



WHRDHUB
WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HUB

Protect. Heal. Nurture

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



www.whrdhub.org



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1 MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The year 2024 is one that will go on record for amplifying the role of women human rights defenders in Kenya, but most importantly, the power of advocacy in ensuring gender equality but above all, the protection of women in all their diversities and walks of life.

The year saw us set out with very ambitious plans of supporting WHRDs in the country. It was not only earmarked to raise the voices of WHRDs but also was critical in ensuring their safety, security and wellbeing. To guide us in this process, the Hub launched its first Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028; a plan that would guide the operations and intervention of the organisation for the next five years. This plan, not only guides the operations and interventions, but also establishes the Hub as a firm champion for WHRDs and is committed to this while being driven by passion and care.

Through collaboration, innovation, and determination, the Hub has supported hundreds of women defenders in advocating for human and environmental rights and advanced the responsiveness of first responders in informal settlements to address issues of GBV to survivors and victims. Together with our partners, we have strengthened safety networks in eight counties of Kenya and beyond, driven meaningful change through capacity development and engagement with duty bearers, generated and disseminated knowledge on WHRDs and their work, strengthened collaborative efforts at national, regional and international level and inspired resilience in the communities we serve and work with.

This remarkable progress and unwavering commitment to our vision of having an empowered, just and equitable society where WHRDs thrive to their full potential was only made possible by the WHRDs themselves. Women who everyday put themselves on the frontline, championing for rights, speaking up against injustice and calling for accountability. The Hub exists as a testament of the contribution WHRDs make in the society.

As we reflect on 2024, we remain grateful to our partners, donors, and team for their dedication. We look forward to building on this momentum in 2025.

2 ABOUT THE HUB

Established in 2019 and registered in 2021, The Hub is a feminist, women led organization that exists to support the work of women human rights defenders in Kenya and the East Africa region. The Hub envisions a world in which basic rights, fundamental rights and freedoms are universally recognized and respected by all.

The Hub seeks to build a society where women human rights defenders achieve wellness, safety, protection and appreciation and occupy spaces of decision making in all spheres of development. To realise this, the Hub engages through the following programmatic pillars;

- Safety & Security Pillar
- Wellbeing & Wellness Pillar
- Livelihoods Pillar
- Mentorship Pillar
- Movement Building Pillar
- Institutional excellence Pillar

In the implementation of its five-year strategic plan, the Hub has prioritised to operate in eight counties; Nairobi, Kitui, Meru, Kisumu, Nakuru, Bomet, Mombasa, and Marsabit with its operations running from Nairobi. Additionally, the Hub has run project activities in Kwale county.

The Hub, through its mission, seeks to amplify and enhance holistic protection programs that invest in mentorship and economic empowerment of networks of WHRDs. To do this, the Hub uses a participatory and inclusive approach to ensure that women in all their diversities are represented and that no one is left behind.



The Hub is led by a team of professional women who make up both the Board and the Secretariat. The team, in various capacities, have all been involved in human rights advocacy particularly in the areas of gender.

2.1 2024 OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The year 2024 saw vibrant exercise of civic space which was marked by notable efforts to the protection and promotion of human rights. These included;

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE PBO ACT

After a decade-long delay, the PBO Act of 2013 was officially implemented on May 14, 2024. While the Act is cited to enhance transparency, accountability, and governance within the civil society sector, fostering a more enabling environment for human rights organizations, it is one to watch as its implementation could potentially continue to shrink the civic space further particularly through targeting of civil society organisations.

FINANCE BILL/GEN Z PROTESTS

*In mid-2024, Kenya witnessed a surge in youth-led demonstrations, predominantly driven by Generation Z. The protests were triggered by the government's Finance Bill 2024, which proposed substantial tax hikes including on essential goods and services thereby intensifying economic pressures amid high inflation and a depreciating Kenyan shilling. The public outcry culminated on June 25, when protesters stormed the Parliament Building in Nairobi, setting parts of it ablaze. The ensuing clashes with police resulted in at least 22 deaths and numerous injuries. In response to the unrest, President William Ruto vetoed the bill on June 26, acknowledging its unpopularity. The cases in court against the bill were ruled in favour of the government and since the ruling, the bill was since enacted into law resulting into great impact on the lives of Kenyans. This has in effect revised tax regimes in the country that in turn will affect the net amounts that employees take home and adds compliance responsibilities on the employers.

FEMICIDE CAMPAIGNS

The alarming rise in female killings, with over 100 women killed in a four-months of the last quarter of 2024, prompted the Kenyan government to declare it the nation's most pressing security threat. Women from across the country came out in large numbers demanding justice for the victims and calling on government to protect women. A country-wide peaceful demonstration was organised in over ten counties of Kenya demanding action to be taken by the government.



PROTEST, CONDEMNING THE INCREASING INCIDENTS OF FEMICIDE IN KENYA - JANUARY 27, 2024

SEVERE FLOODING

Kenya experienced severe flooding which affected 45 out of 47 counties during the year with the National Disaster Operations Centre reporting that more than 300 people died and citing that over 30,000 households were displaced. WHRDs were affected directly through displacement and one notable WHRD losing her life. Additionally, WHRDs were responding to the cases of displacement and this took a huge mental and emotional toll on the WHRDs as some situations appeared bleak. The Hub, through a research on the impact of flooding, noted that WHRDs were directly affected through displacement, destruction of their businesses as well as their physical and digital safety compromised.



Livelihood and Well-being Impacts of the Climate Crisis and Flooding in Kenya for Women Human Rights Defenders

2024/2025



POLITICAL IMPEACHEMENTS

The political space saw active impeachment raised against several political leaders with notable impeachment proceedings against Governors Kawira Mwangaza of Meru and Erick Mutai of Kericho. Governor Mwangaza faced her third *impeachment attempt in less than two years, accused of abuse of office and other charges. The Senate upheld her removal, though court interventions have since suspended the resolution pending further rulings. Governor Mutai narrowly avoided impeachment due to procedural technicalities, despite facing serious allegations. On October 18, 2024, Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua was impeached, marking the first such occurrence in Kenya's history. The National Assembly initiated the motion, citing allegations of undermining the judiciary, abuse of office, and irregular wealth acquisition. The Senate upheld the impeachment after thorough deliberations, reflecting deep political divisions and testing the country's legal and political frameworks.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

These were notably experienced through increased cases of enforced disappearances and abductions. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) noted that between June 2024 – December 2024, a total of 82 persons were abducted with 29 still missing. Kenyans at large and members of the international community have continuously called for accountability but with no response from the government and instead, more abductions have happened. Article 37 of the Constitution of Kenya on the Right to Protest continues to remain one of the most violated rights in the country and trends indicate that this will continue and perhaps even worsen. Increased policing of protests including use of live ammunition during protests, including militarisation of the protests as seen during the GenZ protests continues to limit the enjoyment of these rights.



[1] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/02/kenya-floods-threaten-marginalized-people>

[2] LIVELIHOOD AND WELL-BEING IMPACTS OF THE RECENT CLIMATE CRISIS AND FLOODING IN KENYA FOR WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS REPORT 2024

2.2 IMPACT OF THE OPERATING CONTEXT ON THE HUB AND WHRDS

Women Human Rights Defenders who remain at the forefront of advocating for rights continue to face constant risks and threats on account of the work that they do. These risks, which are gendered in nature, come from various facets including the government and the community at large owing to the patriarchal nature of Kenyan communities.

The political upheavals in Kenya in 2024 had significant effects on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and their efforts to safeguard human rights and environmental justice. WHRDs were impacted as follows;

Increased Risk of Targeted Violence and Intimidation

- Crackdown on Dissent: WHRDs critical of the government or vocal during protests faced heightened risks of harassment, arbitrary arrests, and violence.
- State Surveillance: Enhanced security measures often led to surveillance of activists, particularly those advocating for justice and equity. For WHRDs especially those vocal online, were either trolled or verbally assaulted
- Threat to Safety: Reports of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings created an environment of fear, discouraging activism.

