



NATIONAL  
COALITION OF  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS  
UGANDA

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024





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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
HRDs	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
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
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
UDHRD	United Nations Declaration on Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UPDF	Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UOBDU	United Organization for Batwa in Uganda
UPF	Uganda Police Force
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ULS	Uganda Law Society
VLPS	Virtual Learning Platform Session
WHRC	Wakiso Human Rights Committee

## 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 its formation in 2013, NCHRD-U has played a pivotal and unique role in coordinating 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.







## Acknowledgement

The NCHRD-U Secretariat extends its sincere appreciation all our stakeholders 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.

We are exceedingly grateful for the unwavering commitment of HRDs over the past year but importantly deeply indebted to HRDs on the ground that made our protection mandate manageable through knowledge exchange, collaboration and resourcefulness.

In a difficult year, we are grateful to our partners in no particular order; American Bar Association, Diakonia, Dan Church AID, EU, USAID CSSA/EWMI, ICNL, RFA, OSF, ASF, Ford Foundation, DANIDA, Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN-OHCHR), Civil Rights Defenders, Open Society Initiative of East Africa (OSIEA), Civ-source, The Royal Netherlands Embassy, GIZ-Uganda, Irish Embassy, Small Media Foundation UK, Freedom House and Defend Defenders for your consistent and generous financial support.

We also wish to acknowledge the continued support, strategic guidance, expertise, and technical support of our Board of Directors NCHRD-U Board, Technical Thematic Working Group (TTWG), focal persons on the ground and key partnerships with stakeholders in the protection of HRDs including Uganda Human Rights Commission, Uganda Law Society, Uganda Police Force (UPF), Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), NGO Bureau, Uganda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other strategic stakeholders.





## Word from the Chairperson

On behalf of the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U), I am honoured to present the 2024 Annual Report, an important reflection of our collective commitment, resilience, and unwavering pursuit of justice, human dignity, and protection for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) across Uganda.

The year 2024 has been one of both remarkable progress and significant challenges. In the face of a tightening civic space, increasing threats against HRDs, and complex political and social dynamics, NCHRD-U has remained steadfast in advancing its mandate of promoting and protecting the rights and work of HRDs in Uganda. Despite the obstacles, we registered critical achievements that reaffirm our purpose and strength as a coalition.

Throughout the year, we implemented key programs aimed at strengthening the protection and well-being of HRDs. These included capacity-building trainings, legal aid interventions, wellness and psycho-social support, strategic advocacy engagements, and the continued operation of our protection mechanisms such as the Rapid Response Fund. We also enhanced our engagement with duty bearers, contributing to meaningful policy dialogues on the safety and security of HRDs in Uganda.

Amid shrinking civic space, we witnessed increasing intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and vilification of HRDs, particularly those working in politically sensitive areas such as land rights, gender justice, and environmental rights issues. These challenges required adaptive strategies, some of which involved decentralizing our interventions, strengthening sub regional networks of HRDs, and deepening collaborations with regional and international partners.

As a Coalition, we have strived to respond with innovation and resilience. We prioritized digital security, enhanced our monitoring and documentation of human rights violations, and ensured that HRDs in remote and high-risk areas remained within our protection reach. We also invested in internal systems strengthening to better position ourselves for sustainability and impact.

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners and stakeholders. I extend sincere gratitude to our donors for their continued confidence in our mission and for providing the critical resources that have enabled us to serve HRDs across Uganda. To our development partners, state and non-state actors, civil society organizations, and all stakeholders we are deeply grateful for walking this journey with us.

To the Human Rights Defenders themselves your courage, resilience, and dedication in the face of adversity continue to inspire our work. You are the heart of our Coalition, and your safety, dignity, and freedom will always remain our highest priority.

As we look ahead, we are reminded that the protection of civic space and the defense of human rights are collective responsibilities. Let us continue to collaborate, innovate, and support one another as we build a more just, free, and inclusive Uganda.

Together, we will continue to defend the defenders.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Margaret Sekaggya  
Chairperson, Board of Directors  
National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders – Uganda

## Year in context – 2024













The contextual environment for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and the overall human rights situation in Uganda in 2024 was characterized by significant challenges and restrictions, with some limited positive developments. The main types of violations faced by HRDs include: restriction of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, threats, intimidation, on and offline harassment, surveillance, cyber-attacks and bullying, office closures, restriction of access to vital services such as healthcare and accommodation, arbitrary arrests and detention, assault, and torture.







Human rights defenders, particularly those working on land and environmental issues and the rights for the key populations, faced severe repression and harassment. Environmental activists opposing oil projects like the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) experienced arbitrary arrests, surveillance, and online smear campaigns. At least 96 activists opposing oil projects were arrested between May and early December 2024. The Constitutional Court upheld key provisions of the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act in April 2024, further entrenching discrimination against the key populations.

The government continuously maintained tight control over freedom of expression and assembly. Authorities arrested and charged individuals for criticizing government officials online. In July 2024, police in Kampala detained at least 100 anti-corruption protesters during the “March to Parliament” protest and charged them with “common nuisance”

This scenario generally narrowed the avenues for human rights defenders seeking the fulfillment and enjoyment of their rights. More than ever, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, together with other human rights defenders 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.

