



NATIONAL
COALITION OF
HUMAN
RIGHTS
DEFENDERS
UGANDA

Annual Report 2023



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACCP	Advocacy Coaching Community of Practice
ACTV	African Centre for Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People's Rights
AGA	Annual General Assembly
AS	Advocacy Strategy
CEHURD	Centre for Health Human Rights in Development
CoP	Communities of Practice
CRD	Civil Rights Defenders-Sweden
CS	Communication Strategy
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSSA	Civil Society Strengthening Activity
DCA	Dan Church Aid
DGF	Democratic Governance Facility
DPI	Defenders Protection Initiative
EU	European Union
EWMI	East West Management Institute
FHRI	Foundation for Human Rights Initiative
GWED-G	Gulu Women Empowerment in Development and Globalisation
HRNJ	Human Rights Network for Journalists
HRAPF	Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRCU	Human Rights Centre Uganda
HURIFO	Human Rights Focus
HRD/s	Human Rights Defenders
ICNL	International Centre for Non-Profit Law
ICTJ	International Centre for Transitional Justice
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights
LASPNET	Legal Aid Service Providers Network

LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NCHRD-U	National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda
NETPIL	Network of Public Interest Lawyers
NTV	Nation Television
NBS	Nile Broadcasting Services
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSIEA	Open Society in East Africa
POMA	Public Order Management Act
PLA	Platform for Labour Action
PLP	Peer Learning Platforms
PWDs	Persons with Disability
SBCC	Social & Behavior Change Communication
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
TORs	Terms of Reference
TTWG	Technical Thematic Working Group
UHRC	Uganda Human Rights Commission
UDHR	United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders
UN	United Nations
UPDF	Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UOBDU	United Organisation for Batwa in Uganda
UPF	Uganda Police Force
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ULS	Uganda Law Society
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
WHRC	Wakiso Human Rights Committee
VLPS	Virtual Learning Platform Session

1.0 Identity

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) is a legally registered Non- Governmental Organization consisting of individuals and organizations working together to promote the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs) in Uganda. NCHRD-U provides a platform for promoting synergy, cooperation, collaboration and sharing of best practices among HRDs in Uganda. Since her formation in 2013, NCHRD-U has played a pivotal and unique coordination role of human rights defenders in Uganda, thus creating synergy, corporation and collaboration to effectively enhance protection and safety of HRDs in Uganda. NCHRD-U focuses on all the regions in Uganda and embraces all defenders regardless of race, color, gender, religion, or political affiliation.



1.6 Our Development Partners

NCHRD-U Secretariat appreciates all our development partners for the confidence and invaluable support rendered towards our work since our establishment in 2013. Without your support, we would not be able to contribute to the protection of human rights defenders in Uganda.

From the Chairperson

To all our esteemed members,

I am profoundly honoured to present the NCHRD-U Annual Report for the period January 2023 to December 2023. This year marked a significant milestone for us as we celebrated a decade (2013-2023) of protecting and promoting human rights defenders (HRDs) and their crucial work in Uganda.

Guided by our Strategic Plan (2022-2026), we have remained focused on enhancing the capacity, safety, and recognition of HRDs. Our commitment to supporting these courageous individuals and organizations has been unwavering. Through our various programs, we have provided critical legal assistance, security training, and psychosocial support to those at the forefront of defending human rights in Uganda.

One of our outstanding achievements this year has been our advocacy for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). We significantly utilized this space to develop a comprehensive UPR roadmap, highlighting several interventions and recommendations for enhancing the protection of HRDs in Uganda. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all our partners within and outside the Coalition who contributed to the success of the UPR.

In terms of networking, coordination, and partnerships, NCHRD-U has increased its membership to over 200 HRDs across Uganda. Each new member brings a unique mandate, enriching our diversity. We look forward to welcoming more individuals and organizations into our Coalition. Additionally, we have maintained our existing development partners and welcomed new ones, such as the Center for Civil and Political Rights and USAID.

NCHRD-U has also strengthened the capacity of its members through numerous trainings on safety and security, monitoring, documenting and reporting, advocacy skills, and navigating the CSO enabling environment. Our long-term expertise in protecting HRDs has opened new opportunities, including invitations from the Uganda Human Rights Commission and various embassies to present on promoting the rights of HRDs.

Recognizing the need for organizational sustainability, NCHRD-U launched a five-year Strategic Plan aimed at amplifying our coordination role. We look forward to collaborating with more development partners to promote and protect the rights of HRDs in Uganda.

However, 2023 was not without its challenges. We faced a continued shrinking of civic space, notably marked by the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023, which represents a significant setback in our struggle for human rights and equality. Additionally, the end of the DGF funding modality and the non-renewal of the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Uganda, one of our technical partners, posed significant hurdles. In response, NCHRD-U strategically pivoted its interventions to attract alternative funding and maintain our operations.

Throughout the year, we witnessed threats and intimidation against HRDs and activists. Despite these adversities, NCHRD-U remained focused, resilient, and dedicated to providing protection support to HRDs in Uganda.

