

ANNUAL REPORT

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SAFETY, SECURITY AND WELLBEING
OF HUMAN RIGHT DEFENDERS



DEFENDERS
COALITION

“...we are proud that many individuals can proudly associate with the work of defending human rights because of the mechanisms for safety, security, and awareness that we have put in place.”

-Kamau Ngugi, ED Defenders Coalition



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WHO WE ARE

"We speak up on behalf of the good guys, who in turn speak up for victims of rights violations."

The Defenders Coalition is the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in Kenya that works to strengthen the capacity of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) to work effectively and to reduce their vulnerability to the risk of persecution and/or harm by advocating for a favorable legal and policy environment in Kenya. Defenders Coalition was founded in 2007 and is registered under Kenyan law as a Trust.

WHAT WE DO

Under the prevailing operational context and the organization's track record, the Defenders Coalition has identified four strategic areas of intervention to offer the much-needed services to HRDs:

1. **Supportive** policy, legal and institutional frameworks for HRDs
2. Human Rights Defenders' **protection and Safety**
3. **The socio-economic Well-being** of HRDs
4. Positioning itself as a **reliable, dependable and professional** human rights institution

A WORD

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fifteen years ago, the Defenders Coalition set out on an ambitious journey of delivering much-needed support to human rights defenders so that they can do their work with least difficulty. The journey, as was described then, was marred with a lot of insecurity and risks. While people come together to advance other people's rights, there lacked an institution that would work to defend and protect the safety, security, and rights of those at the frontline defending other people's rights. Fast forward to 2022, and together with others, we are proud that many individuals can proudly associate with the work of defending human rights because of the mechanisms for safety, security, and awareness that we have put in place.

In 2022, Defenders Coalition set out to engage with the state and other stakeholders to ensure free, fair, and credible elections. This is by working closely with relevant bodies, building capacities of those involved in gathering information on human rights violations for accountability purposes, and offering timely support to those at risk during the period. Our work ensured that HRDS and election monitors safely conduct their work. However, despite the measures, the outcome of the elections was hugely contested.

The operating environment for HRDs and CSOs in Kenya remains precarious despite efforts to create awareness of the existence



Kamau Nguji, ED

and work of HRDs and CSOs. Attacks and restrictions on the civic space are on the rise, with a prevalence of 68 percent of our interventions on violations being on the freedom of assembly. Deliberate efforts to put in place legal frameworks for protecting HRDs by the state are still futile.

During the year , two HRDs sadly paid the ultimate price in extremely violent manner – Elizabeth Ekaru was stabbed to death on January 3, 2022, and Sheila Lumumba was sexually assaulted before being stabbed on 17th April 2022 .Their deaths are a grim reality of the risks of HRDs, especially those working on women and gender rights. It is my desire, justice will be eventually served for Elizabeth and Sheila the same way that justice was finally delivered after seven years of wait regarding the murder of human rights lawyer Willy Kimani and three others.

'The High court in Nairobi convicted 3 police officers and an informer over the murder of lawyer Willie Kimani, his client Josephat Mwenda and taxi driver Joseph Muiruri. Honourable lady justice Jessie Lessit found police officers Fredrick Leliman, Stephen Cheburet , Sylvia Wanjiku and police informer , Peter Ngugi , guilty over 3 counts of murder .Leliman was sentenced to death ,Stephen 30 years, Sylvia 24 years and Ngugi 20 years'

In 2023, we must not wait for these situations to recur. Instead, let us convene and demand recognition for our role. Let us demand protection. Let us not make it business as usual but a new

opportunity to strengthen already empowered communities and tighten the loose nuts not tightened in the last year. The lessons we have had are too painful. They have taught us that one life lost is too many lives and that we are always in great danger.

I urge you to take up the mantle from 2022 with grace and pass it to 2023 with great precision, energy, hope, and inspiration. Let us seize the opportunities as they present and endeavour to go a step further in ensuring the realisation of universal human rights, implementation of our Constitution, and fidelity to the rule of law. In our diversity, I am convinced that collectively we shall experience tremendous success in 2023. Let us walk the journey together.

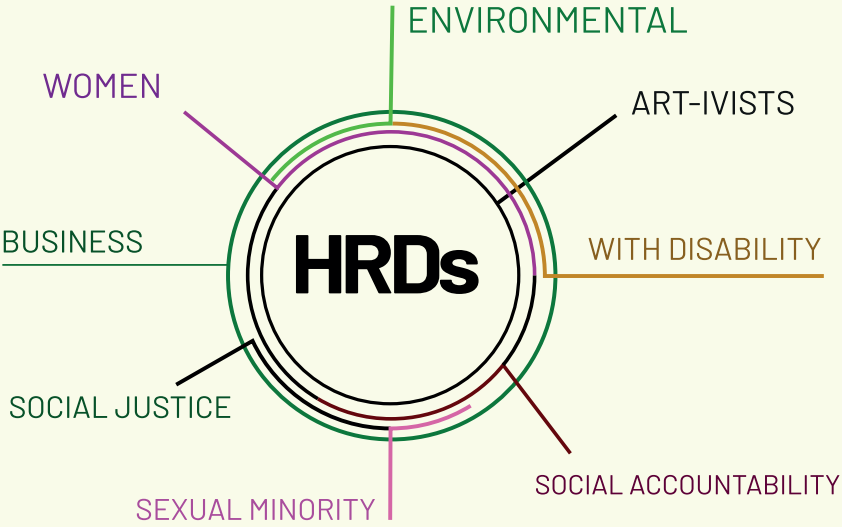
Kamau Ngugi,
Executive Director – Defenders Coalition
Chairperson –EHAHRD-Net

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

THEMATIC GROUPS OF FOCUS:

682 HRDs

were reached directly through our movement building and strengthening initiatives



