

ANNUAL REPORT



2023



table of contents

FOREWORD:	4
WORKING FOR AND WITH COURAGEOUS INDIVIDUALS AT THE FRONTLINE	4
OUR TACTICS, VISION AND STRATEGY	6
CONTRIBUTE TO AN ENABLING CIVIC SPACE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS	8
1WHAT WE ACHIEVED	8
1SELECT SPOTLIGHT	9
1STORIES OF CHANGE	11
OFFERING PROTECTION AND SAFETY SERVICES TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS	12
Overview	13
WHAT WE ACHIEVED	13
Rapid Response in numbers	13
STORIES OF CHANGE	14
Capacity Building - Innovative Solutions for Defenders - Security Management	18
DIGNITY IN HUMAN RIGHTS WORK:	
THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN FOCUS	20
WHAT WE ACHIEVED	20
Supporting sustainable, innovative projects at the grassroots	21
An Academy of Social Justice Champions	21
Connecting through art, music, and poetry	
Staff remembered to rest	23
EXCELLENCY AT THE SECRETARIAT	23
Growing the Defenders Coalition and engagement	24
Sustainability of the organization	24
Financial Statements	24
Staff Testimonials	24



Defenders Coalition

A specific Location Here Nairobi
 P. O. Box 26309-00100 Nairobi, Kenya
 Phone: +254-712632390/ +254 716 200 100
 Email: info@defenderscoalition.org
 Web: defenderscoalition.org



Working For And With Courageous Individuals At The Frontline

In the face of mounting challenges to democracy and civil liberties, 2023 was a pivotal year for human rights defenders in Kenya. The Defenders Coalition witnessed the impact of sustained attacks on the civic space, which manifested in unlawful restrictions on fundamental rights such as the right to protest, associate, and engage with the government. However, amidst these adversities, we also witnessed remarkable resilience and progress in the fight for justice and accountability.

Some of the consequences of unchecked assaults on the civic space took the form of a surge in abuse of power, corruption, and disregard for the rule of law. These factors compounded the risks faced by human rights defenders across the country. Despite these challenges, the Defenders Coalition remained steadfast in its belief that concerted efforts could reverse these dangerous trends.

Throughout the year, human rights defenders from diverse backgrounds came together in powerful coalitions and networks to advocate for change. Whether advocating for ecological justice, minority rights, social justice, or good governance, defenders united under international human rights laws and systems and their voice resonated loudly, challenging complacency and demanding accountability from those in power.

In September 2023, hundreds of human rights defenders protested the government's



inaction on climate change's impact and its impact on the safety of environmental defenders. Part of this vigilance was robust pursuit of a petition in court on rights of sexual minorities and marginalized groups. Their advocacy yielded significant wins, including affirmations of LGBTQ+ rights and legal accountability for alleged perpetrators of extrajudicial killings.

Further, precedent-setting rulings, such as the case involving environmental rights defender Joel Ogada, a human rights defender who has faced several persecutions because of his stand against

“In September 2023, hundreds of human rights defenders protested the government's inaction on climate change's impact and environmental defenders' safety.”

the incursion into his farm and those of other farmers at Kanagoni area in Malindi by a Salt Company. Among the challenges that he has faced are multiple criminal and civil cases engineered against him, which is a form of harassment, intimidation and tactic to subdue him. In one of the cases he was sentenced to 7 years in prison for alleged arson of property of the Kurawa Salt company, which was reduced to 2 years when Defenders Coalition appealed the sentence. When he served time, his family home and food crops were destroyed. This case underscored the importance of judicial protection for defenders facing persecution.

Reflecting on these victories, we recognize four key factors that contributed to our success: the tireless work of human rights defenders who protested bad governance and advocated for the implementation of the 2010 constitution, the collaboration with networks of like-minded peer organizations, the strategic leveraging of international human rights mechanisms and lastly, the sovereignty of the Constitution of Kenya. As we celebrated milestones such as the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 25th anniversary of

the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, we reaffirmed the integral role of defenders in realizing human rights.

As the Defenders Coalition commemorates its 16th anniversary of excellence, professionalism and utmost reliability to the needs of human rights defenders, the need to support human rights defenders has never been greater. Our strategic plan emphasizes the importance of empowering rights holders, collaborating with partners, and embracing innovation to address evolving challenges effectively as well as seeking the full implementation of the CoK 2010.

We sincerely thank human rights defenders, partners, donors, and stakeholders for their unwavering support. Let us stand in Solidarity with defenders, recognizing their invaluable contributions to advancing human rights in Kenya and beyond.

This annual report provides a comprehensive overview of our work and impact. Let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding human rights and supporting those who defend them, for they drive our collective pursuit of justice and equality.

Mary Simat

**Signed
Mary Simat,
Chairperson to the Board of Trustees
Defenders Coalition**

Kamau Ngugi

**Signed
Kamau Ngugi,
Executive Director - Defenders Coalition
Chairperson - EHAHRD- Network.**

Our Tactics, Vision, And Strategy



Gloria Madegwa, Head of Programmes and Strategic Partnerships.

The Defenders Coalition is the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in Kenya, dedicated to safeguarding human rights defenders' (HRDs) safety, security, and welfare. Our mission encompasses empowering HRDs, reducing their vulnerability to persecution, and advocating for a legal and policy landscape that fosters their work in Kenya.

The assault on HRDs has reached critical levels, with defenders facing heightened risks of human rights violations due to the

nature of their work, limited resources, and socio-economic marginalization. Structural barriers within legal, institutional, and cultural frameworks compound these challenges.

Ensuring the safety and effectiveness of HRDs necessitates a concerted effort to eliminate intimidation, violence, and delegitimization of their work. This involves dismantling the norms, perceptions, and systems perpetuating such violations and holding those responsible for attacking defenders accountable.

“The assault on HRDs has reached critical levels, with defenders facing heightened risks of human rights violations due to the nature of their work.”

Duty-bearers must fulfill their obligations to protect, respect, and promote the rights of HRDs. This includes public recognition of their vital contributions, implementing effective protection mechanisms, and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of attacks against defenders. HRDs are entitled to the benefit and protection of same fundamental human rights as all individuals.

Barriers to HRDs' safety and well-being often lie within formal laws, institutional structures, societal norms, and individual capacities. A systematic approach is required to address these challenges, including promoting HRDs' legitimacy, creating an enabling environment for their work, providing necessary skills and resources, and fostering networking opportunities.

We employ various strategic options to deliver professional services to HRDs. These include providing adequate protection, capacity-building for HRDs and relevant stakeholders, and fostering collaboration among civil society organizations, the public, and duty-bearer institutions.

At the Defenders Coalition, we remain committed to empowering and protecting HRDs, recognizing their indispensable role in advancing human rights and justice in Kenya. Together, we strive to create a safer and more conducive environment for defenders to do their vital work.

The Defender's Coalition focuses on four broad strategic strategies to address these challenges:

- ✔ Supportive Policy, Legal, and Institutional Frameworks.
- ✔ HRD Protection and Safety.
- ✔ Socio-economic well-being of HRDs.
- ✔ Institutional Excellence.





1. Regional Protection Framework

Advocacy: We successfully advocated for the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to develop a regional protection framework for HRDs. This landmark initiative- including drafting the African Declaration on the Promotion of the Role of Human Rights Defenders and their Protection in Africa, paving the way for enhanced protection measures across member states, including Kenya.

2. HRD Awards 2023:

We amplified the visibility and recognition of HRDs' invaluable contributions by organizing the HRD Awards 2023. Through this platform, we showcased the remarkable work of 18 outstanding HRDs and organizations, shedding light on their challenges as catalysts for social change and transformation.



3. Legal Advocacy:

Through engagement with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), we successfully advocated for the withdrawal of six cases against HRDs facing trumped-up criminal charges in various courts. This intervention relieved 53 HRDs from legal persecution in regions such as Turkana, Nakuru, and Nairobi.

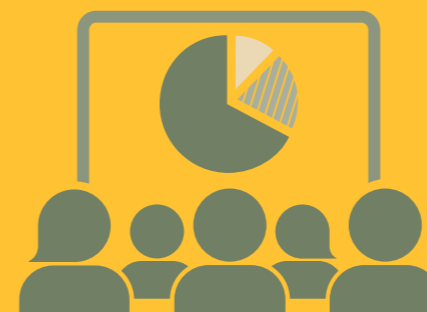


4. Access to International Bodies:

We facilitated the participation of 10 women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in addressing the ACHPR directly through the Defenders Coalition's observer status. This ensured that HRDs had a platform to articulate their demands and share their stories internationally.



5. Criminalization Resistance: Our persistent efforts to push back against the criminalization of human rights work yielded significant results. Seven cases against HRDs were withdrawn by the state, and a precedent-setting ruling was issued at the Malindi High Court following the appeal of the judgment issued on HCCRA NO. E040 OF 2021 involving a land rights defender, Joel Ogada, charged with threatening to kill in 2016. This limited future arrests without the express authorization of the Director of Public Prosecution.



6. Capacity Building: We enhanced the capacities of 313 HRDs in self-protection skills, including physical and digital security management, and improved office security for four civil society organizations (CSOs).

7. Supportive Environment: All supported HRDs resumed their human rights work, reflecting the effectiveness of our interventions in creating a conducive environment for their activities.

8. Legal Representation: Offering legal representation to 53 HRDs facing criminal charges resulted in their freedom through acquittal or dismissal of trumped-up charges, ensuring their rights were upheld in the court of law.