Limited Access to Justice

- Weakened Judiciary Independence: Allegations of government interference in the judiciary left WHRDs skeptical about seeking legal redress for rights violations. Non-respect of court decisions by public officers including the IG showed how the independence of the judiciary was being undermined by the government.
- Overburdened Justice System: Political trials, such as impeachments, diverted focus and resources from addressing human rights violations and the challenges being faced by the citizenry and especially the women who have to bear the burden of Nurturing their families.

Restricted Civic Space

- Protest Restrictions: Crackdowns on public demonstrations curtailed freedom of assembly and speech, essential tools for WHRDs to mobilize communities and advocate for change.
- Legislative Barriers: Provisions in the Finance Bill increased the cost of living, indirectly affecting the resources available for grassroots advocacy and WHRD networks.

Strained Community Relations

- Erosion of Public Trust: As WHRDs and HRDs engaged in protests or called out state abuses, some communities accused them of instigating unrest, leading to tensions between defenders and their constituencies.

Psychological Toll

- Trauma and Burnout: Witnessing violence, facing threats, and operating under constant fear impacted WHRDs' mental health and overall effectiveness. The families of the disappeared or killed persons were emotionally and psychologically affected and the few WHRDs offering wellbeing support were overworked.

[1] [https://www.knchr.org/articles/artmid/2432/articleid/1213/statement-on-the-recent-surge-of-abductions-enforced-disappearances-in-kenya#:~:text=SEVEN%20\(7\)%20OF%20THE%20RECENT,THE%20DICTATES%20OF%20THE%20CONSTITUTION.](https://www.knchr.org/articles/artmid/2432/articleid/1213/statement-on-the-recent-surge-of-abductions-enforced-disappearances-in-kenya#:~:text=SEVEN%20(7)%20OF%20THE%20RECENT,THE%20DICTATES%20OF%20THE%20CONSTITUTION.)

2.3 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The Hub remains committed to empower WHRDs and ensure that they work in an environment free of human rights violations and despite a heavy year, the following opportunities exist;

1

Strengthened
Networks

WHRDs increasingly sought solidarity, fostering stronger alliances to navigate risks, show solidarity with each other and pool/solicit for resources to support peers.

2

Global
Attention

Kenya's membership in the UN Human Rights Council brought international scrutiny, providing a platform for WHRDs and CSOs to spotlight state abuses.

3

Digital
Advocacy

Restricted physical spaces led to creative online campaigns, helping WHRDs and HRDs reach broader audiences while mitigating risks.

The resilience and adaptability of WHRDs in 2024 underscored their critical role in defending rights, even in challenging political climates. However, sustained support, both locally and internationally, is essential for their safety and effectiveness.



IWHRD Day hosted by Kiengu Women Challenged to Challenge (KWCC) in collaboration with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub – The Hub

3. STRATEGIC PILLARS OVERVIEW, ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS

3.1 SAFETY (USALAMA) PILLAR

Overview:

Under the ‘*Usalama*’ pillar, the Hub works to develop appropriate preventive and responsive strategies for the safety and security of WHRDs both offline and online. This is informed by ongoing analysis of trends of the women human rights defenders’ working environment so as to develop safety strategies tailored to meet the context and work of the defenders. Under this pillar, the Hub collaborates with protection partners on provision of suitable gender respecting interventions for the WHRDs.

The overall goal of this pillar is to create a safe and secure environment for WHRDs through holistic protection

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 01 | _____ | To enhance the capacity of WHRDs on safety and security. |
| 02 | _____ | To advocate for an enabling legal and policy environment. |
| 03 | _____ | To enhance access to referral pathways with duty bearers and other stakeholders. |

Key Activities:

- **Safety & Security Assessments:** Conducted 4 assessments which informed the training on safety and security for right holders working on SRHR and GBV and 1 assessment for The Hub as an institution
- **Safety & Security Trainings:** Conducted 4 in-person trainings for a diverse group from SRHR defenders and right holders as well as community champions. Facilitated 3 online sessions on physical safety and digital safety including one digital safety for The Hub’s staff.
- **Linking & Learning Session:** Conducted 1 linking and learning session of safety and security focal persons drawn from Kenya, Uganda and Niger
- **Situational Analysis:** The Hub shared one observation on the situation of women during the GenZ protests

Key Outcomes/Achievements and Impact:

1. **Expanded Safety and Security Training Reach:** The Hub provided safety and security training to 104 beneficiaries from Kenya, Uganda, and Niger, enhancing their awareness and preparedness in their professional activities. The Hub also supported local networks in enhancing the safety, security and wellbeing of their constituents. The Hub did this for the Mombasa network under the leadership of Muslim Women Advancement of Rights and Protection (MWARP) as well as young WHRDs from Lamu County.