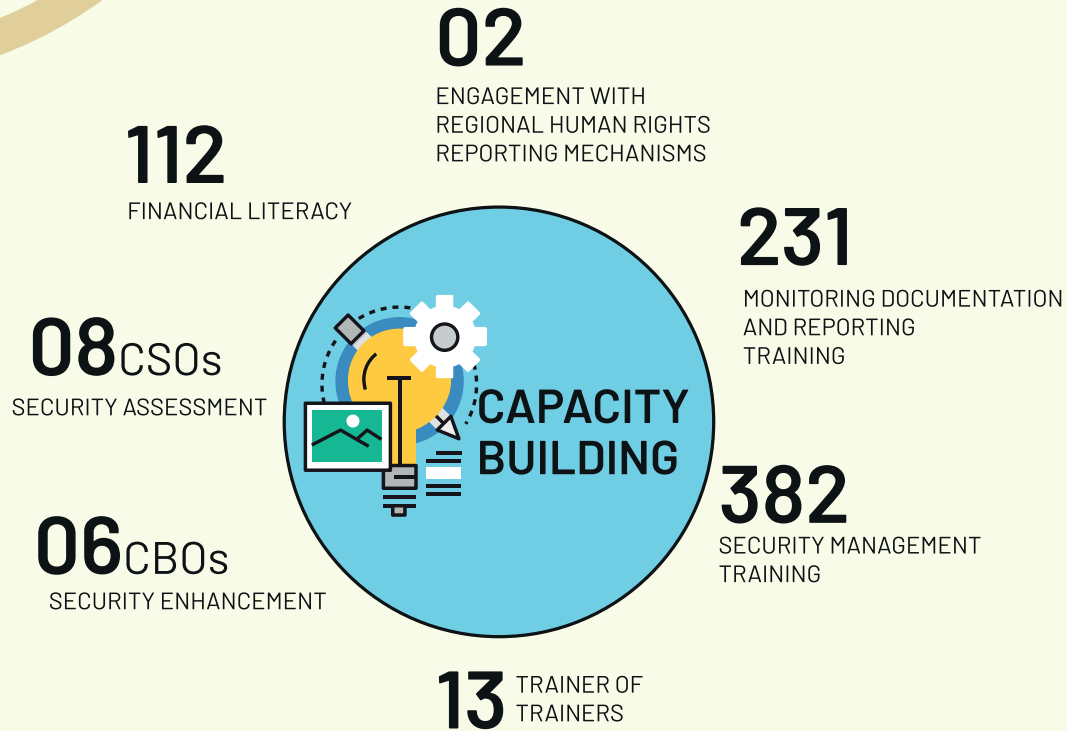
COUNTY NETWORKS

47

Networks across all 47 counties in Kenya



CAPACITY BUILDING IN NUMBERS



02

ENGAGEMENT WITH
REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
REPORTING MECHANISMS

112

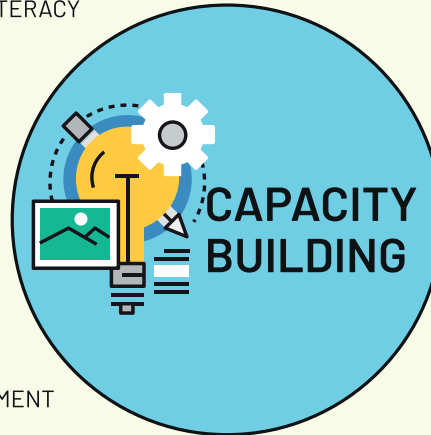
FINANCIAL LITERACY

231

MONITORING DOCUMENTATION
AND REPORTING
TRAINING

08 CSOs

SECURITY ASSESSMENT



382

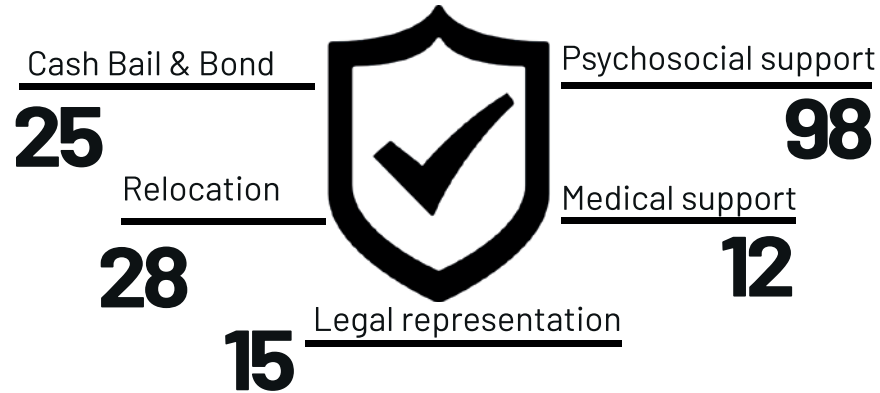
SECURITY MANAGEMENT
TRAINING

06 CBOs

SECURITY ENHANCEMENT

13 TRAINER OF
TRAINERS

PROTECTION IN NUMBERS

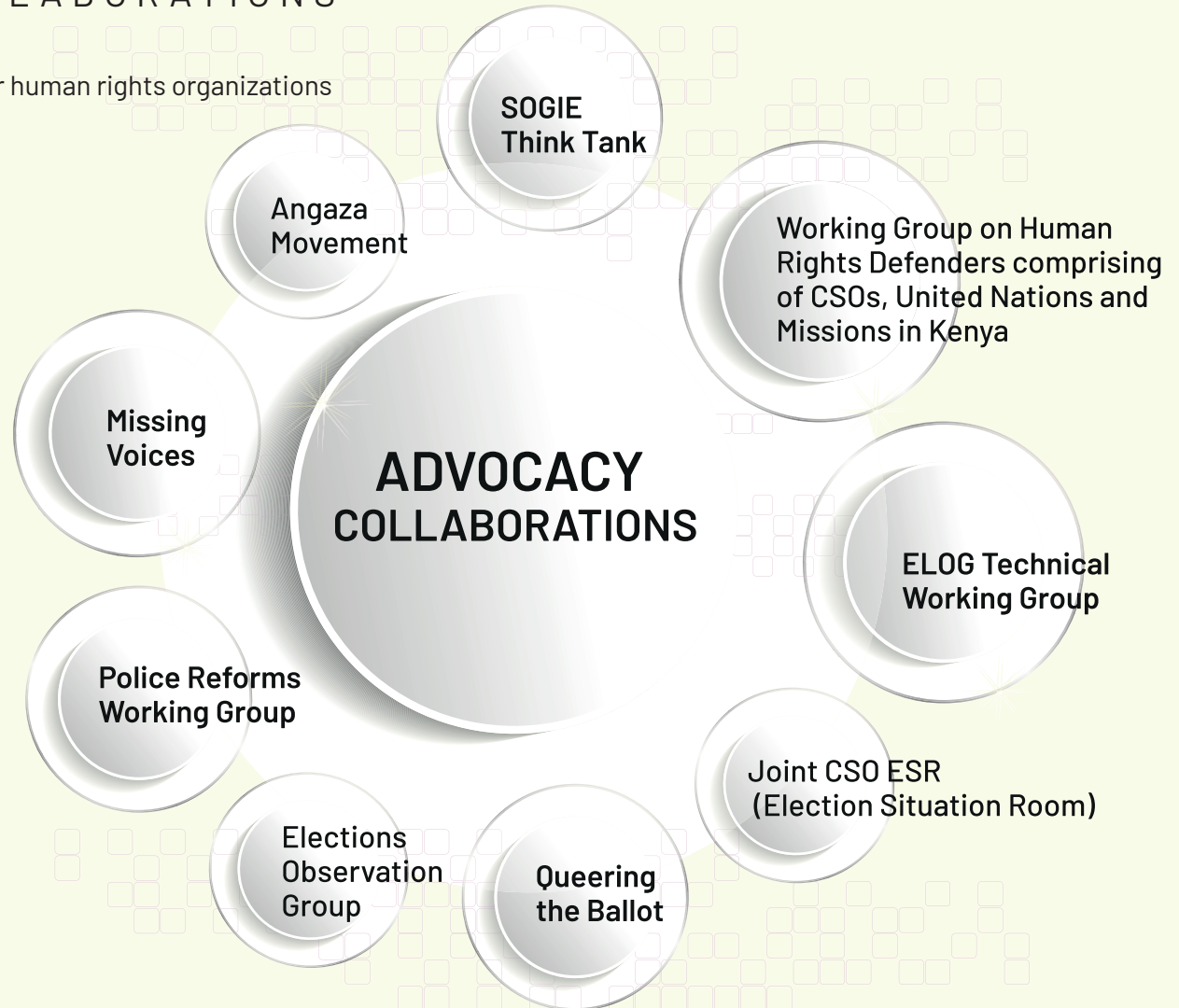


WELL-BEING IN NUMBERS



ADVOCACY COLLABORATIONS

Advocacy Initiatives with other human rights organizations





KEY ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN THE FOUR STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

Defenders Coalition adopts a holistic approach to enhance the safety, security and wellbeing of HRDS. This includes incorporating preventive and urgent protection measures under 4 strategic pillars.

