

JAN-MARCH 2024

# HAKI NEWS

NEWSLETTER, ISSUE 1 - 2024



DEFENDERS  
COALITION

HELLO!

**Hello Friends and Supporters of Human Rights Defenders in Kenya**

**We champion the safety and security of Human Rights Defenders(HRDs) in Kenya.**

HRDs have increasingly exercised their fundamental right to assemble, demonstrate, picket, and petition. However, this has led to a sharp increase in arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention of HRDs by the police.

In response to this critical issue, the Defenders Coalition’s rapid response team has continued to swiftly provide legal representation and cash bail/bond to secure HRDs release thus giving them the confidence to continue amplifying their voices.

Other forms of support that HRDs have continued receiving include relocation support, medical support and psychosocial support with the specific numbers as indicated below.

**WHAT WE DO**



Supportive policy, legal and institutional framework



HRD protection and safety



Socio-economic well-being of HRDs

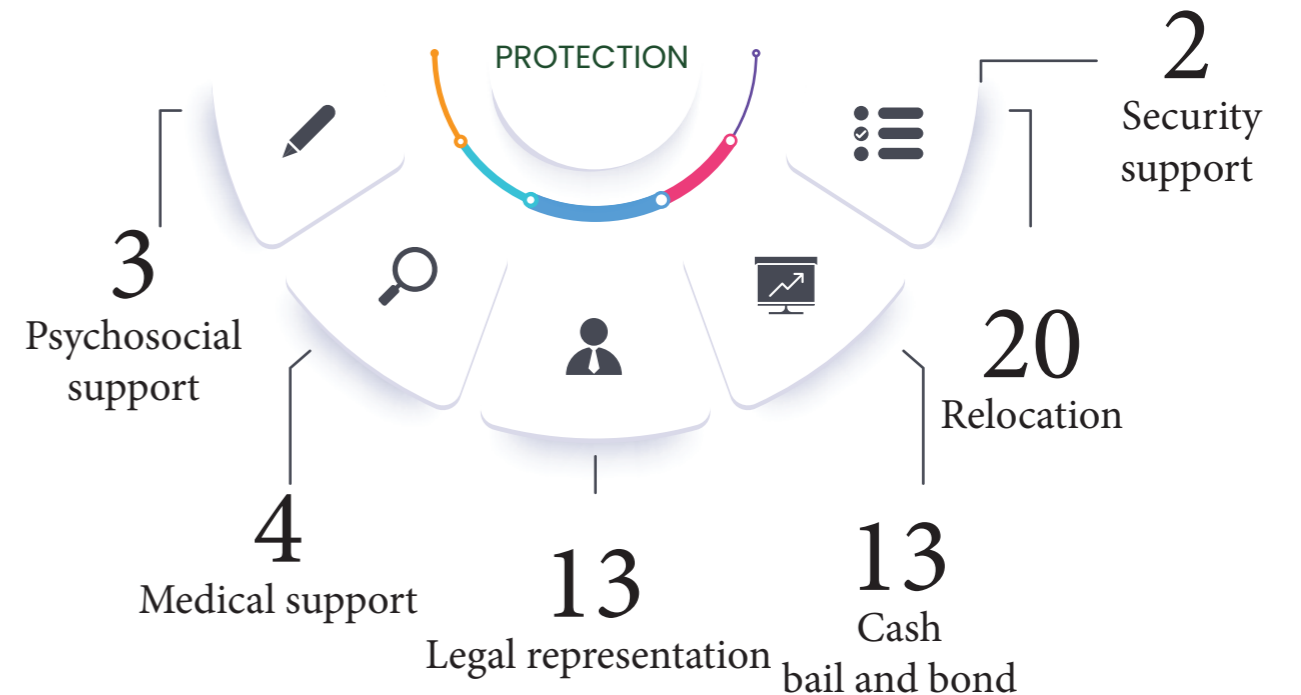


**Institutional Excellence**

Defenders Coalition will see to consolidate its position as a dynamic, effective and sustainable organization



**OUR WORK IN JANUARY, FEBRUARY & MARCH**



Follow and interact with us on our social media handles ;



**PILLAR 1.0**

**SUPPORTIVE POLICY, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

**1.1 5th Annual NiMama Forum, KAKAMEGA COUNTY**



**T**he Mulembe nation is renowned for its vibrant cultural celebrations, where the rhythmic beats of the Isukuti dance herald the beginning of festivities. Such was the scene that unfolded as Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD) converged in Kakamega County, representing all 47 counties of Kenya, for the auspicious 5th NiMama Forum, organized by the Defenders Coalition.