2. **Organizational Security Assessments:** Conducted security assessments for four organizations, providing tailored insights to inform and enhance their safety and security training programs.

3. **Development of Training**

Guidelines: Created a comprehensive training guideline encompassing safety, security, and well-being, serving as a foundational resource for future training initiatives.



Safety and Security Training for We Lead Partners - February, 2024

4. **Advocacy for Women's Safety:** Participated in a femicide awareness campaign, organizing two parallel walks in Kitui and Kwale to advocate for the safety and security of women, thereby raising public awareness and promoting community engagement.

Challenges:

1. **Limited Resources:** The Hub faces constraints in financial and human resources, which hinder the expansion and enhancement of safety and security initiatives.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging multiple stakeholders to establish referral pathways has not been realised fully.
3. **Security Risks:** Kenya's human rights environment continues to morph daily giving rise to new security risks as well as increased targeting of defenders which leaves WHRDs vulnerable but also institutions supporting WHRDs including the Hub.
4. **Knowledge Management:** The Hub is yet to establish itself as an authority on data regarding WHRDs as the situational analysis has not been regular and structured.

3.2 WELLBEING (JITUNZE) PILLAR

Overview:

Under the 'Jitunze' pillar, WHRDs are enabled to focus more on their psychological, mental, and emotional rejuvenation to ensure maximum productivity in all areas of the WHRDs life. This pillar focuses on encouraging WHRDs and by extension, human rights organizations to prioritize wellbeing and self-care within their work.

The Hub seeks to focus on: investing on research to establish circumstances that may cause psychological distress to WHRDs; establish early warning systems and response mechanisms and protocols; enhance WHRDs skills and knowledge levels; as well as invest in response mechanisms to stress and other emotional disorders that WHRDs may face.

The overall goal of this pillar is to empower WHRDs mentally, emotionally and physically.

Objectives:

1. To establish early warning systems and response mechanisms for WHRDs.
2. To enhance WHRDs skills and knowledge levels on self-care.
3. To motivate WHRDs to prioritize well-being/self-care in their daily lives.
4. To connect WHRDs with referral pathways for wellness services.

Key Activities:

- **Needs Assessment:** Conducted 4 needs assessments on the wellbeing of WHRDs
- **Debriefs:** Conducted 2 group debriefs for SRHR defenders
- **One-on-one therapy sessions:** Supported 3 defenders to access therapy support
- **Wellbeing Webinars:** Sensitised groups on wellbeing through 2 webinar sessions.

Key Outcomes/Achievements and Impact:

1. **Needs Assessment:** Conducted four comprehensive assessments to evaluate the wellbeing of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), identifying critical areas for support and intervention.
2. **Group Debriefs:** Facilitated two group debriefing sessions for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) defenders, providing a platform for shared experiences and collective healing.
3. **Individual Therapy Support:** Enabled three defenders to access personalized therapy sessions, addressing their unique mental health needs and promoting resilience.
4. **Development of Wellbeing Guidelines:** Integrated a comprehensive wellbeing guideline into the broader safety, security, and wellbeing guideline document, providing a structured approach to support the holistic wellbeing of defenders.



Wellness session with WeLead Partners

Challenges:

1. **Limited Resources:** Expanding wellbeing programs to include alternative support methods which include sports therapy, story telling including both written and oral for example, demands additional financial and human resources.
2. **Alternative Wellbeing Approaches:** Identifying and integrating diverse methods of wellbeing support and move away from the traditional psychosocial support model.

