

Co-Building Hope and Harmony: A *Harambee* Call to Unite a Divided Society

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Abstract

In response to the current conflict in the Middle East—marked by mass civilian suffering, displacement, and technologically mediated warfare—my message is to affirm social work's sole allegiance to humanity and to reject ideological partisanship to which we may be drawn based on our state, allegiance, and nation. I draw on the philosophy of *Harambee* ("all pull together"). I see strengths-based practice as moral action: centring lived experience, protecting the most vulnerable despite political inconvenience, and resisting ethical paralysis amid institutional failure. I urge social workers globally to practice solidarity across borders, sustain collective care to counter moral injury, invest in the ethical formation of future practitioners, and collaborate across disciplines, cultures, and faiths. This is a global message to professional social workers, a call to act.

Keywords: Social Work Ethics; *Harambee*; Middle East Conflict; Strengths-Based Practice ; World Social Work Day, 2026

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Figure 1: *Harambee*

Source: Generated using Microsoft Copilot.

Introduction

From Nairobi to New Delhi, Brisbane to Bogotá, Cape Town to Copenhagen, social workers step into crises not of our making, yet born on the bodies of those we serve. As **World Social Work Day 2026** arrives, the world trembles: conflicts displace millions; drones and remote warfare haunt the skies already weighed down by hunger and fear; societies polarise; the climate behaves like a wounded giant.

Institutions meant to guard peace feel hollow. The United Nations—envisioned as a moral anchor—too often stalls under the veto power of its permanent members, becoming a spectacle instead of a safeguard. In the face of human suffering, neutrality curdles into paralysis and power eclipses principle.

And yet one ethical truth holds: social workers do not enlist in ideologies. We stand on the side of humanity—life, dignity, and care matter most to us.

Harambee—All Pull Together

Harambee is not a slogan. It is co-buildership: collective strength as a strategy in an age of overlapping crises. We choose it not because it is easy, but because it is necessary.

Humanitarian Complexity in a Divided World

We practice amid turbulence that crosses borders:

- Wars that redraw futures
- Remote weapons that place civilians in the crosshairs
- Religious intolerance is corroding community life
- Economic policies that inflate prices and deepen hunger

I do not see them as isolated storms—they are a web. A choice in one hemisphere reshapes hunger in another. Conflict in one region causes a serpentine refugee queue across an ocean. Social workers see the silent emergencies that follow the loud ones: trauma, loneliness, exploitation, frayed cohesion. Hence, Harambee is not optional; it is imperative.

Strengths, Not Stereotypes

Strengths-based practice refuses to reduce people to their wounds.

Resilience is not romance; it is observable. I witness it every day. You do.

Tragically, though, we see this in the courage of displaced parents safeguarding children and in their solidarity amid food insecurity.

Rebuilding from debris and loss

Strengths are not footnotes to suffering; they are the foundations of recovery. Harambee echoes this: Don't we rise by lifting? Don't we rebuild by collaborating?

Time to heal by honouring one another's humanity. Mark me, colleagues in social work and my readers, the trauma of today's wars will cross generations unless we act decisively and together.

I Raise Loud Questions

- How do we refuse instruments of division when **polarisation** is demanded?
- Can ethics stand firm when every voice insists, we choose?
- Can human dignity survive when neutrality is no longer allowed?
- Can we defend dignity without taking sides?
- How can policy be just without the lens of lived experience?
- Will we protect the most vulnerable even when it is politically inconvenient?
- Are children, elders, minorities, and displaced people truly nonnegotiable priorities?
- How will we practice collective care to prevent moral injury and burnout?
- If burnout serves no one, why isn't care for caregivers a core professional duty?
- What do we owe the next generation of practitioners?
- Can we confront complex social suffering without interdisciplinary, intercultural, and interfaith cooperation?
- If *Harambee* means pulling together, how will partnership—not isolation—become our daily practice?

A Future Co Built, Not Inherited

If we are central to people and hold our faith steadfast, a child seeking shelter under bombardment will have a chance to live and become a mediator for peace. Far away from the war zones in our countries, a refugee youth may have an opportunity to shape a humane migration policy. These are not fantasies. They are simple maths of solidarity—the compounding interest of care.

I share my understanding openly with all professional social workers worldwide this **World Social Work Day**. Division may dominate discourse, but solidarity has always powered progress. Fear spreads fast, yet courage is contagious. Harm is global, and so is hope.

When we co-build. Let us recommit not only to hope, but to the systems that protect, services that dignify, policies that uplift, and practices that heal. Is this a big ask?

In an age of fragmentation, could we choose interdependence, and in the present time of conflict, we choose compassion without borders?

Could we choose to co-build harmony in a divided world?

We rise by lifting each other, we heal by acting together. I never saw strengths-based practice as merely a method but always recognised an inherent worldview in its architecture. Every person has capacity, every community holds wisdom, and every crisis reveals resilience. Share this wisdom with those who govern. Live—and let live. Because unity is powerful, compassion is

courageous, and hope—hope is something we practice, not something we wait for. On World Social Work Day 2026, let us choose interdependence over division, and dignity over despair.

Without losing its soul. Let us choose Harambee.

All pull together. All rise together. All rebuild together.

Happy World Social Work Day.

Conflict of Interest

I declare no conflict of interest. I write with the authority of experience and the pride of a deeply held professional identity. Nearly four decades after earning my Master of Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, I stand unapologetically as a social worker—raising my voice in steadfast support of ethical, just, and humane practice.

Expanded Transparency

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Author Contribution Statement

The author gratefully acknowledges the management of Journal Space and Culture, India, for initiating the tradition of marking **World Social Work Day** through special reports and for strengthening the journal's editorial and reviewer community by inviting numerous social work academics. I have always valued the collegiality and collaborative spirit of our executive editorship and the management team.