## NCHRD-U 2024 program activities in numbers

 <p>Empowerment training of TTWG</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>Capacity needs assessment of grass root organization</p> <p>04</p>	 <p>Peer to peer learning session of HRDs</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>Safety and security training</p> <p>02</p>
 <p>Regional ToT training on MDR</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>ToT training on Advocacy, Lobbying and Networking</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>Supported a learning forum with other East African Coalition</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>HRDs who received protection fund</p> <p>145</p>
 <p>Solidarity visit of HRDs</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>Psycho social and well-being session</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>Regional referral networking meeting</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>Fact finding mission</p> <p>01</p>

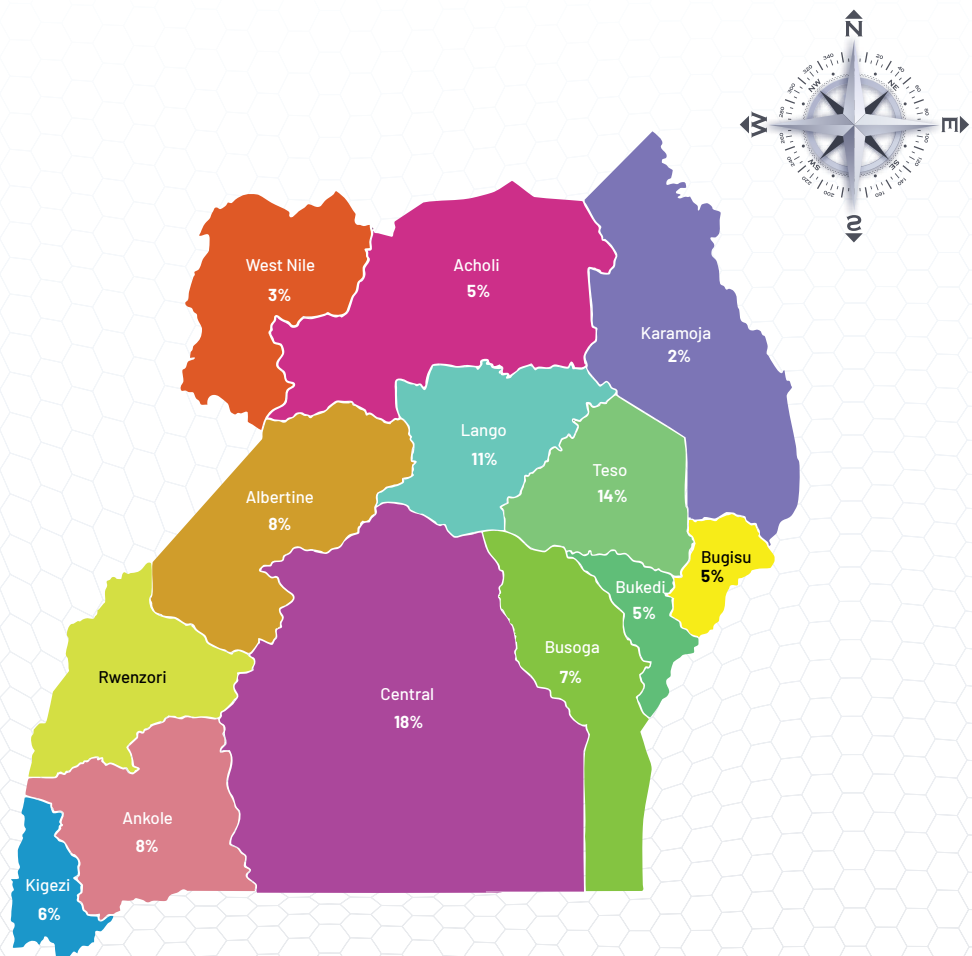
 <p>Reintegration workshop</p> <p>01</p>	 <p>Reports, launched published and disseminated</p> <p>03</p>	 <p>DNMCs meetings held</p> <p>04</p>	 <p>Training of Monitors</p> <p>03</p>
	 <p>Universal Periodic Review engagements</p> <p>06</p>	 <p>NGO forum engagements</p> <p>01</p>	

**A map of Uganda showing proportions of NCHRD-U membership in 2024**

## Key

### Subregions

- Acholi
- Albertine
- Ankole
- Bugisu
- Bukedi
- Busoga
- Central
- Karamoja
- Kigezi
- Lango
- Rwenzori
- Teso
- West Nile





## Programme Achievements under the Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026

Programmatic area	Strategic objective and activities Undertaken	Number of Beneficiaries	Outcomes
Capacity building	<b>Strategic objective 1; (To establish and maintain a high level performance coordination system that enhances member satisfaction and their collective success regarding prioritized issues by 2026.)</b>		
	<b>Activities Under taken</b>		
	1. Held an empowerment training for the TTWG, a key governance structure for the coalition.	12 Members (6 female, 5male, 1 other)	The constituted TTWG group has been imposition to bring the different HRD issues into one center of conversation that has been able to develop an integrated model of resolving issues. This is because all the thematic groups are brought together and have a common discussion on the prevailing issues. The HRDS no longer operate in isolation.
	2. Developed unstructured supplementary service data (USSD Code *284*444#) as a way of extending and expediting support to HRDs working on Land and Environment issues.	N/A	The USSD code has eased the reporting and follow up of violations in the Albertine and Karamoja subregions. It is now easy to analze and identify areas to center in while conducting advocacy initiatives on land and environmental violations.
	<b>Strategic objective 2; (To empower 75% of NCHRDU members with preventive and respective skills, strategies and facilities that build their resilience by 2026)</b>		
	<b>Activities undertaken:</b>		
	1. Conducted a capacity needs assessment on the thematic based organizations in the eastern region.	N/A	As a result of the capacity needs assessments, the coalition has been in position to Tylor its training in line with the knowledge gaps of the grassroot HRDs. Training such as safety and security, peace and conflict resolution, Monitoring, documenting and reporting have been a result of the capacity assessment.
	2. Conducted a Sub- Regional Training in safety and security management in Bukeddi sub-region.	24 HRDs from the Eastern part (Malaba, Kapchorwa, Kween, Tororo, Butaleja, Palisa and Bukwo). Were trained. (13F, 11M)	As the human rights environment continues to be unpredictable, risk management plans are being put in place by the respective organizations in attendance as a means of preparedness in case the worst ever occurred.
	3. Conducted regional ToT training in peace and conflict resolution.	16 HRDs from eastern region (10 male, 5 females, 1 other) representing different thematic clusters like LGBTI, Journalist, Women, Youth, Ethnic Minority and PWDs.	The invited HRDs were equipped with necessary skills in peace and conflict resolution to collectively advance human rights in their respective regions. As a result, the HRDs are now better equipped with skills in peacebuilding and conflict resolution enabling them to handle tensions non-violently and more effectively in their communities, especially when it comes to dealings with the state through the different advocacy engagements.