3.3 FEMTORSHIP (USHAURI) PILLAR

Overview:

Under the 'Ushauri' pillar focuses on building the capacity of young upcoming WHRDs through fellowship, study tour, advocacy, exposure visits and attachment to women community led initiatives for purposes of learning. This pillar ultimately seeks to contribute to knowledge generation on the contribution of WHRDs in promotion and protection of rights as well as contribution of women in the liberation struggles of Kenya. The goal of the femtorship pillar is to cultivate and nurture a culture of human rights among women human rights defenders for sustainability and continuity of human rights advocacy.

Objectives:

1. To establish a structured femtorship framework at county and national levels that allows the young WHRDs to grow, learn and build their confidence to lead and undertake their work impactfully.
2. To enhance participation of WHRDs in leadership and decision-making processes and platforms at county and national levels.
3. To enhance the capacity of WHRDs to incubate local networks for human rights advocacy and collaborate with like-minded partners.
4. To create linkages between upcoming WHRDs; experts in law, health, and media; and professional bodies, with a view to expanding the WHRDs worldview.
5. To expose WHRDs and their initiatives to other spaces at national, regional, and international arenas.

Key Activities:

1. **Capacity Building:** Facilitated knowledge sharing fellowship for 15 WHRDs with disabilities from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia
2. **Exposure Visits and placements:** Facilitated 6 WHRDs to participate in exposure visits; 3 in Kenya, 2 in Tanzania and 1 in South Africa
3. **Attachment to women-led initiatives:** This also covers the Hub's internship program where 1 young woman defender was attached for one quarter. The internship programme immerses a young WHRD into the workings of The Hub and allows them to collaborate and contribute to ongoing work as they also take up leadership exercises in some.
4. **Structured femtorship:** This was through a needs assessment and mapping out of femtors and femtees in the Hub's counties of operation. This process is to enable femtorship as an active initiative through pairing up of femtors and femtees.

Key Outcomes/Achievements and Impact:

1. Strengthened cross-border networks and solidarity among WHRDs fostering national and regional collaboration and peer support.
2. Increased visibility and representation of WHRDs with disabilities within the broader human rights movement.
3. Increased engagement and contribution of young women defenders to women-led initiatives, enhancing the sustainability of feminist movements.

Challenges:

1. **Structuring the Intergenerational Femtorship Program:** While the Hub has made significant strides in pairing femtors and femtees, the program is still in its early stages and lacks a fully structured framework. Establishing clear guidelines, regular follow-ups, and defined success indicators remains a challenge, which impacts the consistency and effectiveness of the mentorship experience.
2. **Resource Constraints for Exchange Programs:** The demand for exposure visits and placements continues to grow, yet the Hub faces lean financial and logistical resources to sustain and expand these opportunities.

3.4 LIVELIHOOD (*USTAWI*) PILLAR

Overview:

The '*Ustawi*' pillar focuses on empowering WHRDs networks to be able to meet their livelihood needs as they undertake their activism work. The Hub seeks to do this through building its own internal capacity on the pillar as well as understanding the livelihoods ecosystem and the opportunities and challenges it presents.

The Livelihoods Pillar supports Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) improve their economic well-being so they can continue their activism and support their communities. It focuses on:

The goal is to enhance the welfare of WHRD networks through economic empowerment programs.

Objectives:

1. Foster linkages amongst WHRDs networks, government funds, private sector and financial institutions
2. Develop the entrepreneurial capacities of WHRDs networks
3. Highlight and celebrate WHRDs entrepreneurship initiatives
4. Celebrate efforts of WHRDs networks in the development and support of the human rights agenda

Key Activities:

1. **Enhancing the Hub's capacity and knowledge on livelihoods:** This was through a needs assessment that was conducted over the period to interrogate what constitutes livelihoods amongst WHRDs' networks. Additionally, The Hub sat with partners and explored what it means for livelihoods and joint ways of approaching this together.
2. **Facilitated County-based exhibitions to showcase WHRDs entrepreneurship initiatives:** This was only held in Nairobi County where one WHRD was able to share and get supported by fellow WHRDs.