SUPPORTIVE POLICY, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR HRDS

This program is primarily concerned with addressing the state of policy and legal environment that constrains the safety, security, well-being, and work of HRDs. The priority issues addressed under the pillar include regulatory frameworks, norms, and perceptions towards HRD HRD attempt at delegitimizing, delegitimizing HRDs' work, and responsiveness of applicable institutions.

WE ARE PROUD THAT:

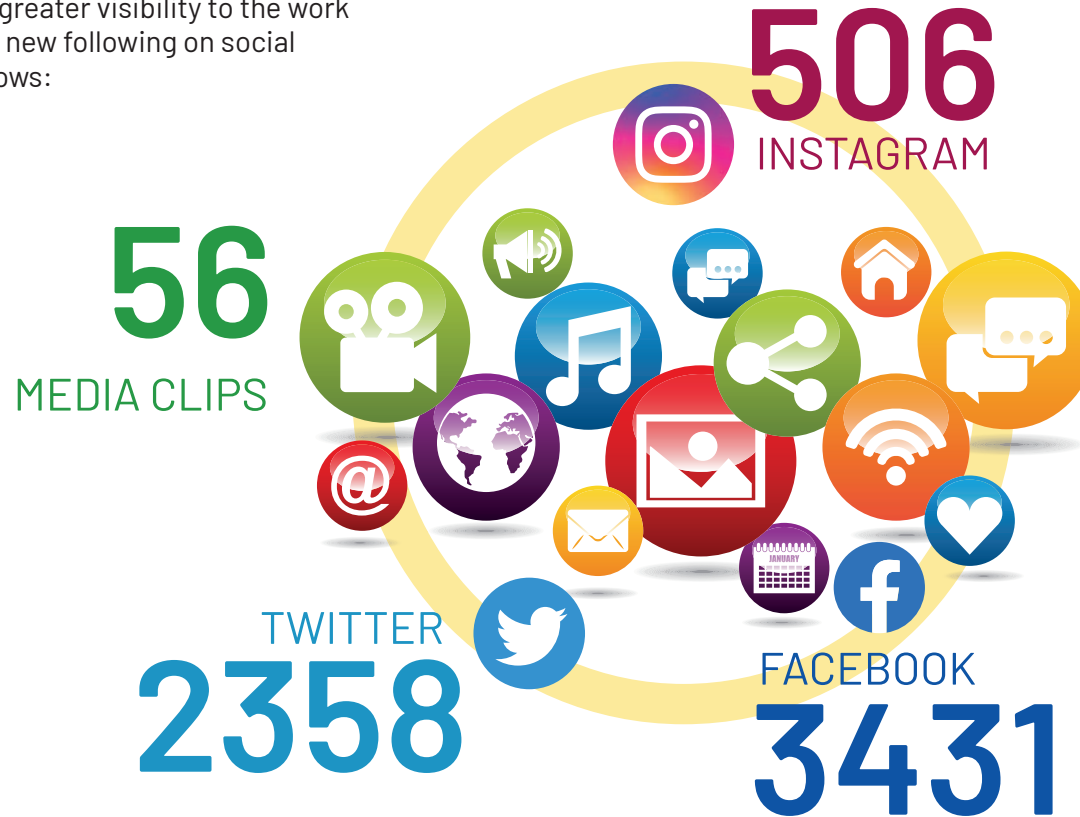
A. WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS STAND TALL

Voices of Women Human Rights Defenders in Nairobi, Wajir, Lamu, Vihiga, Elgeiyo Marakwet, Busia, Migori, Kwale, Kajiado, Mandera, and Turkana Counties are loudly being heard demanding their rights as well as protecting and promoting the rights of others we have facilitated the efforts by linking them up with relevant duty bearers and capacity strengthening from Defenders Coalition.



B. STRONGER, BOLDER HRD MOVEMENT

Contributed to increased recognition and acceptance of HRDs by state, non-state actors, and the public with greater visibility to the work of HRDs by having a new following on social media pages as follows:



C. KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT & DISSEMINATION

Produced monthly situational reports that supported evidence-based advocacy and engagement between HRDs and duty-bearers over the improvement of policy and legal working environment for operations of HRDs and CBOs during the 2022 elections period.

D. SHAPING NARRATIVES

Contributed towards positively shaping the narratives about HRDs and their work by publicly recognizing their critical role in democracy and promotion of human rights through the Human Rights Defenders' Awards 2022 #HRDAwardKE. The HRD awards were hosted by the Ambassador of Sweden to Kenya H.E Caroline Vicini. This was the 7th celebration that increases the visibility of HRDs work

E. POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS

Contributed towards the positive perceptions of members of the public and duty bearers about human rights work and the role of human rights defenders. In 2022, various state agencies and duty bearers willing to participate in round-table conversations with HRDs and CSOs on improvement of the situation of HRDs and human rights in Kenya. The conversations are intended to secure commitments and identify partnership opportunities.



KEY INTERVENTIONS

1. STRENGTHENING OF NI MAMA WHRD NETWORK

Defenders Coalition continued to strengthen county and national networks under the Ni Mama Project .Among them is a network of WHRD under the Ni Mama Project.The project is concerned with supporting WHRDs in Kenya to demand their rights safely and effectively, increase their visibility among various stakeholders and contribute towards their recognition as agents of change at the grassroots level. Through this project ;

- WHRDs have become part of the Court Users Committees in Mandera, Kwale, and Busia Counties to support justice execution processes.
- WHRDs increasingly acted as the first responders whenever other HRDs faced threats and risks.
- Collectively, the WHRDs continued to conduct advocacy initiatives such as demanding inclusion in decision-making processes at the grassroots formations.
- Contributed towards monitoring and reporting the human rights situation at the grassroots level during the 2022 elections period.



TESTIMONIAL KWALE COUNTY

"The Ni Mama Project has been impactful for me and my network. It is exciting now to see that the network is invited to decision-making forums to give their view on issues being discussed. This means that our role is being recognized and that our contribution matters."

- Mwanasha Gaserego, Kwale County.



TESTIMONIAL LAMU COUNTY

“Since becoming part of Ni Mama Network in 2020, We have experienced increased visibility of our work at the community and national levels. The coverage of our work in national newspapers has enhanced my safety because community members realize that our work is being celebrated nationally. I am convinced that visibility is our safety.”

– Rukia Rashid, Lamu County.



2. ENGAGEMENTS WITH RELEVANT DUTY BEARERS AND COMMUNITIES

Following regular engagements and petitioning the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), the Defenders Coalition secured the acquittal of twenty-six (26) HRDs who were facing illegal prosecution in various courts law. The charges range from unlawful assembly, causing a disturbance, resisting police arrest, failure to wear a face mask, and forcible detainer. The HRDs were facing these charges as a group or as individuals. The DPP committed to assess all HRDs matters in Court to ensure that they are not criminalised because of their human rights work.

In Nakuru, Defenders Coalition contributed to human rights based enforcement of the law by the police following the emergence of criminal gangs. Defenders Coalition organized a stakeholder meeting which resulted in a human rights-based response in confronting the criminal gangs and restoring normalcy in Nakuru County.

3. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL, LEVELS OF , AND GRASSROOTS LEVELS .

Defenders Coalitions recognizes the power of partnership and collaboration at the international, regional, national, and grassroots levels . In 2022, the Defenders Coalition engaged with the following international and regional instruments to highlight the situation of HRDs and provide recommendations on the performance of the state in implementing recommendations from 2021:

- United Nations Human Rights Council
- The Special Rapporteur on Freedoms of Expression
- The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders
- The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights
- The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association

As a consequence of those engagements the state made commitments to improve state of human rights in Kenya

Locally, Defenders Coalition continued to engage with the civil society, such as the Angaza Movement on electoral integrity and fidelity, the Missing Voices Coalition on eliminating gelimination of extrajudicial killings and forceful disappearances, and the Police Reforms Working Group to promote police accountability.

Success Highlight

One of the successes of 2022 is that the Kenyan president publicly admitted to the existence of a killer police unit that was killing Kenyans. Consequently, the team unit was disbanded, and investigations were launched to support the prosecution of suspected killer cops through courts of law.



4. SAFE SPACES FOR INTERSECTIONALITY AND OF VARIOUS STRUGGLES

Defenders Coalition made accessible its advocacy service and pathways to all HRDs working on various thematic issues to ensure that no one is left behind by providing safe platforms to network and exchange. Additionally, HRDs continued to respond to violations and safety threats as a collective.

5. PUBLICLY CELEBRATING THE RESILIENCE, PASSION, AND DEDICATION OF HRDS THROUGH THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AWARD

In November 2022, the embassy of Sweden to Kenya and Defenders Coalition the Co-chairs of the working group on HRDs successfully conducted the HRD Awards 2022, where we:

- Honoured the extraordinary work of 15 HRDs and groups of HRDs in the promotion and protection of human rights.
- Positively profiled the work of 15 HRDs and the challenges they face as agents of social change and transformation.
- Recognized the innovation of 15 HRDs and groups in engaging with human rights work

Every year since 2015, the Working Group on Human Rights Defenders in Kenya, which brings together CSOs, the UN, and development partners concerned with the protection of HRDs, organizes the HRD Award. The ceremony aims to was to publicly recognize the important work of HRDs and HRDs groups in Kenya by giving out awards to those who have demonstrated courage, innovation, and impact in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The awards are presented in three categories:

- The Munir Mazrui Lifetime achievement award,
- The Human Rights Defender of the year award and
- The upcoming Human Rights Defender of the year award.
- The Global Solidarity award



TESTIMONIAL NAKURU COUNTY

“Following the Awards have been able to mobilize youths in Nakuru to form a CBO, Voices Guild 254 (VOG254), that uses art as an instrument for social change. The CBOs main philosophy is using excellent art created by young artists at the grassroots level towards Artivism. This CBO has seen the start of different initiatives courtesy of its members, other organizations, , and entities. Concerts 99 and spoken word concept events have been arranged towards this endeavour; these events have seen top spoken word artists from different parts of Kenya come together to create and showcase their pieces that push the human rights agenda. In May 2022, I started the Oebaism Fellowship. This is a mentorship program for art-ivists on writing, performance, branding and the creative economy. This cohort was inducted in 2022, just after the Human Rights Defender awards 2021 with the masterclass sessions establishing vibrant young, ambitious artists from Nakuru ready to impact the world through music, dance, visual art & poetry. This has been one of the proudest moments of seeing other young mentees follow the same path of social change.”

-Willie Oeba, HRD Award Winner, Upcoming HRD of the Year 2021.



6. STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION PATHWAYS AND LINKAGES WITH VARIOUS DUTY BEARERS

Partnerships and collaboration were and remain essential in offering a holistic support mechanism to the needs of members of the public. In 2022, our reach extended to government institutions like The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the National Gender and Equality Commission, Kenya Law Reforms, The Office of the Attorney General,

the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Commission on the Administration of Justice, Directorate of Criminal Investigations, Inspector General of Police.



Meet Minoo Kyaa

Detention In Prisons Shall Not Kill Our Spirit



For Minoo Kyaa, an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Together with other community mobilizers, Minoo has joined hands to petition the government of Kenya to address the runaway cost of living in Kenya.

“One of the focus areas of the Social Justice Centres Movement is to push the government to implement Article 43 of the Constitution of Kenya, which is the basic needs for survival and dignity.”

Minoo says that they never shy away from addressing the issues affecting their communities as a movement. She

pauses and asks, “Who will speak on our behalf if we do not speak up? We must sensitize communities to stay alert and demand their rights!”

It is in the same spirit of mobilizing community members that an ordeal never befell her, even though she strongly says that it built her spirit even stronger.

“For close to one month, I had been involved in a campaign to resist the inaccessibility of food in Kenya, especially by the common citizens. We had made successful community engagements in Korogocho and Ruaraka areas.”

Having experienced success in the two activities, Mino and others proceeded to mobilize community members from Kasarani Area for the same cause.

They did not know that the government had been watching the whole time and was keen to stop the community mobilization.

On April 9, 2022, in the company of close to sixty community members in a peaceful assembly, police officers from Mwiki Police Station arrived and blocked them.

The officers enquired whether the group had notified the police of the assembly. While retrieving the notice to the police, the group was shocked by the level of violence that descended on them.

“They descended on us with teargas and batons, and we scattered. In the process, I saw our camera person get hit by a motorbike, and so I had to keep my safety aside and help the comrade get back to his feet because I couldn’t imagine the beating, he would have received had the police caught him!”

Mino narrates how she was arrested in that confusion.

“The cameraman got to his feet and ran off as fast as he could in the other direction. Unfortunately for me, the police officers grabbed my blouse and violently pushed me to their car that was on standby.”

The helper was now left alone with no one to help them.

In the chaos, other activists were arrested and suffered a

physical assault at the hands of those mandated to protect and serve. The officers proceeded to lock the four in Mwiki Police Station.

It was in the middle of the chaos that the others - majority who have benefitted from Defenders Coalition’s trainings - that had managed to escape the arbitrary arrest reached out to Defenders Coalition to report the safety incident and requested for urgent support.

Defenders Coalition proceeded to activate its rapid response network, which managed to secure their freedom two days later. The state proceeded to press criminal charges against the four. They were charged with trumped-up charges of participating in an illegal assembly and resisting arrest by a police officer. The Defenders Coalition supported the four HRDs with bail and bond to secure their freedom after plea-taking and legal support through the judicial process that would last nine months.

After seven appearances in Makadara Law Courts for hearing and where the prosecution failed to present witnesses, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) terminated the matter under Section A of the Criminal Procedure Code on December 19, 2022.

“We were arrested for absolutely breaking no law and there we were facing trumped-up charges. It was a trying period for me because I failed to understand why I was facing trial. However, the comradeship of others and reliable support from Defenders Coalition kept me going.”

Despite the acquittal, Minoos says that the judicial process has harmed her emotional and socio-economic well-being. She also notes that due to the active criminal case in court, she missed a lucrative scholarship opportunity to enhance her education abroad because of travel restrictions associated with having an active criminal case in court.

Minoos acknowledges legal representation fees are costly. She thanks Defenders Coalition for providing legal representation throughout the period.

During the period, Minoos co-founded the Social Justice Travelling Theatre, a people-centred outfit that engages the community through art and theatre.