On the monumental day of 8th March, amidst the rhythmic pulse of the Isukuti dance, voices rose to address pressing issues. Kamau Ngugi addressed the need of protecting the lives of WHRDs, echoing the prevailing concerns on the safety and security of women in the face of rising femicide and ensuring accountability across all levels of people in the society.

**“Today is the day to call for action to advance women’s rights and gender equality,” articulated Hanna Carlsson, a representative from the Embassy of Sweden in Kenya.**

The Chief Guest at the event, Hon. Elsie Muthanda, Kakamega Women Representative at the National Assembly, lent her voice to the discourse, shedding light on the harrowing realities of teenage pregnancies in Kakamega county, as is in many parts of the country. She also emphasized on the constitutional mandate to safeguard women’s rights and rallied for concerted efforts in addressing these systemic injustices.

An important moment surfaced as a **petition was presented** to her, reiterating the resounding call to end femicide and galvanize governmental action. The call for action were clear:

- A Presidential Declaration of Violence Against Women and Femicide as a national crisis requiring an emergency response, and reports
- Demanded the establishment of a Commission on the Elimination of Femicide and Violence Against Women and the development of a National Plan of Action for the elimination of VAW and Femicide.
- An increase in the allocation of funds and personnel to the State Department of Gender to support the monitoring of the Government of Kenya’s VAW commitments and the development of prevention of VAW and IPV programs for men.
- The return of the State Department of Gender to the Ministry of Public Service and the restoration of the name of the Ministry to “Ministry of Public Service, Gender and Affirmative Action among others.

**“We want Mheshimiwa to take to go to parliament to also present the voice of Kakamega women, because WHRDs in their own diversity, are not safe and we want someone to represent us, as voters,” stated Rachael Mwikali.**

In solemn remembrance, the End Femicide movement led a candle-lit vigil, honoring the memory of those who have fallen victim to these atrocities. This touching gesture served as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for the need of safety and security of women in the country.

The momentum of solidarity extended to the 9th of March, 2024 as over 106 Women Human Rights Defenders, Civil Society organizations, duty bearers and partners joined the Climb for Justice Campaign on a hike through the lush Kakamega forest in a bid to raise funds for Haki Village, a resource hub for human rights defenders.

The 5th NiMama Forum, 2024 played a huge role in strengthening the national WHRD Network in Kenya.

Among others, the network served to:

- **Befittingly commemorated the International Women’s Day 2024**
- **Shared, documented and amplified the work of WHRDs in Kenya as they are integral to national development.**
- **Documented the technological risks faced with WHRDs.**
- **Enhanced the capacities of 38 WHRDs regarding safe digital navigation**

**Building a National Network for Women Human Rights Defenders: Remarks from Kamau Ngugi, Executive Director**

“I take pride that we are able to bring together women from various parts of the country as we build not only a national network, but also a global network of Human Rights Defenders. Ni Mama has provided an opportunity for us to come together and see women from various communities- it is easy to say we work nationally without seeing the faces of those we work with. It is important to note that it was deliberate to bring together women from across the country. They are not only physically present in this gathering but continue to network among themselves beyond this room.



**The Time to Act Is Now: Remarks from Hon. Elsie Muhanda, Women Representative, Kakamega County**

“We live in a country where statistics show that 40% women have experienced physical and sexual violence. 500 girls have equally died of femicide. As we celebrate International Women’s Day, we are cognizant of the struggles women face. It is time we introduce measure to address this wave of violence.



**The Power of Institutions in Ensuring Gender Equality: Remarks from Hannah Carlsson, Embassy of Sweden**

“Girls and women are more likely to experience gender based violence and have less power over their bodies and resources. Norms and prejudices are still being upheld Therefore there is need to strengthen the institutions that will uphold gender equality.