As we look to the future, our resolve remains firm. We will continue to advocate for a safer, more enabling environment for HRDs. We call on the government of Uganda, international bodies, and all stakeholders to uphold their commitments to human rights and protect those who defend them.

Finally, on behalf of NCHRD-U, I extend our sincere gratitude to our development partners, including Wellsprings Philanthropy Foundation, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Dan ChurchAid, Freedom House, Ford Foundation, American Bar Association, CSSA-East West Management Institute, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Center for Civil and Political Rights, Diakonia, Open Society Foundation, Civil Rights Defenders-Sweden DefendDefenders, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, for their support in 2023.

I also wish to thank my colleagues NCHRD-U Board of Directors for their commitment, professionalism, and oversight. Lastly, I applaud the Secretariat team led by the Executive Director for their dedication and resilience amidst challenges. Your work this year has been commendable.

Ms. Margaret Sekaggya,

Chairperson,

Executive Board,

National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda

The Year in Context-2023

The year 2023 saw a largely turbulent human rights landscape in Uganda, mainly characterized by incidences of gross human rights violations, an ever-shrinking civic space, limited and selective access to civil and political liberties and the general lack of access to justice as a whole for the Ugandan Citizenry. This scenario generally narrowed the avenues for HRDs seeking the fulfillment and enjoyment of their rights.

More than ever, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, together with other human rights defenders (HRDs) took to the front to ensure that the rights of individuals and communities were respected as per national, regional and international human rights standards in spite of the prevailing circumstances.

The legal and policy framework was hugely characterized by glaring bottlenecks that caused an impediment to citizens' full enjoyment of their rights. A clear example was the passing into law of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) 2023 which stifled the voices of HRDs working on minority rights issues.

All through the year, HRDs working on thematic areas of civil rights and liberties, electoral reform, the environment - specifically extractives and land rights, rights of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and journalists faced several risks and threats to their safety and security. HRDs were most at risk. The main types of violations faced by HRDs include: restriction of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, threats, intimidation, on-and off-line harassment, surveillance, cyber-attacks and bullying, office closures and break-in, freezing of bank accounts, restriction of access to vital services such as healthcare and accommodation, arbitrary arrests and detention, assault, torture, and extrajudicial killings.

2.0 Programme Achievements under the Strategic Plan 2022-2026

Programme theme	Strategic objective and activity undertaken	Number of beneficiaries	Recommendations
Capacity building	Strategic Objective 01; Activity undertaken <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Constituted and strengthened sub regional coalition networks. 2. Established of the Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs') Network. 3. Convened a national EHRDs' Symposium. 4. Trained HRDs in monitoring, documentation and reporting of protection related cases and issues at local, national, regional and international levels. 5. Supported advocacy engagements on six (6) thematic areas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 01 sub-regional network in mid-western Uganda (Hoima) 2. One network was established from the 46 mapped out organisations. 3. 36 participants (22 male, 13 female and 01 others). 4. 30 HRDs from all regions of the countries. 5. 20 representatives from each of the 4 regions in Uganda. These representatives were from six (6) thematic areas (PWDs, Environment, ethnic minorities, women Journalists and Youth) 	<p>There is need to constitute more sub regional coalition networks in all the 11 sub regions of the country for a more sustainable coordination for HRD protection.</p> <p>There is need to establish more networks for other thematic clusters.</p> <p>This symposium should be convened every year so that environmental defenders can double efforts in raising issues around the environment.</p> <p>Training more HRDs to become trainers of trainees for sustainable peer to peer learning.</p> <p>There is need to narrow these advocacy engagements to sub regional level still targeting participants from all the six thematic clusters.</p>
	Strategic Objective 02; Activities undertaken; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trained HRDs in advocacy, lobbying and networking towards addressing human rights issues. 2. Equipped 15 lawyers on how to conduct legal compliance and health checks. 3. Conducted legal compliance health checks for 35 organisations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 30 HRDs from eastern Uganda. 2. 15 lawyers from Uganda Law Society. 3. 35 HRD organisations across the country. 4. 06 trained lawyers from Uganda Law Society supported 06 most at risk organisation. 	<p>Training more HRDs across the regions of the country so that they can gain skills in how to identify advocacy issues, how to use media for advocacy and how to lobby for policy change.</p> <p>Training more lawyers and paralegal personnels from different organisation to always assess the legal compliance and health checks.</p> <p>Continued assessment of legal compliance and health checks of</p>