“We were arrested for absolutely breaking no law and there we were facing trumped-up charges. .. the comradeship of others and reliable support from Defenders Coalition kept me going.”



HRDS PROTECTION SAFETY AND SECURITY

Coalition focused on facilitating timely and appropriate interventions to all forms of safety, security, and well-being to HRDs, by strengthening the capacities of HRDs and other service providers, especially duty bearers, lawyers, medical personnel, and counsellors among others. We consolidated the need for the safety of human rights defenders by positioning Defenders Coalition as a Dependable and reliable organization for HRDs at risk due to their work.

IN 2022 WE:

1. MOBILIZED CBOs

Mobilised community-based organizations and national human rights institutions to consolidate solidarity efforts as a form of safety net as well as collective confrontation of threats to the civic space and safety of HRDs

2. NATIONAL SERVICE FOOTPRINT

Defenders Coalition retained the pool of service providers and expanded service providers across the counties to support in officering much-needed support to HRDs everywhere in Kenya.



3. 100% DETENTION FREE

We experienced 100% success rate in preventing detention-related torture due to police arrests of HRDs in Kenya by bailing them out in a timely manner. We watched over the backs of 51 individual HRDs and 7 groups of HRDs (74 HRDs) who were at risk due to their Human Rights work.



4. CAPACITY ENHANCED

Enhanced the organizational capacity of six (6) civil society organizations in response to gaps in their office safety and security.

5. SUPPORT WITH NUMBERS

Two hundred and thirty-five (235) HRDs benefited from our programme on monitoring, documentation, and reporting.

6. SKILL ENHANCEMENT

Improved the confidence of three hundred and eighty-two (382) HRDs in the conduct of their human rights work through skill enhancement in digital and physical security management.



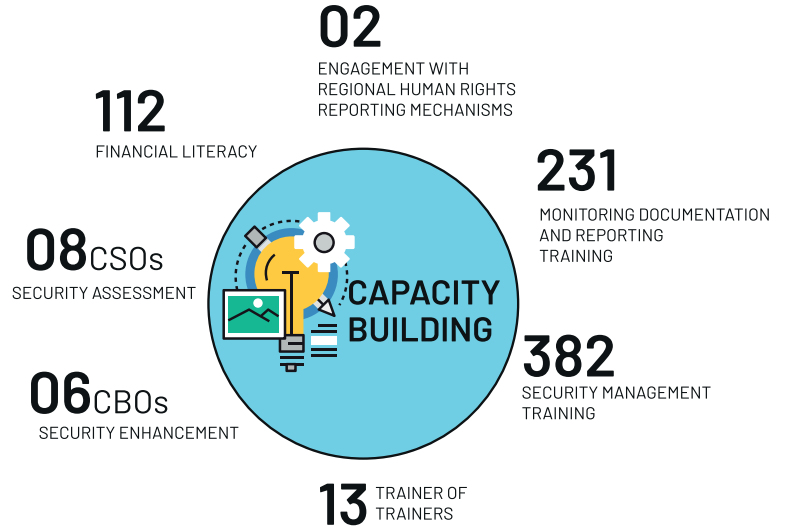
“...facilitating timely and appropriate interventions to all forms of safety, security, and well-being to HRDs, by strengthening the capacities of HRDs and other service providers...”

KEY MILESTONES ON THE PILLAR

PROTECTION IN NUMBERS



CAPACITY BUILDING IN NUMBERS



TESTIMONIAL MINOO KYAA

“The period when you have been arbitrarily arrested is such an unbelievable moment for any HRD because you get arrested for having committed no crime. Mine was a classic one. The police arrested me for publicly saying I was hungry and that I needed to the government to lower food prices. After the arrest, we were required to raise cash bail or else be remanded. Now imagine someone complaining about the high cost of food is expected to raise Kshs 20,000 for cash bail. It would have been very difficult for me to raise the money, but the Defenders Coalition had these resources where others and I received cash bail support and an advocate who walked with me throughout the case until the end.”- Minoo Kyaa

TESTIMONIAL KIASWA INITIATIVE

“Defenders work extra miles forgetting themselves and at times exposing themselves to imminent dangers. they sometimes go the extra miles whenever a HRD is at risk to ensure that we are safe. Well done. Keep defending human rights defenders.”-Kiaswa Initiative.

TESTIMONIAL NJERI MIGWI

“As a human rights defender who is always at the forefront facing individuals who more foted than not are left unhappy with my work, I Know what it exactly means to have someone who can pay your bail when arbitrarily arrested, give you a lawyer, evacuate you when at risk or even support your bills to see a professional psychologist. I benefit from being this, and I know what it means to have that.”-Njeri Migwi.





Meet Davis Tafari

I am More Than My Dreadlocks

His face lights up at the mention of the word activism. At the same time, he glooms at the mention of police brutality, extortion, and abuse of power.

At the age of 24, Davis Otieno, popularly known as Tafari has been a victim of police excesses and abuse of power. He has been arrested on trumped-up allegations more than eight times.

His passion for human rights is deep. It is rooted in the spirit and determination to dismantle oppression by those in power.

Tafari believes that challenging and undesirable economic situations, self-condemnation, and social ills continue to hold the masses in informal settlements in Nairobi, specifically Dandora Community where he hails from.

Tafari is a man on a mission. He believes he was born to defend rights and his strongest tools are creativity and a camera.

In his reflection, Tafari passionately speaks how the prevalence of human rights violations in informal settlement

is so high to the extent that the locals see violations as normal occurrence. To some, he says, the state of human rights violations was so bad that community members have succumbed to the thought that it was the right of a police officer to kill you!

“I grew up in Dandora where the police can just arrest you because you are a young male. All they see are criminals when they see us. Young men have been negatively profiled. Especially for me, it was tougher because, as you can see, I have beautiful dreadlocks on my head.”

In June 2022, Tafari was a victim of police targeting and negative profiling. On a fateful day, Tafari set out to the Nairobi CBD where he expected to document a petition to the Ministry of Health and the Office of the President.

He met with two other HRDs and then proceeded to the CBD, where they alighted safely. To his surprise, plain clothed police officers on patrol quickly pulled him aside and started ransacking through his bag with allegations that he was carrying drugs.

“It was shocking as I have never carried drugs before. I wondered why they targeted me and not my two colleagues or the other passengers that alighted from the bus?”

Tafari narrates how he was immediately handcuffed despite the protests by the two other HRDs. They were later taken to Kamukunji Police Station, where he was held and charged with the possession of twenty-four rolls of marijuana.

In the meantime, the other two HRDs had sounded an alarm;

a HRD was in distress. Other HRDs reached out to Defenders Coalition, where they reported the distressed HRD and requested urgent support.