9. Mental Health Support: We prioritized the mental health resilience of 207 HRDs by providing access to psychosocial support services and debriefs, acknowledging the toll of their work on their well-being.

10. Courage Building: Through quality rapid response and timely referrals among members of the Protection Working Group, we bolstered the courage of 486 HRDs, ensuring they felt supported and empowered in their advocacy efforts.

These achievements underscore our commitment to standing alongside HRDs, empowering them to continue their vital work in advancing human rights and justice in Kenya.

“Seven cases against HRDs were withdrawn by the state, and a precedent-setting ruling was issued at the Malindi High Court following the appeal of the judgment issued on HCCRA NO. E040 OF 2021.”



PILLAR 1



Contribute To An Enabling Civic Space For Human Rights Defenders

At the Defenders Coalition, our commitment to advocating for an environment where human rights defenders (HRDs) can operate freely, securely, and without hindrance remains unwavering. Throughout 2023, we pursued strategic avenues to promote the formulation and enforcement of policies, laws, institutions, and cultural norms conducive to HRDs' work.



ACHIEVEMENTS

Engagement with International Mechanisms:

We actively engaged with regional and international bodies, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council, to highlight the situation of HRDs in Kenya. Where we highlighted the situation of HRDs in Kenya; notably, we spotlighted formulating and enforcing Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE) HRDs following a landmark ruling by Kenya's apex court affirming the rights of sexual minorities to organize and associate.



Advocacy for Regional Protection Framework:

Our advocacy efforts led to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) formulating a regional protection framework for HRDs, subsequently adopted by member states, including Kenya. The ACHPR adopted the recommendation with the drafting of the African Declaration on the Promotion of the Role of Human Rights Defenders and their Protection in Africa.



Executive Director Kamau Ngugi and Lawyer Paul Muite at the 2023 HRD Awards.

“Annual Human Rights Defenders Awards 2023: 18 outstanding HRDs and organizations were publicly recognized, and honored for their dedication.”



Enhancing Visibility through the HRD Awards:

We celebrated and acknowledged the invaluable contributions of HRDs through the HRD Awards 2023, positively profiling their work and raising awareness about the challenges they face as agents of social change. 18 outstanding HRDs and organizations were publicly recognized, and honored for their dedication.

Shaping Narratives through Media Engagement: Intensifying community mobilization and outreach activities, we utilized mainstream and digital media to shape narratives around human rights work. Our efforts garnered significant media coverage, with digital content receiving a monthly average of 74,000 impressions.



Winnie Sengwer and the Ambassador Gunnar Andreas Holm of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi pose for a photo during the the 2023 Annual Ni Mama Network Convening in March 2023.

Empowering Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs):

We strengthened a national network of WHRDs spanning all 47 counties, providing crucial support for grassroots advocates championing gender justice and the rights of women and girls. This network serves as a first responder on concerns about civic space, safety, and well-being.

Facilitating HRD Participation in Court Users Committees:

Advocating for including HRDs in Court Users Committees across Kwale, Busia, and Turkana Counties, we facilitated their participation to provide vital information to judicial officers, particularly regarding judicial persecution faced due to their work.



Members of the Civic Freedoms Forum during a press conference in June 2023.

Building Solidarity Movements:

We pivotally built, coordinated, and resourced four solidarity movements and networks centered on HRDs. These networks actively highlight civic space concerns and advocate for social accountability through solidarity statements, petitions, and mass action initiatives.

Legal Advocacy and Case Withdrawals:

Through engagement with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), we successfully advocated for the withdrawal of six cases against HRDs facing trumped-up criminal charges in various courts. This intervention relieved 53 HRDs across regions such as Turkana, Nakuru, and Nairobi.

Enhancing Access to International Bodies:

We facilitated the direct participation of 10 WHRDs in formulating, enforcing, and advocating for their rights. This engagement ensured that international bodies were responsive to the needs and demands of HRDs.

We strengthened a national network of WHRDs spanning all 47 counties, providing crucial support for grassroots advocates championing gender justice and the rights of women and girls.

Contribution to Reducing Extrajudicial Killings and Disappearances

Through our involvement in the Missing Voices Coalition, we documented and addressed cases of police killings and enforced disappearances. The number of police killings in 2023 were 118 in total compared to 130 in 2022. This represents a reduction of 9.2%. Further, the number of enforced disappearances recorded were 10 in 2023, compared to 22 in 2022. This represents a reduction of 54.5% in recorded cases.

In total, 128 people were killed or forcefully disappeared in 2023. This is a 15.8% drop compared to a total of 152 cases recorded in 2022.

Most of the killings occur during anti-crime operations by state security agencies. In 2023, 58 people were killed because of anti-crime operations compared to 91 cases during the same period in 2022.

Anti-riot killings, however, increased in 2023 due to the protests against high cost of living in March and July. Anti-terror related killings decreased from 18 in 2022 to 1 in 2023. Either the government has implemented a softer approach to dealing with terror-related cases or they have found more discrete ways of executing victims, which do not raise alarm in the wider public, hence missing documentation.

In terms of gender, men continued to be more vulnerable to police killings and impunity. The proportion of men killed in 2023 remained high, at 94% of all victims, compared to 95.3% in 2022. The proportion of women was recorded at 4.7% in 2022, compared to 6% in 2023, a slight increase.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS BY MISSING VOICES COALITION

ATTORNEY GENERAL:

- Operationalise the National Coroners Services Act and the Prevention of Torture Act in consultation with the CS National Treasury.
- Fast-track the payment of court awards and reparations to victims of unlawful police killings in consultation with the CS National Treasury.
- Work with the CS National Security to increase budgetary allocation to facilitate the operationalization of the National Coroners Service under the National Coroners Service Act.

INSPECTOR GENERAL:

Enhance the operation of the Internal Affairs Unit of The NPS that is believed is currently a shell of what it was before 2022 elections. The IG should give the unit sufficient and independent budgetary allocation and security of tenure for he director.

TO THE DPP:

- Expedite cases on extra-judicial executions and enforced disappearances in court and work with the judiciary to provide a realistic timeline for when they will be resolved
- Develop a habeas corpus guideline with state oversight agencies, the judiciary, and civil society organizations.
- Develop ODPP guidelines on the investigation of enforced disappearances.
- Fast track the development of jurisprudence on prime responsibility and command of responsibility.

JUDICIARY:

- Expedite and finalize the cases of enforced disappearances and police killings before the court and habeas corpus before the court.
- Prioritize the need for law reform on sanctions for government officials' failure to obey court orders for production in habeas corpus cases.



SELECT SPOTLIGHT

The Power of Public and Solidarity Statements



The Coalition was able to make a number of impactful media appearances, including one on TV47, where representatives spoke on the role of women as HRDs.

After many years of analysis, we have concluded that public statements and solidarity actions can contribute to the release of threatened or arbitrarily detained human rights defenders and enhance their safety and well-being. The most recent evidence for this belief is the impact of campaigns towards the release of 74 HRDs and members of the public who were arbitrarily arrested on July 7, 2023 in Nairobi for taking part in community-led protests against the high cost of living. These patriots were not arraigned in court despite staying in police custody for close to 72 hours, which obviously flies in the face of article 49 the constitution.

It is important to build well coordinated, and resourced solidarity campaigns on issues of huge public interest as the approach has proven efficacious. This strategy, compounded by support from regional organizations, is one that we shall continue to deploy to advocate for the unconditional release of human rights defenders facing illegal arrest and detention.

Further, we continue to call on the government of Kenya to consider the adoption of the model HRD Protection Policy that would otherwise ensure the safety and protection of human rights defenders.

An Affirmation From The Court On The Right Of LGBTQ+ Persons, Just Like Everybody Else Has The Right!

In 2023, the Supreme Court of Kenya affirmed that sexual minorities have the right to association. This progressive ruling by the apex court quashed the decision by the Non-Government Organizations (NGO) Board to bar the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission from forming legally recognized groups.

The landmark ruling affirmed the decisions of the High Court and the Court of Appeal, allowing for the registration of The National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the words 'gay' and 'lesbian' in its title.

Why is this significant?

The Defenders Coalition works with minority rights defenders whose situation on safety worsened in 2023. As a result of the court ruling, an anti-LGBTQIA movement mushroomed, specifically in Nairobi and the coastal region. Consequently, minority rights defenders and allies were increasingly attacked, forcefully evicted from their homes as well as targeted through smear campaigns on social media platforms.

Defenders Coalition responded by supporting strategic advocacy forums, offered rapid response to 158 SOGIE HRDs, and built capacities of 64 SOGIE HRDs to conduct their work safely.



Defenders Coalition responded by supporting strategic advocacy forums, offered rapid response to 158 SOGIE HRDs, and built capacities of 64 SOGIE HRDs to conduct their work safely.

Enhancing Access to Regional and International Advocacy Forums



We worked to ensure that international bodies and processes are accessible and responsive to human rights defenders and that they have the tools, resources, and networks necessary to tell their own stories and articulate their demands. In 2023, we supported 10 women human rights defenders to address the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in Defenders Coalition's Observer Status.



In June 2023, the Defenders Coalition held successful advocacy meetings with states, United Nations special mechanisms and procedures on the state of human rights and frontline human rights defenders in Kenya on the sidelines of the 53rd Human Rights Council Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.



Winners and nominees of the HRD Awards 2023.