Key Outcomes/Achievements and Impact:

1. Improved understanding of the diverse livelihood needs and economic realities faced by WHRDs within their networks, enabling the Hub to design an elaborate livelihood framework.
2. Provided a platform for WHRDs to showcase their entrepreneurial initiatives, enhancing visibility and recognition of their work within the community and among peers.

Challenges:

1. **Implementation of the Livelihood's framework:** As this was developed in the course of the year, implementation is yet to begin. However, this framework will inform interventions going forward.

3.5 MOVEMENT BUILDING (HARAKATI) PILLAR

Overview:

The '*Harakati*' pillar focuses on building strong networks and initiatives by WHRDs at community, national and regional levels so as to enhance collective actions. This pillar also enables the Hub's contribution within policy making and influencing spaces such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the Commission on Status of Women (CSW).

The goal of this pillar is to enhance collaborations and solidarity for sustainable change.

Objectives:

1. To build strong human rights movements that inform leadership and decision-making processes at county and national levels.
2. To create communities of practice for joint advocacy.
3. To create a network of like-minded WHRDs to enable them plug into WHRD conversations.
4. To foster collaborations, partnerships, and networks of stakeholders supporting the work of WHRDs at local, national, and regional levels.

Key Activities:

1. **Developing WHRDs networks Database:** The Hub developed a database drawn from the Hub's counties of operations including project counties. The database currently sits at 2,000 WHRDs and continues to grow as the Hub's interventions continue.
2. **Facilitated joint advocacy campaigns:** Facilitated and participated in joint advocacy campaigns including the end femicide campaign in Kenya. Working together with Pollicy and The Africa Initiative for WHRDs, the Hub organised a webinar to sensitise WHRDs on online facilitated GBV.



The Hub organised a webinar to sensitise WHRDs on online facilitated GBV.

3. **Fostered growth of WHRDs networks in Kenya and within the East Africa region:** This was through establishment of respective county networks as well as through the co-creation of the East Africa WHRD Protection Network.

4. Participation of the Hub in networks and partnership events that gave visibility to the organisation and its work: The Hub partnered with community groups in eight counties to undertake celebrations of the sixteen days of activism towards ending GBV at the counties with a view of creating awareness on the issue as well as connecting WHRDs to duty bearers within their respective counties. At the regional level, the Hub worked closely with sister Coalitions in Uganda and Tanzania to secure resources for joint actions as well as participated in giving visibility of the work of WHRDs by working closely with the UN SR for WHRDs as well as participating in the regional activities organised by the Africa Initiative for WHRDs.



Protection Networks Consortium Convening Protection Networks for Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania -April, 2024

Key Outcomes/Achievements and Impact:

- Established a centralized and dynamic repository of WHRDs within the Hub's networks, enhancing coordination, information sharing, and targeted interventions.
- Increased visibility and collective action on critical issues affecting WHRDs, such as gender-based violence, through participation in high-impact advocacy campaigns like the End Femicide campaign in Kenya.
- Strengthened partnerships and alliances with other human rights organizations and stakeholders, amplifying the voices of WHRDs at national and regional levels.
- Improved sustainability of WHRD movements by creating spaces for knowledge exchange, mutual support, and joint strategizing to address common challenges across the region.
- Fundraised for regional collaborative work together with WHRD networks of Uganda and Tanzania.

Challenges:

- Inclusivity gap in effectively engaging male champions as allies in the support and protection of WHRDs. The lack of strong linkages and collaboration with male advocates limits opportunities for fostering inclusive approaches to addressing gender-based challenges, challenging deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, and creating broader societal buy-in for WHRDs' work.
- Messaging & Narrative Control: Framing issues in a way that resonates with diverse audiences is crucial but difficult especially in contexts of shrinking Civic space, it becomes difficult to make joint statements as a consortium.

3.6 INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING PILLAR

Overview:

This pillar is focused on the institutional infrastructure which would be realised through effective governance, strategic leadership, engaged staff, mobilisation of diversified funding, financial stability, efficient structures and processes as well as the enhancing the visibility of the Hub.

The goal of this pillar is to position the Hub as the premium WHRDs' organisation nationally and regionally.