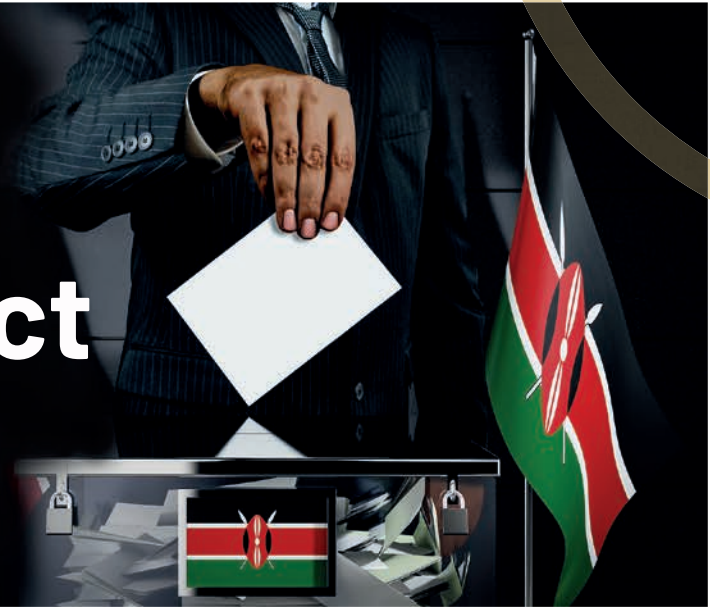
The Defenders Coalition proceeded to deploy a lawyer who pushed for the release of the HRD on cash bail by 5.00 PM on the same day.

“Are my dreadlocks not beautiful? Is having dreadlocks a crime? Was I being followed so that they would stop me from documenting the peaceful procession?” Tafari posed these questions to himself with no answer.

Tafari walks free. To this date, he wears his dreadlocks with grace. The dreads are getting longer and more beautiful. He has contemplated shaving them many times. But he has not because perhaps, he says, they will grow longer to become an icon for protesting the negative profiling of human rights defenders.

“Were it not for the quick response of Defenders Coalition, I do not know what would have happened to me. Perhaps they would have forcefully disappeared me like they have done to my childhood friends.”

Elections Project



Elections provide a critical opportunity for citizens to advance democratic governance and encourage citizen participation by electing leaders who advance their aspirations. For elections to be meaningful, citizens should have the ability to enjoy their right to free speech, and association and peacefully assemble to articulate their needs or express their displeasure with the governance process without being targeted for reprisals. Key to a safe working environment for HRDs is the strong legal and policy structures that can be brought about by institutionalized democracy and the rule of law. Moreover, the Defenders Coalition recognizes that democratic elections form the basis for legitimate government.

In 2022, the Defenders Coalition supported Kenya's electoral process by deploying election monitors across the country to gather information that would enhance transparency and credibility of general election's outcome.

From August 2021 to August 2022, the Defenders' Coalition recruited 212 monitors who are essentially HRDs by training and practice to monitor human rights violations during the said period. In three (3) periods, the Defenders Coalition facilitated these HRDs to undertake monitoring in different batches:



first, between August and December 2021, there were 75 monitors; second, from December 2021 to January 2022, there were 32 monitors; and finally, between June and August 2022, there were 105.

Through training on monitoring and documenting human rights violations, Defenders Coalition was able to:

Offer rapid support to individuals and communities at risk due to their work as a result of countrywide monitoring of the human rights situation using the pioneer Mtetezi Application.

Mobilize relevant duty bearers – The Ministry of Interior and

independent commissions- to implement appropriate mechanisms that averted violence.

Compile 12 monthly human rights situational reports that informed measures by the state, including deployment of agencies to contain insecurity issues in Nakuru and Marsabit Counties.

Ensured the safety of political activists and HRDs at risk due to their work of advancing democracy.

TESTIMONIAL LENA H MIGIDE

“Happy new year 2023. I take this opportunity to thank the defenders coalition for choosing me to be among the election monitor 2022. The knowledge and exposure was superb. There is alot I gained in terms of knowledge, skills that even pushed me to monitor the petition for my own good. Now I have the know how about petition and the things that matter. Sitting and watching at least 10 legal counsel cross examination is just another level. Then came the scrutiny! How the ballot boxes were sorted in readiness for scrutiny, the tight security and how every documents within the ballot box was scrutinized and compared with what was in the polling station diaries and PSD's ! Being compared with the evidence given in court and report writing!. Not forgetting the stipend . Forever grateful thank you so much Defenders coalition. Pass my Regards to DK, Gloria, Sengwer and the entire team for really impacting my life. Thank you so much and God bless you all safe and secure” – Lenah Migide.



TESTIMONIAL TOBISTER OSUNDWA

“Capacity building of women human rights defenders is key in the dispensation of service to our communities. I’m happy to be in the 2022 cohort of women human rights defenders admitted into the Human Rights Academy by Defenders Coalition. It’s a great opportunity for me to build skills relevant to my work and I know I will serve my community better now and in the future.”

– Tobister Osundwa.



TESTIMONIAL GIDEON KOSKEI

“Training and deployment of HRDs as election monitors enabled HRDs to broaden our networks and good relationships with state actors like the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and the National Police Service Actors. The police perception about our work changed completely as they realized HRDs are a very good source of information that was meant to keep members of the public safe.”- Gideon Koskei.



TESTIMONIAL MWANGI MURAYA

“The relevance of HRDs was felt on how national and international observers’ keenness on working closely with HRDs who were monitoring violations in various counties. Following the classification Nakuru County as a potential hotspot area due to insecurity in 2022, HRDs were given the first priority in advising security agencies on how to approach the situation in a humane way as well as in sharing critical information with international stakeholders in Kenya’s election.” Mwangi Muraya.



The Case of Florence Achuya

Defying Culture To Stand Tall Against Violations



For Florence Achuya, her day is incomplete if she fails to defend the vulnerable in society and ensure justice is served for them.

Despite her daily family activities, she has been doing this for the past 11 years. She is financially constrained but says she is ready to soldier on.

"I like being a fighter. I represent Women Justice Centre in Vihiga County. I am a defender by nature."

In her, she says, there exists a spirit of changing lives in any challenging situation that comes her way. This being

an election year, she says she is upscaling her resolve to penetrate the political terrain in protecting the rights of women and the vulnerable ahead of the August 9 polls.

Election observer

As a result, she has been picked as an election monitor and has her job cut out. She began by monitoring the registration of aspirants by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, an exercise that saw her move from one office to another, assessing the clearance process.

"I fight for women, girls, and even boys. I feel that the boy child has been neglected. I am happy being a defender.

I feel happy when I succeed in defending people because it leaves me with fulfilment and satisfaction that someone has received justice because of my effort.”

She says if she were financially empowered, her reach and scope of duty would be widened, and she would make more positive impacts on lives. But the challenges she faces could be heavier. She, for instance, cites difficulties in reaching survivors and victims amid financial constraints.

Training

She got her training in human rights from the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, Kenya, and notes that this has equipped her with more information and technical know-how in handling her resolve professionally.

The National Coalition for Human Rights Defenders, Kenya, aims to champion the safety, security, and of human rights defenders.

The body is a national organization incorporated in Kenya as a trust. Its mission is to strengthen the capacity of human rights defenders to work effectively and to reduce their vulnerability to the risk of persecution. It currently has 3,456 members and has trained 2,504 human rights defenders from 14 networks, according to the information on its website. Ms Achuya says the training she got from the coalition is the reason she has been approved as an election monitor by the IEBC.

Advocates peaceful campaigns.

She says she feels monitoring the election process will place her right at the centre of getting access to first-hand information on the planning of the forthcoming general election. She believes this will also sharpen her skills in championing women’s rights before, during, and after the election.

“In the process, we can campaign for peace and peaceful coexistence.”

To beat the financial constraints, Ms. Achuya says she and other defenders are involved in soap making, handcrafts, and farming to boost their earnings and fund their daily activities.