**Giving Back to Those Who Work Tirelessly for Our Rights: Remarks from Gloria Madegwa, Head of Programs and Strategic Partnerships.**

“We celebrate every woman who is doing something to bring change to our communities and to our country. As the Defenders Coalition, we execute a lot of successful work and programs, but Ni Mama allows us to be deliberate and acknowledge the work women do as Human Rights Defenders.



1. 2



### 1.2. 1 Shut down of major towns in Kenya to call out cases of femicide

On 27th January, 2024 Defenders Coalition joined thousands of women human rights defenders and other citizens on the streets of major towns to express disgusts at the heinous crimes of torture, rape, mistreatment and Killing of Women.

The peaceful protests took place in **Kisumu, Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret, Turkana, Vihiga, Nakuru, Kisii, Machakos, Nyeri, Kwale and Busia** as a loud statement to call on the authorities to action to protect women from killings and violence but to also condemn the public silence and in some instances distasteful comments on social media that blame the victims.

The right to life is sacrosanct yet in the past few days of January 2024 we have witnessed horrendous tales of how Starlet Wahu, Rita Waeni, Grace Wangari were lured into macabre murders that point to the degeneration of societal values and respect attached to the right to life. A report by Africa data hub found that there is a delay in getting justice for the victims involved after the cases have been taken to court. Further to 500 Kenyan women being murdered between 2017 and 2024 according to Africa uncensored.

**We choose to do a dark Valentine instead of a red Valentine because we feel the country and leadership of the country should be showing us love. But at the same time being in solidarity with the victims, survivors and also and all the women in Kenya. To say together we're going to end femicide and also fight for our own security, freedom and protection.**

**- Rachael Mwikali-**

### 1.2.2 Dark Valentine Vigil

On 15 February, 2024, Defenders Coalition joined the EndFemicideKe movement in a Candle lit vigil.

"We choose to do a dark Valentine instead of a red Valentine because we feel the country and leadership of the country should be showing us love. But at the same time being in solidarity with the victims, survivors and also and all the women in Kenya. To say together we're going to end femicide and also fight for our own security, freedom and protection." reiterated Rachael Mwikali

"Why is this symbolic being in, the university of Nairobi space. In 2019, there were a lot of commitments that were made by the government of Kenya on ending femicide, but we're yet to see the results, so we are also here to remind them that we are still pushing some of those commitments that were put to protect us by the government".



## ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS WITH WOMEN NETWORKS ON ENDING FEMICIDE

### 1.2.3

### Solidarity with WHRDs from Marsabit in calling for the arrest of Margaret Esimonte's Killers

Barely a month after a nationwide march to demand an end to femicide in Kenya, a rural woman Margaret Aleya Eisimonte from Kargi, Marsabit County tragically lost her life on 18 February 2024 following a barbaric beating by morans on suspicion of being a witch.

Despite the killing, the National police Service in Kargi are yet to arrest the killers. It is on this premise that the Defenders Coalition joined WHRDs from Marsabit County for a solidarity and fact finding mission to amplify the concerning issue as more women were at risk of losing their lives as a result of a beating from the morans.

It is alleged that the morans were acting on instructions by elders from the Rendille Community following a declaration by a witchdoctor that some women in the clan are witches.

The second victim of the barbaric attack, Ms Wareheya Sahado, has since recuperated after also receiving a barbaric beating targeting her private parts by the same morans.

Margaret Super, a woman human rights defender from Marsabit, expressed the fear that more women are likely to be attacked and killed.

**"We are shocked by this occurrence. This is murder and the murderers are walking free, and this is unacceptable. We do not know the number of women on that list by the Mganga and we fear that more women will be targeted for assault and murder just like Aleya."**

The Defenders Coalition, Samburu Women Trust and Pastoralists People's Initiative believe that the attacks on pastoralist women in Kargi are an attack on all women in Kenya and amount to serious violations of the safety, security and dignity of women.

It's worrying that there hasn't been any arrest made so far. It's crucial for both the authorities in Marsabit County and the broader Kenyan government to swiftly and decisively investigate these incidents, hold those responsible accountable, and ensure the safety of pastoralist women in the area.