Recognizing The Brave Individuals At The Frontline At The HRD Awards

For eight years in a row, the Working Group on Human Rights Defenders recognized 18 outstanding human rights defenders for their trailblazing work in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Nominees were recognized under the Upcoming Human Rights Defender of the Year Award, Human Rights Defender of the Year Award, Munir Mazrui Lifetime

Achievement Award, The Global Solidarity Award, and the Popular Vote Award.

Despite not being among the list of nominees, five other rights defenders and organizations were recognized at the ceremony for their dedication and exemplary commitment to serving their communities.



STORIES OF CHANGE

The Social Justice Centre Travelling Theatre

“I have been a victim of discriminatory police arrests due to my dreadlocks. However, through our campaigns, we have witnessed a significant decrease in these police excesses,” shares Davis Tafari. Tafari serves as the Founder and Art Director of The Social Justice Centres Travelling Theatre (SJCTT), an advocacy group united in their mission to combat police brutality and extrajudicial killings in Nairobi’s informal settlements. “For young men in the slums, survival often means facing a life of poverty amidst the threat of bullets and forced disappearances. Extortion, harassment, and intimidation by the police have become normalized occurrences,” Tafari explains. In recognition of their courageous efforts to challenge injustices and demand accountability, SJCTT was honored with the 2023 Upcoming Human Rights Defenders of the Year award. Their approach involves using art in the form of street and stage performances to engage with their predominantly community-based



Davis Tafari, the Founder of The Social Justice Travelling Theater.

“For young men in the slums, survival often means facing a life of poverty amidst the threat of bullets and forced disappearances. Extortion, harassment, and intimidation by the police.”

“The majority of SJCTT members hail from these settlements, often unemployed and reliant on theater as their means of sustenance.”



We employ music, stage plays, street performances, poetry, spoken word, and progressive cultural dance to foster a socially just community.

audience, educating them on human rights and garnering support for defenders. “We utilize a variety of mediums to reach our audience, tailored to the specific issue at hand. Increasingly, we employ music, stage plays, street performances, poetry, spoken word, and progressive cultural dance to foster a socially just community,” Tafari notes. Reflecting on his own experiences of arbitrary police arrests during his youth, Tafari highlights the positive impact

the movement has had within informal settlements.

The majority of SJCTT members hail from these settlements, often unemployed and reliant on theater as their means of sustenance. Despite the challenges of raising resources for performances and sustaining membership, SJCTT remains steadfast in its commitment to advocating for its community.

Lisa Gem – A Young Social Justice Champion

My passion for children's rights burns brightly, kindled by a deep-seated concern for cases of child abuse, neglect, and the imperative need for children's online safety and security, as well as their fundamental rights to health and education.

My journey into human rights advocacy was inspired by my father, himself a dedicated human rights defender. Accompanying him to his workspaces, I keenly observed the absence of children's representation in discussions and decisions that affected their lives. It was then that I realized I could be their voice, their advocate for change.

In 2023, an invitation from the Defenders Coalition for a networking session with past Human Rights Defenders Awards winners and sharing my experiences with the 2023 nominees during the awards ceremony was truly empowering.

The support from the Defenders Coalition has been critical in my journey. It has made me feel appreciated and opened doors to connections and opportunities I would not have otherwise encountered. This support has elevated my visibility, with notable recognition from esteemed platforms such as the Nation Newspaper, naming me among Kenya's 60 most influential women since independence.

Additionally, a German TV network and The Star newspaper have shared my story, all stemming from the recognition bestowed upon me by the Defenders Coalition through the awards. As I continue my advocacy for children's rights, I am fueled by the growing interest of children themselves who aspire to become human rights defenders because of the impact of my work and the success stories we've created.



“The support from the Defenders Coalition has been critical in my journey. It has made me feel appreciated and opened doors to connections and opportunities I would not have otherwise encountered.”

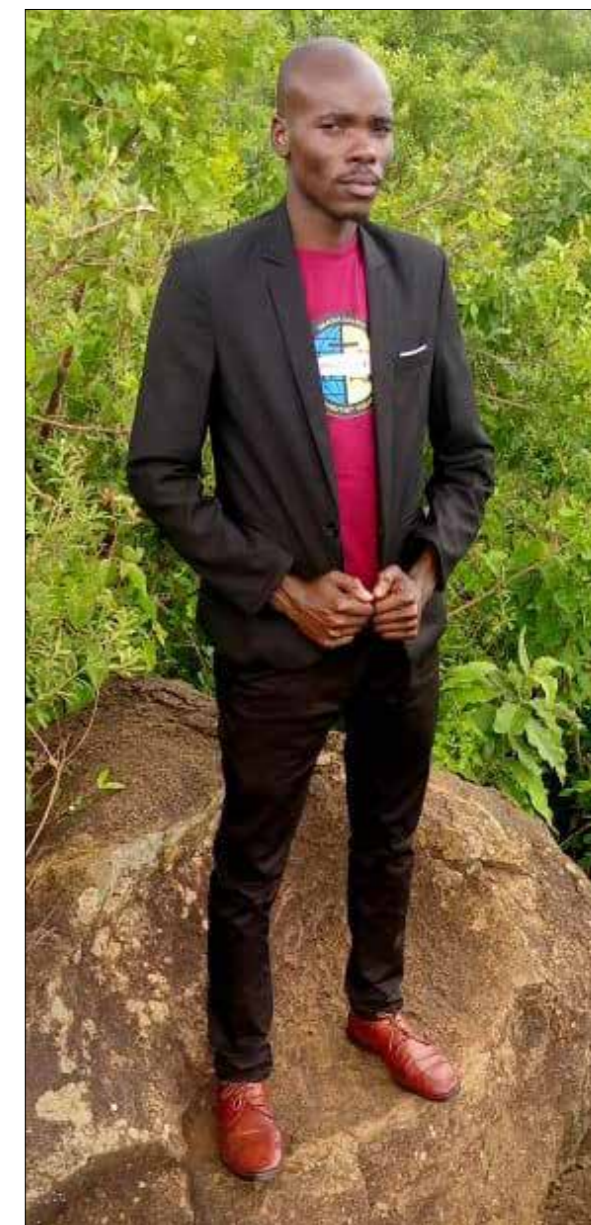
Dalmas: HRD from Mukuru Kwa Reuben

‘I am privileged to be in a position where I can actively support my community, particularly in matters of documentation, access to justice, and legal procedures, all thanks to the immense support of the Defenders Coalition.

As a human rights defender focusing on documenting Gender-Based Violence and addressing police brutality, I wear multiple hats, including that of a counseling psychologist and gender desk officer at Mukuru Justice Center.

Central to my work is the belief that everyone deserves justice, as it is inseparable from human dignity. Hailing from the informal settlements of Mukuru, where numerous violations occur with impunity, I felt compelled to take action as a human rights defender to ensure justice and human dignity prevail.

Attending the training on advocacy was a turning point for me. The training significantly enhanced my skills and knowledge in human rights advocacy, and I am grateful for the positive outcomes it has yielded. Thanks to the support of the Defenders Coalition, I am now better equipped to serve my community by documenting cases, facilitating access to justice, and guiding individuals through the legal procedures they may encounter.’



“Hailing from the informal settlements of Mukuru, where numerous violations occur with impunity, I felt compelled to take action as a human rights defender to ensure justice and human dignity prevail.”

PILLAR 2



Offering Protection And Safety Services To Human Rights Defenders

The Defenders Coalition strengthened and diversified its response services to HRDs. The support was divided into the following:

- Providing immediate protection and safety interventions to HRDs at risk.
- Embedded capacity, agency, and voice among HRDs and HRDOs for ensuring their individual and collective protection without necessarily relying on the Defenders Coalition.

Overview

Defenders Coalition prides itself on being the only national organization in Kenya that works towards the protection of HRDs. It is privileged to be the convenor of the Protection Working Group (PWG) and a permanent co-chair of the Human Rights Defenders Working Group (HRDWG).

The PWG brings together 22 organizations, locally and regionally, that are concerned with the safety and protection of its members and HRDs. In contrast, the HRDWG brings together diplomatic missions and civil society organizations that are more broadly concerned with protecting HRDs and human rights. The Working Group on HRDs convenes every two months with the objectives of information sharing, coordination, and, whenever needed, joint action related to the protection of HRDs and the working environment in which they operate. The Working Group on HRDs has two co-chairs - Defenders Coalition as the permanent chair and a rotational Co-chair. This position is currently held by the Embassy of Denmark in Kenya.

“The PWG brings together 22 organizations, locally and regionally, that are concerned with the safety and protection of its members and HRDs.”

What We Achieved

Defenders Coalition was able to successfully offer timely and appropriate support for LGBTQI+ HRDs who came under heavy attack following the Supreme Court ruling in February 2023. The provision of protection intervention through the Ford Foundation support ensured that minority and marginalized communities of HRDs continued with their human rights work and the continued growth of the human rights movement at a time when reprisals were at a record high.

Our continued pushback on criminalization of human rights work through legal representation and advocacy bore fruits where 6 cases against various HRDs were withdrawn. The Malindi High Court issued one precedent-setting ruling following the appeal of the judgment issued on HCCRA NO. E040 OF 2021 involving a land rights defender, Joel Ogada, who was charged with threatening to kill in 2016. The high court judge issued express orders limiting any future arrests on the HRD without the express authorization of the Director of Public Prosecution, which will restrict the targeting of HRDs in the county.

Enhanced the capacities of 313 HRDs on security management and office enhancement of 4 organizations.

