

Protect. Heal. Nurture

2024 & 2025



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About the Hub

The hub is a feminist, women-led organization dedicated to supporting Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in East Africa and across the region.

The Hub focuses on key areas:

- **Safety and Security (Usalama)** – Ensuring WHRDs are protected online and offline.
- **Well-being (Jitunze)** – Supporting WHRDs' mental health and resilience.
- **Femtorship (Ushauri)** – Leadership training and femtorship for young WHRDs.
- **Livelihoods (Ustawi)** – Economic empowerment for WHRDs.
- **Movement Building (Harakati)** – Strengthening WHRD networks and advocacy.
- **Institutional Building** – Enhancing The hub's sustainability and impact.

Vision

An empowered, just, and equitable society where women human rights defenders thrive to their full potential.

Mission

We amplify and enhance holistic protection programs that invest in femtorship and economic empowerment of networks of women human rights defenders.

Dear Reader,

In this edition we are pleased to share the milestones of 2024 and 2025 at the Women Human Rights Defenders Hub (The Hub). Guided by the hub's first Strategic Plan (2024–2028), the hub remains committed to Protect, Heal, and Nurture women human rights defenders (WHRDs) across Kenya and the region.

In 2024, the hub launched the Strategic Plan on International Women's Day with WHRDs from ten counties, affirming their voices and priorities. It is both a roadmap for action and a symbol of solidarity, justice, and care.

Key highlights include launch of narratives of courage and healing; the Disability Forum, which united WHRDs with disabilities from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia to strengthen inclusive advocacy; and the 16 Days of Activism, celebrated under the theme Roots, Rights, and Resilience, amplifying the call to end gender based violence. The hub also expanded safety networks, enhanced digital security, and strengthened partnerships that reinforce wellbeing and leadership. These achievements were made possible by the bravery of WHRDs and the support of partners and allies.

As we step into 2026, the hub remains rooted in courage and resilience, committed to ensuring women defenders thrive and lead change.



The Year 2024



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 the hub 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 well-being. To guide the hub 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 partners, the hub has 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 levels, and inspired resilience in the communities it serves and works with. This remarkable progress and unwavering commitment to the hub's vision of having an empowered, just, and equitable society where WHRDs thrive to their full potential were only made possible by the WHRDs themselves. Women who every day put themselves on the frontline, championing for rights, speaking up against injustice, and calling for accountability. The hub exists as a testament to the contribution WHRDs make in society. As we reflect on 2024, the hub remains grateful to its partners, donors, and team for their dedication. We look forward to building on this momentum in 2025.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Overall Goal: To create a safe and secure environment for WHRDs through holistic protection.

Under this pillar, the hub focused on creating a safer working environment for Women Human Rights Defenders by strengthening their capacity to anticipate, prevent, and respond to threats. Throughout the year, the hub carried out several safety and security assessments, which examined the risks affecting defenders, especially those working on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Gender Based Violence (GBV). These assessments enabled the Hub to understand the changing landscape of threats, both physical and digital, and provided evidence to guide context-specific interventions. In addition to assessments, the hub conducted extensive in-person and online safety trainings. These sessions equipped defenders with practical skills in digital protection, physical safety, risk analysis, and emergency preparedness, benefiting more than one hundred WHRDs across Kenya, Uganda, and Niger.



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Safety & Security (Usalama) Pillar



The hub organized a regional linking and learning forum that brought together safety focal persons from Kenya, Uganda, and Niger. This gathering created space for cross-border sharing of experiences, lessons, and strategies, strengthening solidarity and improving the collective ability to respond to security threats.



Safety & Security (Usalama) Pillar



During the GenZ protests in Kenya, the hub released a situational analysis highlighting the unique risks women defenders faced, including online harassment, surveillance, and intimidation. This contributed to national awareness and advocacy for safer civic engagement.

Safety & Security (Usalama) Pillar

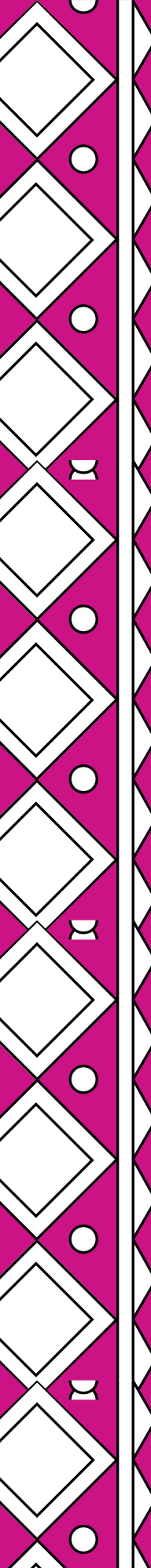


Beyond individual defenders, the hub supported organizations through structured institutional safety assessments, helping women-led groups strengthen their internal security systems and protocols. The hub also played an active role in national advocacy by participating in the anti-femicide campaign, organizing simultaneous public walks in Kitui and Kwale to push for women's safety and accountability.

Safety & Security (Usalama) Pillar



To consolidate these efforts, a training guideline covering safety, security, and wellbeing was developed. This serves as a long-term institutional resource, ensuring that training delivery remains consistent, high-quality, and adaptable to evolving threats.



WELLBEING (Jitunze) Pillar

Overall Goal: To
empower Women
Human Rights Defenders
emotionally, mentally,
and physically.

The wellbeing pillar concentrated on the mental, emotional, and physical restoration of WHRDs, recognizing that defenders cannot work effectively when overwhelmed by trauma, fatigue, or emotional strain.

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Wellbeing (Jitunze) Pillar



The hub began by conducting four comprehensive wellbeing assessments which revealed the stressors affecting defenders, ranging from exposure to GBV cases and political instability to burnout caused by high emotional labour. These assessments guided the design of responsive support initiatives.