	4. Supported HRD organisations to fulfil their statutory obligations.		these organisation supporting them comply where necessary. Supporting more HRD organisations to fulfil their statutory obligations.
	Strategic Objective 04; Activity undertaken <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raised awareness on the proposed Human Rights Defenders (HRD) Protection Bill. 2. Enhanced support to human rights defenders focusing on environmental protection. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 121 members from 04 different sub regions (Kalangala, Kigezi, Bukedi, and Bugisu) 2. 46 EHRDs organisations were mapped out and supported 	<p>There is need to popularise the HRD Protection Bill more to harness massive support at the grassroots level, strengthen and enhance advocacy efforts around the HRD concept.</p> <p>There is need to support more EHRD organisations and individuals on issues around environment and climate justice.</p>
	Strategic Objective 05; Activity undertaken; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertook a gender analysis/assessment of NCHRD-U. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All the 15 coalition staff members participated in the assessment. 	<p>These gender analysis/assessments should be scaled up to HRD organisations so that they can also deepen their understanding on the general perspective on gender.</p>
Emergency and Protection	Strategic Objective 04; Activity undertaken; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disbursement of the protection and emergency fund. 2. Conducted solidarity visits to our HRDs. 3. Review and development of the HRD case management and referral network system. 4. Conducted research on the Assessment of the present- 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 200 HRDs (80 male, 60 female and 60 others). 2. 60 HRDs were visited (10 in Kampala, 06 in Wakiso, 02 in Lira, 05 in Hoima, 07 in Kigezi, 05 in Mbarara, 05 in West Nile, 08 in Mbarara, 05 in Jinja, 03 in Moroto and 04 in Mbale). 3. To benefit all HRDs at risk to report their cases. 4. To benefit all HRDs. 	<p>Mobilising for more resources to protect more HRDs at risk. Last year received 250 cases but we were able to only support 200 due to resource constraints.</p> <p>There is need for more advocacy as a tool to ensure the protection of HRDs when doing their work.</p> <p>There is need to popularise the referral system across the country and also build the capacity of HRDs to be able to</p>

	<p>day protection services for HRDs in Uganda.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and development of key protection documents. Partnership engagements and events (weaving resilience initiative – East Africa HRD Protection Hub, and Champions of change program workshop organized by Civil Rights Defenders). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 03 documents were developed (protection manual, protection program model, and safety, security and risk management policy). All NCHRD-U member to benefit in these partnerships and event engagements 	<p>access it and also utilize so easily.</p> <p>Proper assessment of the research findings to streamline the protection support to HRDs and improve response towards both the urban based and grassroots HRDs.</p> <p>The operationalization of these documents should align with the NCHRD-U five-year strategic plan (2022 – 2026).</p>
Advocacy and Networking	<p>Strategic Objective 01; Activity Undertaken;</p> <p>Established 6 communities of practise (CoP) advocacy platforms within the four regions of Uganda.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> CoPs within members from members from the entire country 	<p>Strengthening these CoP platforms to inform campaigns and interventions towards addressing the different human rights violations within different regions.</p>
	<p>Strategic Objective 03; Activities undertaken;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted a lobby and advocacy training. Supported 05 grassroots HRD organisations in Lango sub region to conduct advocacy engagements on key issues affecting their working environment. Held two group wellbeing sessions for HRDs to support their reintegration into the grassroots communities and work space. Held a bilateral meeting with the Human Rights Committee 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32 participants (religious leaders, cultural leaders, Uganda police, the media and business community). 05 HRD organisations from Lango sub region. 21 HRDs (13 male and 08 female). All NCHRD-U members. Over 200 people attended the two days events (These included; HRDs, state and non-state actors, partners, media fraternity, and the Jinja City community. 29 women HRDs participated in these commemorations. 	<p>There is need for more trainings to equip grassroots HRDs with advocacy and lobbying skills for their programs and activities.</p> <p>There is need to support more grassroots HRD organisations to conduct advocacy engagements on key issues affecting their working environment.</p> <p>There is need to conduct more wellbeing sessions for HRDs to support their reintegration into the grassroots communities and work space.</p> <p>Putting on hold the Bill pending the repealing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023. The Act</p>

	<p>of Parliament to lobby for the tabling of the Human Rights Defenders Bill.</p> <p>5. In partnership with Defenders the NCHRD-U commemorated the International Human Rights Defenders Day 2023.</p> <p>6. The coalition celebrated the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day 2023 to create awareness to the plight of women human rights defenders and calling for collective efforts to protect and promote their work in a safe environment.</p> <p>7. Coordination of activities in line with the Universal Periodic Review process, ICCPR and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.</p> <p>The coalition compiled a shadow report to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in Arusha.</p>	<p>7. 03 meetings were held in 2023.</p> <p>8. Three secretariat staff and two grassroots HRDs.</p>	<p>depicts HRDs as promoters of homosexuality.</p>
	<p>Strategic Objective 04; Activities undertaken;</p> <p>1. Held sub regional meeting in Masaka city to create awareness on the proposed Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill 2022.</p> <p>2. Held one strategic meeting with the Human Rights Committee of Parliament to discuss the recommendations from the</p>	<p>1. 29 HRDs (18 male and 11 female).</p> <p>2. 29 participants (14 male and 15 females).</p> <p>3. 75 HRDs (38 female, 38 male and 10 others) were supported through the referrals</p>	<p>There is need to hold more sub regional meetings in other regions of the country to popularize the proposed Human Rights Defenders Protection Bills 2022.</p> <p>Need to constitute a committee that will demand for a review of the law in respect to impartial judicial appointment, to further address the ongoing cases of enforced disappearances and the</p>

