



# South African Council for Social Service Professions

#WSWD2026 #SACSSP

World Social Work Day 2026

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

Social workers across the globe are uniting to bridge divides, foster belonging, and build a sustainable, peaceful, and just future.

### World Social Work Day

### 17 March 2026 | #WSWD2026 | #SACSSP

Inspired by the African principle of collective effort, “all for one”, Harambee calls us to rise together, overcome divisions, and co-create harmony in our communities.

- Active Participation: Encouraging communities to engage in shaping inclusive futures.
- Social Justice: Advocating for fairness and equity across cultures and systems.
- Belonging: Creating spaces where every voice is valued and every person feels at home.

Join the worldwide recognition of social work’s impact, highlighted by a major online event hosted at the United Nations in Geneva.

Together, let’s answer the **Harambee call** - co-building hope and harmony in a divided society.

WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY  
17 MARCH 2026 | #WSWD2026

# CO-BUILDING Hope & Harmony

A Harambee  
Call to Unite  
a Divided Society



**NON NOBIS - Not for ourselves**



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## World Social Work Day 2026

### World Social Work Day 2026 - Theme Translation

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

**Afrikaans:** Saam-Bou van Hoop en Harmonie: 'n Harambee Oproep om 'n Verdeelde Samelewing te Verenig

**isiZulu:** Ukubambisana Ukwakha Ithemba Nobunye: Uhlelo lweHarambee Lokuhlanganisa Umphakathi Ohlukanisiwe

**isiXhosa:** Ukubambisana Ukwakha Ithemba noBunye: Isibizo seHarambee Sokudibanisa Uluntu Olwahlukileyo

**Sesotho:** Ho Haha Tšepo le Kutloano Hammoho: Pitso ea Harambee ea ho Kopanya Sechaba se Arohaneng

**Setswana:** Go Aga Tsholofelo le Kutlwano Mmogo: Pitso ya Harambee ya go Kopanya Setšhaba se se Arohaneng

**Sepedi (Northern Sotho):** Go Aga Tshupo le Kutlwano Mmogo: Phego ya Harambee ya go Kopanya Setšhaba se Arohaneng

**Xitsonga:** Ku Aka Ntshembo na Vun'we Hi Ku Tirhisana: Ku vitaniwa ka Harambee ku Hlanganisa Vanhu Lava Avanyisiweke

**Tshivenda:** U Vha Tshigwada U Vha na Tshedza na Vhuthihi: U Vhidzwa ha Harambee u Vhanganisa Tshitshavha Tsho Fhandekanaho

**isiNdebele:** Ukubambisana Ukwakha Ithemba Lokuthula: Ukubiza kweHarambee Ukuhlanganisa Umphakathi Ohlukanisako

**siSwati:** Kwakha Litsemba neKuhleleka Ndawonye: Libito leHarambee Lekuhlanganisa Umphakatsi Lohlukene

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

*Message from*

**Professor Paul Mbedzi**

President of the South African Council for Social Service Professions

World Social Work Day offers an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of social workers, learn more about this noble profession, and increase support for the vital role social work plays in families, schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, and the broader community. It also highlights a profession that often works quietly behind the scenes, helping people through life's toughest challenges and advocating for systems that uphold dignity for all.

The theme for 2026 is "Co-Building Hope and Harmony: A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society," inspired by the African philosophy of Harambee, meaning "pulling together" or "all for one." This theme emphasizes the importance of solidarity, mutual support, and collective responsibility in addressing societal divisions caused by conflict, inequality, displacement, and ecological crises. It highlights the role of social workers in rebuilding trust, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering dialogue across social, cultural, and political boundaries.

This call also underscores the crucial part social work plays in bringing communities and systems together to create a more inclusive and sustainable future. A common theme and a common day help us connect these experiences without assuming one "right" model for every place.

It urges us as social workers to reflect and ask how we, both as individuals and as a collective, can make a meaningful and lasting difference in the lives of those in need. The work of social workers continues to send powerful beams of hope to many in situations of extreme desperation and despair, transforming feelings of helplessness and chaos into opportunities for safety, healing, and hope.

Let's celebrate World Social Work Day together! Happy World Social Work Day to everyone!



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

*Message from*

**Ms Nicolette van der Walt**

Member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions

Today, on World Social Work Day, I want to honour each of you for the courageous work you do often unseen, often under pressure, yet always deeply impactful.

This year's theme, inspired by the African philosophy of Harambee - pulling together - reminds us that social work has always been about building hope. Every family strengthened, every child protected, every community dialogue facilitated is an act of restoring trust and harmony in a divided world.