	<p>4. Facilitated promotion and share learning and adoption of good practices amongst HRDs across Uganda to build HRD's resilience in the era of shrinking space.</p>	<p>35 participants (24 male, 11 female)</p>	<p>While in the sharing forum, the participants deliberated on the action points and way forward on what they will be able to do when they go back to their respective district</p> <p>In karamoja, the HRDs have collectively been in position to map out the hot spots in the sub region, conducted fact finding missions, community dialogues and fact-finding mission together with the state actors in the region.</p> <p>This has been a deliberate move to create awareness of the different challenges the Karamoja sub-region is facing and has been going unattended to by the state.</p>
	<p>5. Conducted Risk Assessments for selected lead organizations to ascertain risk drivers and equip the organizations in accordance to need.</p>	<p>In total 20 organisations from Buliisa, Hoima, Masindi and Kiryandongo were risk assessed.</p>	<p>From the assessment conducted, it was reported that noted that most NGOs are not aware of their legal obligations while many do not set aside funds and resources for lawyers to meet these obligations. Lack of knowledge on the obligations means a number of organizations may be at risk but are not aware.</p> <p>The assessed organizations were supported in identifying their compliance gaps and highlighting the urgent need to fulfil the legal obligations and compliance.</p> <p>The assessment also reveals a critical vulnerability in the NGO sector that, if unaddressed, could lead to increased legal risks, operational disruptions, or potential deregistration.</p>
	<p>6. Conducted one sub-regional level ToT and orientation on best practices for improved MDR of land and environmental HR violations within the Albertine sub-region with emphasis on supporting community, sub-regional and national reporting mechanisms on LED violations.</p>	<p>25 LEDs/ HRDs from Albertine sunregion were specifically from the areas of Hoima, Masindi, Kiryandongo, Buliisa, Kagadi, Kakumiro, Kikuube and Kibaale.</p>	
	<p>7. Held Two TOTs trainings on personal and organizational safety &amp; security of HRDs/org. involved in documentation and response to land and environmental HRVs in Albertine and Karamoja sub-regions.</p>	<p>Both meetings attracted 54 members (22 female, 32 male)</p>	<p>The training enhanced the capacity of human rights defenders (HRDs) and organizations in the Albertine and Karamoja sub-regions to assess, manage, and respond to personal and organizational safety and security risks. The training fostered greater preparedness, resilience, and coordination among HRDs working in high-risk and often volatile regions. HRDs are now aware of the importance of safeguarding information and documents outside the confines of their offices, importance of digital security and having a security plan documented and known to all the organization staff.</p>

	8. Conducted 02 training session for trainers of trainers (TOTs) in monitoring, documentation & reporting protection related cases & issues at local, national, regional & international levels.	Two trainings targeting 50 (21 male, 29 female) HRDs from the central and Rwenzori sub-regions.	<p>The selected HRDs were equipped with skills in how to Document and report human rights violations, hold perpetrators accountable and provide a basis for legal and advocacy efforts.</p> <p>As a result, there had been an improvement in the quality of reporting and documentation of HR violations. Uganda eyenkya a CBO located in kalungu district had been in position to attract some funding from GIZ to boost her operations.</p>
	9. Held training for TOTs for selected HRDs in advocacy, lobbying and networking towards addressing human rights issues.	51 HRDs (30 from Eastern Uganda and 21 from Kabale sub-region) across 2 trainings.	<p>A focuss group discussion held in Mbale and Mbarara respectively bringing HRDs from the said regions reported an Improved advocacy, lobbying, and networking skills among selected (HRDs), enabling them to more effectively influence policy, mobilize support, and build strategic alliances to address human rights issues with government actors. The training strengthened their capacity to engage more purposively with decision-makers, form the respective district leaderships and amplify human rights concerns at local and national levels.</p> <p>Non-confrontational approaches are now being utilized by the HRDs to get their messages amplified other than the past when they only thought about force.</p>
	10. Supported a learning forum with other East African Coalition.	53 HRDs from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania	<p>The learning forum availed the HRDs from the 3 countries with an opportunity of sharing the best practices that can be replicated as they manage the safety and security challenges encountered during elections.</p> <p>The information sharing was also pivotal in promote better understanding of monitoring, documentation and reporting of Human rights violations arising from adoption of good practices, highlighted common threats and security challenges that HRDs face during the electoral processes in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania and fostered regional solidarity and collaboration amongst HRDs in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.</p>

#### Protection and emergency

**Strategic objective 4** (To improve availability, access, timeliness and utilization of emergency response and protection services to HRDs by 2024, have in place a comprehensive and accessible system by 2026. )