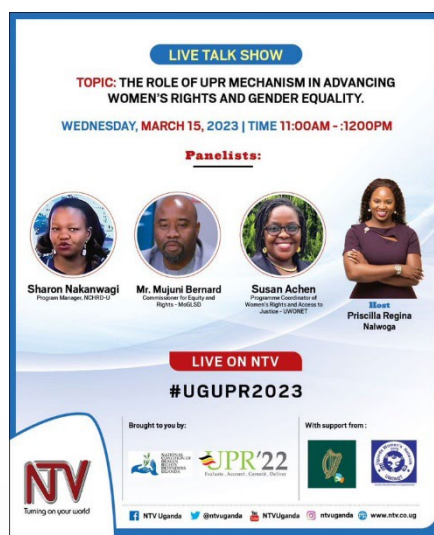
	<p>UN Civil and Political Rights Committee.</p> <p>3. Improved the availability, accessibility, timeliness and utilization of protection and emergency response services to HRDs under eminent threat.</p>		<p>level of torture in Uganda among others.</p> <p>There is need to strengthen the referral system and make it more user friendly to HRDs so as they access protection and emergency services.</p>
	<p>Strategic Objective 04; Activities undertaken;</p> <p>4. Held sub regional meeting in Masaka city to create awareness on the proposed Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill 2022.</p> <p>5. Held one strategic meeting with the Human Rights Committee of Parliament to discuss the recommendations from the UN Civil and Political Rights Committee.</p> <p>6. Improved the availability, accessibility, timeliness and utilization of protection and emergency response services to HRDs under eminent threat.</p>	<p>1. 29 HRDs (18 male and 11 female).</p> <p>2. 29 participants (14 male and 15 females).</p> <p>3. 75 HRDs (38 female, 38 male and 10 others) were supported through the referrals</p>	<p>There is need to hold more sub regional meetings in other regions of the country to popularize the proposed Human Rights Defenders Protection Bills 2022.</p> <p>Need to constitute a committee that will demand for a review of the law in respect to impartial judicial appointment, to further address the ongoing cases of enforced disappearances and the level of torture in Uganda among others.</p> <p>There is need to strengthen the referral system and make it more user friendly to HRDs so as they access protection and emergency services.</p>
	<p>Strategic Objective 05; Activity Undertaken;</p> <p>1. The NCHRD-U held its Annual General Assembly on 13th June, 2023 at Hotel Africana Kampala and commemoration of the 10 years of existence.</p> <p>2. NCHRD-U's secretariat's performance and</p>	<p>1. Over 150 attended the Annual General Assembly.</p> <p>2. All the 15 NCHRD-U secretariat staff benefited.</p>	

	effectiveness improved to meet the needs of its stakeholders.		
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3.0 Communications

3.1 Media Engagements/TV Talk Shows

In 2023, NCHRD-U collaborated with the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development and the Uganda Women's Network to conduct a live televised talk show on NTV Uganda on the UPR on 15 March, 2023 from 11:00am to 12:00pm. The show created awareness on the UPR and provided an opportunity for the panellists to discuss the role of UPR mechanism in advancing women's rights and gender equality.



3.2 Live X (formerly Twitter) spaces

In 2023, the NCHRD-U conducted two (2) X (formerly Twitter) spaces. As part of events to mark the International Women's Day 2023, NCHRD-U with support from our partner, Diakonia, hosted an X (formerly Twitter) space on 07th March, 2023. The discussion centred around the challenges and risks faced by WHRDs, and initiated a discussion on the HRD Protection Bill. The panellists and participants included state actors, NCHRD-U sub-regional network members, and NCHRD-U regional focal persons.



People
Change
the World

Diakonia

Discussion on the challenges and risks faced by WHRDs and initiate a discussion on the HRD protection Bill.

MODERATOR



Tabitha Netuwa

Protection and Security
Management Manager -
Defend Defenders.

PANELISTS



Pamela Angwech

Executive Director -
Gulu Women Empowerment
Development and Globalization.



Susan Achen

Programme Coordinator, Women's
Rights and Access to Justice -
Uganda Women's Network



Faith Juliet Namansa

Executive Director -
Busoga Governance and Social
Accountability Forum.



Dorothy Esther Kiyai

Protection Officer -
National Coalition of Human Rights
Defenders Uganda

7.March.2023
4pm to 5:30pm

JOIN US VIA **bit.ly/41Nm3y2**

www.hrdcoalition.ug [NCHRD_UG](https://twitter.com/NCHRD_UG) [NCHRDs](https://facebook.com/NCHRDs)

With support from our partner, Defend Defenders, NCHRD-U hosted another X (formerly Twitter) space on 28th November, 2023. This was aimed at ushering WHRDs into the official celebration of the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day 2023. The topic of discussion was “Honoring She Defenders: Recognizing the Resilience, Achievements and Empowerment of Women who Champion Human Rights”. The panellists and participants included NCHRD-U sub-regional network members, and NCHRD-U regional focal persons.

