

# HARAMBEE AND GLOBAL SOCIAL WORK AND DEVELOPMENT

*Uharambee · Coming Together as Society*

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**Mtandao**  
wa Kazi za Jamii  
na  
Maendeleo wa  
**Africa**



**Africa**  
Social Work  
&  
Development  
**Network**

# WHAT THIS CONVERSATION COVERS?

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# WHAT IS HARAMBEE?

1. Harambee principles
  2. Harambee in global practice
  3. Examples
  4. Barriers
  5. Path forward
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## Uharambee

The act of coming together. It moves beyond individual, family, or community to the societal level, where collective mobilisation creates lasting change.

# HARAMBEE PRINCIPLES



## Human Rights & Dignity

Harambee aligns with the social work mandate to uphold collective human rights — not just individual rights, but the rights of communities and societies to self-determine and flourish together.



## Collective Responsibility

Harambee reframes social problems as shared societal challenges, reinforcing that solutions require the full engagement of all social actors — not just professionals or states.



## Social Justice

By mobilising society as a whole, Harambee challenges structural inequalities, echoing the global social work call to address systemic injustice at its roots.



## Community & Society-Led Practice

Where social work has historically centred communities, Harambee elevates this to the societal level — a call for whole-of-society approaches to development and wellbeing.

# HARAMBEE IN PRACTICE

01

## **Whole-of-Society Mobilisation**

Harambee frames development as a societal project — engaging governments, civil society, communities, and individuals as co-producers of the common good, mirroring the UN's whole-of-society approach to the SDGs.

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02

## **Decolonising Social Work**

Uharambee offers an African-rooted epistemology that challenges Western-centric social work models, centering indigenous knowledge and collective agency as legitimate frameworks for professional practice.

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03

## **Social Cohesion & Nation-Building**

In post-conflict and fragile settings, Harambee provides a framework for rebuilding social trust — mobilising society around shared identity and common purpose as a foundation for sustainable development.

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04

## **Policy & Governance**

Social workers informed by Harambee advocate for policies that strengthen societal solidarity — from universal social protection to participatory governance — embedding collective wellbeing as a state responsibility.

# INFUSING HARAMBEE: BENEFITS FOR GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS

When **Governments, the African Union, United Nations, and Regional Blocs** embed Harambee — the societal value of whole-of-society collective action — into their mandates, structures, and programmes, the common good becomes the engine of global governance.

## UNITED NATIONS



### Whole-of-Society Global Governance

Harambee repositions the UN from coordinating states to mobilising entire societies — aligning the SDGs, human rights, and peace agendas around a shared societal purpose that transcends national interest.

## AFRICAN UNION



### Pan-African Societal Solidarity

The AU's Agenda 2063 gains transformative power when grounded in Harambee — mobilising African societies as a whole to collectively own, drive, and sustain continental development beyond elite governance.

## NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS



### Coherent National Social Policy

Governments that embed Harambee design policies for the common good of all in society — closing the gap between institutional decisions and the lived reality of every member of society.

## REGIONAL BLOCS (ECOWAS, SADC, ETC.)



### Shared Regional Purpose

Regional bodies infused with Harambee move beyond trade and security to advance societal cohesion — enabling member states to collectively address inequality, displacement, and social fragility.

## ALL INSTITUTIONS



### Inclusive & Equitable Outcomes

Harambee demands that no member of society is excluded from the common good — pushing institutions to design programmes that reach the most marginalised and measure success at the societal level.

## ALL INSTITUTIONS



### Sustainable Collective Progress

Societal ownership — not top-down delivery — ensures that progress endures. When society mobilises collectively behind shared goals, institutions build resilience that outlasts any single programme or policy cycle.

# EXAMPLES, BARRIERS & THE PATH FORWARD

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Ghana

National Social Protection Policy — a whole-of-society effort uniting government, NGOs, and social services professionals. A model of Harambee in national governance.

### South Africa

A national social services framework co-developed by professionals and policymakers — mobilising society-wide responses for vulnerable populations.

## BARRIERS

- ✗ Fragmented societal structures limit whole-of-society coordination
- ✗ Differing institutional priorities obstruct shared societal goals
- ✗ Power imbalances silence social services voices in policy spaces
- ✗ Insufficient resources constrain society-wide service delivery
- ✗ Lack of societal data to demonstrate collective impact

## PATH FORWARD

- ✓ Build societal dialogue forums for services and policymakers
- ✓ Use data to demonstrate collective social services impact
- ✓ Establish joint planning aligned to shared societal goals
- ✓ Embed social services expertise in national policy processes
- ✓ Invest in whole-of-society capacity and collective leadership