100% of supported HRDs went back to their human rights work.

Successfully offered legal representation to 53 HRDs facing criminal charges in various courts of law. The 53 were let free by the court either through acquittal or dismissal of trumped-up criminal charges against them.



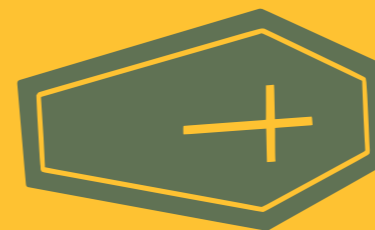
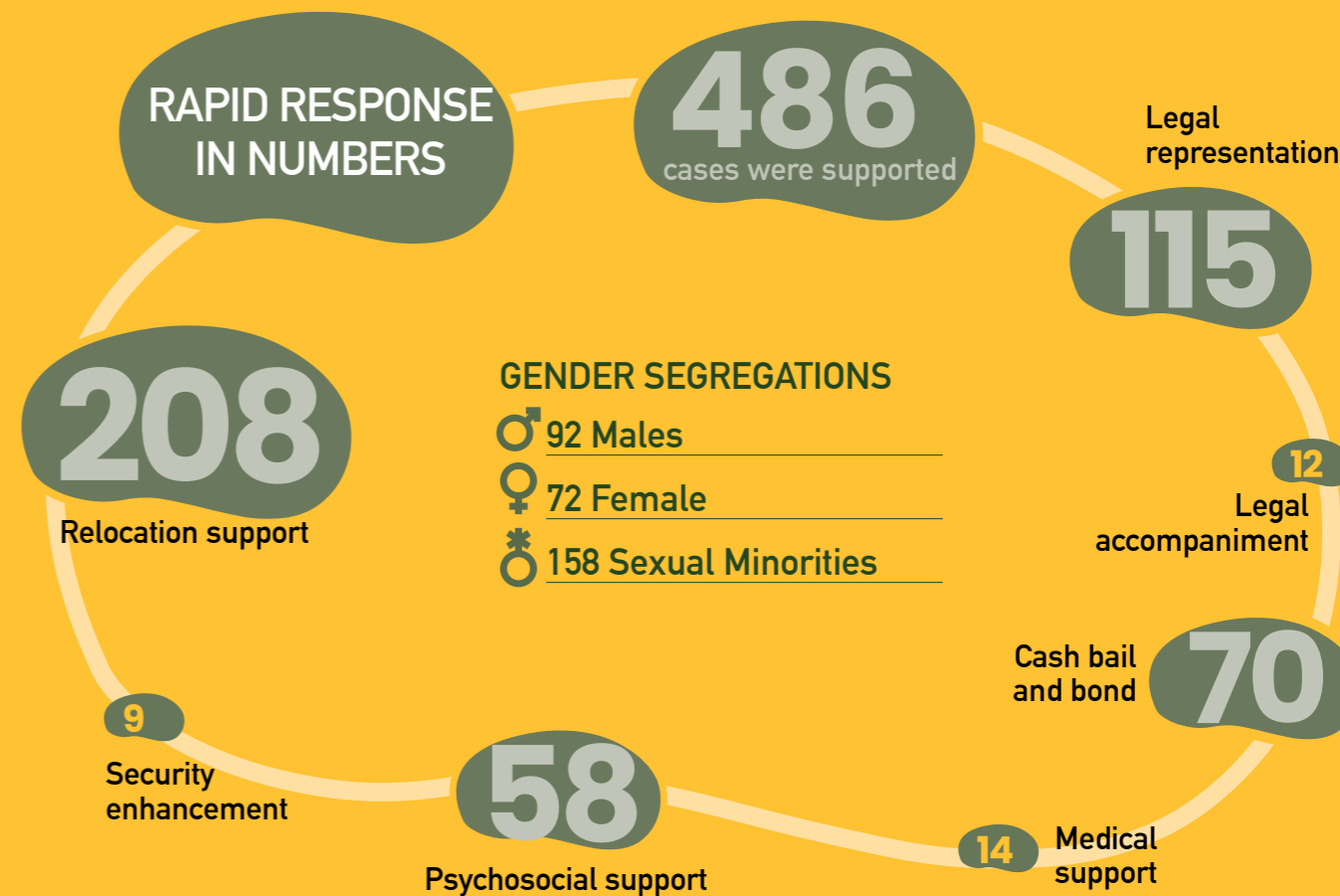
Defenders Coalition prides itself on being the only national organization in Kenya that works towards the protection of HRDs.



Defenders Coalition is the convenor of Protection Working Group (PWG)

The PWG brings together 22 organizations, locally and regionally, that are concerned with the safety and protection of its members and HRDs.

22



Serious Concern

4 HRDs Murdered (Sniper, Chiloba, Dr Godfrey Onyango, Collins Kwonyiko)



The Criminalization Trend of the Year

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya envisions an open civic space where citizens and civil society organizations can engage with the government, organize, and express themselves without hindrance. However, trends and experiences point to an onslaught on the civics where the Kenyan State has been keen to constrain

the civic and democratic space through punitive and prohibitive governance frameworks targeting the individuals, Public Benefits Organizations (PBOs), Faith-Based organizations (FBOs), media organizations, trade unions, Constitutional Commissions among other independent state and non-state actors.



Laws abused to criminalize HRDs:

- Public Order Act (2012)
- Computer Misuse and Cyber Crimes Act (2018)
- The Penal Code

Other violations include

- Threats, intimidation, and harassment from National Government and Administrative Officers (NGAO)
- Murder
- Threats, intimidation, and harassment from community members
- Gender-based violence.



**VIOLATIONS AGAINST HRDS
DOCUMENTED IN 2023**

AFTER 10 YEARS IN THE CORRIDORS of justice and faced with what Malindi High Court Judge Mr. Kizito Magare's Judgment equates to the South African apartheid-era tactics to grab prime properties from innocent citizens, land rights defender Joel Ogada has been vindicated by the court. >>



STORIES OF CHANGE

The Impact of Legal Representation - A big win for Joel Ogada, a land rights activist from Kilifi County. >>

A big win for Joel Ogada, a land rights activist from Kilifi County

After 10 years in the corridors of justice and faced with what Malindi High Court Judge Mr. Kizito Magare’s Judgment equates to the South African apartheid-era tactics to grab prime properties from innocent citizens, land rights defender Joel Ogada has been vindicated by the court.

He was pronounced free of numerous persecutions because of his fierce stand against the incursion into his communities – who are primarily farmers – salt-rich farms at Kanagoni area in Malindi by a Kurawa Salt Company Ltd.

The judgment delivered on 16 November 2023 by Justice Kizito overturns a sentence given by the Honourable D. Wasike in Malindi on 2 December 2021, case number CMCR E 177 of 2016. In the sentencing, the court found Joel Ogada guilty of threatening to kill security personnel of Kurawa Salt Company Ltd.

Following the judgment, Ogada was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment or pay a fine of Kshs. 50,000. The Defenders Coalition posted the fine on his behalf.

Mr. Ogada was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by the Defenders Coalition and other human rights organizations when he was found guilty and sentenced to six months in prison.

The Defenders Coalition paid the fine and appealed the sentencing in the High Court with the support of human rights lawyer Mr. Charles Onyango.

At the time, Kamau Ngugi, ED at Defenders Coalition, noted that:

“This is a matter of concern to all environmentalists and land rights activists who express dissent over illegal acquisition of their property. It is an outrage as this means that any activist who dares stand against powerful corporations will be imprisoned.”

It was on 16 November 2023 that the High Court overturned the Malindi CMCR E 177 of 2016 ruling and set free Mr. Ogada.

“The conviction and sentence are set aside. The appellant is released forthwith unless otherwise lawfully held. To JOEL OGADA, enjoy your freedom. The courts in this country work as uMkhonto we Sizwe,” reads the judgment.

Further, Judge Magare ordered that the office of the Director of Public Prosecution shall not prefer charges related to land and or employees of Kurawa Salt Industries Ltd or their affiliates unless under the personal hand and consent of the Director of Public Prosecution in each case, given before the arrest consent other than by the person holding office as the Director of Public Prosecution.

Some of the cases against Ogada include CR 677/ 2010, where the complainant was the personnel manager of the Kurawa salt company, and CR 41/2013, where he was charged with forcible detainer of his own land. Kurawa Salt Company Ltd was the complainant.

The legal challenges against Ogada and his neighbors started in 2000 when Kurawa company launched a campaign to expand into neighboring community land through negotiations.

Those unwilling to get minimal compensation for their land were coerced.

John Ogada, who mobilized his community against these advances, was immediately targeted for these reprisal acts that included multiple criminal charges against him.

The complainants were essentially staff of the Kurawa Salt Company Ltd.

Despite multiple acquittals, the company continued to mount numerous legal actions against Ogada.

It should be on record that Ogada has faced multiple criminal and civil cases

engineered against him. In one of the cases, he was sentenced to 7 years in prison for alleged arson of property of the Kurawa Salt Company Ltd.

The sentence was reduced to 2 years after the Defenders Coalition appealed the sentence. Ogada served the time, and his family home and food crops were destroyed while he was away.



“It should be on record that Ogada has faced multiple criminal and civil cases engineered against him. In one of the cases, he was sentenced to 7 years in prison for alleged arson of property of the Kurawa Salt Company Ltd.”

Joel Ogada’s Journey for Justice

Fight against incursions by salt-rich farms at Kanagoni area in Malindi by a Kurawa Salt Company Ltd.