But this is not enough. She appeals to well-wishers to support their activities to ease their movement and communication.

“Despite the constraints, I keep going because I feel I must do something to its logical conclusion,” she concludes.

Nation Media Group first published this story . This is not a reproduction but an amplification of the message.



SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF HRDS

Under this area of focus, the Defenders Coalition aimed to facilitate HRDs to adopt progressive well-being practices in their socio, economic, and well-being resilience to attain an improved quality of life that allows them to promote and protect human rights sustainably and with dignity.

A. ACCESS TO WELLBEING PROFESSIONALS

The mental resilience and well-being of 372 HRDs was improved by providing access to well-being professionals and services.

B. ENHANCED CAPACITY

Enhanced capacity of 120 HRDs in financial literacy and entrepreneurship as a step towards economic self-reliance and resilience.

C. HRD ACADEMY

Conducted the Annual HRD Academy 2022



WE ARE PROUD THAT:

1. 372 HRDS ACCESSED MENTAL HEALTHCARE

We created awareness and provided access to mental health services for 372 HRDs (group debriefs). This support contributed to the reduction of the effects of adverse mental illnesses due to human rights work.

2. CHALLENGED HARMFUL PRACTICES AROUND WELL-BEING

The mental resilience and well-being of 372 HRDs was improved by providing access to well-being professionals and services. Defenders Coalition continued to challenge harmful practices surrounding wellness, such as stigma, misconceptions, and lack of prioritization by different communities and thematic groups.

3. FINANCIAL LITERACY ENHANCED

Defenders Coalition enhanced the capacity of 120 HRDs in financial literacy and entrepreneurship as a step towards economic self-reliance and resilience.



4. CREATED PLATFORMS FOR MENTORSHIP AND EXCHANGE

Continued to provide platforms for cross-pollination, exchange, and mentorship between seasoned HRDs and the young HRDs, including at Mashujaa Love Concert.

5. STAFF REMEMBERED TO REST

As part of the best practices in promoting the well-being of those at the frontline and those involved with supporting those at the frontline, Defenders Coalition Secretariat also continued to observe regular well-being check-ins culminating during the mental health in October 2022 when the secretariat slowed down for three days on programme work to concentrate on the well-being of staff.

6. CONFIDENT HRDS

We successfully enhanced the capacities of 120 HRDs to protect and promote human rights confidently, safely and effectively during the week-long annual HRD Academy 2022.



What is the HRD Academy?

Every year ever since 2016, Defenders Coalition hosts an Annual Human Rights Defenders Academy and General Assembly of HRDs. The purpose of these events is to intervene to training needs and other gaps of HRDs as identified in the previous year at a General Assembly where HRDs analyze the situation faced by HRDs from across the country and among the various thematic groups of HRDs and prioritize protection, capacity building and advocacy needs of HRDs. Since the inception of the HRD Academy in 2016 a total of 960 HRDs have benefitted from training on various priority topical issues.



"... a total of 960 HRDs have benefitted from training on various priority topical issues."



Meet Editar Ochieng

Femingarisha: Hygiene Champ



Women human rights defenders start earning a living from soap making.

When WHRDs from Kibera made the decision to plunge themselves into the unpredictable world of entrepreneurship amidst COVID-19, many thought they were making a mistake that they would regret.

Armed with only skill and Kshs. 68,000 there had been donated by various well-wishers (Defenders Coalition

being one of the well-wishers) to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, the WHRDs bought the various ingredients for soap making. Their main aim was to distribute as much liquid soap as many households as possible and enhance personal hygiene, including regular handwashing practices as the World Health Organization emphasized.

To cut production costs, the WHRDs are packaged in recycled plastic bottles collected from dustbins in nearby residential estates.

“On a single day, we would distribute nearly 200 bottles of liquid soap. Some households would take up to two litres of liquid soap. So, we thought to ourselves, what if we distribute the soap to the households for a small fee and then plough back the profits to secure a space for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence?” the WHRDs asked themselves. After all, they were passionate about advocating against violence against women and girls.

Editar Ochieng, the founder of the Kibera Feminist for Peace, Rights and Justice Centre (FPRJC), says that the idea struck the group as something that can help generate income and enable them to conduct their day-to-day human rights work sustainably and with dignity.

“We used the funds that had remained to buy equipment that would enable us to produce liquid soap in bulk because we knew that we had a ready market – the community that we serve – and that our product had been tested and tried and thus would compete with others in the market. Our product was for a cause, for women and girls in Kibera.”

The idea that kicked off in 2020 was finally in the majority of the households in Kibera in 2022.

“We have two outlets in Kibera. One is at our office, and the other is near a busy market center. We have branded our

soap Femingarisha as a feminist way of cleaning up.”

The WHRDs face lights up at the mention of the following plans. They speak in unison. One can see the determination and resilience in the smiles.

“We want Femingarisha on the shelves in local supermarkets. How soon? We do not know, but it will get there. We want to lead in demonstrating that we can monetize our passion through the same people that we serve.”

Defenders Coalition is proud to have walked the journey with FPRJC. Their product, Femingarisha, will help save a life or restore the lives of victims of SGBV.

“The initial support from Defenders Coalition was not intended to start any business. It is the belief in the capacity of the WHRDs to make liquid soap for us safely and to support those with limited access to the same. Perhaps other HRD networks can also emulate this success story,” Editar says as we end our conversation.



"... a leading, dynamic, effective, and sustainable organization in its primary work of enhancing the safety, security, and well-being of HRDs..."

INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE



Under this pillar, Defenders Coalition focused on an inward consolidation of its position as a leading, dynamic, effective, and sustainable organization in its primary work of enhancing the safety, security, and well-being of HRDs through further strengthening and diversifying our resource base, human resource, and leadership capabilities, as well as our internal systems, policies, and structures.

Enhanced financial sustainability and resource base of Defenders Coalition with intensified external fundraising and local resource mobilization through the Climb for Justice initiative.

Improved internal environment for enhanced compliance, accountability, professionalism, and organizational effectiveness by adopting various institutional policies.

Continued to attract and retain a passionate, professional, and dedicated team of staff to support providing services to HRDs at the frontline.



KEY INTERVENTIONS

A. INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Defenders Coalition intensified its efforts of mobilizing resources to enhance its sustainability. Hundreds of Kenyans and friends of Kenya mobilized resources towards setting up a permanent hub for HRDs through the Climb For Justice Campaign.

Since the commencement of the campaign in 2019, and through hiking, merchandising, and crowdsourcing among others, Defenders Coalition has raised a total of Kshs. 12.1 million.

The funds have been utilized to acquire 2 hectares of land where the HRD hub will sit. Development of this piece of land is expected to start in 2023.


TESTIMONIAL NELLY MADEGWA

My breath grows heavy and my legs refuse to go on, the trail gets more rugged and delceptive as I leap over the streams of water slipping through the narrow crevices between the rocks. Only a few meters since we left the point of despair, I am a little behind my 'tribe' and in that solitude I can't help but wonder why I'm here, why was this so important for me to be a part of it and am pulled back into five years ago when all these started.