**Efforts should be focused on addressing the underlying causes of this violence, which includes entrenched beliefs and cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women. Education, community involvement, and promoting gender equality are vital elements of lasting solutions to prevent such atrocities from happening again.**

**It's the responsibility of everyone in society to oppose injustice and strive towards creating a society where every individual is treated with dignity, respect, and**



### 1.3 Police Reforms Working Group Meeting

On 24th January, 2024, Defenders Coalition joined the Police Reforms Working Group Kenya (PRWG-K) meeting in a quarterly strategic meeting aimed at reviewing the performance of the working group in 2023 and identifying priority areas of 2024 to realize the shared objectives.

The Police Reforms Working Group Kenya (PRWG-K) brings together over 19 National and International Human Rights Organizations that seek to advocate for reforms within the National Police Service. The working group started out as a civil society police vetting working group, initiated by IMLU and other partners in November 2011 upon the realization that the much anticipated police reforms which needed concerted effort of Civil Society Organizations.

Since inception, the PRWG-K has had periodical meetings with a key concern among actors in the security services being the seeming stalling of the police reforms process. In 2018, the group was invited to the Multi-Stakeholder Consultative Committee on Police reforms Agenda where it is a co-convenor. Through this advocacy platform, we have seen a raft of changes especially in the operations of the National Police service. However, cases of police impunity, corruption, use of force by police officers, different reform narrative by Government, escalating incidents of insecurity, police harassment and EJES abound even in this era of reforms, with little to no accountability.

The outcome of the meeting renewed momentum for police reforms, and explore innovative solutions to ensure the effective implementation of security sector activities in the pursuit of a just and accountable law enforcement system.



### 1.4 Empowering Women: Elizabeth Kingi Vision for Safety and Security in Kenya

As the world celebrated International Womens Day, it was imperative to reflect on the progress made and the challenges that still lay ahead in ensuring the rights and protection of women. In the 5th Annual NiMama Event, Elizabeth Kingi, the OCPD from Kakamega Police Station, had the privilege of addressing a gathering of women from

Elizabeth Kingi address to the gathering of women in Kakamega County, organized by the Defenders Coalition, holds significant implications for the safety and security of women in Kenya. Her impassioned speech and commitment to addressing gender-based violence underscore the urgent



various parts of Kakamega County, organized by the Defenders Coalition.

With a tone of empowerment and solidarity, Kingi commenced her address by acknowledging the significance of the occasion. She emphasized the importance of women supporting each other in their journey towards equality and justice. Kingi's words echoed a sentiment of unity and collaboration, reassuring the women present that they were not alone in their struggles. Her address to the gathering of women holds significant implications for the safety and security of women in Kenya. Her impassioned speech and commitment to addressing gender-based violence underscore the urgent need

need for concrete action to protect women rights and ensure their well-being. Overall, Elizabeth Kingi conduct and work exemplify the transformative impact that women in the forces can have in advancing the safety and security of women in Kenya. Her proactive measures, commitment to collaboration, and advocacy for systemic reforms set a precedent for others to follow in their efforts to combat gender-based violence and promote gender equality. As such, there is a clear need for others in the police forces to emulate her conduct and work in order to create a society where every woman can live free from fear and violence