The judgment delivered on 16 November 2023 by Justice Kizito overturns an earlier sentence



Ogada was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment or pay a fine of Kshs. 50,000.



The Defenders Coalition paid the fine and appealed the sentencing in the High Court



Unwavering Courage: Bernard's Fight for Justice in Villages in Turkana

Deep in the Northwestern parts of Kenya, a brave human rights defender sits outside his house as we walk in to pay a visit. The Defenders Coalition is in town researching the capacity of HRDs in Northern Kenya, and the quest for information leads us to Benard Kerio's home.

It does not take long before Benard starts to reflect on his journey as an HRD.

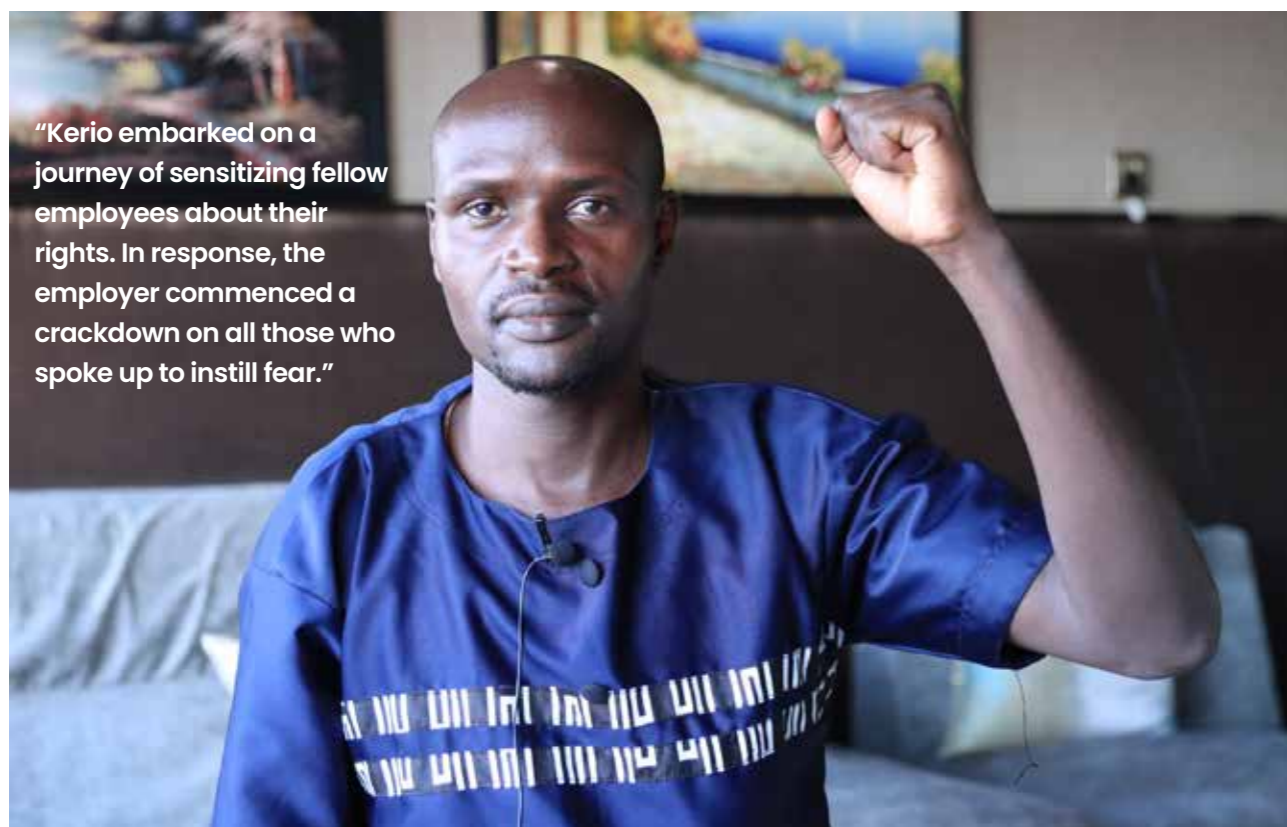
"I come from Turkana South, Turkana County, and my journey as a HRD kicked off in 2021 when I was working at China State Construction Engineering and Cooperation Limited. During my time there, I witnessed numerous violations perpetrated by the company due to impunity and total disregard of the existing labor laws in Kenya."

Consequently, Kerios says, he decided to take action. He would not sit around

watching violations take place.

"It was concerning how underpayment of salaries was executed. Those who spoke up were harassed. Safety officers failed to perform their duties responsibly, and injured employees received no care or compensation. Employee contracts were constantly breached, and Human Resources did not prioritize the welfare of the employees. Hiring and firing occurred without prior notice."

Kerio embarked on a journey of sensitizing fellow employees about their rights. In response, the employer commenced a crackdown on all those who spoke up to instill fear. At this point, Kerio had rattled with a powerful individual. What followed next were threats from unknown persons.



"Kerio embarked on a journey of sensitizing fellow employees about their rights. In response, the employer commenced a crackdown on all those who spoke up to instill fear."

"One evening, I received a call from someone who told me that I was playing with government resources and that I did not have any rights in informing employees about their salaries."

One day, the employees surrendered their working equipment and decided to strike. The strike continued for a few days until the Chinese employers called a meeting with us and the Labor officer, the only one in Turkana West, Pokot County. The labor officer acknowledged that the employees were indeed underpaid and not compensated per the law. The salary issue was finally resolved. Following these processes and engagement with the labor laws and officers, the company acknowledged its mistakes and hired a professional Human Resource Officer to establish new company rules and ensure compliance with labor laws.

"They were charged with illegal assembly. Later, the five were released on a cash bail of KES 30,000 each. The Defenders Coalition intervened and paid a total cash bail of KES 150,000."

The second wave of Kerio's tribulations began shortly after this victory.

"On September 16th, 2021, the police arrested me and informed the Human Resource Officer that I should no longer be an employee of the company. They referred to me as a criminal without providing a clear reason for my arrest. I was charged with "Threatening to Kill" and taken to court on the same day. Later that day, I was taken to jail, but I was released on a cash bail of

30,000KSH, which my colleagues helped raise. I regained my freedom on September 17th, 2021. Upon my return home, I received a suspension letter dated October 8th, 2021, stating that I was suspended from duty until the legal issue was completed at Lodwar Law Courts, Kerio narrated.

In November 2021, five other employees were arrested for protesting the company's harsh working conditions. They were charged with illegal assembly. Later, the five were released on a cash bail of KES 30,000 each. The Defenders Coalition intervened and paid a total cash bail of KES 150,000.

While working outside of the company, Kerio continued to advocate for those still working in the company. He collaborated with other labor unions and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection Department, where they held meetings that yielded to reforms in the company.

"To date, the employees at the company enjoy the benefits of the strike and protests. They receive fair pay, face no harassment, and enjoy a healthy and desirable work environment," Kerio says.

His participation in other movements has increased significantly over the years.

Kerio is grateful that he was acquitted of all trumped-up charges against him and four others: David Ekidor, Mark Emase, Elipan Ekai, Bernard Kerio and Emeri Lowos. Kerio appreciates the support received from Defenders Coalition's legal team, which saw them through the legal process.

"I highly appreciate what Defenders Coalition is doing—they are incredibly active, fast, and efficient, and their support has been invaluable, especially in Turkana South. Although I have now received training on how to manage my security and collaborate with other HRDs," Kerio adds.

Illegal arrest, trumped up charges against a rural land and environmental land rights defender, Amina Hussein, from Isiolo County.

My interaction with the Defenders Coalition arose last year after we mobilized the community to protest the forceful acquisition of community land by a conservancy, the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT). We were concerned that despite a petition filed in the Environment and Lands Court opposing this acquisition, the NRT planned to construct offices on unregistered community land.

One day after the community protest, which was violently disrupted by the police, I was arrested on my way to the market. I was in the company of my three-year-old daughter. The police assaulted me during the arrest and locked me up. They proceeded to charge me with fictitious charges, including inciting violence and theft of 450 bags of cement from NRT. I was shocked. How is it possible that a woman like me would carry 450 bags of cement? And where would I be hiding them?

It was in that shock and confusion that I received a call from the Defenders Coalition where they assured me that they were going to work round the clock to ensure that I am released and were to provide a lawyer to support me in the criminal charges that I was facing.

Defenders Coalition paid my cash bail and legal fees, and I was released that night.

“Learning about topics such as carbon credit, human rights legislation, and climate justice has enabled me to educate my community effectively, equipping them with the tools to advocate for their rights.”



Attending the HRD Academy last year was a privilege that expanded my knowledge and horizons. –Amina Hussein

It has now been eight months, and they continue to stand by me, empowering me to persist in my human rights work with their backing for my court proceedings.

Attending the HRD Academy last year was a privilege that expanded my knowledge and horizons. Learning about topics such as carbon credit, human rights legislation, and climate justice has enabled me to educate my community effectively, equipping them with the tools to advocate for their rights.

The knowledge and support I have received from the Defenders Coalition and the HRD Academy have been immeasurable. It has not only strengthened my resolve but has also enhanced my effectiveness as a human rights defender.

A challenging period for SIGIE HRDs in Kenya -Ishmael Bahati- SIGIE HRD, Mombasa county

‘As a member of the sexual and gender minority community, my journey as a human rights defender is entrenched in my personal experiences of injustice and exclusion.

