

Working Together as Equals: Student Reflections on Global Solidarity

Howest RUN-EU [Volunteering for Human Rights Learner Exchange \(LEX\)](#) Student Reflections

As part of the LEX, students explored the shift from "Development Cooperation" to "Global Solidarity" and were invited to formulate their own definition of the concept. They reflected on the reasons behind the change in terminology and its implications for a more equitable and inclusive approach to international cooperation. Through volunteering and participating in [Wereldkamp 2026](#) thanks to Howest's partnership with [Broederlijk Delen](#), students engaged in discussions with NGOs, volunteers, and other participants. The definitions in this document are the result of those conversations, combined with the students' own critical reflections and experiences.

Sebastian Amartya Utomo (NHL)

Based on conversations with organisations including Manos Unidos, Vlaamse Jeugdraad, and Broederlijk Delen, Global Solidarity can be understood as people around the world helping one another to improve well-being for everyone.

It means recognizing that today's world is interconnected and that empathy should extend beyond national borders. Contributing to Global Solidarity requires a collective mindset and a willingness to engage with global issues. It also highlights the important role young people can play in raising awareness, inspiring others, and creating positive change.

Global Solidarity is rooted in a sense of belonging to a wider human community and in the understanding that people everywhere have a responsibility toward one another.

Imke Japes (NHL)

Global Solidarity is the support and cooperation that exist between people and organisations across different countries with the goal of achieving a sustainable and just transition.

This support is not only financial. It also includes emotional support, dialogue, exchange, understanding, and mutual learning. Global Solidarity encourages countries and communities to move beyond postcolonial structures and ways of thinking. It rejects imposing one country's definition of progress or development on others.

Instead, it promotes respect, cooperation, and the recognition that different societies may pursue their own paths toward a just and sustainable future.

Dorkas Klooster (NHL)

Development Cooperation is often understood as support provided by developed countries to developing countries in order to improve economic and social conditions through financial aid, technical assistance, or policy advice.

However, this concept raises important questions about dependency and neo-colonial attitudes. Discussions around the topic highlighted the tension between providing necessary support and maintaining unequal power relationships.

Global Solidarity represents a collective commitment by all countries and peoples to address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and human rights. It emphasizes equality, equity, fairness, and justice. Rather than following a one-way donor-recipient model, it promotes mutual cooperation and shared responsibility.

Changing the name to Global Solidarity reflects a move from one-sided assistance toward mutual respect and a shared commitment to supporting people in need.

Paola Portillo Diez (UBU)

Global Solidarity is a way of working together as equals to create a fairer and more sustainable world. It replaces the term *Development Cooperation* because the old name can suggest that some countries are "developed" while others simply receive help. In reality, every country has knowledge, experiences, and responsibilities to share.

Global Solidarity is based on partnership, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. It recognizes that global challenges such as climate change, inequality, poverty, migration, and human rights affect everyone and can only be addressed through cooperation. Rather than focusing on charity, it emphasizes justice, equity, and collective action. It means listening to one another, learning from different perspectives, and ensuring that everyone has equal dignity, opportunities, and a voice in shaping the future.

Charlotte Lefevere (Howest)

Global Solidarity is a fair and empathetic way of living together as one global community. It is built on mutual respect for human rights and a shared responsibility for the planet and for one another.

It means working together to create a better and more equal quality of life for everyone, recognizing that people everywhere are connected and that no one should be left behind. Global Solidarity encourages learning from one another, caring for one another, and contributing to a more sustainable and just world. It is about building stronger bonds between people worldwide and ensuring that everyone can take part in creating a better future.

Keitesi (Keisha) Aisha (Howest)

Changing the term from *Development Cooperation* to *Global Solidarity* is not enough on its own. A new name does not automatically change reality.

Global Solidarity should be based on equal partnerships, shared decision-making, equitable governance, and fair access to resources. As long as power remains concentrated in certain parts of the world, inequalities will continue despite changes in language. Through discussions with NGO representatives, it became clear that Global Solidarity remains a work in progress. Real transformation requires changing the systems, structures, and relationships that shape international cooperation.

Global Solidarity should be measured not by the language we use, but by the equality we practice. Only when power, responsibility, and decision-making are genuinely shared can Global Solidarity become a reality rather than simply a new label.

Neda Maghrebi (HAMK)

The transition from *Development Cooperation* to *Global Solidarity* represents more than a change in terminology.

The term *development* can imply that some countries are more developed than others and may reflect colonial or Western ways of thinking. Global Solidarity instead treats all people and countries as equal partners.

It emphasizes equity, human rights, and people's ability to shape their own futures. Rather than focusing on charity, it supports a rights-based approach where individuals and communities are empowered to develop according to their own priorities and needs.

Khadijeh (Maral) Doozandehkhadijeh (HAMK)

The shift from *Development Cooperation* to *Global Solidarity* is much more than a change of words. The old term can imply that some countries are more advanced than others, reflecting an outdated and colonial way of thinking.

Global Solidarity recognizes all people as equal partners. Instead of focusing on charity, it prioritizes fairness, human rights, and empowerment. It aims to create conditions in which people can improve their own lives rather than simply waiting to receive assistance from others. The concept encourages cooperation based on equality and respect, rather than dependency.

Across their reflections, students consistently concluded that the shift from Development Cooperation to Global Solidarity is much more than a change in terminology.

Across their responses, five key ideas emerge:

Equal Partnerships

Students repeatedly rejected the idea of a one-way relationship between colonized and colonizing countries. Instead, they described cooperation as a partnership between equals where everyone contributes knowledge, experience, and solutions.

Equity and Human Rights

Several students highlighted that Global Solidarity is rooted in fairness, human rights, and equity rather than charity. The focus is on creating opportunities, addressing inequality, and ensuring that all people can participate in shaping their futures.

Moving Beyond Colonial Thinking

Many students recognized that the term “Development Cooperation” can unintentionally suggest that some countries are more advanced and advantaged than others. They viewed Global Solidarity as a move away from these hierarchical assumptions toward mutual respect and shared decision-making.

Shared Global Responsibility

Students connected Global Solidarity to common challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, sustainability, and social justice. These issues were seen as collective responsibilities rather than problems for one region to solve for another.

Mutual Learning and Human Connection

The reflections emphasized empathy, listening, dialogue, understanding, and learning from different perspectives. Support was not viewed as only financial, but also emotional, educational, and relational.

Collective Student Conclusion

Taken together, the eight students viewed Global Solidarity as a shift away from one-way relationships and toward equal partnerships. They emphasized human rights, equity, shared responsibility, mutual learning, and collective action. Rather than seeing international cooperation as helping others from a position of advantage, they described Global Solidarity as people, communities, and countries working together as equals to address shared challenges and create a more just and sustainable world.

Global Solidarity is a commitment to work together as equal partners across borders to create a more just, sustainable, and inclusive world. It is based on mutual respect, human rights, equity, shared responsibility, and collective action. Global Solidarity recognizes that all people, communities, and countries have valuable knowledge and experiences to contribute, and seeks to move toward equal power relationships, cooperation, mutual learning, and shared solutions to global challenges.

In short:

Global Solidarity means people, communities, and countries working together as equals to address shared challenges and build a fairer, more sustainable world based on human rights, equity, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

Global Solidarity is
about working with others as equals
to create positive change together.

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