**PILLAR 2.**

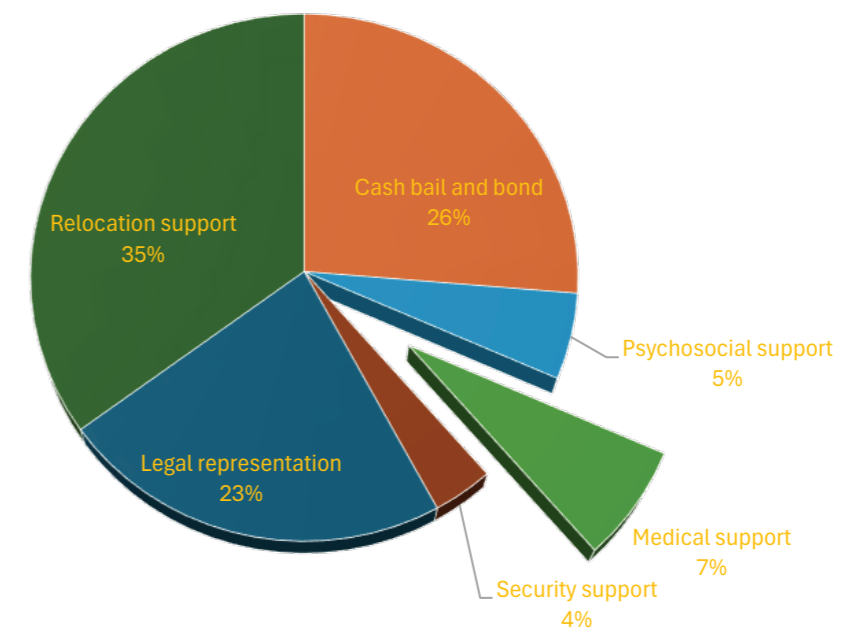
**TOWARDS THE SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN KENYA**

The main aim of this pillar will be to facilitate timely and appropriate responses to all forms of threats or insecurities to HRDs.

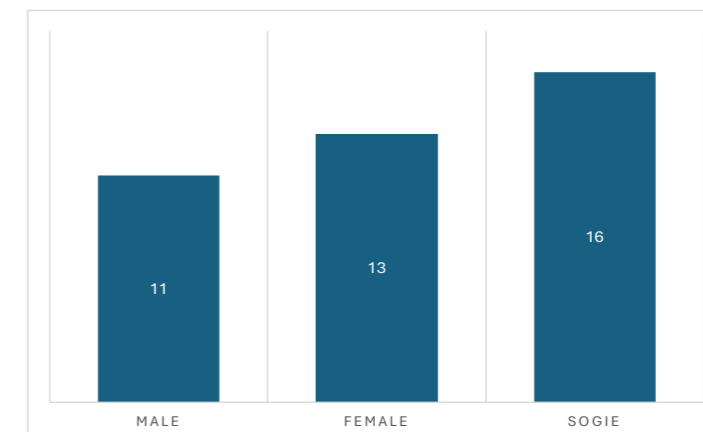
Defenders Coalition intervenes in a timely way whenever HRDs are at risk and deliberately establishes strategic partnerships with complementary referral systems in order to ensure a systems approach to HRD support

During this reporting period, the prevailing hostile operating environment continued to affect the work of HRDs specifically while exercising the freedom of peaceful assembly which came under heavy attack. Law enforcement responded with arbitrary arrests and detention as a weapon to neuter HRDs voices. Sexual minority HRDs also continued to face attacks which has been a looming trend since the beginning of the year.

**2.1 Rapid Response and Protection in numbers**



**Gender Segregation**



2.2.

### Digital Security Clinic

Digital security for Human Rights Defenders is an approach to protect individuals and organizations against the risks of using the Internet. It includes the use of tools to secure identity, data, information, property and other assets in the online and mobile world



On 8th March ,2024 at the 5th NiMama Forum in Kakamega ,Defenders Coalition Enhanced the capacities of 38 WHRDs regarding safe digital navigation .

2.3.

### Security Audits



On 23rd february ,Defenders Coalition conducted security audits for the Kenya Sex Workers Alliance and Resilient Hearts CBO .During these audits our team meticulously reviewed their security protocols ,shared valuable security tips and identified areas of improvement. additionally we explored opportunities for collaboration between the organizations.

Defenders coalition used the following methods for the audit:Physical inspection of the facility. One on one discussions of risks, challenges, fears, questions, and experiences around digital both digital and physical security.Use of questionnaires, a questionnaire was shared with the organization prior which they filled and used as guidance during the physical meeting.

2.4.

### Fix-Up support after

On 19th January,,2024 , Defenders Coalition conducted a fix up support to Coalition of Grassrroot Human Rights Defenders CGHRDs after a security audit.

There were some significant improvements noted. It was great to hear about the enhancements to the physical space, including construction work and additions like a sleeping area for visitors and a sanctuary for victims of human rights violations.