At the outset, I didn't recognize myself as a human rights defender. Instead, I was driven by the necessity to assert my existence in a society that often marginalized individuals like myself. It wasn't until 2008, after being involved in various movements and training sessions, that I fully embraced the role of a human rights defender as a means to advocate for the respect and dignity of sexual and gender minorities.

The year 2023 brought significant challenges for the sexual and gender minority community, particularly in the face of rising homophobia and the emergence of anti-LGBTQ movements across the country, with the coastal region bearing the weight of the impact. Human rights defenders and allies were targeted, attacked, and forcibly evicted from their homes, prompting us to seek support from partners, including the Defenders Coalition.



The Defenders Coalition played a crucial role in providing essential support, including relocation assistance, medical treatment, and facilitating dialogues with the public to mitigate the impact of the attacks. They demonstrated flexibility by extending support not only to recognized human rights defenders but also to members and allies whose lives and properties were at risk.

“The year 2023 brought significant challenges for the sexual and gender minority community, particularly in the face of rising homophobia and the emergence of anti-LGBTQ movements across the country.”

Their efforts included setting up situation rooms in Mombasa and Nairobi for monitoring and documentation, organizing refresher training for monitors and paralegals, and mobilizing other human rights defenders and institutions to condemn the attacks publicly.

Even as the situation appeared to stabilize, the Defenders Coalition remained vigilant, ensuring the ongoing security of human rights defenders nationwide. The Defenders Coalition's multifaceted support during times of crisis saved lives and preserved dignity. Their inclusive approach to protection sets a commendable standard for all organizations involved in defending human rights.'

<< I didn't recognize myself as a human rights defender. Instead, I was driven by the necessity to assert my existence in a society that often marginalized individuals like myself. –Ishmael Bahati.

Capacity Building - Innovative Solutions for Defenders - Security Management



A participant receives a certificate of participation following a successful Training of Trainers in July 2023.

The morning unfolds in serene tranquility, a stark contrast to the tumultuous events that have defined the year since January 2023—a period marked by the mayhem of police brutality, arrests, threats, extrajudicial killings, and torture stemming from protests by human rights defenders (HRDs) in Kenya.

Gathered together by the Defenders Coalition are 20 HRDs from 10 counties across the nation commencing a week of capacity enhancement on their safety and security while exercising the fundamental right to protest.

“If we’re to exercise our right to protest, enshrined in the constitution, how can we do so without subjecting ourselves to undue risks? What practices can we adopt to minimize risks while maximizing the impact of our work as human rights defenders?” Kamau Ngugi sets the stage for the 5-day training with these poignant questions.

Boniface Mwangi, a seasoned HRD with a background in the deployment of peaceful assemblies as an advocacy tool, delivers a compelling presentation on organizing protests effectively and safely.

“Your immediate community is your first line of defense. They must be informed about your plans. Their support not only enhances your safety but also strengthens solidarity. If they understand your objectives, they’re more likely to stand by you and shield you from harm when threats arise,” he emphasizes.

Following these sessions, HRDs delve into the training, sharing their experiences as community leaders organizing around various issues in diverse grassroots and rural contexts.

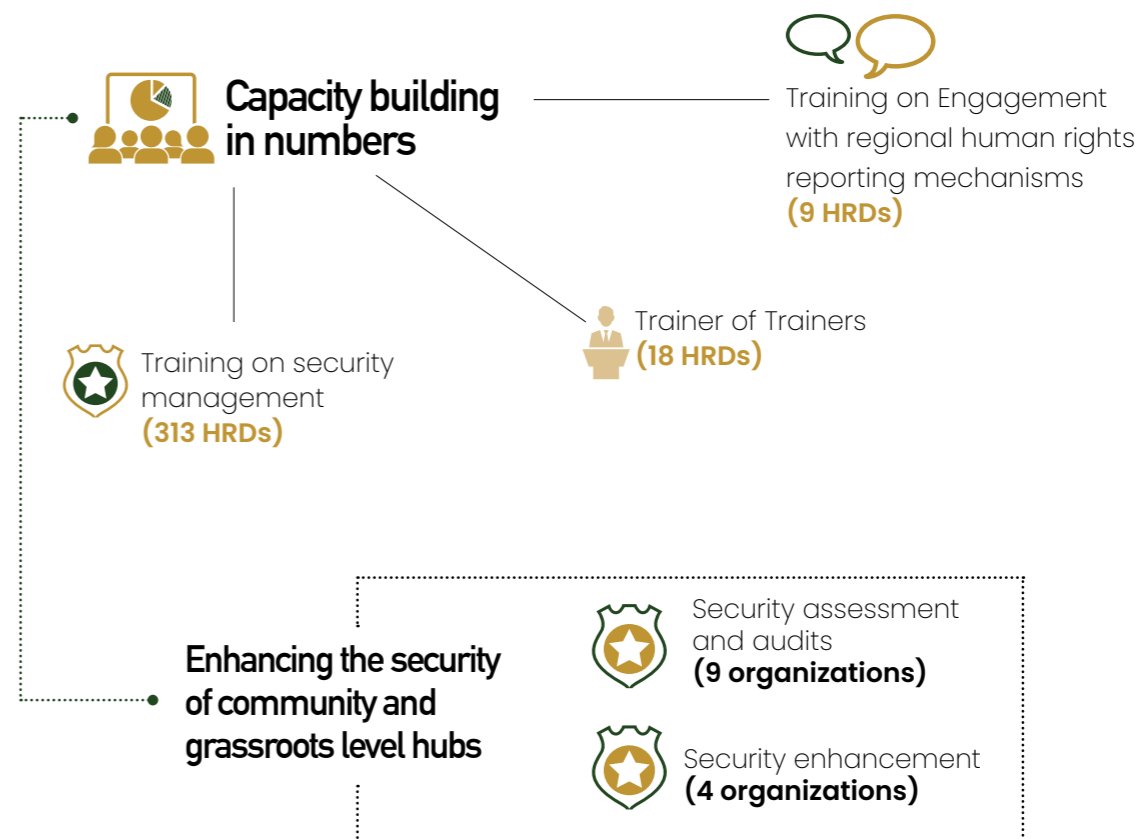
Over five days, the training covers a range of modules, focusing on tools for environmental scanning, risk analysis, and developing security plans based on these assessments.

The objective is clear: to empower these HRDs to take ownership of their security and disseminate their newfound knowledge

to others within their networks. Such training can make the critical difference between life and death in their line of work, where advocacy for the rights of others in grassroots and rural settings often invites intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, stigmatization, or worse.

“I understand the risks inherent in my work. It’s often met with hostility and danger. I’m eager to apply the skills I’ve gained in this training and share them with other HRDs who lack such opportunities so they too can safeguard their security,” one participant remarks enthusiastically .

Through this training initiative, Defenders Coalition aims to see the ripple effect of knowledge-sharing sessions conducted by these participants, reaching an additional 200 HRDs at risk within a few months of course completion.



PILLAR 3

Dignity In Human
Rights Work >>



The Social-Economic Well-Being Of Human Rights Defenders In Focus

Under this priority area, the Defenders Coalition focused on building the socio-economic well-being and resilience of HRDs and their organizations. Interventions focused on empowering HRDs to secure their livelihoods and income security for self-reliance as well as promoting their mental health and resilience.



Supporting sustainable, innovative projects at the grassroots

In 2023, 11 community-based organizations supported by Defenders Coalition engaged county governments and state departments on the need to adopt human rights-based approaches in service delivery to community members.

Through the established networking, the CBOs continue to engage with the relevant state agencies who support follow-ups on violations and accountability and offer rapid support to victims of human rights violations.

The supported organizations include Feminist for Peace, rights and Justice centre-Nairobi, Busia Social Justice Centre, Kanduyi SJC, Mukogodo Girls Empowerment Program-Laikipia, Wuoth Ogik SJC in Migori, Mandera County Human Rights network-Mandera, Oketha CBO in Kisumu, Pastoralist Peoples Initiative in Marsabit, Nakuru Human Rights Network in Nakuru, Youth Hamasisho Network in Vihiga County, and Coalition for Grassroot Human Rights Defenders in Nairobi.

“Through the established networking, the CBOs continue to engage with the relevant state agencies who support follow-ups on violations and accountability.”

Prioritizing Selfcare and Wellbeing

Defenders Coalition took part in a 30-day self care challenge during the Mental Awareness Month of September to ensure that human rights defenders have 30 days of mindfulness. It was a reminder that while we work to support and help others, we also need to always take care of ourselves. Throughout the challenge, we focused on selfcare, mindfulness and supporting each other. We acknowledge all who joined us on this self care journey and should remember that selfcare isn't just for one month-its a life long commitment. Defenders Coalition stands strong in support of mental well-being for all.

30-Day Challenge Self Care

Day 01 Catch up with an old friend or relative	Day 02 Spend at least an hour doing something creative	Day 03 Make a list of everything you are grateful for	Day 04 Don't Use your phone today!	Day 05 Cook yourself a healthy meal	Day 06 Go for a long walk in the park
Day 07 Get up early and listen to the morning chorus	Day 08 Research an unfamiliar topic	Day 09 Practice Yoga	Day 10 Have a long shower or relaxing bubble bath	Day 11 Start reading a new book	Day 12 Listen to your favourite album or songs
Day 13 Do a random act of kindness	Day 14 Set a mini goal	Day 15 Have a laugh, watch your favourite movie or comedy	Day 16 Learn a new game like chess or backgammon	Day 17 Make an achievable to-do list	Day 18 Spend some face-time with family or friends
Day 19 On a clear night, look at the stars	Day 20 Compliment someone	Day 21 Learn something new about another city or country	Day 22 Have a 'ME DAY' pamper day	Day 23 Walk 30 minutes a day for the rest of the challenge	Day 24 Plan your dream vacation
Day 25 Get out and feel the rain or sunshine on your face	Day 26 Smile at a stranger	Day 27 Clean out your email inbox	Day 28 Let go of guilt	Day 29 Cross one item off your achievable to-do list	Day 30 Write down one positive thing about your day before you go to bed

#HRDsMentalWellbeing

Let's take the 30-day self-care challenge together.