#### Activities undertaken:



	1. Access and disbursement of the Protection Fund	145 (F-29, M-115, O-1) HRDs accessed the Protection Fund where they received support including relocation, upkeep, legal, psychosocial, safe transport and communication, through direct engagement and referrals from the Referral network	Enhanced safety and wellbeing of at-risk HRDs through timely, needs based support; strengthened trust and use of the Referral Network. HRDs supported are points of reference of the existence of the protection fund to HRDs at risk.
	2. Solidarity visits to HRDs at risk	20 targeted visits conducted across six (6) subregions (Albertine, Lango, Karamoja, Acholi, Central, Rwenzori).	Strengthened community-based protection mechanisms; facilitated HRD reintegration; verified ongoing threats at the grassroots.
	3. Group Psychosocial and Well-being Sessions-	Held two (2) group support sessions conducted on 15 <sup>th</sup> /1/2024 and 11 <sup>th</sup> /7/2024. for 22 HRDs (10-F, 12-M).	Provided a safe healing space for emotional recovery and social reintegration into their grassroots communities and work spaces; contributed to HRD mental resilience.
	4. Launch of Digitalized Referral & Case System	Digitalized Referral & Case System launched on 9 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 to securely manage information on HRD protection cases. A platform for collective structured system that facilitates the timely referral of HRDs at risk to appropriate resources and support services in times of need.	Improved accessibility to protection services, efficiency, confidentiality and timeliness in case handling and referrals; strengthened institutional capacity for protection response.
	5. Subregional Referral network meetings held	Twelve (12) subregional meetings held in 12 subregions of Busoga (F-14, M-16), Teso (F-8, M-22) 6 <sup>th</sup> June, Bukedi (F-6, M-11) 5 <sup>th</sup> June, Karamoja (F-18, M-10) 7 <sup>th</sup> June, Acholi (F-14, M-17) 12 <sup>th</sup> June, Lango (F-14, M-16) 11 <sup>th</sup> June, West Nile (F-9, M-21) 14 <sup>th</sup> June, Kigezi (F-9, M-12) 20 <sup>th</sup> August, Albertine (F-6, M-14) 4 <sup>th</sup> July, Greater Masaka (F-6, M-14), Rwenzori (F-5, M-16) 3 <sup>rd</sup> July and Ankole (F-10, M-15) 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Broad regional representation achieved and identification of subregional priorities ensuring documentation of local perspective
	6. Dissemination of Referral System & IEC Materials	Disseminated referral IEC materials to three hundred (300) grassroots HRDs across 12 subregions of Busoga, Bukedi, Teso, Karamoja, Lango, Acholi, West Nile, Ankole, Rwenzori, Albertine, Kigezi, greater Masaka who were sensitized and equipped with information materials.	Enhanced knowledge and accessibility to protection services at the grassroots; improved local response networks.

	7. Fact-Finding Missions (Acholi and Albertine)	Two fact finding missions conducted in Acholi and Albertine subregions and 18 HRDs (6-F, 12-M) reached; identified root causes of the risks and coping mechanisms.	Informed evidence-based programming and interventions; deepened understanding of regional HRD challenges, adaptation and coping strategies.
	8. Reintegration Workshop	Three-day reintegration workshop held for 29 HRDs (19-F, 8-M, 0-3) on 4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> September 2024. The intervention addressed the pressing needs including psychological wellbeing and building support networks.	Strengthened HRDs' psychosocial wellbeing, resilience, and reintegration skills; built sustainable peer support networks.
	9. Protection Service Providers Meeting	Conducted a one-day workshop on 15 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 for 26(12-F, 14-M) protection service providers who were engaged on best practices, challenges and strategies to strengthen service delivery in emergency response with a focus on the upcoming 2026 general elections.	Fostered collaboration, shared best practices, and improved preparedness for future political contexts including the 2026 elections.
	10. Launch of the Assessment Report of Present-Day Protection Services	Assessment study launched on 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 with 43(F-22, M-21) stakeholders and 250 copies of the evidence-based assessment disseminated to various stakeholders across the country.	Provided strategic insights and data to stakeholders on how to address HRD vulnerabilities and service gaps; advocated for targeted improvement in the protection services.
	11. Development of Institutional Security, Safety & Risk Management Policy	A Comprehensive Institutional Security, Safety and risk management policy developed and operationalized.	Strengthened institutional preparedness and resilience against physical, digital and psychosocial risks; ensured safety of staff and infrastructure.

#### Advocacy and Networking

**S0 - 3** (To raise the profile of human rights defenders in Uganda by 2026, while supporting their collective evidence-based influence initiatives, at national, regional and international levels)

#### Activities Undertaken

	1. Conducted a monitoring visit to the District NGO monitoring committees (DNMCs) of eastern and northern regions.	6 districts from the east (Jinja, Kamuli, Iganga, Tororo, Kalaki and Soroti) and 6 districts from the north (Lira, Pader, Kitgum, Gulu, Arua, Adjumani).	<p>The coalition was able to assess the functionality and the impact of DNMCs within the districts they operate, advocacy gaps, and the level of CSOs enjoyment of the freedoms of Assembly and Association and recommendations.</p> <p>The coalition was also able to identify the different challenges and dynamics within the relationships of the DNMCs and CSOs that affected their effective operationalization.</p>
	2. NCHRD-U digitized the Enabling Environment Monitoring Tools for easier rollout of monitoring, information collection and analysis on Freedom of Association, Assembly and Expression (FoAA&E).	27 monitors from all thematic areas and regions of the country were trained in how to monitor and report incidents using the tool.	<p>The tool enabled the coalition to make data-driven decisions, respond to changing circumstances rapidly, and streamline the key factors affecting the civic space.</p> <p>The tool offers increased efficiency, accuracy, accessibility, and flexibility in data collection and analysis of reported incidents.</p>
	3. Coalition Secretariat together with trained HRDs/Monitors set out to the 12 regions of Uganda to collect information on the key trends to the CSO enabling environment for the period of April 2024 to May 2024.	04 coalition secretariat staff and 27 trained monitors.	With the use of the monitoring tool the monitors were able to identify key trends and restrictions to the enabling environment, including monitoring of proposed laws and implementation of existing laws affecting the enabling for CSOs and HRDs who are disproportionately affected by growing restrictions on civic space.
	4. Developed a baseline report on the CSO legal enabling environment on the freedom of expression, association and assembly.		During the validation of the report with state actors, the coalition advocated for; Legal Reforms through scrutinizing existing laws and regulations to identify restrictive measures that hinder civil society activities and identifying reforms that ensure a supportive legal environment.
	5. Held shuttle diplomacy meeting to address human rights violations against land and environmental defenders in the Albertine Region by fostering collaboration among key stakeholders.	30 participants including HRDs, state actors, and private sector	The meeting provided a platform for discussing challenges faced by HRDs, exploring areas for intervention, and developing a joint action plan to strengthen protection mechanisms. especially land and environmental defenders in Uganda.