As social workers, you build alongside children, families, colleagues, and communities - weaving resilience where there was fracture, and dignity where there was despair.

Thank you for your integrity, compassion, and unwavering commitment to justice. Your work does more than respond to crises; it helps shape a society where hope is shared, and harmony is possible.

Let us continue to pull together and radiate hope.

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

*Message from*

**Prof Fikile Mazibuko**

Member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions

The world continues to face complex challenges that threaten peace, social justice, and the progress humanity has worked hard to achieve. Ongoing wars, femicide, gender-based violence, and the displacement of people from their homes and places of belonging weaken our collective hope.

At the same time, the voices of communities - once central in advocating for nation-building, social cohesion, and democratic participation - are becoming faint. WSWD 2026 reminds us that Harambee, the spirit of 'pulling together,' is essential in rebuilding trust and strengthening societies.

Governments alone cannot address the social issues confronting us; meaningful community participation is critical and vital. Social workers must continue to champion peaceful co-existence, justice, and inclusive development. As new global realities emerge, we are called to co-build resilient communities by combining digital innovation with our inherited wisdom and professional expertise. Together, we can restore hope, harmony, and dignity for all.

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

*Message from*

**Ms Caroline Mokhele**

Member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions

As we celebrate World Social Work day, I would like to appreciate, acknowledge and recognize Social Workers across the globe for being at the forefront of co-building hope and harmony of individuals, families and communities. Social Workers advocate for justice, protect the rights of the vulnerable and work tirelessly to empower communities.

Fellow Social Workers, indeed our calling is a kingdom assignment.

We are called to unite a divided society. Unemployment, poverty and inequality continue to divide us.

This day calls for us to rebuild trust, restore dignity and create opportunities for the marginalized and the most vulnerable. Let us build hope where there is despair and harmony where there is division. Let us work together to build societies that are inclusive, compassionate and just. Harambee!

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

*Message from*

**Mr André Viviers**

Member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions

The theme of World Social Work Day 2026 - Co-Building Hope and Harmony: A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society – provides us with an opportunity to take a moment for self-reflection, and also to reflect on the role and place of social work in our communities, country and the world. An opportunity to treasure what our profession stands for – social justice, human rights, sustainability, human relationships, inclusion, non-discrimination, ethical practice, amongst others.

Social workers together with social auxiliary workers and other professionals work tirelessly, every day, to make this world a better place. Often in very trying circumstances, but always with compassion! Often, when someone asks me what social work is about, I tend to respond that it is the profession embedded in “hope”. And this leads to the most interesting opportunity to discuss the value, theory and practice of our profession.

Social workers have the skills and experience to navigate the most complex situations, as those most in need of social work services are often found in places and circumstances that challenge the conventional or where society has a their own scotoma. This is where social workers initiate the co-building of hope and harmony – often as the last bastion of hope, change and something better and different.

The very essence of being a profession embedded in “hope” also require from every social worker, social auxiliary worker, student social worker and student social auxiliary worker to stand-up and speak out for social justice and human rights. We do this in many different ways, and it requires from us to cease every possible platform. Often being the lone voice for justice and human rights, but knowing we are united with others in our profession by our common values, principles and code of ethics.

Let us include in our reflection that our main interest is those that we serve, and not ourselves, which is well captured in the motto on the SACSSP’s coat of arms: Non Nobis – not for ourselves

Harambee!



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

*Message from*

**Mr S'dumo Masilela**

Member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions

It is essential to join the global community to celebrate the 2026 World Social Work Day, themed "Co-Building Hope and Harmony: A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society".

To provide context for this theme, it is crucial to define the Swahili term "Harambee," which translates to "all pull together."

This year's theme is significant as it urges the world to unite in a collective effort to overcome divisions caused by greed and a lack of respect for humanity.

Nations worldwide are engulfed in conflict and violence due to individuals and cartels seeking to monopolize production resources.

Social Service Professionals (SSPs) are inherently activists, characterized by their nature, form, and determination. They are advocates for social action and champions of social justice.

It is no coincidence that the motto of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) states "NON NOBIS – Not for ourselves." This reflects the selflessness and activism of Social Service Professionals.

While Social Service Professionals are indeed human beings with their own needs, what sets them apart is their awareness that every issue has a solution.

Furthermore, the methodology employed by social service professionals in assisting society is grounded in the belief expressed by Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who stated, "I am not a liberator. Liberators do not exist. The people liberate themselves."

Che Guevara's sentiment is echoed by Annette Benad (2007), who remarked that social workers are "helping people to help themselves."

This principle is also reflected in a Chinese proverb, which Mao Zedong contributed to, stating, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."