Objectives:

1. To strengthen staff capacity, motivation, and retention.
2. To establish an effective, representative, and engaged board.
3. To provide effective, efficient, and sustainable services for WHRDs.
4. To build financial independence for the Hub through sustainable financial streams.

Key Activities:

1. **Policy Development:** The Hub with support from TRF and the Board of Trustees, developed organisational policies including the development of the Strategic Plan 2024-2028, The Resource Mobilisation Strategy, The Human Resources Policy, The Finance and Admin Policy, The Safeguarding Policy and the Anti-Corruption Policy
2. **Staff Skillset Assessment:** This, alongside performance reviews, enabled the Hub identify internal robust talent and areas of building on. This informed dockets that staff are to manage as well as areas they need to improve their capacity on..
3. **Resource Mobilisation:** This was realised through robust successful fundraising initiatives for both operations and projects including a donor roundtable where the Hub shared with current and potential funding partners about the Hub.
4. **Setting up operational Infrastructure:** This was through securing an office as well as furniture and equipment.

Key Outcomes/Achievements and Impact:

- Strengthened organizational governance and accountability through the establishment of comprehensive policies that provide clear guidelines for operations and decision-making.
- Enhanced strategic direction and long-term sustainability with the development of the Strategic Plan 2024-2028, ensuring alignment with the Hub's mission and vision.
- Improved risk management and ethical standards through the implementation of policies such as Safeguarding and Anti-Corruption, fostering a culture of integrity and compliance.
- Strengthened overall organizational performance by aligning staff capabilities with the Hub's strategic objectives and operational needs.
- Expanded donor and partner engagement, positioning the Hub as a trusted and capable entity for collaboration and investment.
- Established a functional and professional workspace that enhances operational efficiency and provides a conducive environment for staff productivity.

Challenges:

1. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Hub remains a significant challenge, particularly due to the heavy reliance on donor funding. While successful resource mobilization efforts have supported both operations and programmatic activities, the unpredictability and conditional nature of donor support pose a risk to financial stability. This dependency limits the Hub's ability to independently plan for long-term growth and resilience. Diversifying income streams through innovative, self-sustaining initiatives is critical to reducing financial vulnerability and ensuring continuity of impact.

4. STORIES OF CHANGE

1. Case Study 1: Scaling the Heights, Amplifying the Voices of Women Defenders: The Summer School for Human Rights Defenders that happened in Cape Town South Africa.;

Lydia Chepngetich, a human rights defender from Bomet County, was seconded by the Hub to participate in the Summer School for Human Rights defenders in Cape Town, South Africa. The Summer school took place from October 7th to 10th October 2024.

“My participation in the Summer School for Human Rights Defenders was an eye opener for me as a defender from a remote village in Kenya. The engagement at the summer school has influenced how I approach my work as a human rights defender, and how I work with my fellow defenders. I am now able to work more in solidarity and collaborate more with other defenders. I have disseminated to them what I learnt from other defenders from different parts of Africa and I will say things will never be the same again because the skills and knowledge that I learnt I am able to apply here in my community. I believe that I will be able to refer other defenders to any other opportunities from the network that I established from the summer school. The exposure that I have now is different and how I approach human rights work is very different. The visit was a game changer to me, fellow human rights defenders and my community in Bomet County”.



2. Case Study 2: Amplifying the voices of women human rights defenders in the fight against Gender Based Violence: Training Workshop on Combating Violence Against Women in Africa: Arusha, Tanzania.

Caren Wambui Kiarie, a fierce and ardent woman human rights defender based in Kisumu County got an opportunity to participate in a five-day training workshop in November 2024. The forum was convened by the African Institute of International Law in Arusha, Tanzania. Caren, through the support of the Hub was able to make an outstanding presentation on her work and experiences as a woman activist in advocating against Gender Based Violence in Kenya. The forum which was attended by women Judges, Lawyers, Journalists, Psychologists and women human rights defenders from the Civil Society Organizations across Africa provided an opportunity to show-case the work of women defenders in fighting for a just society that respects the rights of women.

Having attended the international conference, Caren confessed “I am a good example of the great empowerment the Hub is doing to support and expose seasoned grassroots WHRDs. I am currently attending a five-day training in Tanzania on combating violence against women. I am here to share my experience on violence against women human rights defenders”.