6. The Coalition organized a two-day workshop to monitor the implementation of Uganda's commitments under international mechanisms, specifically the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

45 HRDs from the 16 thematic clusters and the four regions of the country.

The workshop provided a platform for the clusters to review their contributions, assess the implementation of the UPR recommendations specific to each cluster, and generate individual cluster reports.

The workshop enhanced accountability for Uganda's human rights commitments, as midterm report allowed stakeholders to evaluate progress, identify gaps, and outline strategies for effective advocacy.

7. Developed and Validated the Mid-term shadow report.

The report was submitted to the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights and is now available on their website:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ng-os-mid-term-reports>

8. Participated in the NGO forum engagement and the 81<sup>st</sup> ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) from.

Five (05) coalition members.

The Forum enabled members to explore progress and how recent developments, particularly ongoing human rights violations, conflicts and political instability, continue to impact education and human rights across Africa

9. Held the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual AGA 2024

200 HRDs attended the AGA in Kampala

The AGA offered a platform to review the coalition's progress, refine code of conduct, and strengthen its protection mechanisms for HRDs in Uganda.

10. Held the International Human Rights Defenders Day 2024

250 HRDs, development partners, state actors and the media attended the event in Kampala.

Increased Visibility and Recognition of HRDs

- The event highlighted the work and challenges faced by HRDs in Uganda.
- The media coverage amplified their voices and struggles, influencing public opinion and promoting support.
- It created a platform for networking, collaboration, and joint action to address threats against HRDs.
- HRDs were celebrated their work publicized hence boosting their morale and reaffirm the importance of their work in Uganda.

11. Held an interaction a two-day's session with the parliamentary Human Rights Committee, state actors and HRDs on the enjoyment of civil and political rights in Uganda.

10 members of parliament, 08 state actors, and 15 HDRs from all the regions of Uganda.

The session provided opportunities for monitoring progress in promoting the enjoyment of civil and political rights in Uganda.

The session also enabled the dissemination of parliamentary handbook that has all recommendations of the human rights committee to the state of Uganda.



## Media and Communication engagements in 2024

In 2024, the NCHRD-U conducted 03 TV talk shows in May, October and December. These talk shows were held on NTV (To explain the digital referral system), on Family TV (to talk about the Assessment of HRDs service providers report) and NTV (to talk about the commemoration of International Human Rights Defenders Day 2024) respectively. 18 radio talk shows were also held. 02 during the celebration of the International Women Day in March, Two during the commemoration of the World Environment Day in May, 01 during the celebration of the Youth Day in August, 02 talks for during the advocacy campaigns in Albertine and Karamoja sub regions, 04 during the commemoration of the International Women HRDs Day in November, and 05 during the commemoration of the International HRD Day in December.

The NCHRD-U also held 05 online discussions on X (formerly twitter) and Zoom meetings. 03 X space discussions were held during the commemoration of the World Environment Day, International Youth Day and International Women HRD Day. 02 discussions were held; one during the Peer to peer learning the East African HRDs Coalitions (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) and the other during discussion on the Ankole sub region HRD situation.



The NCHRD-U managed to participate in two press conferences. One when CSOs gathered at NCHRD-U offices to brief the media about their stand on the NGO Amendment Act 2024, and the other during the CSOs media brief about the Lubigi evictions. 03 events organized by the NCHRD-U had journalists providing media coverage. These include; the Lunch of the Digital Referral System, launch of the assessment report on the HRD protection services in Uganda and the commemoration of the International IHRD Day.











### Information, Education and Communication materials

In 2024, NCHRD-U produced 5,000 Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials such as posters, brochures, and flyers. NCHRD-U also produced a women documentary and short video of the defenders with key achievements, challenges, success and inspirational messages of women human rights defenders. The copies of IEC materials that were designed and disseminated have helped in amplifying HRD voices, creating visibility of their work, enhancing the accessibility of protection services available to HRDs in dire need, the response mechanisms following a prescribed referral pathway, and also the security tips that HRDs and CSOs can follow in order to manage security threats. Samples of some IEC materials that were produced and distributed are shared below.



## Breakdown of the media engagements.

TV talk shows	Radio talk shows	Online engagements	IEC Materials	Press conferences	Media events Coverage
03 	18 	05 	5000 	02 	03 

All the above media engagement activities enabled NCHRD-U to promote its brand as well as creating awareness around the HRD concept.



From the Left; Chris Higenyi (Moderator), Ms. Hope Bagota (Senior human rights officer at UHRC) and Mr. Robert Kirenga (NCHRD-U ED) during a TV talk show at NTV on 04<sup>th</sup> December, 2024.



Mr. Moses Aliganyira and Ms. Janepher Baitwamasa (HRDs from Albertine sub region) discussing land and environmental rights issues on Spice FM Hoima.