3.3 Radio Talk Shows

Two radio talk shows (on Spice FM Hoima and Pacis Radio Gulu) were held in celebration of the International Women Human Defenders Day 2023. These were aimed at honoring She Defenders as well as recognizing the resilience, achievements and empowerment of women who champion human rights across all regions of Uganda. In addition, 22 radio talk shows (across all regions of Uganda) were held as a build-up to the IHRD day celebrations in Jinja City in Eastern Uganda. These were aimed at reinforcing the protection and promotion of HRDs and their work.



Jovia Matsiko HRD from Mbarara City, Ankole sub region participating in a radio talk show on Radio West in preparation of the IHRD Day 2023

3.4 Press Conferences

In 2023, NCHRD-U held two press conferences. The first one was during the commemoration of the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day (IWHD Day) on 29th November, 2023. This was held at the residence of the Liberian consulate in Uganda Ms. Thelma Awori and drew 20 grassroots WHRDs from all regions and clusters.

The second press conference was held on 04th December, 2023 at the Jinja City Hall in

preparation for the International Human Rights Defenders Day 2023 commemorated in Jinja City, Eastern Uganda from 7th to 8th December, 2023. The theme of the celebration of IHRD Day was “Reinforcing the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights Defenders and their Work”. The panellists and participants included state actors, NCHRD-U Executive Director, and NCHRD Busoga sub-regional network members.



From Left to Right: Mr. Moses Lwochaza (Jinja District Deputy Speaker), Betty Enangu (Head UHRC Jinja Regional Offices), Mr. Robert Kirenga (ED NCHRD-U), SP James Ofwono (Legal and Human Rights Officer, Kiira Region Police), and Ms. Faith Namansa (NCHRD-U Busoga sub region focal person)

3.5 IEC Materials

In 2023, NCHRD-U produced 2,000 Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials such as posters, brochures, banners, T-Shirts, promotional materials, and flyers. NCHRD-U Documentary and video about the HRD concept was produced by Swengere Family (A comedy group based in Jinja). During the preparations for the IHRD Day 2023, audio adverts were produced and translated into five different languages of Uganda (Luo, Runyakitara, Luganda, and Lusoga) to popularize the HRD concept in all regions of the country as the IHRD Day 2023). These were later disseminated through 23 different radio stations in the country. The copies of IEC materials that were distributed have helped in enhancing the accessibility of protection

services available to HRDs in dire need, popularizing the AGM 2023, IWHRD Day 2023, IHRD Day 2023, Launch of the Civic Space Index report 2022 and The Environmental HRDs symposium. Samples of some IEC materials that were produced and distributed are shared below:

https://x.com/NCHRD_UG/status/1731967409320276068







NCHRDs-UG @NCHRD_UG · Dec 5, 2023

Promote



👉 Reinforcing the protection and promotion of HRDs and their work.

#IHRDDay2023

#TogetherWeDefend



11

27

1K



3.6 Events Media coverage

In 2023, the NCHRD-U invited the media to cover three (3) events.

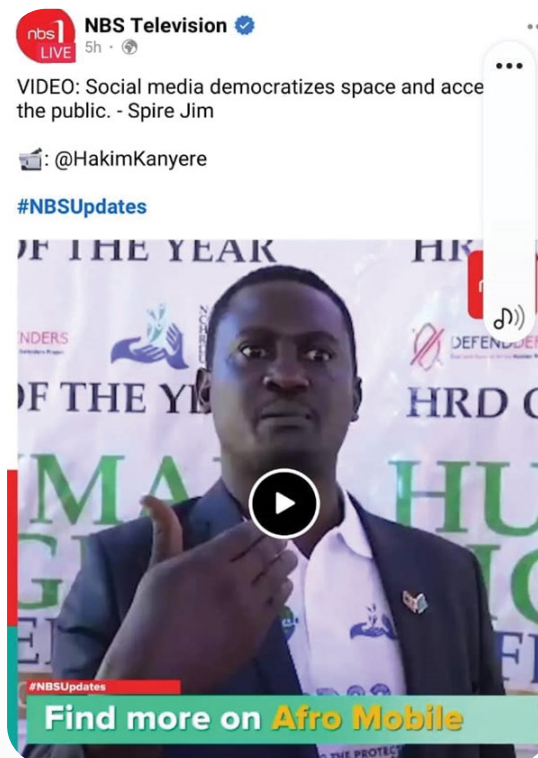
Twelve (12) media houses (4 TV, 5 radio stations and 3 print) were invited to cover the commemoration of the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day 2023 on 29th November, 2023. This event was held at the residence of the Liberian consulate in Uganda Ms. Thelma Awori under the theme “Honoring She Defenders: Recognizing the Resilience, Achievements and Empowerment of Women who Champion Human Rights”.

On 04th December, 2023, another press conference was held at Jinja City Hall to launch the International Human Rights Defenders’ Week. Twenty (20) media houses were invited (7 Print [both online/offline], 10 radio stations and 3 TV stations).

The last event covered by the media in 2023 was the commemoration of the International Human Rights Defenders Day held from 7th to 8th December, 2023 in Jinja City, Eastern Uganda under the theme “Reinforcing the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights Defenders”. It

brought together over 160 participants from all regions of the country, state and non-state actors.