2.5.

### Security Management Training

Defenders Coalition is firmly dedicated to safeguarding HRDs ,irrespective of their backgrounds. As part of our protective initiatives ,we provide comprehensive security management trainings covering both physical and digital. This aims to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to develop security management strategies based on individual and organizational risk assessments and enhance their capacity and confidence to practice and transfer these skills to others.



On 7th March during the 5th NiMama Forum Defenders Coalition held security management training with Women Human Rights Defenders across the 47 counties in Kenya under the theme of using technology to counter Gender Bases Violence.

On 12th to 14th March,2024, Defenders Coalition organized security management training for HRDs from Nairobi, Machakos, Kajiado, Naku-ru, Uasin Gichu, Marsabit, Baringo, West Pokot, Nandi, Kakamega, Elgeyo Marakwet, Tharaka Nithi and Vihiga Counties between 12th and 14th March 2024.





### 3.1. Turkana Exchange Learning-HRD

On 14th and 15th March, 2024, HRD Awards Laureates from 2016-2023 came together with jury of HRD Awards on a learning visit with comrades in Turkana County as three trailblazing HRDs from the county have been recipients of the HRD Award.



The solidarity, and exchange learning program connects HRD Awards laureates with the impactful work of their peers and for the HRD jury to witness firsthand the work of frontline human rights defenders who have won the Annual HRD Awards since 2016. It also cultivates a supportive network and fosters collaboration among Awardees for solidarity and collective action, empowering them to confront challenges collectively and amplify their impact in advancing human rights.

### 3.2. Intergenerational Learning-Veteran HRDs

On 1st March, 2024, Defenders Coalition facilitated intergenerational dialogue conversations with veteran Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) who imparted their wisdom to upcoming human rights defenders in Social Justice Centres, emphasizing the role of theater in driving change and for socio-economic sustainability.

The intergenerational dialogue conversations seeks to;

- Establish mentorship programs where experienced activists can mentor and pass on knowledge and skills to younger activists to help them navigate challenges and maximize their impact.
- Document the stories and experiences of veteran human rights defenders.
- Facilitate intergenerational dialogue and collaboration to bridge generational divides and harness the strengths among the generations of HRDs.



## 3.

**ENHANCING THE SOCIO- ECONOMIC WELLBEING AND CAPACITIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS TO EFFECTIVELY DEFEND THE CIVIC SPACE IN KENYA**

### 4. CLIMB FOR JUSTICE CAMPAIGN- *2024 EDITION IS HERE*



**W**e are back to scaling Kenya's most beautiful and breathtaking hiking destinations in support of the Climb for Justice Campaign.

This year, Defenders Coalition promises you so much fun to new and exciting hiking destinations in support of brave individuals advancing the rule of law and constitutionalism in Kenya.

*We call on you to join us by signing up to hike and help the Defenders Coalition set up a permanent resource center for human rights defenders.*

To book your slot pay via MPESA  
Paybill: 810896  
Account: Your Name

*Destinations of the year:*

Kakamega Forest- 9 March 2024 (DONE)

Iveti Forest, Machakos County-14th May, 2024

Aberdares Forest, Seven ponds hills-13th July

Mt. Kinangop hills, Aberdares Forest-14th September

Mt. Kilimanjaro Expedition-13th-20th October



*Human Rights defenders at Kakamega Forest on 9th March, 2024*

# My Journey to Mt. Kilimanjaro



“

**...to be the first from my village to summit adds a bit of extra motivation!**

“

**..let's get one thing straight – Haki Village ain't just some project for Defenders Coalition to claim; it's for all you Human Rights Defenders out there.**

**Dennis Orengo**

*What would Dennis Orengo's grand debut be in his village? Well, he's aiming to shake things up and make his folks burst with pride this October by conquering Mt. Kilimanjaro as part of the Climb for Justice Campaign! After all, he's already shown off his hiking skills in Kakamega Forest, and he's dead set on joining every prep hike leading up to the final climb for justice destination this year*  
*Dennis - is a Human Rights Defender, fighting for the marginalized and vulnerable groups like widows, children, refugees, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), and even those unfortunate victims of extra-judicial*

Let's kick off with a fun question. If you were a mountain, which one would you be and why?