## Links

1. <https://search.app/8cnCrSh88QERj3ei6>
2. <https://search.app/q2aqVZTdzfZiCHy8>
3. <https://chimpreports.com/govt-urged-to-enact-law-to-protect-human-rights-defenders/>
4. <https://www.pmldaily.com/news/2024/12/ugandas-human-rights-defenders-call-for-protection-support.html>
5. [https://youtu.be/LfoB3q599XY?si=2uVR\\_GbND7GjP6VN](https://youtu.be/LfoB3q599XY?si=2uVR_GbND7GjP6VN)
6. <https://youtu.be/IFwR36PJ1yQ?si=rD6FwkvJRAZPs9UJ>
7. [https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/human-rights-defenders-facing-challenges-repo-NV\\_197963](https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/human-rights-defenders-facing-challenges-repo-NV_197963)
8. <https://youtu.be/OcQh8Psr-lA?si=EWVx7qrKrc5fM3sb>
9. <https://youtu.be/5qOT0EnfAfo?si=W0gJe4csQr1xere>



## Success stories from our HRDs

### Empowering journalists to champion transparency and human rights advocacy



Joseph Akiso, a passionate middle age Ugandan journalist, human rights defender, and founder of Media for Transformative Advocacy. Joseph originates from Teso sub region, eastern part of Uganda. He spends most of daily time looking for news from different sources which is the primary source of income. Joseph has always believed in the power of the media to drive social change. With years of experience in the media, Joseph recognizes the critical role journalists play in holding public servants accountable and amplifying citizen voices.

However, he also understands the challenges journalists face in accessing information and engaging public officials effectively.

Joseph just like many other journalists in Uganda continue to face numerous barriers in their pursuit of public information. Government agencies often withhold crucial data, citing bureaucratic red tape or national security concerns. Public officials view media practitioners as adversaries rather than partners in governance, leading to intimidation, threats, and, in some cases, violence against journalists. Additionally, many journalists lack training in accessing public information effectively, which limits their ability to ask the right questions and hold public servants accountable.

As Joseph observed, *"Public servants hold the office that they do, basing on the trust given to them by the citizens. This then means that there is a social contract which those public servants have with those that gave them the authority, which is the citizens."* However, with restricted access to information, journalists still struggle to fulfill their role as the Fourth Estate.

### Sharpening journalists for advocacy

With funding from Diakonia through the NCHRD-U, Joseph launched an advocacy campaign titled *"Journalists' Right to Access Information."* The campaign aimed to equip journalists with the skills needed to access public information effectively and engage public servants constructively through workshops, training sessions, and community dialogues. The campaign impacted in the following ways; Journalists were educated on legal provisions that empower them to request and access public information without fear or obstruction. They were equipped with practical sessions to enable them gain the skill of framing effective questions and engaging public officials constructively. The campaign emphasized the role of media in facilitating conversations between citizens and their leaders, allowing for direct engagement on issues of governance and accountability.



*"For the media to be able to perform this role so well, there is need to support them, in terms of training, especially in the aspect of access to information. But also the skill of how best to access this information from public servants"* Joseph recounts.

Through workshops, mentorship, and community engagements, the campaign provided journalists with the tools they needed to navigate these challenges.



## Strengthening the media's role in governance

The advocacy campaign led to a significant shift in how journalists and public officials interacted. With improved skills, journalists became more confident in seeking information and holding leaders accountable. Additionally, citizens gained increased access to platforms where they could directly engage their representatives. The campaign also resulted in the formation of a Community of Practice a network where journalists and public officials engage in continuous dialogue, reducing hostility and fostering a collaborative approach to accountability.

Joseph noted, *"I am very grateful that this campaign ended up with the formulation of a community of practice. This means that there is going to be continuous engagement between the media and those who hold public offices so that they stop looking at the media as an enemy but rather a partner in the process of accountability."*

## Sustaining the impact

Recognizing the success of this initiative, NCHRD-U is committed to expanding similar advocacy campaigns, particularly as Uganda approaches a critical election period. Future training sessions will focus on election reporting, fact-checking, and investigative journalism to ensure journalists continue playing their vital role in promoting democracy and advocating for human rights.



Joseph emphasized the importance of continuity, saying, *"I pray that similar advocacy and trainings continue to occur, especially in this period where Uganda is going through an election. This is the time when the citizens and those holding public offices should be provided more space to have conversations and dialogues."*

Through continued support from NCHRD-U and partners like Diakonia, Uganda's journalists will remain equipped to advocate for transparency, ensuring that public servants uphold their social contract with the citizens.

## Empowering HRDs for Change in Kalungu: How Henry Paul Muyingo Transformed Grassroots Advocacy with NCHRD-U Support



Mr. Henry Paul Muyingo a dedicated grassroots human rights defender and coordinator of Uganda Eyenkyia Development Project Group in Kalungu district Buganda sub-region shares his experience on how the work of the coalition through capacity building has helped the grassroot HRDs CSOs gain recognition and attract funding from other donor organizations.

In Kalungu District, where socio-economic challenges intertwine with deep-seated human rights issues, the Group sought to make a difference. With limited resources and the

challenges of organizing support for human rights initiatives at the community level, Muyingo faced uphill battles in mobilizing his community to advocate for change. He noticed that issues like land rights and environmental degradation especially in the “Lwera wetland” were persistent, yet there were few mechanisms to address them effectively or raise awareness. Though passionate about human rights, Muyingo found it challenging to reach policymakers or secure the resources needed to make a lasting impact.

Recognizing the need for empowerment and professional guidance, Muyingo connected with the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U). Through NCHRD-U programs, he found an opportunity to enhance his skills and learn the tools necessary to drive real change in Kalungu.