As we celebrate World Social Work Day, it is important to recognize the Social Service Professionals and the working class as a whole.

It is essential to understand that you are ultimately responsible for your own liberation; there is no angel, messiah, or Good Samaritan who will come to your rescue.

Nevertheless, we must unite under the banner of 'Harambee - All pull together' to combat the oppressive capitalist system.

Social Service Professionals, like any other profession, have consistently been at the forefront advocating for the best interests of the community. Their needs must be addressed, and they should be provided with suitable working conditions, enabling them to continue their vital work in transforming lives.



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*Message from*

**Dr Merle Allsopp**

Member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions

In a world of increasing polarity in the access to resources, and the threats emanating from the development of technology, social work, a stalwart profession in the South African struggle for social justice, is more significant than ever.

In celebrating social workers today we express gratitude for what they have given humankind, and petition for their increased deployment to promote cohesion and well being both here and across the world.

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

*Message from*

**Mr Molawo Malekutu Lafter**

Member of the Professional Board for Social Work

This theme reminds us that meaningful change is achieved when we come together with a shared purpose. The spirit of Harambee - pulling together - calls on social workers, communities, government, civil society, and all stakeholders to work collectively to rebuild trust, restore dignity, and strengthen social cohesion.

Social workers stand at the forefront of supporting vulnerable individuals, families, and communities. Through advocacy, empowerment, and compassionate service, they help bridge divides, promote social justice, and nurture hope where it is most needed. In a time when many societies face inequality, conflict, and social fragmentation, the role of social workers in fostering harmony and inclusion is more critical than ever.

On this WSWD, I extend my sincere appreciation to all social workers for their dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to human dignity and social justice. Together, through unity and collective action, we can build a society grounded in hope, compassion, and harmony.

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*Message from*

**Prof Varoshini Nadesan**

Member of the Professional Board for Social Work

Our training, experience, will and agency empowers us to network with our peers and related organisations to build resilience in vulnerable communities in times of suffering, conflicts, tensions and wars.

I encourage all social workers, students and social auxiliary workers working across the many platforms of practice, to join a commemoration for World Social Work Day 2026.

Join online or in-person, participate, debate, and contribute to discussions on uniting our society by building trust and resilient communities.

Take the initiative to work together to build a brighter future for the generations to come.

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*Message from*

**Dr Manthosi Frans**

Member of the Professional Board for Social Work

As we mark World Social Work Day 2026, led by the International Federation of Social Workers, I am inspired by this year's theme, "Co Building Hope and Harmony A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society."

I believe this call is not only about the communities we serve, but also about us as social workers. Whether we practice in developed or developing countries, we share the same commitment to social justice, human dignity, and service. Yet many of us face burnout, limited resources, and lack of recognition.

I urge social workers in academia, government, NGOs and private practice sector to unite beyond silos. Collaboration must go beyond research partnerships. We should actively share knowledge, mentor one another, and exchange best practices across borders. When we strengthen each other, we strengthen our profession. And when we stand united, we are better equipped to build hope and harmony in the communities we serve.

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*Message from*

**Ms Ida Strydom**

Chairperson of the Professional Board for Social Work

On Social Work Day 2026, we embrace the theme “Co-building Hope and Harmony: A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society”. Harambee, the African philosophy of pulling together, reminds us that real and lasting change happens when we stand side by side.

As social workers, we witness poverty, inequality, trauma, and exclusion in our communities. Yet we also witness resilience, courage, and the extraordinary strength of people when they are supported with dignity and compassion. Hope is not built by one voice alone; it is created through collaboration, empathy, and shared responsibility.

On Social Work Day we recommit ourselves to building bridges where there are divisions, restoring dignity where it has been diminished, and strengthening unity where it is fragile. Let us answer the Harambee call - to work together, to listen deeply, and to act boldly. Together, we can co-build a society rooted in justice, harmony, and hope for all.

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*Message from*

**Ms Charlene Singh**

Member of the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work

Dear Social Workers

With deep respect and solidarity, I extend heartfelt appreciation for the powerful work you do in holding our communities with care and compassion. In times when our society often feels fragmented, your commitment to restoring hope, dignity, and connection is deeply appreciated and highly valued.

In the true spirit of pulling together, you continuously draw on your inner strength to hold yourselves together in challenging circumstances. You pull together as teams, supporting one another with courage and professionalism. Most importantly, you help pull communities together bridging divides, restoring trust, and strengthening social cohesion where it is most needed. May you remain encouraged in knowing that your every act of presence, every listening ear, and every moment of advocacy contributes meaningfully to building a more inclusive and resilient society.

Thank you for the hope you build each day.

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