Wellbeing (Jitunze) Pillar



The hub organized two group debrief sessions for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) defenders, creating safe spaces for them to share their experiences, offload emotional burdens, and support one another. These collective healing circles not only reduced stress but also reinforced solidarity among women working under intense pressure. To provide deeper individualized care, the hub facilitated professional therapy sessions for four defenders who required personalized psychosocial support to manage trauma and emotional exhaustion.

Wellbeing (Jitunze) Pillar

In addition to direct support, the hub delivered two wellbeing webinars where WHRDs learned about stress management, emotional regulation, self-care practices, and sustainable activism. These virtual sessions helped reach defenders in remote areas and reinforced the idea that wellbeing is not a luxury but an essential component of human rights work. All these learnings were later integrated into a wellbeing guideline, which forms part of the broader safety-security-wellbeing manual. This guideline strengthens the long-term capacity of WHRDs and their organizations to embed wellness in their daily operations.



Healing Through Shared Narratives

The hub, in collaboration with The Story Kitchen, hosted a storytelling session where WHRDs shared their lived experiences of resilience, challenges, and victories.

Key Outcomes:

Created a safe space for WHRDs to express their struggles.

Strengthened solidarity and healing through shared narratives.

Highlighted stories of bravery, resilience, and advocacy.

The Hub compiled these powerful stories into a publication to amplify the voices of WHRDs in the region and globally. The stories were published and disseminated.



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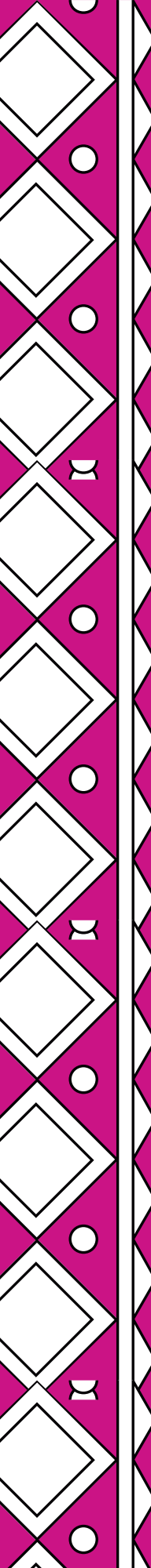
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Wellness and Selfcare Sessions



FEMTORSHIP

Overall Goal: To cultivate and nurture a culture of human rights among Women Human Rights Defenders for sustainability and continuity of human rights advocacy.

The femtorship pillar worked to build the next generation of women human rights defenders by nurturing leadership, strengthening confidence, and facilitating knowledge exchange.

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Femtorship (Ushauri) Pillar

During the year, the hub conducted a regional knowledge sharing fellowship that brought together fifteen WHRDs with disabilities from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. This gathering provided an inclusive platform for the defenders to learn, grow, and reflect on their roles in human rights advocacy. It also amplified the visibility of WHRDs with disabilities, whose experiences are often overlooked.



Femtorship (Ushauri) Pillar

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”.



To increase exposure and broaden perspectives, the hub facilitated several learning journeys for emerging WHRDs. Three exposure visits took place within Kenya, two in Tanzania, and one in South Africa. Through these placements, defenders interacted with other movements, institutions, and activists, gaining new strategies and expanding their networks. Additionally, one young WHRD was hosted by the Hub as an intern for an entire quarter, providing her hands-on involvement in program work, leadership tasks, and coordination roles.

Femtorship (Ushauri) Pillar

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.

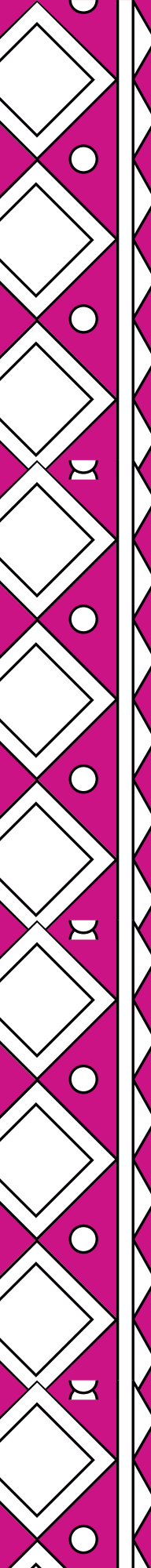
Having attended the international conference, Caren confessed “I am a good example of the great empowerment the Hub is doing to support and expose seasoned grassroots WHRDs. I am currently attending a five-day training in Tanzania on combating violence against women. I am here to share my experience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



Femtorship (Ushauri) Pillar

The hub embarked on establishing a structured femtorship program by mapping existing femtors and emerging femtees across its counties of operation. This process sets the foundation for a long-term intergenerational model where experienced WHRDs guide upcoming leaders, strengthening continuity and sustainability within the movement.





LIVELIHOODS

Overall Goal: To enhance the welfare of WHRD networks through economic empowerment programs.

This pillar recognized that defenders cannot serve their communities effectively if they lack economic stability.

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Livelihoods (Ustawi) Pillar

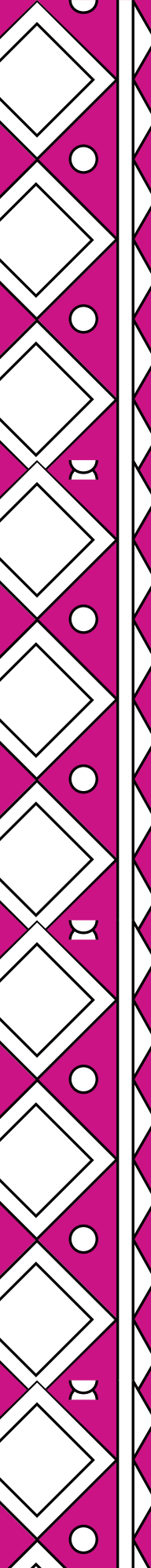
To understand the economic challenges and opportunities that WHRDs face, the hub conducted a needs assessment examining how defenders earn income, the barriers they encounter in entrepreneurship, and the financial pressures that affect their activism. Through consultations with partners, the hub also examined how to jointly strengthen livelihoods across its networks and how economic empowerment intersects with protection.