The major aim of media coverage was to create visibility and raise awareness about the important work of human rights defenders in Uganda. By showcasing their efforts and achievements, the coalition aims to highlight the significance of their work in promoting and protecting human rights in Uganda. Through media coverage, the NCHRD-U advocates for their rights and draws attention to any challenges or threats they may face in their work. This in turn helps mobilize public support and generate pressure on authorities to address issues such as harassment, intimidation, or violence against defenders. Samples of the coverage are shared below:



[Gov't tasked with prioritizing legal support of Women Human Rights Defenders - PML Daily](#)

[Liberian envoy Awori calls for protection of women rights defenders - New Vision Official](#)

[Women activists call for human rights defenders Bill | Monitor](#)

[Rights defenders urge Parliament to prioritize Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill \(nilepost.co.ug\)](#)

[Uganda commemorates international Women Defender's day - UG Standard - Latest News](#)

[NCHRD-U celebrates human rights defenders: Empowering voices in Jinja - Busoga Today](#)

[NCHRD-U launches week of celebrations ahead of the International Human Rights Defenders' Day - Eye Media Uganda News](#)

[Human rights defenders launch week-long activities \(nilepost.co.ug\)](#)

[92.1 OP FM - FM 92.1 - Jinja - Listen Online \(streema.com\)](#)

[Gov't reiterates commitment to champion human rights amid growing concerns of disappearing people | Pulse Uganda](#)

[Liberian consul in Uganda condemns violence against women \(youtube.com\)](#)

4.0 Key Achievements, Challenges and Lessons Learned

4.1 Key Achievements

1. Finalization of the Communications and Branding Strategy

NCHRD-U developed a Communications Strategy which is one of the key policy documents that will support the institution in communications and branding. It will be used as a tool to guide the institution's networking engagements and popularizing the NCHRD-U's mandate. As one of the key deliverables this quarter, the Communications Officer reviewed and finalized the Communications Strategy with technical support for USAID/CSSA which included training on running social media campaigns held on September 5, 2023 and a one-on-one session with the USAID/CSSA Communications Officer on July 14th, 2023.

The Communications Strategy was shared with USAID/CSSA for final review and approval to support its operationalization. A new Communications Officer was recruited on October 1 2023 and an orientation meeting was held with USAID/CSSA in February 2024 to support his role at the Coalition. The Communication and Branding Strategy was finalized and approved by USAID/CSSA in February 2024.

2. Operationalization of the Communications Strategy

In order to support the operationalization of the Communications Strategy, the Coalition participated in a number of training sessions and held a one-on-one meeting with the USAID/CSSA Communications Officer on September 5, 2023. The NCHRD Communications Officer received technical assistance from USAID/CSSA on running social media campaigns. This followed training in June 2023 where it was observed that the content on the social media platforms was events based and should rather include the stories, documentaries, campaign-based activities on key HRD issues to broaden its usage. The skills from the training have supported the operationalization through development of stories on the website and social media accounts and provided story updates of the on-going NCHRD-U engagements with different stakeholders.

In the last quarter, the Communications Officer produced a documentary profiling the grassroots women human rights defenders sharing their journey in the promotion and protection of human rights as part of the established WHRDs community of practice thematic

cluster. Additional stories were uploaded on the website <https://hrdcoalition.ug/> and the NCHRD-U X (formerly Twitter) account https://twitter.com/NCHRD_UG was updated on the different engagements including the two-day meeting on the (March 27 and 28 2024) midterm review assessment of the Universal Periodic Review recommendations <https://hrdcoalition.ug/2024/04/02/the-national-coalition-of-human-rights-defenders-uganda-holds-the-civil-society-organisation-mid-term-universal-periodic-review-2024-conference/>, the press statement condemning the threats against the HRD Dr. Jimmy Spire Ssentongo (March 2024) <https://hrdcoalition.ug/2024/03/22/the-nchrd-u-condemns-threats-against-human-rights-activist-dr-jimmy-ssentongo/>, and the launch of the Monitoring, documentation and Advocacy project in Karamoja sub region (February 2024 <https://hrdcoalition.ug/2024/02/26/monitoring-documentation-advocacy-for-human-rights-in-Uganda-project-action-officially-launch/>).

The NCHRD-U X (formerly Twitter) account in the last quarter has attracted an increase in the account viewership and impressions (*January 5.8k, February 7.7k, March 27.3k*) and in followership from 5600 followers in January, 2024 to 6100 currently. This is attributed to the stories shared on the social media platforms. These stories create themes for campaigns of the different thematic communities of practice which is one of the key focus areas of the Coalition.

The strategy in the next quarter will support development of a quarterly newsletter and designing different IEC materials for upcoming activities; the UN recommendations on the Civil and Political rights, HRD referral network which will be used as tools to disseminate information and popularize the available protection mechanisms to the grassroots HRDs.

