of statements on global solidarity that respondents could either agree or disagree with.

The results showed very broad agreement among respondents on core values. Nearly all supported advancing global solidarity (96%) and the responsibility of Nordic countries to reduce poverty and inequality (95%), with nearly as strong consensus on protecting future generations, including Indigenous peoples. This suggests that disagreements across Nordic civil society on global solidarity are not about fundamental values, but rather about how to interpret current challenges and how far change should go.

Yet some issues proved divisive, particularly whether sustainability and equality goals should be postponed in times of instability, whose interests development cooperation serves, and whether restrictions on civil society can be justified in the name of 'security'. These differences shaped three main groups: "Critical Realists" (17%), who take a more pragmatic or realpolitik-oriented thinking and are more willing to prioritise

stability; "Strong Multilateralists" (26%), who largely believe in the effectiveness of development cooperation and believe it can be improved from within; and the largest group; and "Supporters of structural change" (57%), who are the most critical and call for fundamental reform, including greater global justice and decolonial approaches. A full 100% of the last group are prepared for Nordic countries to give up their economic advantages in the name of global justice – a very unique result.

Finally, a few of the most contentious statements were often skipped, suggesting uncertainty or difficulty in taking a clear position. These included whether development cooperation mainly serves donor interests, whether development funds should be directed straight to Global Majority partners, and whether Nordic organisations sufficiently support local civil society actors.

Webinar on *Navigating Change in a Shifting Global Landscape* as a preparatory step for discussions on global solidarity

After the survey, a webinar was organised to form an understanding of the changing operating environment for questions of global solidarity in the Nordic countries and to form a research-based understanding of the current status of global solidarity in Europe.

To generate thinking, Dr. Margit van Wessel presented highlights of her research on **transnational** solidarity. Dr. van Wessel is an Associate Professor in at Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands with over 20 years' experience in researching civil society advocacy. Her presentation and classification of different forms of translational solidarity provided a useful academic basis for thinking about the meaning and ways to advance solidarity.

TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

1. Relating, organizing and acting
2. With/between distantly situated others
3. To address adversity based on shared humanity, identity, experience/condition, interest/cause or entanglement

Foundations of transnational solidarity

Category	Description	Example issues
Shared identity	Basis for community/affinity, often with connotations of intersectionality, underlining intertwining forms of oppression and marginalization	LGBTQIA+ rights; indigenous rights
Shared humanity	Based on values deemed universal, such as human rights, with connotations of shared responsibility, compassion and global citizenship	Hunger; Genocide
Shared experience/condition	Common experiences, of life, injustice, or threat, or subjection to the conditions at the basis of these	Racism; power of big tech
Shared interest/cause	Focus on resolving issues from different standpoints, emphasizing human and global interdependence	Climate change; supply chain worker protections
Shared entanglement	Implicated in structural conditions causing injustice - can involve asymmetrical relations, invoking responsibilities of one group towards another	Colonial history; capitalist exploitation

@ Margit van Wessel 2026. Wageningen University & Research.

The webinar presentations and discussions among participants provided valuable background information and presented some of the key questions and challenges stakeholders encounter when discussing global solidarity. These were considered in developing the Conference methodology.

Conference on *Nordic Voices for Global Solidarity*

At a one-day Conference held in May in Helsinki, Finland, 30 people currently living in Nordic countries engaged in a day of reimagining and realigning.

Participants represented a wide range of civil society actors, including those working in development organisations, diaspora, youth and artists. All participants were united in their commitment to a vision of global solidarity.

The Conference was a philosophical and embodied investigation of the definition of global solidarity when looked at from Nordic countries. It was also an imagining of a future we could achieve through global solidarity. Finally, it was an exploration of how we could implement global solidarity and what that journey would look like.

The discussions were not conclusive. They are a foundation for further discussions, explorations as well as concrete action to make the vision a reality.

We recognise that there is a need to continue to diversify the voices discussing solidarity and advancing global solidarity, also in

Nordic countries. In addition, global solidarity requires discussion and envisioning with global partners.

We also acknowledge that we are not the only ones discussing solidarity, and that there is not one sole conceptualisation of solidarity. We recognise that civil society goes far beyond and draws strength beyond big international organisations. We recognise that foresight and creating alternative visions of the world are methodologies that have been championed by social movements including queer, disability and feminist movements. We also recognise that there are movements that appeal to solidarity with aims that are opposite to our aims; we distance ourselves from any white supremacist formulations of solidarity.

A toolkit developed to accompany this vision can support the next steps of any actor interested in global solidarity.

Danish Global Focus

<https://globaltfokus.dk/en/>

Finnish Development NGOs Fingo

<https://fingo.fi/en/>

Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment

<https://forumfor.no/en/>