Livelihoods (Ustawi) Pillar



As part of showcasing and celebrating WHRD entrepreneurship, the hub organized a county-based exhibition in Nairobi where a woman defender presented her business to peers and received support and visibility. This exhibition served as a starting point for future county-based markets and celebrations of defenders' economic resilience. Using insights from the assessments and engagements, the hub developed a comprehensive livelihood framework that will guide future interventions, including economic strengthening programs, access to financial services, entrepreneurship development, and cooperative-based initiatives.



MOVEMENT BUILDING

Overall Goal: To enhance collaborations and solidarity for sustainable change.

The movement-building pillar focused on strengthening feminist organizing at the community, national, and regional levels. One of the hub's most significant achievements was the development of a WHRDs database containing over two thousand defenders from the hub's counties and project sites. This database enhances coordination, enables targeted engagement, and supports rapid communication during emergencies or advocacy actions.

Movement Building (Harakati) Pillar



The hub played an active role in nationwide advocacy efforts by participating in the End Femicide Campaign and co-hosting a webinar on online-facilitated GBV, which equipped WHRDs with knowledge to navigate digital violence and harmful online environments.

Movement Building (Harakati) Pillar



The hub further supported the growth of county-based WHRD networks and contributed to the creation of the East Africa WHRD Protection Network, a regional platform that promotes solidarity, joint advocacy, and collective protection across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.



Movement Building (Harakati) Pillar



Through partnerships with county actors, the hub also supported community-based activities during the 16 Days of Activism, enabling defenders to connect with duty bearers, create awareness on GBV, and raise visibility of their work.



Movement Building (Harakati) Pillar



At the regional level, the hub amplified the voices of WHRDs by collaborating with feminist coalitions and participating in regional engagements, including those involving the UN Special Rapporteur on WHRDs. These coordinated efforts strengthened collaborative advocacy and built momentum towards sustainable movement-building across the region.

Key Outcomes:

Strengthening WHRD Chapters – There is a need to assess missing voices within country-level WHRD chapters and ensure they are included in discussions.

Strategic Plan Launch – The East Africa Women Human Rights Defenders Network launched its strategic plan, which will guide advocacy and capacity development efforts for WHRDs.

Network Membership – The hub officially joined the East Africa Women Human Rights Defenders Network, expanding its engagement in regional advocacy.

The Arusha Conference

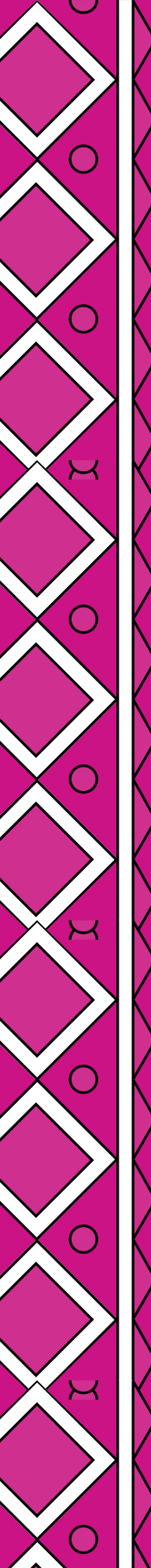
The African Institute of International Law, in close collaboration with The Hague Municipality, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the African Foundation for International Law convened a three-day conference which brought together key stakeholders to foster solutions that bridge gaps between justice systems and the lived experiences of victims.

The hub, at the conference, made a profound presentation followed by a plenary discussion on “Exploring The Contributions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Promoting Victim-Centered Justice in Kenya.”



THE HAGUE WEEK OF JUSTICE - VIS
AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN & PEOPLE'S
ARUSHA TANZANIA





INSTITUTION BUILDING

Overall Goal: To position the Hub as the premium women human rights defenders organisation nationally and regionally.

The institutional strengthening pillar aimed at rooting the hub on firm governance, leadership, and operational foundations.

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Institutional Building Pillar



During the year, the hub developed key organizational policies including the Strategic Plan (2024–2028), the Resource Mobilisation Strategy, the Finance and Administration Policy, the Human Resource Policy, the Safeguarding Policy, and the Anti-Corruption Policy. These documents form the governance backbone of the organization and provide clarity, accountability, and coherence in how the hub operates.



The Donor Round Table



The hub also made major strides in resource mobilization by successfully hosting its first donor roundtable meeting, which enhanced relationships with funding partners and secured meaningful support for both operations and programs.



Launch of a Report on the Livelihood and Well being Impacts of Climate Crisis and Flooding in Kenya for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)



During the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, 2024, the hub launched a report on "Livelihood and Well-being Impacts of Climate Crisis and Flooding in Kenya for Women Human Rights Defenders."

The report analyses the impact of floods on WHRDs' livelihoods, emotional well-being, advocacy efforts, and the sustainability of human rights work.

Meru, Kitui, and Nakuru were hardest hit as floods disrupted the primary income sources for 92% of Women Human Rights Defenders.