With NCHRD-U’s mentorship, Muyingo polished his advocacy and lobbying techniques, improving his ability to communicate the urgent needs of his community effectively. Through hands-on practice, he was able to attract support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) to advance Uganda Eyenkyia Development Project Group’s mission. The support from NCHRD-U enabled Muyingo not only to secure vital funding but also to amplify his voice and impact across the sub region

In recognition of his outstanding commitment and transformative impact, Muyingo was recognized as the first runners up Human Rights Defender of the Year 2024 in Uganda. This recognition highlighted his dedication to his community and underscored the success of his advocacy initiatives. Additionally, Muyingo has been selected to represent grassroots human rights defenders from Uganda at an international forum in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2025, where he will share his insights and learn from other defenders around the world.

NCHRD-U’s innovative approach to blending training with hands-on support and partnership development enabled Muyingo to harness his potential fully, positioning him as a key influencer in human rights advocacy within Uganda.

## Challenges

- Increasing political and legal restrictions, interference of the executive arms of the government on the independence of other arms of the government, militarization of government departments, unfavorable changing legal frameworks.
- The global shifts and international trends like shrinking foreign aid due to, global authoritarianism, changing diplomatic relations, new shift in donor priorities and increased political interference with funding restrictions targeting Civil Society Organizations that have impacted the implementation of human rights work.
- HRDs continue having high expectations and demands of the institution; funding their organization projects and administrative costs due to the current economic times.
- The ever-growing HRDs diverse protection and humanitarian needs to be addressed which go beyond what the current protection fund covers, legal and medical support and hence offering limitations. The diverse needs included business start-ups, security equipment enhancement, school fees, gadget purchase replacements, short courses, and development of skills and temporary work areas.
- As more human rights advocacy moves online, the digital space presents risks and threats to cybersecurity and digital Rights through cyber surveillance, data breaches, and online harassment, which have become increasingly common in the repressive working environment for HRDs.
- There is low enthusiasm especially with adapting to digital platforms by grassroots HRDs hindering virtual engagements and increases communication barriers like slow internet connectivity, affordability and lack of digital gadgets.
- Changing trends in the threats and strategies of attack on HRDs especially those working on governance, accountability, environment and women. These require sudden change in strategies that require a lot of resources.
- 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 to hinder freedom of expression. The merging of the NGO Bureau to be placed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs which is headed by the army frustrates the registration process for most HRD organization and subjected to militarization.
- The lobbying process of the HRD Protection Bill 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 and there is no guarantee as to when the ruling will be granted.
- The passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 has impeded progress were more HRDs are in self-censorship for being accused of promoting homosexuality. This has affected the active participation of HRDs especially at the grassroots level.



## Lessons Learned

- **Evolving Nature of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs):** The human rights landscape in Uganda continues to evolve, with the emergence of new categories of HRDs, such as online and digital defenders. These defenders bring distinct needs, vulnerabilities, and operational dynamics. It is imperative for the Coalition to recognize, adapt to, and support this new breed of HRDs through tailored interventions and inclusive programming.
- **Integrated Advocacy Across All Levels:** Effective advocacy demands a strategic approach that bridges grassroots, national, regional, and international mechanisms. Working collaboratively across these levels enhances the Coalition's ability to influence policy, amplify local voices, and secure meaningful protection for HRDs.
- **Building HRD Resilience Through Comprehensive Support:** Strengthening the resilience of HRDs, particularly at the grassroots level, requires a dual approach: provision of emergency response mechanisms and preventive strategies such as psychosocial support, legal aid, and reintegration. Reintegration, in particular, has emerged as a vital component for sustaining long-term HRD wellbeing and engagement.
- **Prioritizing Cybersecurity and Digital Rights:** With increased reliance on digital tools, HRDs are increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats. The Coalition recognizes the urgent need to prioritize training in cybersecurity, digital rights, online safety, and protection against surveillance, data breaches, and digital harassment.
- **Leveraging Digital Platforms for Engagement and Advocacy:** Digital spaces offer new opportunities for engagement, advocacy, and visibility. The Coalition will strengthen its online presence to better connect with HRDs, share critical information, and participate in global human rights movements. Digital platforms will also be leveraged to monitor, document, and report human rights violations in real time.
- **Strategic Stakeholder Engagement:** Constructive engagement with progressive state actors, civil society partners, and international stakeholders is essential for advancing human rights. Through sustained dialogue, strategic partnerships, and policy influence, the Coalition will continue to promote a more enabling environment for HRDs.
- **Agility in the Face of Global Shifts:** The global context including shrinking foreign aid, rising authoritarianism, and changing diplomatic relations presents significant operational challenges. The Coalition must remain agile and responsive, while also diversifying funding sources and adapting its strategies to ensure long-term sustainability.
- **Evidence-Based Programming:** Investing in research and documentation of emerging and topical human rights issues remains critical. Robust, evidence-based data will inform more effective advocacy, programming, and strategic decision-making at the national, regional, and international levels.
- **Anticipating Emerging Human Rights Challenges:** Uganda's human rights terrain continues to shift, with new and complex issues such as environmental justice, mineral resource extraction, climate-related disasters, and global geopolitical tensions. The Coalition must proactively monitor these trends and adjust its interventions accordingly to remain relevant and responsive.
- **Strengthening Coalition Building and Regional Solidarity:** Stronger alliances, particularly at grassroots and sub-regional levels, are key to sustaining the HRD movement. The Coalition will invest in building robust networks across Uganda and deepen collaboration with peer human rights organizations in East Africa to share resources, knowledge, and strategies for tackling common challenges.



