



Women Human Rights Defenders Hub - The Kenya Hub

Protect. Heal. Nurture



Dear Reader,

We are thrilled to introduce you to the captivating communities of Women Human Rights Defenders in this publication, a journey that unveils essence of our mission come to life; the empowerment of WHRDs, and the advancement of human rights in Kenya. Within these pages we showcase WHRDs communities in seven counties in Kenya.

In 2019, we initiated the Women Human Rights Defenders Hub, a feminist, women led, organization that exists to support the work of women human rights defenders in Kenya. The Women Human Rights Defenders Hub strategic interventions are organized around six pillars, Safety and security pillar, Livelihoods, Wellbeing, Femtorship, Movement and cross movement, and Institution building.

We pay homage to the existing systems, honoring and rewarding the remarkable work of these unsung heroes.

Thank you for embarking on this transformative journey with us.

Sincerely,
Salome Nduta, Executive Director
WHRDHUB Kenya

In partnership with



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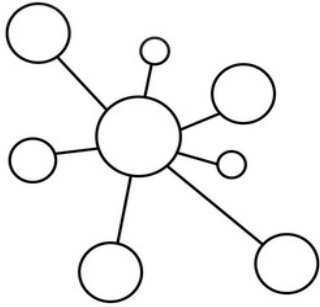


About The Hub

The Women Human Rights Defenders Hub (the Hub) is a feminist, women led, organization that exists to support the work of women human rights defenders in Kenya.

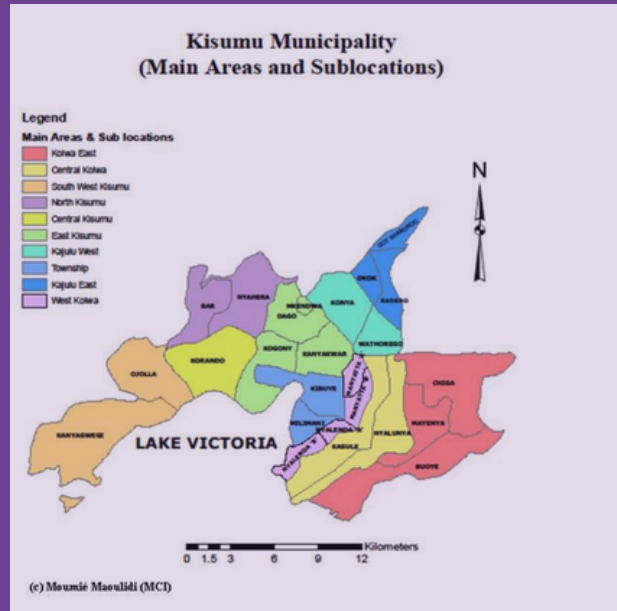
It was established in 2019 by women human rights defenders who had worked for many years in the mainstream male-led human rights defenders' movement in Kenya. Their experience was that the broader human rights defenders' movement was not addressing the gendered concerns and needs of women defenders. Capacity and patriarchy were at the root of this.

The niche of the Hub is its focus on protecting women human rights defenders in their diversities. For the Hub, a woman human rights defender is not defined by gender but by the work one does, that is, championing women rights. Men who support women human rights are women human rights defenders to that extent.



The hub and networks

Kisumu County



Situated in the banks of Lake Victoria, Kisumu is the third largest city in Kenya and the second largest among the cities sharing Lake Victoria after Kampala. Kisumu County has a population of slightly over 1,155,574 people (560,942 males, 594,609 females and 23 intersex) according to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census which was conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Kisumu County has five sub-counties namely Kisumu East, Kisumu West, Kisumu Central Muhoni and Nyakach.



IWHRD Day 2023, Kisumu in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Kisumu Women Defenders network was formed in 2019 with the aim of promoting human rights and rights related to gender equality. In 2023, celebration of Women Defenders brought together Women in the Social Justice Centre from all the 5 sub counties to celebrate the work they do, learn from each other and collectively identify challenges they face in defending members of their communities in all their diversity.