Partnerships



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Partnership Meetings



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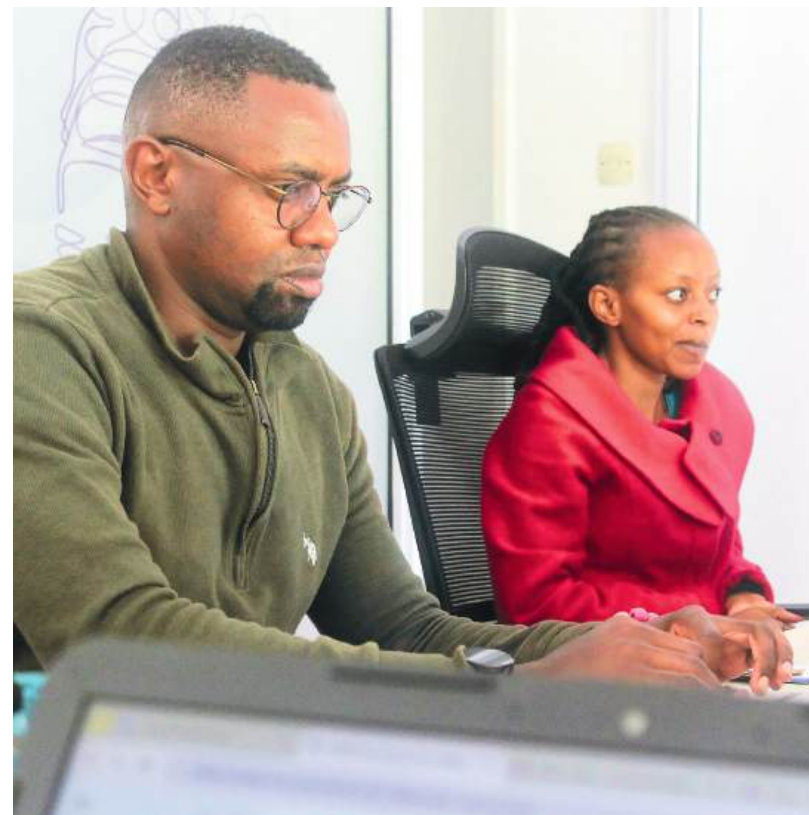
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The hub hosted Fidelis Mudimu from Front Line Defenders for an insightful discussion on enhancing the safety and resilience of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs). Additionally, the hub engaged with the ForumCiv team, exploring opportunities for collaboration on the Livelihoods and Femtorship Pillars.

Key Outcomes:

Strengthened strategies for WHRDs' safety and security.

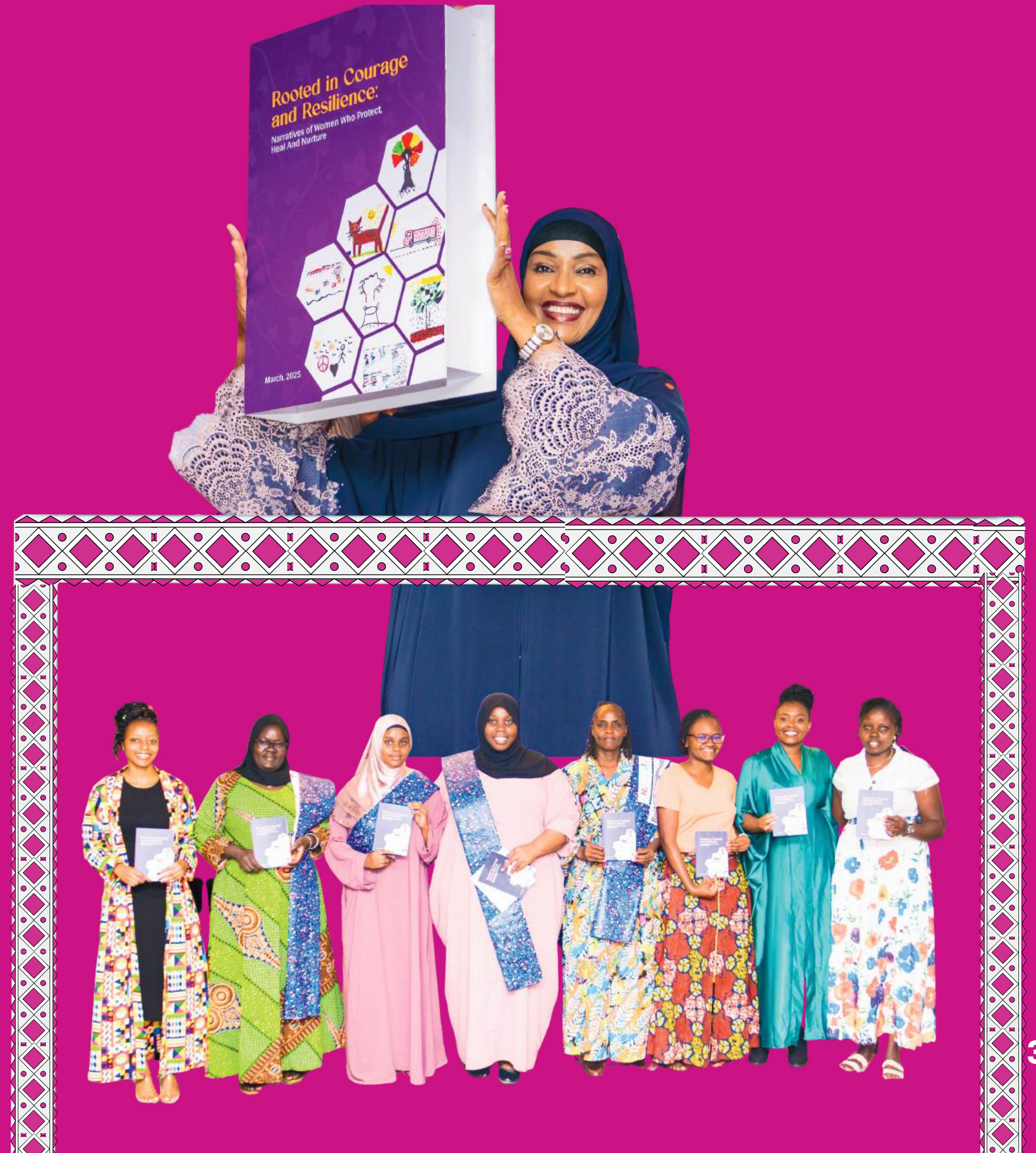
Enhanced collaboration with ForumCiv on shared advocacy and development goals.