3. Development of the Advocacy Strategy

On August 21, 2023, NCHRD-U identified a consultant to provide support in the development of the Advocacy Strategy. The consultant kick started the assignment on August 25, 2023 and it is on-going with the tasks as per the TORs. The Advocacy Strategy will streamline NCHRD-U's Advocacy program which will be an institutional course of action and direction to help manage its relationship with the other stakeholders and scan its working environment.

The Advocacy Strategy will provide a roadmap for the Coalition and will have a HRD focus and direction, which will be a point of synergy. USAID/CSSA contracted Craig Bowman to provide technical support to the Coalition team in the development of the strategy and any other necessary advocacy initiatives.

The Advocacy Strategy was finalized and approved by USAID/CSSA in February 2024 and is supporting the Coalition's engagement with the international mechanisms. A meeting was held with the United Nations on the Civil and a press statement released condemning the threats against Dr. Spire. <https://hrdcoalition.ug/2024/03/22/the-nchrd-u-condemns-threats-against-human-rights-activist-dr-jimmy-ssentongo/>.

4.2 Challenges

1. The concept and definition of a Human Rights Defender is still a contentious issue that needs in-depth and continuous discussion among HRDs and other stakeholders.
2. HRDs had diverse protection needs to be addressed which went beyond the current protection fund; legal and medical support hence presenting limitations. The diverse needs included security enhancement, family support on relocation, gadget replacements, short courses, development of skills and temporary work areas.
3. There were changing trends in the threats and strategies of attack on HRDs especially those working on governance, women, accountability and land rights which also called for new response strategies to be included in the protection fund.
4. Due to the current economic times, HRDs had high expectations and demands of the protection fund to address their protection needs in a holistic manner and their social and humanitarian needs above and beyond their protection needs which has made attending to some of these cases particularly difficult.
5. The popularization of the protection fund attracted fraudulent cases of HRDs with high demands claiming to be at risk but not in eminent danger.
6. The development of the Board Charter highlighted the need for an independent Secretary to the Board. This new position has added a financial demand to the institutional budget in order to accommodate and facilitate a professional Secretary to the board. This challenge will be addressed by the board in its management meetings.
7. High inflation rates have greatly affected the day-to-day operations of the NCHRD-U and cost of living for the staff. This has led to budget cuts and adjustments on several interventions.
8. Communication barriers especially with adapting to virtual channels of communication which is hindered by slow connectivity and/or lack of smart gadgets especially with

partners at the grassroots.

9. The new shift in donor priorities in line with funding the protection of HRDs.
10. Restrictive legislative environment; for example, the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023, computer misuse Act 2022 has affected the operation of human rights organization by hindering freedom of expression.
11. The lobbying process before the Parliamentary committee was affected by the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 which depicts the human rights defenders as promoters of homosexuality. The bill was put on hold pending the repealing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023.
12. The passing of the Anti-homosexuality Act has affected the working environment of HRDs and led to a reduction of funding opportunities, readjustment of program activities, and frustrated actions towards sexual orientation and gender identity that inform interventions. The NCHRD-U will work closely with the thematic cluster head to respond to HRD cases and issues arising. The Coalition will create safe spaces to have discussions the impact and adaptation of the AHA on the working environment of HRDs to various stakeholders and also share their reintegration stories.
13. Government threats including the freezing of NGO accounts, closure of NGOs suspected of working on issues of LGBTIQ and non-renewal of permits and operating licenses have also frustrated operations of HRD organization hence affecting the operations of the secretariat. Continuous conducting of the risk assessments and contextual analysis of the working environment for civil society are great tools to managing and addressing the security threats that arise.

4.3 Lessons Learned

1. The Secretariat has learnt more about the obligations and roles of the different board committees and how their management strengthens the coalition. The free interaction between the board members and the secretariat promoted transparency in systems. There was better understanding and appreciation of the salary approval processes and a critical assessment of the impact of the current economy on the remunerations received. The Board shared the history, vision and mission of the Coalition from its birth which created a sense of purpose and appreciation of the journey and work done so far. The new staff members had a deeper appreciation of the work of the coalition and

also identified how their positions and roles contribute to the mission of the Coalition.

2. A number of NGOs are not aware of their legal compliance obligations and many of them do not set aside funds and resources for lawyers to meet these obligations. Lack of knowledge on the legal obligations means that a number of organizations are vulnerable and at risk to state attacks.
3. The Restrictive legislative environment that has many laws imposing laborious and long bureaucratic procedures, requirements and protocols to be followed by the HRDs organizations in the disguise of legal compliance has frustrated the operation of many member organizations which has led them to self-censorship, and compliance fatigue which in turn affects their active participation in the planned activities. Legal compliance is a key strategy to sustainable running of any organization and therefore the NCHRD-U will incorporate this mechanism in its running of the protection program and also raise awareness to its membership organization.