Key human rights issues in Kisumu County



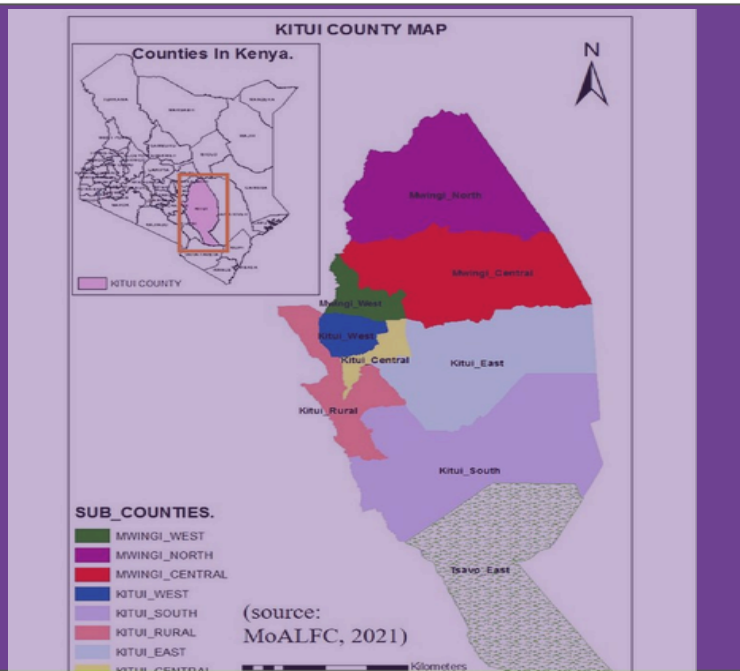
IWHRD Day 2023, Kisumu in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Key human rights issues in Kisumu county include:

- Lack of adequate support from the community including duty bearers
- Lack of closure on previous personal traumas
- Inadequate financial stability and support
- Inadequate training in Para-legalism
- Lack of safe houses for survivors and victims of GBV
- Inadequate training on HRBA to handling different cases
- Understanding of the law of succession/ land right when it comes to wom



Kitui Women Peace and Security



Kitui county is an Arid and Semi Arid area with a total population of 1,136,187 according to KNBS Census 2019; (Males - 549,003, Female - 587,151 and Intersex - 33). Kitui has seven 7 sub-counties. There are 262,942 households with an average household size of 4.3 persons per household and a population density 37 people per square kilometer. Kitui has high poverty levels that have adversely affected women, girls and persons living with disabilities.

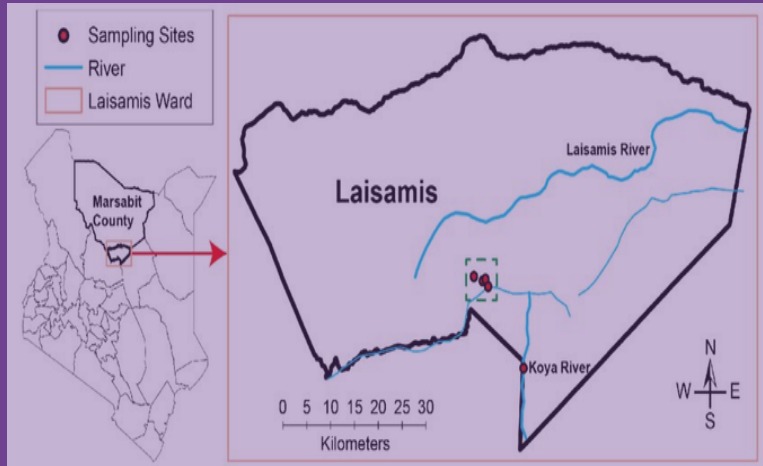


IWHRD Day 2023, Kitui in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Kitui Women, Peace and Security (KWPS) is a non-partisan network of grassroots women in Kitui County who are passionate and committed to ending violence against women and girls' and championing for increased participation of women and girls' in conflict prevention, peace and security processes.

Key human rights issues in Kitui County that have worked against women and girls include but not limited to; teenage pregnancies, domestic violence, forced evictions (Kitui Rural), human trafficking (Mwingi Central & North), Female Genital Mutilation (Mwingi North - Tharaka Ward), land/property Inheritance and succession, sexual violence and rape (Kitui Central).

Marsabit County



In this county many of the WHRDs shared that their advocacy work was informed by cultural practices that were violating women and girls more than their male counterparts. The participants in the workshop discussed on measures to confront the menace which is mainly meted through FGM, the challenges they have been facing in handling the issue and new techniques to tackle the problem while advancing the pursuit for human rights and justice in their communities especially amongst disenfranchised women and girls from Northern Kenya.