In 2024, the hub made significant progress in strengthening the safety, well-being, and leadership of Women Human Rights Defenders across Kenya and the region. More than 2,000 WHRDs were connected through the hub's growing networks and movement-building efforts. A total of 104 defenders from Kenya, Uganda, and Niger took part in safety and digital security trainings, supported by detailed safety reviews for four organizations and four wellbeing assessments that helped shape targeted support. The hub also offered two group debriefs, three individual therapy sessions, and two wellbeing webinars, giving defenders much-needed emotional care. Through the femtorship work, 15 WHRDs with disabilities joined a regional fellowship, six defenders gained new exposure through visits in East and Southern Africa, and one young woman completed an internship at the hub. The national WHRD database grew to more than 2,000 members, and the hub helped strengthen county networks while co-creating the East Africa WHRD Protection Network. The hub also joined nationwide anti-femicide efforts, including organizing walks in Kitui and Kwale. Internally, six key institutional policies were developed, the first Donor Roundtable was held, and the hub secured a fully equipped office, marking an important step towards stability and long-term growth.

2024 Impact Highlights

The Year 2025

We reflect on the key activities undertaken, the progress made, the challenges faced, and the commitment of women human rights defenders who continue to support GBV survivors, push for policy reforms, and promote wellness within their communities.



Leading Through Uncertainty



Salome Nduta, Executive Director, WHRD HUB

The year 2025 brought civic unrest, repression, and heightened threats to human rights across Kenya, especially for women HRDs and marginalized groups. In the face of this, Women Human Rights Defenders have shown remarkable courage and compassion. They have stood by survivors, engaged with duty bearers, and made wellness a central part of their activism. This photobook honors their efforts, not only as a record of progress but as a celebration of those who continue to rise, speak out to build safer and more just communities. Their leadership keeps hope alive in the most trying times.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Overall Goal: To create a safe and secure environment for WHRDs through holistic protection.

Under this pillar, the hub focused on creating a safer working environment for Women Human Rights Defenders by strengthening their capacity to anticipate, prevent, and respond to threats. Throughout the year, the hub carried out several safety and security assessments which examined the risks affecting defenders, especially those working on SRHR and GBV. These assessments enabled the hub to understand the changing landscape of threats, both physical and digital, and provided evidence to guide context specific interventions. In addition to assessments, the hub conducted extensive in person and online safety trainings. These sessions equipped defenders with practical skills in digital protection, physical safety, risk analysis, and emergency preparedness, benefiting more than one hundred WHRDs across Kenya, Uganda, and Niger.



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Strengthening Communities, Ending GBV



More than thirty barazas and community dialogues were held across Nairobi, Kisumu, Meru, Kwale, and Kitui, providing safe spaces for open conversations and identifying urgent needs, including enhanced capacity for first responders.

The hub collaborated closely with communities, directly engaging with individuals and reaching over 10,000 people through social media, community forums, and local outreach initiatives. Key milestones during this period included the release of GBV status reports. Through a series of courtesy visits, WHRDs built meaningful relationships with county officials, enabling their active participation in policy dialogues and service delivery discussions.



Policy Advocacy in Action



One of the most significant developments in 2025, has been the growing presence of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in formal decision-making spaces. Thanks to their consistent efforts and the use of real community experiences to advocate for change, WHRDs are now part of County GBV Working Groups in counties such as Nairobi, Kwale, Kisumu, Kitui and Meru. This marks an important shift from years of working at the margins, supporting survivors without recognition or access to influential platforms.



Policy Advocacy in Action

The hub formalized an agreement with the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), setting the stage for future collaboration on public awareness, joint advocacy, and monitoring.

These partnerships and actions are not only advancing the visibility and protection of WHRDs, but also ensuring that victims and survivor voices are reflected in county plans and budgets, while strengthening referral and support systems. For instance, in Nairobi, a young WHRD who had been running a community hotline was invited to present her case data at a county GBV coordination meeting. Her presentation influenced a decision to pilot a survivor tracking tool in informal settlements.

Similarly, in Kwale, two WHRDs now co-chair subcommittees within the GBV Working Group. These breakthroughs highlight how persistent engagement grounded in data, solidarity, and collaboration can dismantle systemic barriers. They also underscore the power of resourcing and respecting grassroots expertise in driving sustainable change.



Fatuma Wambui, a Woman Human Rights Defender and first responder from Kisumu County, has been part of the Enhancing Access to Information and Service Delivery for GBV Survivors in Informal Settlements project. Over the past year, the initiative has played a transformative role for women like Fatuma, who work daily to support survivors of gender based violence. While challenges such as limited capacity and weak referral pathways remain, Fatuma shares that the project has helped build her confidence, deepen partnerships with key service providers, and empower her to speak out and lead change within her community.

Testimonial



Strengthening Protection and Leadership of Women Human Rights Defenders

The hub has expanded its efforts to support Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), particularly those operating in high-risk and conflict-affected environments such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and indigenous regions of Kenya. The hub is also supporting 11th Hour and AJWS to strengthen the safety, security, and well-being of their grantees, an initiative grounded in its ongoing commitment to empowering WHRDs across the region.

In the DRC, the hub's efforts focused on building resilient networks of women eco-defenders while providing targeted protection, support, and leadership development. In Kenya, the hub is actively engaging with indigenous and environmental defenders across counties to enhance their capacity to identify and respond to security threats.

These initiatives reflect the hub's deep commitment to holistic protection and collective power, ensuring that WHRDs, especially those on the frontlines of environmental justice, are not only safe but also equipped to lead, influence policy, and thrive within their movements.



Enhancing the Voice and Agency of Women Environmental Defenders Through Formation of Strong Networks for Collective Protection and Capacity Development

The hub conducted a comprehensive safety and protection needs assessment among 11th Hour Project grantees and Women Eco-Defenders (WEDs) in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It brought together insights from five different tools and assessments, revealing the complex risks faced by environmental and human rights defenders. The assessment highlighted physical threats, digital insecurity, legal challenges, donor gaps, and the urgent psychosocial needs of defenders, especially women.

Across Uganda and DRC, the project completed multi-country assessments covering individual defenders and environmental justice organizations working across biodiversity, land, water, pollution, climate justice, and advocacy. It conducted risk and threat analyses, reviewed physical and community safety systems, and evaluated digital vulnerabilities such as surveillance, hacking, and harassment. The team documented legal challenges including criminalization, arrests, and restrictive policies, and assessed the psychosocial well-being of defenders, noting trauma, stress, and family impacts. Finally, it mapped donor and institutional support to identify gaps in emergency assistance, digital tools, legal aid, mental health services, and livelihood support.