DEFENDERS COALITION



An Academy of Social Justice Champions

THE 8TH ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS Defenders Academy, held by the Defenders Coalition in December 2023 from the 3rd to the 8th, was a success. Throughout the week-long event, we welcomed 103 participants from all 47 counties of Kenya, including 53 women, 50 men, 7 individuals from sexual minority groups, and 3 persons with disabilities. The Academy served as a unique platform for training, networking, and sharing experiences among HRDs. Participants had the opportunity to discuss successes, challenges, and the threats they face, while also learning about strategies to address them. Our esteemed partners and keynote speakers provided inspiration and guidance.

Under the theme of "We shall be inspired and not Intimidated," as articulated by Nyaguthi Chege, participants engaged in various campus activities. These included the Physical and Security campus, Digital and Cyber Security campus, and Climate

and Environmental Justice campus, each offering full-day training sessions. A thematic panel focused on effective engagement in climate justice conversations, examining issues facing HRDs and potential responses from both HRDs and the state.

Throughout the week, HRDs had access to digital and physical security clinics, safe spaces, and psychosocial wellbeing clinics. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% reporting gaining new skills and knowledge and 94% affirming that their expectations were met. Particularly impactful were the opportunities for cross-county engagement and discussions around climate justice.

One participant reflected, "Today's sessions were very educational. As an HRD, I had never paid much attention to climate justice or climate change, but after these sessions, my perspective has changed. Thank you for the opportunity!"



Throughout the week, HRDs had access to digital and physical security clinics, safe spaces, and psychosocial wellbeing clinics.

HRD Academy Alumni Voices



"Through the skills in documentation, I have been actively involved in training and empowering local communities, grassroots HRDs, and colleagues in the art of documentation in Vihiga County."

Ronald Oindo,
2022 HRD Academy Beneficiary

"The academy wasn't just a training ground; it was a catalyst for personal growth. Gaining skills in monitoring and evaluation was a key to my rise as a Chief Officer of Children, Gender, and Social Services in Tharaka Nithi County."

Kelly Karimi Rwigi,
2021 HRD Academy Beneficiary



"I maximized on the academy resources to establish a network of four fellow human rights' defenders from other counties."

Muthoni Wanjohi,
2022 Academy Beneficiary

HRD Academy Alumni Voices



"The network created through the academy enabled us to establish a National WhatsApp group that facilitates effective nationwide coordination and collaboration of activities."

Gibson Ngugi,
2017 HRD Academy Beneficiary

'My post-academy success includes winning the Best Upcoming Human Rights Award in 2020, elevating my visibility and credibility for a broader human rights impact.'

Naila Abdallah Mohamed.
2019 HRD Academy Beneficiary



"This training not only opened my eyes to strategic approaches in addressing issues related to general rights violations but also enhanced my comprehension of the intricate landscape of Cyber Security."

Sammy Mugita,
2018 HRD Academy Beneficiary



Fostering Connection through Art, Music, and Poetry

In keeping with our tradition, the Defenders Coalition hosted the inspiring Mashujaa Festival concert on October 20, 2023. The concert brought together human rights defenders of all ages to celebrate the creative brilliance of local and regional talents, art, music, and poetry.

The festival transcended boundaries, uniting individuals from various sectors, including social justice centers, seasoned activists, youth, creatives, artists, art enthusiasts, civil society organizations, and change-makers. From noon till sunset, the concert resonated with the vibrant sounds of music, the captivating visuals of art, and the profound messages conveyed through poetry, highlighting the crucial role of these creative mediums in amplifying human rights, democracy, and social justice.

A particularly moving moment was the presence of Shujaa Ngungi Wa Thiong'o, who shared a poignant message emphasizing the importance of honouring our heroes and heroines of the past and the significance of celebrating ourselves to rejuvenate our spirit for the journey ahead.

Through this initiative, the Defenders Coalition achieved the following:

Raised KES 783,340 through the sale of merchandise and tickets, contributing towards the Climb for Justice Campaign and the establishment of Haki Village, a sanctuary for human rights defenders.

Provided a platform for 382 HRDs to intersect and unite in their pursuit of a society grounded in justice and human rights.

Prioritizing Staff Wellbeing

In adherence to best practices aimed at fostering the well-being of frontline workers and those providing support to them, the Defenders Coalition Secretariat maintained its commitment to regular well-being check-ins. This dedication culminated in a focused initiative during Mental Health Awareness Month in October 2023. During this period, the secretariat intentionally slowed down its program activities for two days to prioritize the mental and emotional health of its staff members.

PILLAR 4

Within this strategic choice, The Defenders Coalition is committed to solidifying its role as a vibrant, impactful, and sustainable entity within the human rights protection landscape. Our primary objectives revolve around bolstering the internal policy framework, fortifying systems, enhancing internal governance structures, fostering self-reliance, broadening revenue streams, and prioritizing the well-being and capacity building of our members.

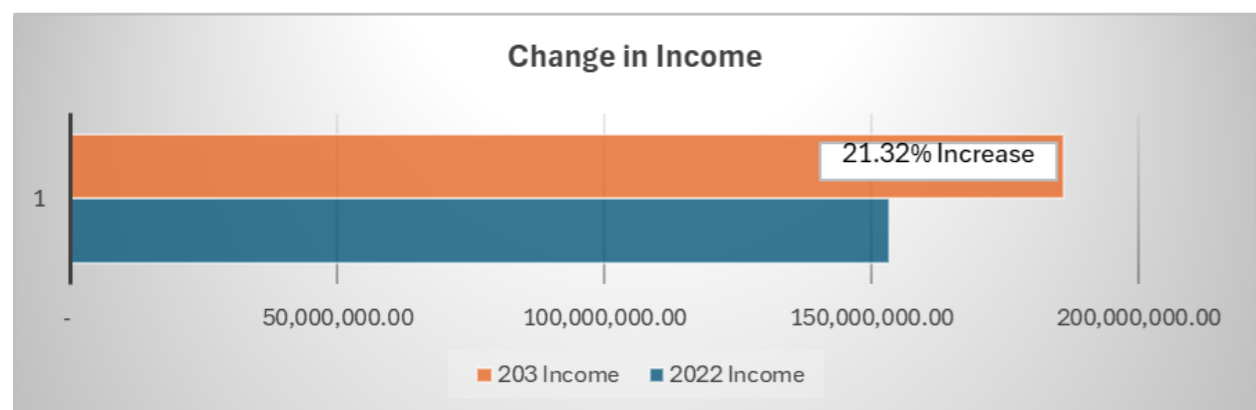
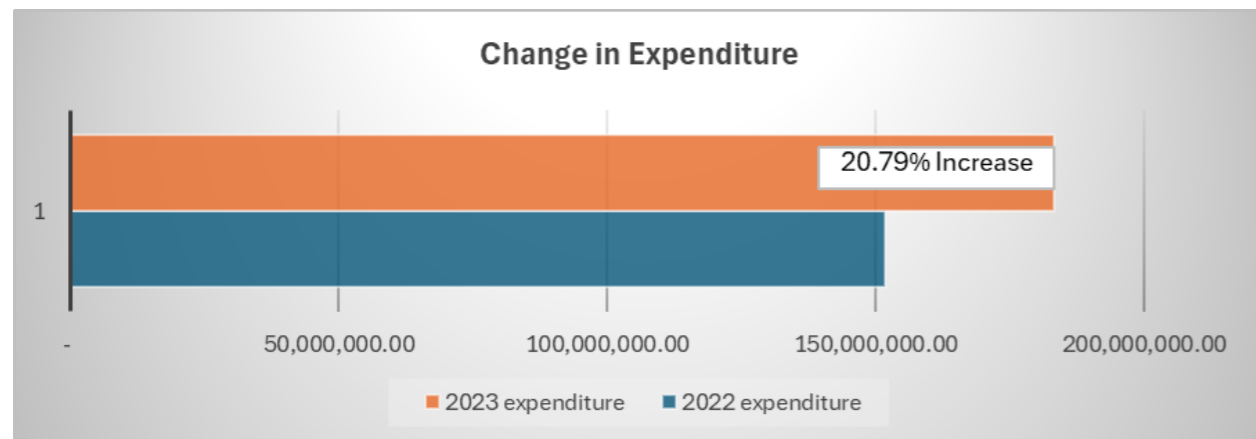