Annexes

2023 Financial Statement

*National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U)
Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 November 2023*

6.0 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR NCHRD-U AS AT 30.11.2023

Particulars	Notes	30.11.2023	30.11.2022
		UGX	UGX
Non-current assets			
Property and equipment	9.2	197,040,103	252,127,251
		197,040,103	252,127,251
Current assets			
Project advances			-
Cash and cash equivalents	9.3	2,413,493,980	2,089,764,041
Total current assets		2,413,493,980	2,089,764,041
Total assets		2,615,534,083	2,341,891,292
Reserves & Liabilities			
Reserves			
Capital reserves	9.4	197,040,102	252,127,251
Revenue reserves	9.5	1,878,493,981	2,089,764,041
Total reserves		2,075,534,083	2,341,891,292
Current liabilities			
Differed income	9.6	540,000,000	-
Total current liabilities		540,000,000	-
Total equity and liabilities		2,615,534,083	2,341,891,292

The financial statements set out on pages 10 to 12 were approved by NCHRD-U Management on and were signed on their behalf by:



Mr. Robert Kirenga Rucogoza
Executive Director




Ms. Margaret Schaggya
Chairperson - BoD

The notes set out on pages 13 to 27 form an integral part of these financial statements.

National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U)
Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 November 2023

7.0 STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR NCHRD-U FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 NOVEMBER 2023













Particulars	Notes	30.11.2023	30.11.2022
		UGX	UGX
Income			
Income	9.7	2,901,353,034	4,086,456,071
Total income		2,901,353,034	4,086,456,071
Expenditure			
Programme costs	9.8		
Protection Emergency Response		386,488,984	106,283,500
Capacity building of members		403,196,097	293,073,778
Advocacy in HRD issues		1,270,248,302	795,643,803
		2,059,933,382	1,195,001,081
Institutional strengthening	9.9		
Organizational structures		89,452,693	227,731,852
Administration		358,085,964	585,196,575
Payroll support		605,151,055	849,564,760
		1,052,689,712	1,662,493,187
Total expenditure		3,112,623,094	2,857,494,268
Net (surplus)/deficit for the year		(211,270,060)	1,228,961,803

The notes set out on pages 13 to 27 form an integral part of these financial statements.





Board of Directors

-  1. Ms. Margaret Sekaggya – Board Chairperson
-  2. Mr. Robert Ssempala - Board Vice Chairperson
-  3. Mr. Yona Wanjala – Treasurer
-  4. Mr. Elly Kasirye - Member
-  5. Mr. Ismail Kusemererwa - Member
-  6. Ms. Margaret Ellem Akullo - Member
-  7. Mr. Hassan Shire - Member
-  8. Ms. Mable Nimwesiga - Member

Technical Thematic Working Group (Include members list)

-  1. Mr. Robert Turyakira- Chairperson TTWG- Head of Environment Cluster
-  2. Ms. Winfred Mugambwa- Vice Chairperson TTWG -Head of Sexual Minorities Cluster
-  3. Mr. Akiso Joseph - Head of Journalist Cluster
-  4. Mr. Opedun Victor – Head of the Youth Cluster
-  5. Ms. Nambuba Sherry - Head of PWDS Cluster
-  6. Ms. Rashida Adong- Head of Women Cluster
-  7. Mr. Taremwa Albert- Regional Focal Person - Western
-  8. Ms. Peninah Zaninka – Head of Ethnic Minority Cluster
-  9. Ms. Rose Amongin-Regional Focal Person -Eastern
-  10. Mr. Kasim Mugerwa – Regional Focal Person – Central
-  11. Mr. Okello Roanaldo Ronie -Regional Focal Person -Northern
-  12. Ms. Jennifer Baitamwasa – Regional Focal Person -Western

Secretariat Staff

-  1. Mr. Robert. R.Kirenga – Executive Director
-  2. Ms. Jennifer Akech – Program Manager
-  3. Mr. Andrew Lubanga- Finance and Administration Manager
-  4. Ms. Joanita Nabaale – Human Resource and Administration Officer
-  5. Mrs. Patience Kwizera Mpamizo- Advocacy and Networking Officer
-  6. Ms. Dorothy Esther Kiyai- Protection Officer
-  7. Ms. Prosy Babirye – Capacity Building Officer
-  8. Mr. Pious Nsajja – Communications Officer
-  9. Mr. Patrick Alobia – Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
-  10. Ms. Jennifer Alum- Administrative Assistant
-  11. Mr. Ashraf Ndaula- Programs Assistant
-  12. Mr. Frank Kigoye- Programs Assistant
-  13. Mr. Gladys Mirembe -Executive/Grants Assistant
-  14. Mr. David Muganwa- Caretaker
-  15. Mr. Richard Engoot- Driver

This publication is available at www.hrdcoalition.ug

National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda

Plot 148 Semawata road

P.O BOX 302, Ntinda, Kampala, Uganda

Phone: +256 414 699 373

Email: info@hrdcoalition.ug

www.hrdcoalition.ug

Facebook: National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders

Twitter @NCHRD_UG

Instagram @nchrdu

Linkedin: National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders



Annual Report 2023



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National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders
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Plot 148 Semawata road
P.O BOX 302, Ntinda, Kampala, Uganda



Phone: +256 414 699 373



Email: info@hrdcoalition.ug