Enhancing the Voice and Agency of Women Environmental Defenders Through Formation of Strong Networks for Collective Protection and Capacity Development

The project, sponsored by the 11th Hour Project, clearly identified defenders' priority protection needs and highlighted the high risk levels they face, enabling more targeted and gender-responsive interventions. It revealed the distinct threats experienced by women eco-defenders and exposed systemic gaps in safety systems, legal protections, digital security, and psychosocial support. The assessment offered donors evidence-based recommendations to shift toward more sustainable and holistic protection programs and provided a strong foundation for policy advocacy. By bringing data together from multiple tools and countries, the project also strengthened coordination, understanding, and solidarity among WHRDs, eco-defenders, and partner organizations.



Strengthening Protection and Leadership of Women Human Rights Defenders

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Protecting Her Voice: Digital Resilience for Women Human Rights Defenders – Webinar

WHRDHUB
WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HUB
Protect. Heal. Nurture.

DIGITAL SECURITY WEBINAR

PROTECTING HER VOICE:
DIGITAL RESILIENCE
FOR
WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

 **Date: 4 September, 2025**
Time: 10:00am - 12:00pm EAT

 **Virtual on Zoom**

The Hub is a feminist organization, led by women, that provides holistic protection to Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), in all their diversities, in Kenya and beyond.

   **@WHRDHub**

Register Now

 **www.whrdhub.org**

The hub conducted a webinar titled “Protecting Her Voice: Digital Resilience for Women Human Rights Defenders,” focusing on the challenges WHRDs face in online spaces. While digital platforms amplify women’s voices, they also expose defenders to harassment, surveillance, and misuse of laws such as the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act (2018). The session unpacked the Act in simple terms, examined how it affects women defenders, and shared practical strategies to help them stay safe, informed, and resilient in their digital activism.

The webinar strengthened the digital confidence and safety of Women Human Rights Defenders by giving them a clearer understanding of the laws that shape their online spaces and the risks they may face. By breaking down the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act in simple, accessible language, the session helped WHRDs recognize how the law can be used against them and how to navigate it more safely. Participants left with practical skills to protect their devices, secure their communication, and respond to online harassment and surveillance. The conversation also created a supportive space where WHRDs could share experiences and learn from one another, helping build a stronger, more informed, and more resilient network of women defenders using digital platforms for activism.



NGO Forum in Banjul

At the recent NGO Forum in Banjul, held ahead of the 85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2025, Salome Nduta, Executive Director of the Kenya Women Human Rights Defenders Hub, spoke about the realities women defenders face in Kenya, from shrinking civic space to the gendered risks that come with speaking truth to power.

85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul



At the 85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul, The Gambia, the Women Human Rights Defenders Hub team joined fellow civic actors and rights organizations for the Forum on the Participation of NGOs, under the theme "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations."

Unpacking the Just Transition: Reflections from Addis to Maputo

The hub has spent recent months elevating the voices and experiences of Women Environmental Defenders in the climate justice space. This has included new research on Kenya's climate laws and policies, along with close monitoring of the risks WEDs face, ranging from harassment and digital attacks to growing restrictions on their participation in environmental decisions. These insights are helping the hub understand the realities of WEDs' safety and influence, and are shaping stronger protection and advocacy efforts.

Regionally, the hub took part in two important gatherings in Addis Ababa and Maputo, which highlighted the barriers women still face in climate governance, the gaps in global climate agreements, and the need for stronger feminist leadership in Africa's just transition. As the continent moves toward COP30, the hub is joining other feminist and environmental groups in calling for WEDs to be fully supported, protected, and included in climate negotiations. These reflections now guide the hub's work across its pillars, integrating environmental safety into protection work, building feminist climate leadership, supporting green livelihood initiatives, and strengthening movement building and storytelling. At the heart of all this is a simple truth: a just transition in Africa must be feminist, and it must recognize and support the women who are already defending ecosystems and communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.



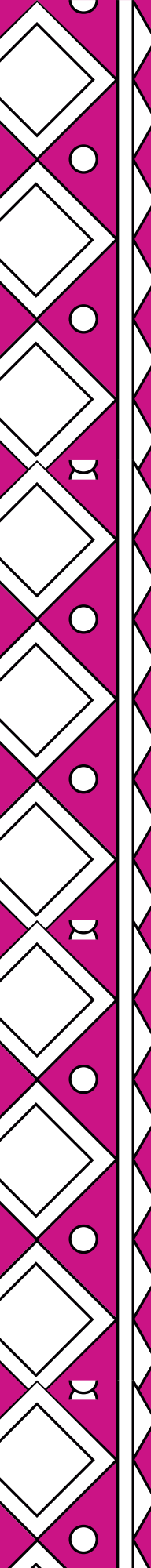
Two-day Workshop for Women Environmental Defenders (WEDs) and Women Environmental Defenders' Organizations (WEDOs)

The hub, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme – UNDP, brought together Women Environmental Defenders (WEDs) and Women Environmental Defenders' Organizations (WEDOs) for a two-day workshop in Nairobi dedicated to strengthening their work and voices in environmental and climate justice.

A major highlight of the two days was the validation of a new research report, which presented both county and national insights on the realities facing WEDs. Participants reflected on the findings and shared how these issues show up in their day-to-day work.

In the afternoon, WEDs and WEDOs shared personal stories from the field protecting natural resources, leading community actions, pushing for fair environmental policies, and speaking out against harmful practices. These conversations brought out the critical role they play in defending the environment and promoting climate justice. The hub is using the eMonitor tool developed by UNDP to monitor TFGBV, generate evidence for advocacy, and strengthen protection mechanisms for first responders and WHRDs.





FEMTORSHIP

Overall Goal: To cultivate and nurture a culture of human rights among Women Human Rights Defenders for sustainability and continuity of human rights advocacy.