IWHRD Day 2023, Marsabit in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Pastoralist people's initiative (PPI) is a non-profit umbrella organisation committed to uplifting the lives of the community as a whole. Its main focus is on empowering the vulnerable in the community that is the women and the youth. PPI in collaboration with the Women Human Rights Defenders (Hub) hosted a 2-day workshop meeting to mark the International Women Human Rights defenders Day with a view of sensitising duty bearers and community members on the important role played by WHRDs as well as identify challenges they face. The meeting that was held on 28th and 29th November, 2023 at the Merigo Cultural Centre in Marsabit county. Participants were drawn from sub-counties of Merille, Laisamis, Logologo, Kamboiye, Karare and Marsabit town.

Key Human Rights Issues in Marsabit County

Testimonial of one of the Women human rights defender who has been in the forefront in fighting Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was shared on how she became an outcast in the community, how her life became endangered after rescuing one of the victims of FGM and how she was assisted by one of the Organization that protects the women human rights defenders to escape and be protected in their sanctuaries. She narrated to the audience of the pain and struggles women undergo at the hands of FGM but also sensitized them on the importance of standing up for what is right by fighting for the weak and the voiceless without the fear of being threatened or rejected by the society. She informed them in detail that there are various organisations whose main goal is protecting those who fight for not only their rights but also the rights of others. Those being threatened could run to these organisations that would provide them with safety and protection in their sanctuaries.

It was noted that women are key players in driving the economy of a country and have become breadwinners of their families. WHRDs who rely on human rights work thus do not get to provide for their families through their human rights work. It was noted that it would be important to educate WHRDs on better management of resources, for instance, grazing patterns by environmental committees since their communities mainly depend on livestock for their livelihood to mitigate the effects of drought which is the main challenge facing them as Pastoralists.

The importance of WHRD well-being could not be overstated. Women human right defends were stressed on the need of prioritising their health by ensuring that they go for mental health check-up to prevent cases of depression that may arise in their line of duty as women human right defenders. The women human right defenders were encouraged to look upon their mentors who have been in the forefront to fight for women human rights for advice and motivation as well as mentoring upcoming women human right defenders.

Other challenges included: Dropping of cases due to bribery; Long duration of hearing of human rights cases in courts; Lack of information by women human rights defenders on how to prosecute cases and even inform the police at the grassroot level; Lack of resources from the government to conduct sensitization conferences on Gender based violence and Lack of established government offices at the grassroot level to address gender-based violence and Female genital mutilation cases.

There was a media briefing where the women showcased their bravery by raising their voices against Gender Based Violence and assuring the public that they would never be silent when it comes to violation of human rights while expressing their gratitude to PPI and its partner the Hub who have made the event successful. Women take a stand on gender based violence.

Meru County



IWHRD Day 2023, Meru in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

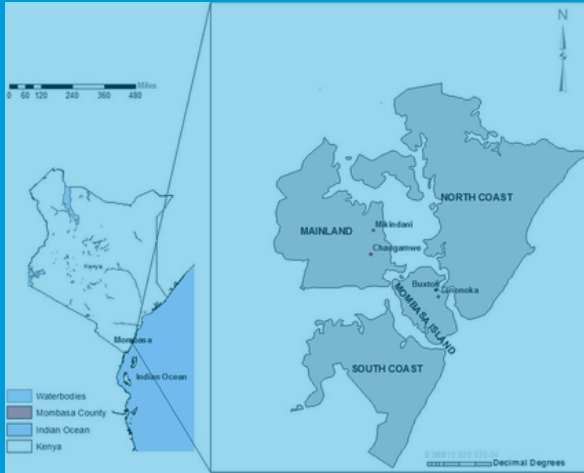
Meru County is one of the 47 Counties in Kenya found in the upper Eastern region and is the home of Mount Kenya the second largest Mountain in Africa. A largely agricultural County and rated number one producer of the popular 'Miraa' production in Kenya. The county also boasts of relatively strong fair food security. However, under the beauty of its green vegetation lies the ever increasing cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV) with a record of the highest number of teenage pregnancies in Kenya reported by the Daily Nation of August 2023 as highlighted by a survey conducted by the National Syndemic Diseases Control Council (NSDCC). It was noted that the numbers have been rising by an alarming rate since 2015 in the three regions of Meru County (Imenti, Tigania and Igembe).

