COVID-19 Global Solidarity Action
Letters to Heads of State
15-22 May 2020

As COVID-19 has spread around the world, affecting the health of people and increasing hunger, poverty and domestic violence, we need global solidarity now to protect everyone, everywhere and to ensure no one is left behind. We must keep that spirit of solidarity so we can build back better for people and planet and achieve the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. Hundreds of civil society organisations (CSOs) have set out a series of recommendations to governments and we know that the coming weeks and months are crucial to ensure a global plan for the future that leaves no one behind.

This joint civil society statement on the Covid-19 response was developed by GCAP together with partners and signed by over 400 CSOs across the world. It advocates that a Covid-19 response must include civil society and must address inequalities, civic rights, women’s rights and gender justice, climate and environmental justice, and building back better. See also the campaign website covidcitizenaction.org, where you can also sign the statement.

On 15 May we will launch this joint statement and send these messages to governments in a united push. It will be an opportunity to underline the importance of solidarity and to demand a global coordinated response to both the immediate crisis and the longer-term recovery.

This will be the start of and will help build the momentum of the solidarity campaign of #StrongerTogether, which will have advocacy and actions taking place in the coming days and months, including a Global Day of Solidarity on 22 May. We propose you to send and publish the letter together with the statement until 22 May!

Please see the template of the letter, which you can use and adjust to fit your context below.

In order to have the best impact:

• Adjust the sample letter (below) to your situation and send it together with the statement with all 400 signatories to your head of state – the president or prime minister, and also to members of parliament, ministers, and key officials.

• Publish it as an open letter in the national media.

• Announce the letter in a virtual press conference.

• Talk about the letter in interviews with media or online.

• Or other effective ways to spread these key messages!
How to publish?

- Publish a press release
- Send letters to media editors
- Target and send to recognized national media houses
- Share on social media and tag key personalities and media houses
- Share with CSOs networks and coalitions in your country
- Share the letter online and tag key personalities in your communities and country.

Suggestions for contacting national media & for media outreach:

- Send statements to editors so that they select the news item for publication
- Target recognized national media houses:
  In Ghana, the national media shares news on their portals, other media houses pick it for redistribution.
- Share statements online and tag national media for attention
- Approach a newspaper and tell them this exclusive for them.
  For example: 400 organisations from the whole world signed this together with GCAP Ghana. We have sent it to the President of Ghana and to the UN Secretary General. You can have the exclusive publication rights for today (15 May)

Share it on social media!

- Use #StrongerTogether
- Tag GCAP!
  - Facebook: @GlobalCalltoActionAgainstPoverty
  - Twitter: @whiteband
- Share it with the joint civil society statement on the Covid-19 response
  See some sample posts and tweet here: https://trello.com/b/f31HkPch/covid-citizen-action-campaign

More information on #StrongerTogether can be found here: solidarityinaction.org
Template letter - please adjust to your situation!

Dear [add name of head of state]

We are writing as part of a coalition of more than 300 civil society organisations from around the world, including those working on key rights of women, young people, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and wider human and environmental rights, on the urgent response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are strongly committed to ensuring that civil society organisations and volunteers play a critical role in supporting inclusive community action and ensuring that those who are most often marginalised are not left behind through this challenging time, we believe we are all stronger together. At the same time, we expect world leaders to ensure that key measures are undertaken to ensure coordinated support for our action at the local and regional level, as outlined in our statement, in order to build a fairer future.

The pandemic especially affects impoverished communities, older people, women and girls, people with disabilities, refugees and displaced populations, and those with underlying health conditions, and highlights the importance of a whole-of-society human rights centred approach to deliver well-resourced health and social protection systems that respond to all ages. This is an urgent healthcare emergency but it also shines a glaring light on the underlying fragility and inequalities of our societies and the critical need for universal provision of the right to health and social protection, fairer tax and financing, as well as long-term sustainable development, as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

You can read our full joint statement here: covidcitizenaction.org

We call on you to commit your government to ensuring a strong role for civil society organisations as part of a joined-up approach to response and recovery to the pandemic.

In particular we call on you to commit to the following principles:

- Connect immediate ‘response and recovery’ funds directly with local groups, community organisations and social enterprises

We recommend that as part of any proposed ‘response & recovery’ funds, a specific allocation should be directed towards innovative approaches to promoting recovery by community organisations and that money reaches them directly; and ensure that these funds are delivered in a way that is inclusive of women and girls, young people, older people, persons with disabilities and other marginalised or vulnerable groups by the use of respective ‘markers’ to track and measure these funds. We stand ready to assist in the design of this approach.

- Safeguard freedom of expression and support innovative approaches to digital freedom of assembly to ensure all voices are heard.
We remain concerned that human rights are under threat and that in some cases emergency powers are being repurposed or mis-directed to limit access to information and obstruct the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression. We call on you to commit that measures will be temporary, subject to review, necessary and proportionate to the evaluated risk, and targeted to ensure public safety while balancing fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore, in the short term ‘response’ phase, we call on Member state governments and donor agencies to:

1. Safeguard healthcare workers and social care workers on the frontline by ensuring they have access to safe and decent working conditions and are resourced properly
2. Involve civil society organisations in policy and operational responses to COVID-19
3. Uphold financial and policy commitments to a human rights-based approach, in particular the rights of older people, persons with disabilities and women, girls and gender diverse people.
4. Implement clear social and environmental conditions on any emergency financial stimulus to companies, such as treating workers fairly and cutting carbon emissions

In the medium term ‘recovery’ phase, we call on Member state governments and donor agencies to:

5. Drive a seismic shift towards universal healthcare, welfare payments and social protection that include essential services such as vaccine programs, sexual and reproductive health products and services for all
6. Cancel national debts to ensure sufficient finance is available to governments to ensure a just recovery
7. Adopt fairer taxation policies on those who hold the most resources in our society, alongside measures to tackle illicit financial flows to pay for these protections
8. Put in place incentives for a feminist, green industrial revolution to enable rapid scaling up of sustainable jobs

You can read all of our 12 points here: covidcitizenaction.org

We look forward to hearing from you and your office on how we may work with you in taking forward these key priorities.