The femtorship pillar worked to build the next generation of women human rights defenders by nurturing leadership, strengthening confidence, and facilitating knowledge exchange.

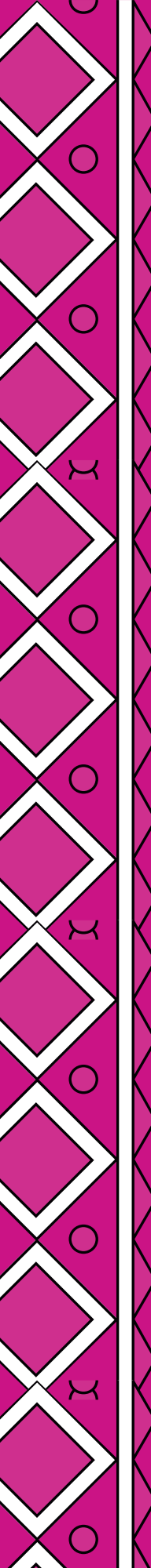
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Femtorship (Ushauri) Pillar

Trained story crafters have each been supporting women defenders in their respective regions to document their stories of change, thus building a network of story crafters. Five young and emerging WHRDs were supported with proposal development and pitching strategies.

1 young woman defender was seconded for a human rights, leadership, political, and public narrative training by the East African Editors Society. This year, the hub has provided an opportunity for an internship to a young, upcoming woman defender. Matching and pairing of femtees with femtors in diverse human rights fields is ongoing through intergenerational conversations at the network level. A database comprising femtees and femtors in the diverse human rights sectors has also been developed.





MOVEMENT BUILDING

Overall Goal: To enhance collaborations and solidarity for sustainable change.

The movement-building pillar focused on strengthening feminist organizing at the community, national, and regional levels. One of the hub's most significant achievements was the development of a WHRDs database containing over two thousand defenders from the Hub's counties and project sites. This database enhances coordination, enables targeted engagement, and supports rapid communication during emergencies or advocacy actions.

Convening of the Consortium of East Africa Women Human Rights Defenders Protection Networks

The hub hosted a three-day reflection and consultative meeting for Women human rights defenders from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania came together with funders and partners to take stock of the network's journey. The discussions focused on what had been achieved so far, the challenges being experienced, and the priorities for the way forward. A key part of the conversations was how to navigate changing donor requirements while also finding ways of strengthening support for women defenders in the region. The timing of these discussions was significant given the upcoming elections in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, and the increasing threats to civic space across East Africa.

Consortium members shared the progress they had made over the years, such as expanding their networks, embracing diversity by working with defenders from different backgrounds, and sustaining their work through collaboration. They also shared future ambitions, including creating a regional protection fund, undertaking joint fundraising efforts, amplifying the voices of women defenders in regional and international spaces, and conducting joint advocacy.

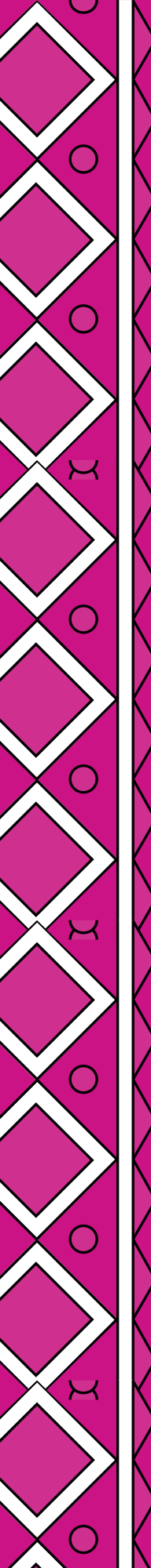


Convening of the Consortium of East Africa Women Human Rights Defenders Protection Networks



Donors, on their part, pledged to support the consortium politically and diplomatically, to help raise visibility, to use their convening power to connect the consortium with other movements, and to prioritize the well-being of women defenders. They also emphasized the importance of flexible funding, psychosocial support, and regional solidarity, with a specific commitment to stand with women defenders in Tanzania during the crisis period.

The discussions between funders and consortium members emphasized the importance of building stronger movements, closing funding gaps, encouraging mentorship, ensuring the participation of young and marginalized defenders, and addressing the shrinking civic space in Tanzania. By the end of the day, clear next steps were agreed on, such as developing a monitoring plan for the Tanzania elections, preparing for advocacy at the African Coalition meeting in October, engaging with upcoming human rights review processes, and continuing reflection and learning sessions.



WELLBEING (Jitunze) Pillar

Overall Goal: To
empower Women
Human Rights Defenders
emotionally, mentally,
and physically.

The wellbeing pillar concentrated on the mental, emotional, and physical restoration of WHRDs, recognizing that defenders cannot work effectively when overwhelmed by trauma, fatigue, or emotional strain.

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Rooted in Courage and Resilience Book Launch



One of the most meaningful moments of the year 2025 was the launch of Rooted in Courage, a collection of stories that lifts the voices and experiences of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs).

The event was more than a book launch, it was a space for connection, healing, and shared strength. WHRDs shared their experiences through personal stories and reflections, revealing both the weight of their work and the resilience it demands. The conversations that followed reminded everyone just how powerful storytelling can be and strengthened the hub's commitment to keeping WHRDs at the center of advocacy, care, and lasting change.

Taking Steps in Your Wellbeing Journey – Webinar

The hub marked Mental Health Awareness Month by hosting a virtual healing session titled “Taking Steps in Your Wellbeing Journey.” The event, brought together Women Human Rights Defenders who continue to carry the emotional weight of their work, often while having little space to care for themselves. The session provided a supportive environment for WHRDs experiencing burnout, trauma, and emotional fatigue as a result of their frontline roles in responding to crises and advocating for justice.

The conversation created a safe feminist space where participants could reflect on their wellbeing, share personal experiences, and acknowledge the emotional toll of their work. Mental health professionals guided the discussion, offering practical tools for managing stress, recovering from burnout, and navigating trauma. The webinar also encouraged WHRDs to prioritize their own care, recognizing wellness as essential to their resilience and effectiveness.