## Recommendations:

- ❖ Strengthen advocacy through coalition-building with like-minded CSOs and regional human rights bodies to push back against repressive governance practices and defend institutional independence.
- ❖ Develop a diversified fundraising strategy, including alternative domestic resource mobilization, south-south partnerships, and engaging non-traditional donors (e.g., philanthropic tech companies).
- ❖ Introduce clear eligibility criteria and communicate resource limitations while seeking flexible core funding to expand support for HRDs. Promote peer-to-peer support mechanisms among HRDs.
- ❖ Advocate for inflation-adjusted funding from donors and streamline operational costs by leveraging digital tools and hybrid working models.
- ❖ Revise the Protection Fund guidelines to include expanded categories such as digital tools, short-term skills training, and small-scale livelihood support.
- ❖ Develop a digital protection protocol for HRDs, conduct regular cybersecurity trainings, and invest in secure digital platforms and tools.
- ❖ Establish an early warning and rapid response unit within NCHRD-U to monitor trends and facilitate immediate intervention and strategy shifts.
- ❖ Launch a coordinated legislative advocacy campaign including litigation, policy briefs, and public dialogues to challenge or repeal oppressive laws.
- ❖ Reframe the HRD Protection Bill advocacy by separating it clearly from controversial narratives and building broader political alliances across party lines.
- ❖ Provide psychosocial support and legal clarity for HRDs on permissible advocacy, while creating safe engagement platforms that protect anonymity and dignity.

## Annexes

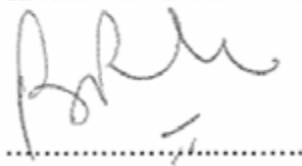
## 2024 Financial statement

*National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U)*  
*Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 November 2024*

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR NCHRD-U AS AT 30.11.2024

Particulars	Notes	30.11.2024	30.11.2023
		UGX	UGX
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property and equipment	9.2	665,221,782	197,040,103
		<b>665,221,782</b>	<b>197,040,103</b>
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	9.3	1,845,324,612	2,418,493,980
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>1,845,324,612</b>	<b>2,418,493,980</b>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>2,510,546,394</b>	<b>2,615,534,083</b>
<b>Reserves &amp; Liabilities</b>			
<b>Reserves</b>			
Capital reserves	9.4	665,221,781	197,040,102
Revenue reserves	9.5	1,845,324,613	1,878,493,981
<b>Total reserves</b>		<b>2,510,546,394</b>	<b>2,075,534,083</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Differed income	9.6	-	540,000,000
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>540,000,000</b>
<b>Total equity and liabilities</b>		<b>2,510,546,394</b>	<b>2,615,534,083</b>

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 R. Kirenga  
Executive Director

  
 ....

Ms. Margaret Sekaggya  
Chairperson - BoD

*National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U)*  
*Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 November 2024*

**STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR NCHRD-U FOR THE  
 YEAR ENDED 30 NOVEMBER 2024**

Particulars	Notes	30.11.2024	30.11.2023
		UGX	UGX
<b>Income</b>			
Income	9.7	3,959,312,274	2,901,353,034
<b>Total income</b>		<b>3,959,312,274</b>	<b>2,901,353,034</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
<b>Programme costs</b>	9.8		
Protection Emergency Response		787,660,594	386,488,984
Capacity building of members		499,231,415	403,196,097
Advocacy in HRD issues		923,821,399	1,270,248,302
		<b>2,210,713,409</b>	<b>2,059,933,382</b>
<b>Institutional strengthening</b>	9.9		
Organizational structures		468,729,571	89,452,693
Administration		836,121,778	358,085,964
Payroll support		476,916,885	605,151,055
		<b>1,781,768,233</b>	<b>1,052,689,712</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>3,992,481,642</b>	<b>3,112,623,094</b>
<b>Net (surplus)/deficit for the year</b>		<b>(33,169,368)</b>	<b>(211,270,060)</b>



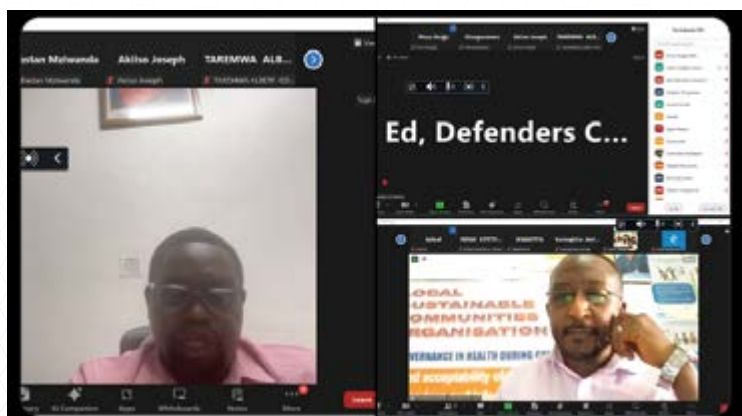
## Photo gallery



*Training of Monitors in Kampala in July 2024.*



*Participants pose for a photo a shuttle diplomacy meeting in Kampala on 15th August 2025*



*An online engagement of East African coalition defenders*







NCHRD-U Secretariat Staff engaging development partners during the "Together for Progress" event at Sheraton Hotel on 25th September 2024



Participants posse for a group photo after the launch of the report on the Assessment of the present day #HRD protection emergency services in Uganda.


































## 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. Mr. Shabnam Olinga – 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
-  16. Mr. Mbarushimana Stephen – Project Coordinator
-  17. Mr. Wakayiya Trevor – Volunteer






## Contact Info

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 National Coalition of Human  
Rights Defenders Uganda

Plot 148 Semawata road  
P.O BOX 302, Ntinda,  
Kampala, Uganda

 Phone: +256 414 699 373

 Toll-free: 0800 100 250

 Helpline: +256 763 565 154

 Email: [info@hrdcoalition.ug](mailto:info@hrdcoalition.ug)