Until 2015, I understood human rights in the abstract context taught to me in a history class in high school, not relatable. Let me put it this way; I got into activism through "baptism by fire". As a survivor of sexual assault, working through the shame and self-reproach, somehow threw me into into the deep end of activism as I could not get past the society's indifference to and how it is desensitized over violations against human rights. Anger motivated me as I scurried through the process barely coming up for breath. All that mattered was the outcome. I did achieve a few milestones , however the process wore me out. I lost myself and even as I began learning about advocacy and human rights the anger remained and you can say I was self-centered. I couldn't see others' experiences without being drawn back into my own loss in a way that had me stuck.

The elephant hill is very dramatic. It has a false starting point that is 3.6 km to the starting point and with all the excitement even as we are directed to savor it and not walk fast, most of us this does not make sense till you are about to reach the point of despair and you realize you could have reserved your energy and a bit of that excitement for this. I have had my own false start where I did listen with the intent





TESTIMONIAL NELLY MADEGWA

of responding and not comprehension and when I needed everything to make sense concurrently.

At the starting point , I was excited like everyone else. I woke up at 3;30 am for this. What could possibly go wrong?I had everything I needed, so I thought, till I had to pick up humility on my way up less than 300 meters to the summit and a bit more coming down through the bamboo forest. Between the starting point and the beginning of the bamboo forest , there is merry making, upbeat music and Swahili sayings 'methali' with the promise of living out their meaning with the change in altitude and as the terrain gets even more treacherous and this does come to pass.

The transition into the bamboo forest begins with a change in music genre, we were lucky one of us had a great long playlist of reggae music and I remember him saying this is the genre that gets you through suffering. Such wisdom. I grappled through the slippery never ending bamboo forest and my tally count for the number of times I was to fall flat on my back begun. At the beginning it was embarrassing and very painful, though, of importance was the many

times I knew my 'tribe' was there to hold on to, help me up and laugh through the falls.

When you are about to be happy for getting through the forest, you are treated to a sight of abandon, the point of despair (Desperado) that is what the signpost says and in all veracity you don't need the sign to explain what is going on, hopelessness and the feeling of desolate are tangible, there is nothing in sight just clouds and deafening silence. Life should not exist there.here you are and you all need to recharge by taking some snacks and enjoy a serious hydration exercise. At that point I could really use being back in the van. And it gets more real after this point, the 'tribes' get smaller to the point where am all alone and I do not do well alone with my thoughts but to get to the end this is a barrier and I need to work through while holding on to my sanity, remembering to breathe and taking the excruciating impossibly small steps. I barely have functioning legs and at some point I feel my body is angry at me for dragging it through this experience.

There is nothing disingenuous with being angry at the injustice in the world and I had this covered through the breach between

this passion and anger in my walk as a human rights defender and the resources I need and needed to navigate the slippery trail, high altitude has the gravity that keeps pulling me down and has had me falling flat on my back enough times to want to quit.

Descending is something I had underestimated and I paid for it. I thought it would be easier and more friendly to the legs I couldn't feel, till my tally count for the number of times I fell tripled on my way down. The bamboo forest felt like a scene in a horror movie, misty, haunted silence with distant echoing. It was more challenging to the mind than the body. My 'tribe' coming down had three people but before that it had only me trying to catch up to them because I could not be alone anymore with my mind and this running away from who I am (impatient, selfish and lost) was a very slippery slope.

We were lost on the right path, we doubted it, we even considered taking camp and making peace with being lost (this felt incredibly safer than going on) but we moved on and it felt insane though bearable because we had each and towards end, the pink ribbon a few meters to the entry of the Bamboo forest. We finally got out of that creepy never-ending forest and met our sanity and embraced normalcy on our way to the starting point 2.4 km away, our conversations were more authentic cause we did not have the energy to pick up our defenses yet and we were all about moving forward. At the van as we waited for others we all shared this sense of fulfillment and the realization of baggage we carry that is not necessary, things we have prioritized that are frivolous. The climb mirrored to me the importance of

'tribe', different strategies to handle the different and new difficulties, knowing when to slow, accelerate and stop in this walk of activism. I identified with my 'egoic' masks and I know that is not who I am, with being able to hold that space for myself it then opens me up to have the same heart for others.

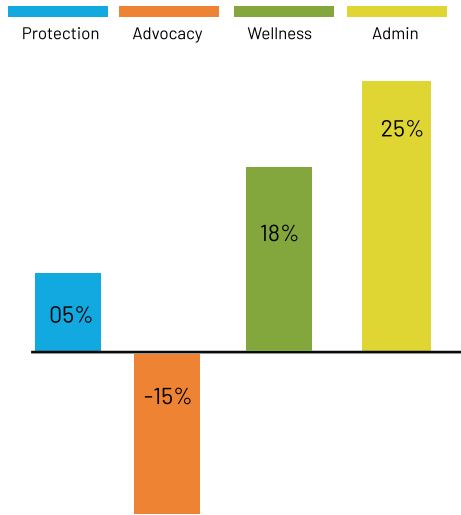
The small steps, the breaks to recharge, the tribe and incomparably the understanding of why I do this are all that count and the learning never stops. For any human rights defender this is wisdom born of pain yet with the knowledge of this treacherous trail, we will still make this choice.

The summit is the ultimate goal for every hiker, though, the whole trail to and from the summit is the ultimate experience. When the pain and anger of the injustice I suffered faded and the tapestry was mended, new normal, I had an in between moment and needed to figure out why activism was important to me and I had to rediscover my journey as a human rights defender, the hill, the climb for justice is my blueprint. The hills and mountains are nature uninterrupted and in that unbroken state, they reflect our humanity back to us. The moments I spent on the trail alone I was able to see myself beyond my defenses and I hope this helps me see others, empathize, and intentionally cultivate compassion. Suffering should not be the end of the story, but the beginning, we need to evolve beyond that and be pulled into seeing our interdependence, to being each other's pink ribbon in this walk to restoration, when the steps we make feel like a bootless errand.

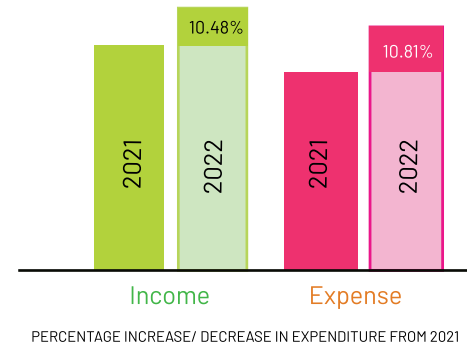
My emancipation is bound up in your emancipation.

B. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Percentage Increase/ Decrease in Expenditure from 2021



Income And Expenditure Growth In 2022



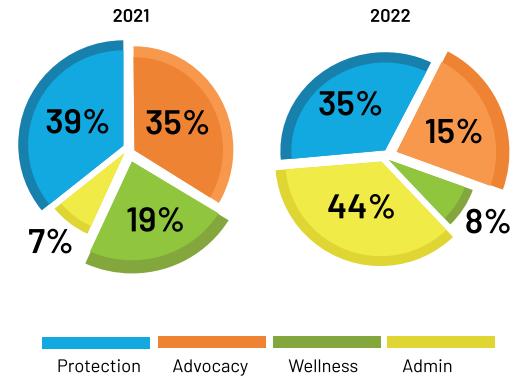
Income and expenditure growth in 2022

Income	10.48%
Expenditure	10.81%

Percentage increase/decrease in expenditure from 2021

Protection	7.30%
Advocacy	13.42%
Wellness	17.61%
Admin	24.64%

Expenditure per Program



C. BOARD AND STAFF

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