Kiengu Sub-County hosted the 2023 International Women Human Rights Defenders' Day. The celebrations were held at Ntuene Primary School situated at the heart of the famous Maua Town. Kiengu Women Challenged to Challenge (KWCC) in partnership with the Women Human Rights Defenders Hub (The Kenya Hub) brought together diverse groups of women defenders targeting perennial and young female activists in celebrating their diversity and learn from each other as they start a journey of mentorship and strengthening of the county WHRD networks. The celebration was preceded by dialogues among WHRDs in their separate groups followed by a joint session aimed at identifying priority interventions for WHRDs in the county. The women convenings were crowned a day of pomp, colour and fun with a side event on well-being and wellness convening as a way of bonding and rejuvenation.

Among the issues raised during the women defenders convening were high rates of teenage pregnancies, early (child) marriages, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child labour, and insecurity for WHRDs which called for concerted efforts by all the stakeholders both in public (Government) and private institutions (CSOs & FBOs). Specifically for human rights programming, capacity building on Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), for the women defenders came out strongly.



Mombasa County



Mombasa County, which is the Country's second City happens to also be the Country's smallest county sitting at an area of 229.7 km². Mombasa has 6 constituencies, Chagamwe, Jomvu, Kisauni, Nyal, Likoni and Mvita. Whereas MWARP is headquartered in Mombasa, it operates in the coastal and north-eastern regions of Kenya specifically, Kilifi, Kwale and Garissa. As MWARP's target group is women of diverse backgrounds, it has identified challenges that women face in the course of their work and especially, within the human rights discourse.



IWHRD Day 2023, Mombasa in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Muslims Women Advancement of Rights and Protection (MWARP) is a not-for-profit making organization. The main aim of the organization is to exist and work as Women Rights Organization that agitates for and promotes the protection and advancement of the rights of marginalized groups i.e. Muslim women, women in rural and hard-to-reach areas, women and girls with no or low levels of education, among others. MWARP envisions to see "A just society where women and girls realize, embrace and enjoy their full rights and dignity".

Key human rights issues in Mombasa County



IWHRD Day 2023, Mombasa in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Through partnership with The Hub, Women Defenders in Mombasa have collaborated to create a network of women defenders who work towards human rights advancement of human rights. Additionally, the two organisations will continue collaborating in enhancing capacity in various aspects including HRBA, Safety and security and monitoring and documentation

Key challenges cited by the women defenders include;

- Lack of adequate capacity in a human-rights based approach
- Concerns over safety and security
- Lack of resources including personnel and finances
- Lack of wellbeing structures
- Profiling of WHRDs
- Food insecurity
- Concerns over SRHR

Nairobi County



The population of Nairobi County has continued to surge over the years, driven by factors such as rural-urban migration, high fertility rates, and improved healthcare leading to lower mortality rates. As of the latest census report, conducted in 2019, the population of Nairobi County stood at 4.3 million residents, or 1.4 million households. This demographic diversity underscores Nairobi's status as a melting pot of Kenyan society, reflecting the country's socio-economic and cultural dynamism.



IWHRD Day 2023, Kibera in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Women Beyond Borders is a women led initiative formed in 2018 in Kibera, and has been a space where women come together to share their stories. The initiative started as an informal support group, offering a platform for dialogue where women felt heard, understood and supported.

Recognizing the escalating cases of GBV during the COVID-

19

pandemic in 2020, Woman Beyond Borders was officially registered as a CBO. This transformation from an informal gathering to a registered organization was driven by the need to expand its impact and provide more comprehensive assistance to survivors of GBV.

Korogocho

Korogocho is situated in one of the sub-counties of Nairobi County (Kasarani) in Ruaraka constituency. The residents of Korogocho have had a history of self-organizing around issues that affect them including social justice. Korogocho Peace and Justice Center is an initiative led by WHRDs which focuses on ecological justice: pollution related to the dumpsite and issues of food sovereignty by growing food and fruit trees at the community level.

Some of the human rights issues in the informal settlements of Nairobi county include:

Threats and Intimidation: Women human rights defenders often face threats and intimidation, especially after reporting cases such as gender-based violence (GBV). This hinders their ability to advocate for justice and protection for survivors.