5. VISIBILITY OF THE HUB AND WHRDS WORK

The Hub's visibility is greatly supported by an active online presence as well as through community mobilisation. The social media highlights are summarised below;

June, 2024: #StopFemicide Campaign

- Content: A compelling post emphasizing the necessity for respect, safety, and the protection of women's rights, accompanied by the hashtag #StopFemicide.
- Impact: This post likely resonated deeply with the audience, contributing to the notable increase in reach and engagement during this period.
- https://www.instagram.com/p/C2l_nOaNCTo/?igsh=enBqZ3h0ZnU1NDBu



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YREkbOixsFs>

- *Launch of a report during the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day 2024: "Livelihood and Well-being Impacts of the Recent Climate Crisis and Flooding in Kenya for Women Human Rights."*



<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/15trsfanJN/>

Protest, condemning the increasing incidents of femicide in Kenya



<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/18BGtz3G3F/>

One week safety and security training program for We Lead Partners

6. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

The Hub has engaged and worked with different partners across various platforms. These have included local, regional, and global networks.

The Hub is critical on research and expanding knowledge. The period saw the Hub support a phd candidate in conducting research on Transitional Justice in Kenya; reflections of the TJRC commission. This research enabled the Hub to interrogate elements of safety, wellbeing and livelihoods for women at the frontline and how they are affected in the community.

The Hub's partnerships and collaborations are captured as follows;



7. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The year has seen the Hub engage in robust resource mobilisation including through establishment of a framework as guided by the Resource Mobilisation Strategy. Additionally, the Hub hosted its first Donor Round Table where it was able to share with both existing and potential partners its strategy direction and areas of collaboration.

80% of the funding during the year was secured from funding partners as follows;

- o KIOS (2024-2025) – Ksh. 5,032,000
- o UNDP (2024-2025) – Ksh. 3,865,500
- o Ford foundation (2024-2027) – Ksh. 9,990,519
- o Wellspring Philanthropic Fund (2024-2027) – Ksh. 6,475,000
- o Urgent Action Fund (2024) – Ksh. 1,065,000

20% contribution was made through technical support offered to the Hub by well-wishers and partners among them the Thomson Reuters Foundation (TRF) who supported development of three policies for the Hub, The Arnot Manderson Advocates from Scotland who financially contributed towards the development of the Hubs Website, Pete Milligan and colleagues for the development and hosting of the Hub's website.

Other partners have directly supported the work and staff of the Hub among them The Africa Initiative for WHRDs which has facilitated staff to participate in regional activities, Defend Defenders which has supported staff and other women defenders to attend meetings at the region and in-country.

Women Defenders from different counties of Kenya have also supported the work of the Hub by offering their time and venues to be used for Hub activities and they have also mobilised fellow WHRDs and duty bearers to participate in Hub activities.

8. LOOKING AHEAD: PLANS FOR 2025

As the Hub moves into 2025, the focus will be on strengthening its foundation and advancing strategic priorities to ensure long-term impact and sustainability.

- Key among the plans is an intensified fundraising effort to support the Hub's strategic pillars, ensuring the successful implementation of core programs and initiatives as outlined in the strategic plan.

- Efforts to increase visibility will be prioritized, with targeted communication strategies to enhance the Hub's profile, amplify WHRDs' voices, and attract broader support. Spreading reach of its work within the target counties, visibility in regional and international activities as well as maintain visibility in the mainstream media and social media.

- Collaboration will play a critical role, with the Hub aiming to foster stronger partnerships at local, regional, and international levels to expand its reach and influence. Collaborate with governmental departments working to advance women and children rights, work closely with the private sector and institutions of learning in Kenya and beyond.

- Internally, investing in staffing and equipment will be made to build a robust team and operational capacity, enabling the Hub to meet the growing demands of its work effectively.

- A key focus will also be on sustainability, with deliberate steps taken to diversifying funding streams and explore innovative resource mobilization strategies to reduce reliance on donor funding. These efforts will position the Hub for resilience and long-term success in advancing the rights and well being of WHRDs across the region.