EXCELLENCE AT THE SECRETARIAT

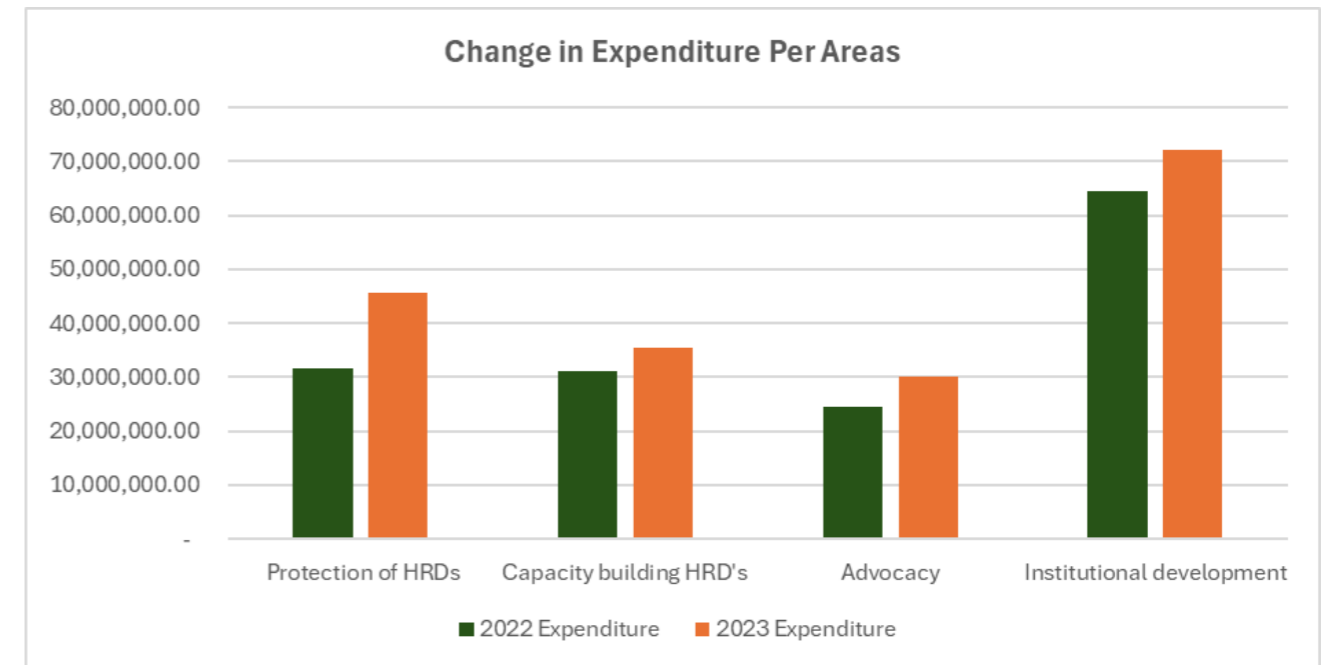
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The Defenders Coalition’s financial performance in 2023 demonstrated resilience and growth, ensuring the sustainability of our human rights advocacy efforts. Despite a challenging economic climate, we saw a 20.7% increase in total donations and grants, reflecting the continued trust and support from our donors and partners. This financial support enabled us to expand our programs and reach rights advocates in need. These financial achievements underscore our commitment to transparency and accountability, ensuring that every shilling spent is maximized for impact in the fight for human rights.

COMPARATIVE INCOMES FOR 2022 AND 2023



COMPARATIVE EXPENDITURE PER PILLAR FOR 2022 AND 2023



Growing the Defenders Coalition and Engagement



In May 2023, the Defenders Coalition hosted its development partners at the secretariat in Nairobi where we discussed on the support that human rights defenders in Kenya need.

IN 2023, THE DEFENDERS COALITION

made significant strides in enhancing its marketing, communication, outreach, and fundraising efforts, resulting in heightened engagement and support for our human rights initiatives. Our online presence experienced notable growth, enabling us to spotlight the remarkable contributions of the human rights defenders we collaborate with in Kenya.

Throughout the year, our impact in the Kenyan mainstream media surged by 32 percent, marking a substantial increase in visibility. Additionally, we successfully launched several impactful campaigns and events, amplifying awareness of our work both locally and globally. As a result, we welcomed five new donors onboard and secured a 20.37% increase in funding for the organization. These achievements signify our growing recognition and support within the advocacy community.

Sustainability of the Organization

The organization’s sustainability is rooted in our overarching vision, epitomized by the flagship Climb for Justice campaign. Throughout the year, we maintained our commitment to monthly mobilization and fundraising hikes, further solidifying our foothold in advocacy efforts.

Our hikes took us to four diverse destinations: Kanunga Forest, Table Mountain, Ragia Fall,

and Satima Hill. With the participation of hundreds of Kenyans and supporters, these hikes served as both opportunities for physical activity and platforms for merchandising.

Moreover, the campaign catalyzed exploring new avenues to shape narratives surrounding human rights work and redefine the pivotal role of human rights defenders within our communities.



Our hikes took us to four diverse destinations: Kanunga Forest, Table Mountain, Ragia Fall, and Satima Hill.



AWARDS & RECOGNITION:

IN July 2023, the Defenders Coalition was recognized by PEMA Kenya for the impact of our work. The recognition underscores the impactful partnership that we have had over the years and one that has yielded strengthened communities of love, commitment and resilience.

STAFF TESTIMONIALS

Esban Muthoni - Protection and Wellness Manager

The year 2023 marked a tumultuous period in the history of the 2010 Constitution and the defense of human rights. In January, shocking news resounded across the nation with the brutal killing of Edwin Chiloba, a champion for the rights of sexual minorities. This tragic event set the tone for a series of relentless attacks on environmental defenders, land rights activists, indigenous communities, and advocates for social justice.

Throughout the year, arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) became distressingly

common, often justified under vague directives labeled as "Instructions from above."

Despite facing such adversity and constraints, HRDs displayed remarkable resilience. They persisted in their local organizing efforts, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to the cause. This steadfastness deserves commendation.

Given the inherent risks involved in human rights activism, it is crucial to continually acknowledge and appreciate the diverse efforts of HRDs.

Given the inherent risks involved in human rights activism, it is crucial to continually acknowledge and appreciate the diverse efforts of HRDs.

Ahmed Shire – ICT & Digital Security Manager

Recent statistics reveal that over 85% of Kenyans have embraced technology. Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) are also part of this wave, utilizing technology to further their causes. However, this widespread adoption of technology brings about significant exposure to risks, particularly those rooted in technology.

Of particular concern is the growing prominence of artificial intelligence (AI) in our daily communications and interactions.

While AI presents opportunities to combat misinformation and disinformation, it also poses threats to human rights. Surveillance, censorship, and constraints on online and physical assembly are among the dangers HRDs face.

Given these challenges, it's imperative to prepare for the evolving landscape of threats against defenders. Being proactive, if not ahead of the curve, is essential in safeguarding human rights amidst technological advancements.



Participants engage in a roundtable discussion at the Right to Protest Training, September 2024.



Upcoming HRD Award winner Lisa Gem being honored for her exemplary work as a human rights defender.



HRD Awardees and Judging Panel in a networking engagement.



Defenders Coalition, civil society actors, and state agencies at the 3rd Annual Civic Space Protection Summit, November 10, 2024.



From left: Esban Muthoni, Kamau Ngugi, Joseph Kimani of The Royal Danish Embassy, and Winnie Sengwer.



The safety, security, and wellbeing service provision team gathered to review the support Defenders Coalition extends to human rights defenders in Kenya.



Defenders Coalition Staff pose for a photo during their Wellbeing and Leadership Transformation training.



Defenders Coalition staff alongside our longstanding partners, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and Fund for Global Human Rights (FGHR).



Defenders Coalition staff alongside our longstanding partners, Sigrid Rausing Trust (SRT).



Defenders Coalition partners with The Mott Foundation at our National Secretariat.



Our Board of Trustees during a statutory board meeting.



Ambassador Gunnar Andreas Holm of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi during the Annual NiMama Network Forum in March 2023.



The National Coalition of Human Rights in Uganda proudly displaying the Climb for Justice flag in Kampala while commemorating International Human Rights Day.



Human Rights Defender Davis Tafari posing for a photo.



Davis Tafari of the Social Justice Centre Travelling Theater during a meeting with past Human Rights Award winners in December 2023.



Executive Director Kamau Ngugi speaking at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Arusha, Tanzania.



Woman Human Rights Defender at our training event.



A participant at the security management training.




A human rights defender chanting the 'Wimbo Wa Mapambano' song.



NiMama representatives at the 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission in Arusha, Tanzania pose for a photo.

PARTNERS

 <p>CIVICUS</p>	PILLAR 1 - Enabling and safe civic space for HRDs	 <p>AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE</p>
 <p>THE FUND FOR GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS</p>	 <p>CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION</p>	 <p>Norway</p>

 <p>WILLIAM + FLORA Hewlett Foundation</p>	PILLAR 4 - Excellence at the secretariat	SIGRID RAUSING TRUST
---	---	-----------------------------

 <p>URGENT ACTION FUND + AFRICA FOR WOMN'S HUMAN RIGHT</p>	 <p>Uraia</p>	 <p>Democracy International</p>
 <p>FORD FOUNDATION</p>	PILLAR 2 - Safety and protection of HRDs	 <p>giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH</p>

 <p>Sida</p>	 <p>UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER</p>
--	--

 <p>CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS</p>	PILLAR 3 - Enhancing Socioeconomic well-being of HRDs	 <p>Hivos people unlimited</p>
---	--	--

PARTNERS

NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORKS





DEFENDERS
COALITION

P. O. Box 26309-00100 Nairobi, Kenya

PHONE NO +254-712632390

Emergency No. +254 716 200 100

EMAIL: info@defenderscoalition.org