Well, if I were a mountain, I'd definitely be Mt. Kilimanjaro. It's the African heritage and the uniting factor of Africa, aside from being the highest peak in Africa. Plus, during a recent trip to South Africa, I caught a glimpse of Kilimanjaro's peak from the plane. But here's the kicker: it was missing its iconic snow cap! Yet, just days later, my buddy spotted it, complete with a fresh blanket of snow. Talk about resilience and global presence, right? Kilimanjaro's enduring nature, with those ice caps standing tall, truly strikes a chord with me.

**Impressive choice! Tell us about your first Climb for Justice hike experience.**

Ah, 2020 in Kudu Hills - quite the experience! I'll admit, I underestimated the terrain and paid for it. I finished the hike 3 hours later after everyone was done. But it taught me the importance of preparation and perseverance. This year, I plan to tackle every hike with gusto and summit Mt. Kilimanjaro!

*At least be the first one in my village to get to that level(laughs)*

**What's one thing you're looking forward to the most on Mt. Kilimanjaro?**

The challenge, definitely. It's about being part of a group that believes in a risky yet noble cause. And the comradeship that comes with it is priceless.

**Speaking of noble causes, why do you believe in the #BuyHakiBuildHaki Campaign?**

It's simple - without Defenders Coalition, our work as HRDs would be much harder. They've been a pillar of support, making advocacy more easier and accessible through their protection and safety mechanisms to Human Rights Defenders. Joining this cause was my resolution for the year, and I've gained so much in the last 7 years from their wellness programs and trainings over the past seven years, then why not support to raise funds for a home that will help more other people.

**Now, let's delve into your preparations for climbing Kilimanjaro. What's your routine like?**

Oh, it's quite the regimen! I'm a sporty person. I start my day with a morning run to get the blood pumping, followed by daily vigorous exercises. Psyching up my mind is crucial, so I read about others' experiences and also information about Kilimanjaro. And of course, a balanced diet is key.

*Plus, to be the first from my village to summit adds a bit of extra motivation!(chuckles)*

**That's dedication! How will you rally others to join you for the Climb for Justice cause?**

Every month, I've committed I'll contribute to the cause with a small amount of ksh 100 or ksh 200, hoping it'll add up to benefit Haki village, a project close to my heart. It's the least I can do, given the incredible support we've received from Defenders Coalition over the years. And I encourage others to pitch in, even if it means sacrificing a lunch or two!

**Parting Shot**

Let's get one thing straight – Haki Village ain't just some project for Defenders Coalition to claim; it's for all you Human Rights Defenders out there. So, fellow champions of justice, let's roll up our sleeves and dig deep. This isn't just a win for us today, but a legacy we're leaving for the HRDs of tomorrow. Spread the word, grab some merchandise, and let's march forward together because Haki Village isn't just a place; it's a unifying force that binds us all! See you in Kilimanjaro! Shall we?

## Feedback from our Beneficiaries during the Period



Photo Gallery from January, February and March

“  
 I am unable to join you in this hike, due to unavoidable circumstances. I take this opportunity to wish you all the best. My contribution will still support the process. Blessings  
 Ronald Gisore

“  
 It was a great adventure hiking in the forest of kakamega to raise funds for the Haki village. I salute the residents of kakamega for excellent conservation of the forest.  
 Lilian Koech



“  
 Ahsanteni sana HRD team under the leadership of Kamau Ngugi. You make us really proud to be part of the National Coalition of Human Rights, Defenders Coalition. This learning trip was huge and awesome. I came back with immense amount of knowledge. I trust we can all build on this.  
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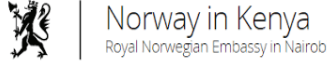


# THANK YOU!

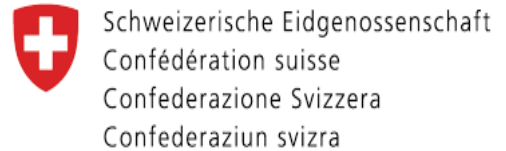


## Our Partners

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SIGRID RAUSING TRUST



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