Grounded in the theme “Taking Steps in Your Wellbeing Journey,” the session invited defenders to pause, breathe, and take meaningful steps towards healing, while also strengthening solidarity and mutual support within the WHRD community.

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LIVE STREAMING

LIVE WEBINAR

“Taking Steps in Your Wellbeing Journey”

TUESDAY, 27TH MAY 2025

10: 00A.M - 11: 30A.M EAT

@whrdhub

[f](#) [i](#) [in](#) [v](#) [t](#)

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DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

- EMOTIONAL
- OCCUPATIONAL
- INTELLECTUAL
- ENVIRONMENTAL
- FINANCIAL
- SOCIAL
- PHYSICAL
- SPIRITUAL

Wellness Clinic for GBV First Responders

With the generous support of the KIOS Foundation and the European Union in Kenya, under the Haki Ni Yetu initiative, the hub brought together women human rights defenders from Nairobi, Meru, and Kisumu for three powerful days of healing, reflection, and strategy.

On the first day, the hub welcomed duty bearers from both national and county levels, including representatives from the The National Gender and Equality Commission-Kenya and local leaders from Nairobi, Meru, and Kisumu. Together with GBV first responders, they came together for more than just a meeting, it was a moment of reflection and renewal.

Participants reflected on shared challenges, honored their progress, and brainstormed collective solutions to strengthen survivor centered GBV prevention and response. The conversation touched on improving gender policies, expanding access to rescue centers, building stronger referral systems, and investing in community based care.



Wellness and Self-care for WHRDs



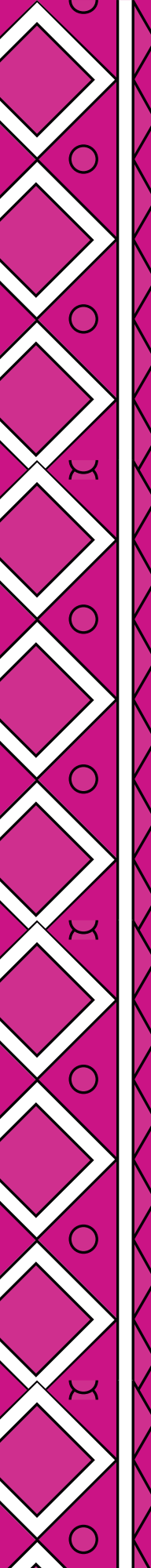
The hub organized a wellness and self-care session where WHRDs traveled to Twin Rivers in Tigoni for a day of outdoor activities designed to ease the pressures of their demanding work. They engaged in zip lining, quad biking, sky biking, and high ropes challenges, experiences that not only brought joy and excitement but also strengthened bonds and boosted morale among WHRDs.

The day concluded with a shared dinner where WHRDs reflected on the activities, expressed words of appreciation, and bid farewell to one another. This closing day highlighted the consortium's and the hubs' belief that self-care is not a luxury but an essential strategy for sustaining women defenders in their work.



Wellness and Self-care for WHRDs





INSTITUTION BUILDING

Overall Goal: To position the Hub as the premium women human rights defenders organisation nationally and regionally.

The institutional strengthening pillar aimed at rooting the hub on firm governance, leadership, and operational foundations.

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The WHRD Hub Retreat in Kitui



The WHRD Hub board and staff held a three-day retreat in Kitui County to reflect, reconnect, and plan for the future. The peaceful setting allowed the team to rest, have open conversations, and assess progress in key areas like safety, wellbeing, livelihoods, movement and institution building. The team discussed what's working, what needs to change, and how to grow stronger together. A visit to the Majengo/Manyenyoni Self-Help Group highlighted the inspiring work of local women defenders blending activism with small businesses. This reinforced the Hub's belief that economic justice is critical to sustaining activism, as secure livelihoods empower WHRDs to continue their work with greater resilience and independence. The team left Kitui renewed, focused, and reminded of the importance of pausing to reflect and grow as one.

Partnerships



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Partnerships and Collaborations



The success of the year 2025 was made possible by strong collaborations with partners like the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), county health departments, county children's departments, county GBV working groups, county commissioners, police gender desks, Civil Society Organizations, and grassroots networks. Working together with local media also helped strengthen both advocacy and support for survivors. These relationships made it easier to pool resources, widen referral networks, and ensure that WHRDs had a seat at the table in key policy discussions. The Hub helped keep the work grounded in real community needs while centering survivors. These collaborations showed just how important it is for different sectors to come together to address GBV, from prevention to care and justice.

To the WHRDs who risk their safety for others, to the survivors who bravely seek justice, to the partners who walk alongside us, thank you. We are deeply grateful to all our partners for their support. As we look to the second half of 2025, we remain committed to this work and to the communities that make it possible.

In 2025, the Hub strengthened protection for Women Human Rights Defenders by training 104 WHRDs across three countries and conducting extensive safety assessments and community dialogues that reached more than 10,000 people. WHRDs gained greater influence in policy spaces, securing positions in key County GBV Working Groups and formalizing collaboration with NGECS. Digital resilience improved through focused training on online safety and legal awareness. The Hub also elevated climate justice work by supporting Women Environmental Defenders through research, regional convenings, and a two-day workshop in Nairobi. Movement building grew with a database of over 2,000 WHRDs and a regional convening that deepened solidarity and donor commitments. Wellbeing remained central, with therapy support, healing sessions, wellness clinics, and the launch of Rooted in Courage, which amplified WHRD voices. The development of a livelihood framework strengthened economic resilience, while a strategic board and staff retreat enhanced institutional alignment. Partnerships with government, civil society, and grassroots networks ensured stronger, survivor-centered GBV prevention and response throughout the year.

2025 Impact Highlights

OUR PARTNERS

We are deeply grateful to all our partners for their continued support. As we look ahead to 2026, we remain firmly committed to this work and to the communities that make it possible





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