Burden of Responsibility: Defenders, when reporting cases like a lost child, are sometimes burdened with the responsibility of caring for the child until their parents are found. This not only poses a logistical challenge but also diverts their focus from other critical human rights issues.

Lack of Mentorship and Knowledge Gap: Older women in the field often fail to provide adequate mentorship to younger generations. This knowledge gap hampers the transfer of skills and experiences crucial for effective human rights advocacy.



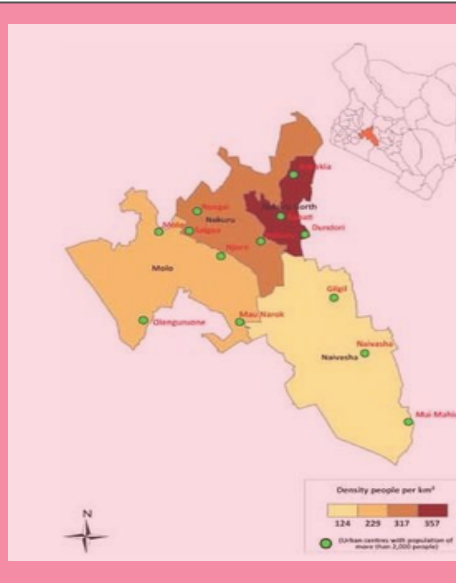
IWHRD Day 2023, Korogocho in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Financial Barriers: Women human rights defenders face financial challenges, hindering their ability to start businesses that could provide them with a sustainable income. Lack of funds limits their independence and weakens their capacity to engage in human rights defending activities.

Insecurity and its Impact on Girls: Insecurity in the Korogocho area disproportionately affects girls, making it difficult for them to engage in human rights advocacy. The prevailing unsafe environment hampers their freedom and limits their ability to participate fully in societal issues.

Insufficient Capacity Building: There is a pressing need for more capacity-building initiatives focusing on human rights defending. Many women in the Korogocho area lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively address human rights issues, further hindering their impact.

Nakuru County



Nakuru County sits on an area of 7,462.4 square feet. Out of a total of 2,162,202, 1,077,272 are male while the female gender stands at 1,084,835.

Women's Rights League affirms the rights of all women to education, healthcare, economic opportunity, and full participation in all aspects of public and private life. We recognize that women's rights are human rights and are essential for building just and equitable societies. We are committed to working in solidarity with women from all backgrounds, including those from marginalized communities who face intersecting forms of discrimination. We believe in the power of collective action and advocacy to bring about transformative change.



IWHRD Day 2023, Nakuru in partnership with Women Human Rights Defenders Hub

Women's Rights League is a feminist movement that brings together like minded Women Human Rights Defenders, women in politics and Women journalists to promote gender justice, socio-economic and political engagement for women, and to create a world in which all women are empowered to live with dignity and freedom.

The movement recognize the inherent dignity and worth of all women and girls and acknowledge the historical and ongoing oppression faced by women. In this regard, we are committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls in spheres of life, including social, economic, and political domains. We believe that achieving gender equality requires the elimination of all structural barriers that prevent women from realizing their full potential.

Key Human Rights Issues in Nakuru County



Anti-femicide campaign 2024, Nakuru

Nakuru County, women population is higher than that of men yet women continue to experience structural barriers that hinders them from decision making positions, political positions and community security structures.

There is a general apathy among youth and women in active involvement of the County governance and democracy processes. Women participation in public affairs is essential for fostering inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance. Archaic beliefs in the society pit women against women making it hard for women to work together to challenge norms that continue to belittle them. It is with this backdrop that we came together as Women Human Rights Defenders to collectively work together to improve the status of women in Nakuru County.

EAWHRDs

The Hub is a member of the consortium of Women Human Rights Defenders Protection Networks, East Africa, which is an initiative of three national networks of women human rights defenders based in East Africa, namely: Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda, Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders Tanzania, and the Women Human Rights Defenders Hub in Kenya. The consortium was formed by the networks in response to the increasingly complex and difficult contexts in which they operate.



Wayforward



The Hub has launched its inaugural strategic plan to guide it's interventions for a five-year period, 2024-2029. The Hub intends to invest in these strategic priorities:

- Capacity development and strengthening of county networks in pilot counties
- Femtorship programming and organising
- Safety and livelihood work
- Institutional development
- Strengthening of the regional network building work
- Research and knowledge generation

Want more insights?

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