

7.

THE STORY OF FLORENCE DIBA

MY NAME IS FLORENCE DIBA. I AM A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FROM ISIOLO COUNTY. I AM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF ISIOLO GENDER WATCH

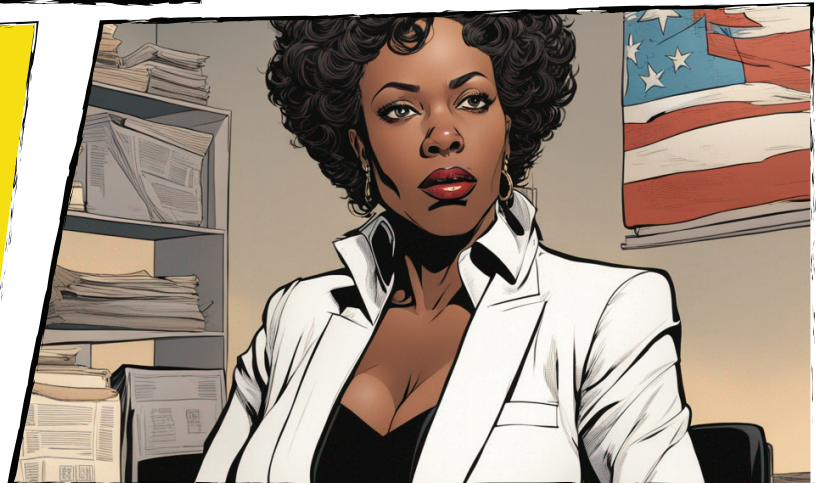


"IN 2000, I NOTICED THE SILENCE OF WOMEN IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY."



I WAS SELECTED TO JOIN THE PEACE COMMITTEE WITHIN THE LOCATION SO THAT I COULD BE PART OF THE DECISION MAKING AT THE LOCATION LEVEL WHERE I SERVED UNTIL 2009.

IN 2009, I WAS ELECTED TO THE DISTRICT LEVEL WHERE I SERVED AS THE CHAIR AND GENDER COORDINATOR. IN SPITE OF MY PRESENCE IN THAT POSITION, I STILL CONTINUED TO WITNESS MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN. I WAS THE ONLY WOMAN ON THE COMMITTEE OUT OF 15 MEMBERS,





IN 2013, USAWA GENDER WATCH WAS CREATED AND REGISTERED IN 2015 BY MYSELF AND A FEW WOMEN FROM THE AREA. WE MAINLY TACKLED GENDER ISSUES AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC LIFE THAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, THE TRADITION AND CULTURE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MARRIAGES.

MY FIRST POINT OF CONTACT WITH DEFENDERS COALITION WAS THROUGH A BOARD MEMBER WHO KNEW OF MY WORK AND CONNECTED ME WITH THE COALITION. I WAS TAKEN IN AND TRAINED AS A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AND CURRENTLY SERVE IN THE COALITION AS A JUDGE ON THE AWARD PANEL.



ON THE ELECTION DAY, I WAS AT THE POLLING STATIONS TO ENSURE THAT WOMEN ARE NOT ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR HUSBANDS OR MALE COUNTERPARTS TO THE VOTING BOOTH.

THE COMMUNITY RETALIATED AND ACCUSED ME OF GOING AGAINST WHAT THEY HAD PLANNED AND SABOTAGING THEIR DECISIONS. I ALMOST LOST MY LIFE IN THE COMMOTION THAT ENSUED



ELIZABETH WAS A WOMAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER WHO ADVOCATED FOR LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS. SHE MOTIVATED ME TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT. SHE SAW MY PASSION AND CAPABILITY AND PAVED WAY FOR ME TO GET VOTED INTO THE DISTRICT LEVEL PEACE COMMITTEE AS SHE REMAINED AT THE DIVISION LEVEL.



ELIZABETH MAINLY FOCUSED ON WOMEN'S ISSUES AROUND LAND RIGHTS. SHE BOUGHT A PIECE OF LAND IN AN AREA WITHIN THE COUNTY. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NEIGHBOR AND HERSELF WHICH ENDED UP IN COURT. HE HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF ENCROACHING ON ELIZABETH'S PIECE OF LAND AND SHE WON THE CASE. HER LEGAL EXPERTISE POSED A THREAT TO SOME COMMUNITY MEMBERS. AFTER THE CASE RULING, ELIZABETH MENTIONED FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND THE DEFENDANT. ON THAT FATEFUL DAY, 3RD JANUARY 2022, SHE WENT FOR A RELATIVE'S BURIAL WITHIN THE AREA AND THE MAN WAS PRESENT AS ONE OF THE MOURNERS. AFTER THE CEREMONY, HE EXTENDED A FAKE TRUCE TO LURE HER ASIDE WHERE HE PROCEEDED TO TAKE HER LIFE. SINCE THEN, THE CASE IS STILL OPEN IN COURT BUT IS IN ITS FINAL STAGES AT MERU HIGH COURT.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE MORE SUPPORT ON SAFETY AND SECURITY RESPONSES, MEDICAL AND LIFE INSURANCE COVERS AND LEGAL AID AND SUPPORT TO ENABLE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN TO BE ABLE TO DO THEIR WORK EFFECTIVELY.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN CONTINUE TO FACE DISCRIMINATION IN THIS PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY THAT WE LIVE IN. THANKS TO WOMEN LIKE FLORENCE, WE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE A SHIFT IN THE THING ARE DONE AS MORE WOMEN ARE GETTING THE COURAGE TO FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS.



ANOTHER INTERESTING STORY AWAITS US....

DEFENDERS COALITION POSITIONS ITSELF AS A THOUGHT AND COLLABORATIVE LEADER TOWARDS (RE)FORMULATION AND OR ENFORCEMENT OF APPROPRIATE POLICIES, LAWS, INSTITUTIONS AND CULTURAL NORMS THAT TOUCH ON THE SAFETY, SECURITY AND WELL-BEING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN.