



2025 ANNUAL PROGRESSIVE REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: JANUARY – DECEMBER 2025

THE TANZANIA HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS' COALITION (THRDC)

ANNUAL PROGRESSIVE REPORT

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MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR



The year 2025 reflects measurable institutional consolidation, expanded protection coverage, and strengthened coordination architecture across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. Implementation under the third year of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan generated demonstrable progress in membership growth, decentralized engagement, emergency response readiness, and structured advocacy interventions. Zonal coordination mechanisms recorded increased functionality, institutional diagnostics strengthened internal accountability systems, and capacity-building interventions enhanced operational competencies among Human Rights Defenders across thematic portfolios. In Zanzibar, structured engagement with the Judiciary, CHRAGG, law enforcement institutions, and the House of Representatives improved institutional interface and policy dialogue coherence. Coordinated election-related civic interventions, legally grounded media responses, and expanded grassroots outreach reinforced THRDC’s position as a credible national protection and coordination platform. These outcomes demonstrate strengthened institutional resilience and disciplined operational execution within a compliance-sensitive civic environment.

Strategic analysis and evidence generation were significantly reinforced during 2025. The Coalition undertook a comprehensive USAID funding cut impact assessment to evaluate liquidity exposure, programmatic vulnerability, and operational continuity risks affecting civil society organizations across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. In parallel, a national Capacity Assessment and Gap Analysis for CSOs generated diagnostic data on governance



systems, compliance preparedness, financial management controls, and program delivery constraints. Findings informed adaptive programming and strategic recalibration. Institutional reform outcomes were also realized through an assessment conducted under THRDC–Zanzibar in collaboration with the Zanzibar Law School, which directly contributed to strengthening governance architecture within the Zanzibar Law Society and supported the structured recruitment of a Chief Executive Officer to professionalize administrative leadership. These evidence-based interventions strengthened institutional performance ecosystems beyond the Coalition itself.

Operational systems modernization marked a defining internal milestone. Membership management structures were re-engineered to enhance proximity engagement, responsiveness, and service delivery efficiency. The Coalition transitioned from paper-based reporting modalities to a Digital Information Management System under an upgraded MEAL framework, strengthening data traceability, real-time monitoring capacity, and internal compliance control. Internal governance instruments were refined through targeted policy revisions affecting both THRDC and THRDC–Zanzibar structures, while constitutional amendments within the Zanzibar framework advanced institutional autonomy and eligibility for direct resource mobilization.

A defining structural shift in 2025 was the changing global donor architecture and evolving geopolitical landscape, which significantly altered funding predictability for human rights actors. Reduced bilateral assistance flows and tightening development finance priorities required strategic recalibration. In response, THRDC initiated the formal process of establishing a Human Rights Grants Facility dedicated to domestic resource mobilization for human rights NGOs in Tanzania. The objective is to develop a sustainable financing instrument capable of mitigating financial volatility, strengthening liquidity buffers for member organizations, and reducing dependency on externally driven funding cycles. This initiative is designed as a long-term institutional resilience mechanism, aimed at addressing structural funding fragility affecting HRDs and aligned organizations. The Human Rights Grants facility will prioritize transparency, governance integrity, and accountable capital stewardship while creating a domestically anchored financing ecosystem for civic actors operating in constrained environments.

Strategic partnerships were further diversified during the year. Collaboration with the European Union and UNESCO expanded technical cooperation and programmatic alignment, reinforcing international legitimacy and institutional credibility. Internal reforms informed by the 2024 assessments strengthened two specialized desks: the Defender with Disability Initiative Desk and the Network of Frontline Environmental Human Rights Defenders Desk. These structural enhancements improved thematic precision, inclusion safeguards, and targeted protection responses for high-risk defender categories. We take institutional pride in advancing evidence-based programming, reinforcing risk assessment frameworks, improving

communication discipline, and consolidating structured monitoring systems across operational units. Preparatory follow-up toward the Watetezi House initiative continued at the compliance and planning level, ensuring procedural integrity prior to transition into construction phases.

These achievements are grounded in collective governance and disciplined leadership. I extend sincere appreciation to the Board of Directors for strategic stewardship and fiduciary oversight, and to the Zanzibar Board of Trustees for reinforcing institutional governance within the Zanzibar structure. Recognition is equally due to the Director of Operations and the Mainland team for sustaining national coordination architecture, and to the Zanzibar team under the Zanzibar National Coordinator for strengthening field-level execution across Unguja and Pemba. Continued engagement with regional institutions, development partners, diplomatic missions, and allied civil society actors enhanced advocacy leverage, protection reach, and policy dialogue platforms.

As we transition into 2026, institutional priorities will focus on consolidating decentralized protection systems, operationalizing the Endowment Fund Facility, institutionalizing advanced data integrity frameworks, expanding structured policy engagement mechanisms, scaling thematic protection desks in response to emerging risks, and deepening domestic resource mobilization strategies. THRDC remains firmly committed to strengthening resilience, safeguarding civic space, and advancing a secure, accountable, and enabling environment for Human Rights Defenders throughout Tanzania.

Advocate Onesmo Olengurumwa

THRDC National Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The 2025 reporting period reflects substantive institutional consolidation and expansion of THRDC’s national protection architecture under the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. Membership increased from 244 in 2024 to 315 registered organizations in 2025, organized within 11 Zonal Coordinating Units (ZCUs) and operating across 14 thematic human rights domains in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. This quantitative growth was matched by strengthened portfolio governance, standardized zonal reporting protocols, and reinforced vertical accountability between decentralized structures and the national Secretariat. In Zanzibar, formal amendment of the THRDC–Zanzibar Constitution and revision of the Board of Trustees Charter clarified fiduciary mandates, oversight functions, and institutional decision-making thresholds, reducing governance fragmentation and strengthening regulatory compliance architecture. Organizational continuity was maintained through a 100% staff retention rate across 19 full-time personnel, complemented by strategic recruitment of specialized expertise in protection, monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL), and digital security. These structural adjustments enhanced internal control systems, improved operational discipline, and reinforced institutional capacity to execute protection and advocacy mandates within a compliance-intensive and politically constrained civic environment.

Protection and emergency response mechanisms were operationalized at scale during the 2025 General Election cycle, producing measurable legal and accountability outcomes. The Coalition provided direct legal representation to 1,343 Human Rights Defenders across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, resulting in 1,256 releases through acquittals, prosecutorial withdrawal, or procedural discharge. Seventy-eight cases remained pending at the close of the reporting period, primarily involving charges of treason, arson, and armed robbery. Systematic monitoring and case tracking documented 42 incidents of abductions or enforced disappearances and 2,045 election-related arrests, generating verified data for legal intervention, public reporting, and structured engagement with oversight institutions. Trial observation was conducted in high-profile proceedings, including the treason case of Hon. Tundu Lissu, strengthening transparency and due process oversight within politically sensitive prosecutions.



Strategic litigation reinforced structural legal safeguards. The Court of Appeal decision in *Onesmo Olengurumwa v. Attorney General* [2025] TZCA 587 nullified statutory restrictions on *locus standi* and restored the constitutional right of civic actors to institute public interest litigation. This judgment expanded access to constitutional remedies and strengthened judicial oversight of executive action. Field-based accountability interventions complemented courtroom advocacy. A fact-finding mission conducted in Kilindi District documented the eviction of approximately 2,600 villagers without adequate compensation or consultation, producing evidence for targeted land rights advocacy and protection planning for affected defenders. Collectively, these interventions strengthened legal support infrastructure, improved documentation of violations, and reinforced constitutional accountability mechanisms during a high-risk electoral period.



Democratic governance and policy advocacy interventions resulted in measurable integration of human rights standards into national political and electoral processes during the 2025 General Election cycle. Through structured engagement under the Civil Society Election Manifesto framework, civil society priorities were formally incorporated into 93% of ACT Wazalendo's manifesto commitments, 85% of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) commitments, and 80% of NCCR-Mageuzi commitments, establishing a documented policy reference point for post-election accountability. The Coalition secured 35 official permits for election observation and voter education, operationalizing the CSO Election Barometer as a structured monitoring instrument for tracking compliance with constitutional freedoms. Concurrently, 24 press statements were issued nationally, each reaching an average of 33 media outlets, strengthening public oversight and contemporaneous documentation of violations. Targeted engagement with the Zanzibar Judiciary, the Police Force, and the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) clarified procedural safeguards relating to summons, bail, and enforcement practices, contributing to improved predictability and reduced exposure of civic actors to arbitrary administrative action during the electoral period.



Institutional capacity strengthening and digital systems reform improved operational resilience, compliance discipline, and data governance across THRDC's decentralized structures in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. Targeted technical interventions reached more than 1,500 stakeholders, including 1,030 CSO representatives who strengthened competencies in statutory compliance, financial management, governance controls, and internal accountability systems.

A total of 150 journalists underwent structured digital security and threat analysis training, with post-assessment results recording a 70% aggregate knowledge increase, translating into improved application of encrypted communication tools, secure documentation practices, and risk-informed reporting during the electoral period. Organizational data management transitioned from paper-based aggregation to a fully operational Digital Information Management System integrated within an upgraded MEAL framework, improving indicator tracking, audit traceability, and real-time performance reporting. These systems reforms were reinforced by advanced technical certification of key personnel in Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights through Regenesys Business School and the University of Pretoria, strengthening internal digital risk management capacity.

Institutional sustainability and fiduciary governance were maintained despite contraction of bilateral funding streams and increased geopolitical volatility affecting civil society financing. THRDC achieved 88% coverage of its 2025 approved operational budget through diversified resource mobilization, including new grants from UNESCO, Save the Children, and the Embassy of Sweden. Internal capital stabilization measures were reinforced through continued investment of the Solidarity Fund in the Unit Trust of Tanzania (UTT), generating incremental returns while preserving liquidity for emergency response functions. Governance structures for the Human Rights Grant Facility were advanced through completion of trustee selection procedures, positioning the mechanism for formal registration and operationalization. Financial oversight systems were validated through clean audit opinions for both the Save the Children-funded MKUA project and the broader Strategic Plan portfolio, confirming compliance with donor regulations and internal financial controls. In parallel, a sector-wide USAID funding suspension impact assessment was conducted to quantify liquidity exposure, operational risk, and programmatic vulnerability among CSOs in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, informing contingency planning and adaptive resource allocation.



Decentralized thematic programming and regional protection leadership strengthened THRDC's operational footprint within the national and East African human rights ecosystem. Member organizations processed 1,103 legal cases across multiple rights domains and reached 197,000 individuals through structured radio-based legal awareness outreach, expanding access to justice and public legal literacy at community level. Youth-focused interventions reached

1,197 young people through structured engagement platforms, with measured learning outcomes indicating an increase in average competency scores on sexual and reproductive health and rights from 45% to 88%. In Zanzibar, coordinated legal aid mechanisms facilitated access to justice for approximately 18,000 individuals across all 11 districts, with prioritization of women and children facing heightened vulnerability. At regional level, assumption of the Chairmanship of the East African Protection Hub strengthened cross-border referral coordination, expedited escalation pathways for high-risk cases, and enhanced Tanzania's representation within regional protection governance structures. These aggregated outcomes provide an operational basis for 2026 priorities, including formalization of the Human Rights Grant Facility and expansion of domestic resource mobilization to mitigate exposure to external funding volatility.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 THRDC in a Nutshell

The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) is a national, non-governmental and non-partisan membership-based institution mandated to promote, protect, and advance the safety, security, and operational resilience of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) across the United Republic of Tanzania. The Coalition is legally constituted under the Non-Governmental Organizations Act, 2002 (Act No. 24) for Mainland Tanzania and registered as a Society under the Societies Act, 1995 (Act No. 6) for Zanzibar. This dual registration framework provides statutory recognition within both jurisdictions and enables coordinated national-level operations within the Union governance structure.

THRDC functions as an umbrella coordination and protection platform comprising over 315 member organizations distributed across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, organized within 11 Zonal Coordinating Units (ZCUs) and operating across 14 thematic human rights domains. Institutional operations are administered through the Headquarters in Dar es Salaam and a fully operational sister office in Unguja, Zanzibar. Normatively anchored in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998), the Coalition advances an enabling civic environment by delivering integrated protection services, legal and emergency response mechanisms, institutional capacity development, strategic litigation support, and evidence-based advocacy at both national and grassroots levels.

Vision: A free and secure working environment for Human Rights Defenders in Tanzania.

Mission: To empower and protect HRDs through protection programs, strategic engagement with government and stakeholders, capacity building, emergency and medical support, security management initiatives, and linkages with national, regional, and international human rights mechanisms.

Overall Goal: To contribute to the growth of civic space in which HRDs' working environment is improved.

Guided by institutional values of human dignity, integrity, responsiveness, accountability, inclusivity, professionalism, and collective solidarity, THRDC operates as a national coordination and protection architecture for Human Rights Defenders. These normative principles inform its governance systems, operational protocols, and engagement strategies across both Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. The Coalition maintains structured engagement with state institutions, regulatory authorities, civil society platforms, development partners, and United Nations human rights mechanisms to advance a predictable, rules-based civic environment. Through integrated protection programming, policy dialogue, evidence-informed advocacy, and institutional capacity reinforcement, THRDC strengthens systemic safeguards for HRDs, enhances organizational resilience, and consolidates recognition of defenders as legitimate actors within democratic governance, rule of law frameworks, and sustainable national development processes.



Figure 1: Show summary of THRDC, vision, mission, overall goal and programs

1.2. Situation of Civic Space and Human Rights Defenders in Tanzania 2025

The 2025 period constituted a volatile operational epoch for civic space and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Tanzania, characterized by heightened systemic risks during the pre-election, during and immediate post-election phases of the October 2025 General Elections. While the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977, theoretically enshrines fundamental liberties under Articles 18 (Freedom of Expression), 20 (Freedom of Association), and 21 (Right to Participate in Public Affairs), the *de facto* enjoyment of these rights was severely curtailed. The implementation gap was widened by the invocation of statutory claw-back clauses under Article 30(2) of the Constitution, which allows for derogation in the interest of public order and national security. Furthermore, Tanzania operated without a *sui generis* legislative framework to domesticate the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, leaving HRDs devoid of specific statutory immunity or recognition. Consequently, the protection regime remained reliant on general constitutional provisions, which were frequently superseded by the restrictive application of the Non-Governmental Organizations Act, 2002 (as amended in 2019) and the Societies Act [Cap. 337]. This created a compliance-heavy ecosystem defined by regulatory asphyxiation, arbitrary surveillance, and the weaponization of administrative discretion against those engaged in accountability and observation functions.

Building upon this restrictive regulatory backdrop, the year 2025 witnessed a surge in arrests and prosecutions targeting civic actors through the strategic application of the *Cybercrimes Act, 2015*, the *Penal Code [Cap. 16]*, and the *Media Services Act, 2016*. Authorities frequently invoked broadly defined provisions, such as Section 16 of the Cybercrimes Act regarding the publication of false information and Section 63 of the Penal Code concerning sedition, to criminalize legitimate dissent. This legal arsenal was further expanded by the *Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, 2020*, which were used to police digital speech. Procedural rights were routinely compromised; despite facing bailable charges, numerous defenders were subjected to prolonged pre-trial detention through the denial of police bond or the imposition of onerous bail conditions by the courts. Furthermore, the disturbing practice of “gate arrests” where suspects are re-arrested by police immediately upon being granted bail or discharged by the court persisted, raising serious questions regarding adherence to due process and the rule of law. The election period marked a significant escalation in severity, characterized by the weaponization of unbailable offences, including treason and economic sabotage, against senior opposition leaders. These proceedings were typically conducted under heavy security deployment, creating an intimidatory atmosphere that fostered a chilling effect on journalism and civic participation.

The constriction of civic space transcended legal harassment, manifesting in grave physical violations against the integrity of the person. 42 distinct incidents of abductions and physical assaults targeting activists, journalists, and political actors were documented. These violations frequently followed a disturbing pattern of *incommunicado detention*, characterized by night-time raids conducted by unidentified individuals often suspected of being state agents. Victims reported subjected to torture and degrading treatment. Despite the severity of these allegations, a pervasive culture of impunity remained evident; public investigations were opaque, and conclusive accountability reports were virtually non-existent. This accountability vacuum is structurally reinforced by Tanzania's continued failure to ratify the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED)*, thereby limiting victims' access to international recourse. Consequently, the prevalence of these unresolved cases fostered a climate of fear, forcing many defenders to adopt survival strategies such as strategic withdrawal and self-censorship to mitigate risks to their personal safety.

Parallel to the deterioration of physical security, the digital civic space underwent systematic dismantling. In 2025, the enforcement of prohibitive licensing requirements under the *Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, 2020* resulted in the deregistration or blocking of over 80,000 blogs and online forums, effectively silencing independent digital voices. This regulatory purge was compounded by administrative censorship targeting traditional media; journalists faced arbitrary suspension of licenses, confiscation of equipment, and regulatory summonses under the *Media Services Act, 2016*, designed to induce self-censorship. Furthermore, network interference escalated during critical political moments, with documented cases of *throttling* restricting access to major social media platforms, including X, Clubhouse and TikTok during elections. During the election period, these disruptions evolved into targeted internet shutdowns, violating the right to seek, receive, and impart information. These measures created an information blackout that materially undermined electoral transparency and impeded civil society's capacity to conduct real-time election monitoring and independent verification of results.

The constitutional right to peaceful assembly under *Article 20* remained severely curtailed through the coercive application of the *Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act [Cap. 322]* and the *Public Order Act*. Authorities systematically conflated the statutory requirement for mere notification of gatherings with a mandatory permit regime, effectively granting the police veto power over civic and political activities. This administrative discretion was disproportionately weaponized against opposition parties and civil society organizations, where internal meetings and public rallies were frequently declared unlawful and dispersed by force. The restriction of assembly intensified during the election cycle, characterized by the deployment

of riot police to block venues and the preventive arrest of organizers under the pretext of preserving public tranquility. These measures did not merely regulate public order but actively criminalized grassroots mobilization, stripping citizens of their collective voice and rendering the right to freedom of association virtually inoperable in practice.

Judicial recourse offered a paradoxical landscape of progressive jurisprudence undermined by executive non-compliance. While the appellate courts occasionally reaffirmed the doctrine of *locus standi* in public interest litigation, expanding access to justice for constitutional petitions, the enforcement of these declaratory judgments remained severely compromised. Litigants facing politically sensitive charges encountered systemic delays and procedural obstructions, often invoking the *Government Proceedings Act [Cap. 5]* to stall the execution of decrees against state entities. In cases involving enforced disappearances and unlawful detention, the efficacy of *Habeas Corpus* applications was nullified by prohibitive evidentiary thresholds, where the burden of proof was rigidly placed on victims' families despite the state's monopoly on information. Furthermore, Tanzania's engagement with supranational adjudication mechanisms, specifically the *East African Court of Justice (EACJ)* and the *African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR)*, was characterized by selective implementation. The state frequently disregarded adverse rulings on civic rights, rendering international oversight mechanisms practically unenforceable and deepening the erosion of public confidence in litigation as a viable pathway for accountability.

The operational viability of the civil society sector was precipitated by an acute financial liquidity crisis, exacerbating the vulnerability of Human Rights Defenders. The abrupt recalibration of bilateral development assistance, most notably the suspension of funding streams from the United States (USAID), triggered a sector-wide contraction. This withdrawal of critical donor support necessitated immediate austerity measures within CSOs, resulting in the termination of essential programmatic interventions, extensive staff retrenchment, and the scaling down of legal aid clinics. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and grassroots entities, often operating without fiscal reserves or unrestricted core funding, faced existential threats. Their capacity to pivot to alternative resource mobilization was legally constrained by the stringent financial disclosure and fundraising regulations under the *Non-Governmental Organizations Act (Amendments), 2019*, which limits domestic fundraising flexibility. Consequently, the sector experienced a severe deficit in rapid response capabilities; at a juncture of heightened electoral risk, CSOs lacked the requisite liquidity to underwrite strategic public interest litigation or sustain comprehensive documentation of violations.

Compounding the general operational threats, marginalized defenders faced aggravated risks due to intersecting forms of discrimination. Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) were subjected to distinct gendered attacks, including *technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)* and coordinated campaigns of *doxing* and reputational slander intended to enforce patriarchal silence. Similarly, defenders with disabilities encountered systemic exclusion; the judicial and security infrastructure consistently failed to provide *reasonable accommodation* as mandated by the *Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010*, effectively barring their access to justice and equal protection under the law. Perhaps most critically, Land and Environmental Rights Defenders (LERDs) bore the brunt of the state's militarized conservation approach. They faced a pattern of *Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)*, where criminal charges ranging from trespass to economic sabotage; were weaponized to stifle legitimate dissent regarding land tenure. This was particularly evident in disputes involving the *Wildlife Conservation Act, 2009* versus customary land rights recognized under the *Village Land Act, 1999*, where forced evictions and the seizure of livestock were executed without adherence to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) standards.

Notwithstanding the pervasive climate of repression, the Tanzanian human rights community demonstrated remarkable resilience through strategic coalition-building and rapid response mechanisms. Civil society networks, in collaboration with diplomatic missions and regional partners, operationalized critical *protection infrastructures*, including emergency relocation funds, *pro bono* legal defense for arbitrary arrests, and real-time documentation of violations. These interventions were bolstered by sustained engagement with supranational oversight bodies, such as the *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)* and the *UN Special Procedures*, which served to amplify domestic grievances on the international stage. However, these measures functioned primarily as reactive mitigation strategies rather than systemic solutions. The civic space remains structurally fragile due to the entrenchment of restrictive statutes and the absence of a dedicated legal framework for the protection of defenders. Consequently, the normalization of civic engagement requires more than ad-hoc resilience; it necessitates a comprehensive legislative overhaul to harmonize domestic laws with international standards, specifically through the enactment of a *Human Rights Defenders Protection Act*. Such a statutory regime is the prerequisite for dismantling the current culture of impunity and establishing a predictable, rights-respecting environment consistent with Tanzania's obligations under the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*.



Figure 2: Show the infographics data on the crackdown of human right in Tanzania for the year 2025

1.3 Overview THRDC Strategic Outcomes

The THRDC Strategic Plan (2023–2027) is operationalized through two mutually reinforcing strategic outcomes that collectively constitute an integrated protection and institutional strengthening framework. These outcomes are designed to advance a structured ecosystem for safeguarding Human Rights Defenders, consolidating civic space resilience, and securing the Coalition’s long-term institutional viability through strengthened governance, operational systems, and resource sustainability mechanisms.

1.3.1 Outcome One: Preventive Protection and Security Management of Human Rights Defenders

Outcome One constitutes a core operational pillar of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition and reflects the Coalition's primary protection mandate. The outcome is structured to safeguard the physical security, legal integrity, psychosocial wellbeing, and institutional continuity of Human Rights Defenders operating in Tanzania. Its strategic intent is to ensure that HRDs are able to undertake legitimate human rights work within a predictable, secure, and rights-respecting environment despite recurrent exposure to surveillance, harassment, criminalization, and regulatory pressure. The outcome therefore positions protection not as an isolated intervention, but as a system-level function embedded within advocacy, coordination, and institutional strengthening mechanisms.

Implementation of this outcome is operationalized through four interlinked intermediary outcomes that collectively constitute an integrated protection architecture. The framework is deliberately preventive in orientation, prioritizing early risk identification, structured preparedness, capacity reinforcement, and coordinated response protocols over reactive crisis management. This design recognizes that sustainable protection is achieved through institutional resilience, coordinated networks, and anticipatory safeguards rather than isolated emergency interventions. The preventive model also integrates legal support, risk assessment, security management, and engagement with state and non-state actors to reduce exposure to harm before escalation occurs.

Each intermediary outcome is underpinned by defined outputs, implementation strategies, operational activities, and performance indicators to enable structured delivery, measurable progress tracking, and adaptive management. This results-based configuration ensures systematic monitoring of protection trends, timely identification of emerging risks, and calibrated response measures aligned with the Strategic Plan horizon toward 2027.

1.3.1.1 Intermediary Outcome 1.1: Membership Empowerment and Public Engagement

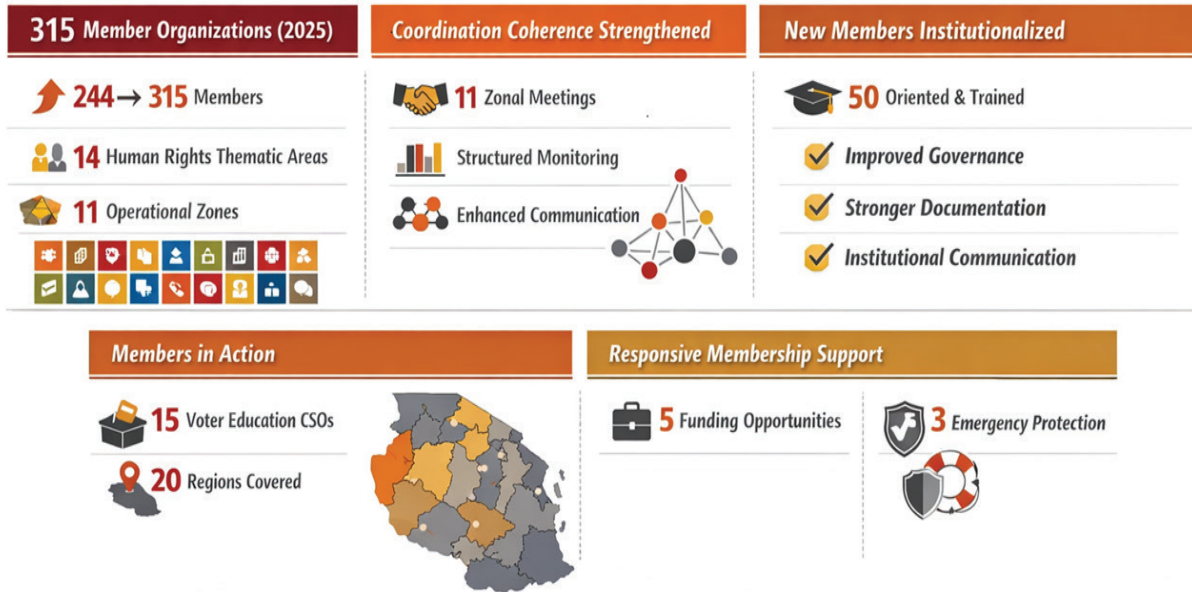
This intermediary outcome is anchored in strengthening institutional capacity, operational resilience, and collective influence of THRDC members while expanding structured public engagement on the promotion and protection of human rights and the role of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in democratic governance. The strategic intent is to move beyond numerical growth of membership toward qualitative institutional enablement, improved coordination

architecture, and enhanced responsiveness to emerging risks. During the reporting period, THRDC delivered sustained technical backstopping, capacity development, emergency and legal support, resource dissemination, and structured communication platforms aimed at reinforcing solidarity, improving accountability linkages, and enabling meaningful participation of HRDs across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. These interventions contributed to strengthened coordination interfaces between the Secretariat, Zonal Coordination Units (ZCUs), and grassroots defenders.

As of September 2025, THRDC comprised 315 member organizations operating across 11 geographical zones and working within 14 thematic areas related to human rights protection and advocacy. Through decentralized zonal structures, interventions were extended to regional, district, ward, and village levels, enhancing geographic coverage and localized responsiveness. By 2027, this intermediary outcome envisages demonstrably strengthened capacity and resilience of members and stakeholders to prevent, mitigate, and respond to risks affecting HRDs. Key outputs under this outcome include:

- (a) Strengthening the membership portfolio within the THRDC Secretariat through structured systems and performance tracking.
- (b) Fully operationalizing Zonal Coordination Units (ZCUs) across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar to ensure decentralized coordination and engagement.
- (c) Establishing a model Watetezi House and Resource Centre for HRDs in Dodoma City as a one-stop protection and support facility.
- (d) Advancing collective action on HRD-related issues at grassroots, national, regional, and international levels through coordinated advocacy and strategic engagement.

Strengthened institutional capacity, coordination coherence, and public engagement across THRDC membership in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar



A coordinated, compliant, and action-oriented membership system capable of collective advocacy, public engagement, and rapid protection response.

Figure 3: Show infographics data for the general performance of the THRDC membership and public engagement

Core implementation areas during the reporting cycle included targeted capacity development on digital and physical security, advocacy methodologies, statutory and tax compliance; structured public awareness campaigns; focused engagement with women HRDs, pastoralist defenders, and other marginalized groups; and strengthening ZCUs to enhance operational coherence at community level. Collectively, these interventions positioned THRDC to transition from coordination-focused support to performance-driven institutional empowerment of its membership base.

1.3.1.2 Intermediary Outcome 1.2: Protection, Engagement, Research, and Advocacy

This intermediary outcome consolidates THRDC's protection mandate through an integrated architecture that combines preventive protection, structured research, legal accompaniment, and high-level policy engagement. The objective is to secure a legally compliant, predictable,

and enabling operating environment in which Human Rights Defenders can conduct legitimate human rights work without intimidation or administrative obstruction. Implementation is grounded in a systems-based approach that links incident documentation, legal analysis, rapid response coordination, and strategic advocacy to institutional accountability processes. During the reporting period, protection services were reinforced through coordinated case monitoring, structured legal follow-up, escalation of emblematic violations to appropriate accountability forums, and sustained engagement with oversight and justice-sector actors. These measures strengthened procedural safeguards, enhanced traceability of violations, and improved institutional responsiveness within a highly regulated civic context.

The operational design of this intermediary outcome integrates multiple strategic levers, including:

- (a) Evidence-based documentation of violations through fact-finding missions and analytical reporting.
- (b) Policy-oriented advocacy targeting regulatory reform and recognition of HRDs within national legal and policy frameworks.
- (c) Structured engagement with ministries, Parliament, judicial actors, law enforcement institutions, and constitutional oversight bodies.
- (d) Election-cycle monitoring and governance-focused research to assess compliance with rule of law standards.
- (e) Coordinated escalation of protection concerns to regional and international human rights mechanisms where domestic remedies proved inadequate.

Strategically, this outcome addresses structural drivers of civic space contraction, including restrictive legal provisions, administrative overreach, election-related risks, and inconsistent enforcement of constitutional guarantees. Emphasis was placed on strengthening accountability for unlawful arrests, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and misuse of regulatory powers, while simultaneously advancing dialogue on adoption and operationalization of a dedicated Human Rights Defenders Policy framework. Collectively, these interventions enhanced preventive protection capacity, reinforced institutional dialogue channels, and strengthened THRDC's leverage in influencing governance reforms at national, regional, and international levels.

1.3.1.3 Intermediary Outcome 1.3: Protection, Planning, and Risk Management

This intermediary outcome operationalizes a structured preventive protection framework aimed at institutionalizing anticipatory risk management systems for Human Rights Defenders, civil society organizations, and relevant state and justice-sector actors. Positioned within Outcome One, it shifts protection from ad hoc emergency response toward systematized preparedness, structured vulnerability assessment, and long-term resilience planning. The strategic objective is to ensure that risks are identified at early stages, categorized according to severity and likelihood, and mitigated through coordinated intervention protocols. During the reporting period, protection architecture was strengthened through integration of risk analysis into program design, reinforcement of safety planning methodologies, and alignment of organizational practices with compliance-sensitive regulatory environments. This approach enhanced continuity of operations for HRDs operating in both high-risk urban centers and underserved rural contexts.

Implementation under this intermediary outcome was anchored in the following technical pillars:

- (a) Institutionalization of routine risk assessments and maintenance of structured risk registers to improve traceability and early warning capacity.
- (b) Capacity development on digital security, physical safety, secure communications, and data protection standards.
- (c) Integration of statutory and regulatory compliance advisory services to reduce exposure to administrative sanctions and criminalization risks.
- (d) Human rights and rule of law training targeting both HRDs and selected state actors to strengthen mutual awareness of legal obligations and safeguards.
- (e) Embedding risk management protocols within organizational governance systems to ensure sustainability beyond project cycles.

Collectively, these measures enhanced preventive readiness, reduced operational vulnerability, and strengthened institutional resilience across the Coalition's network. By mainstreaming protection planning into organizational systems and expanding competencies among both rights holders and duty bearers, THRDC reinforced a culture of compliance, preparedness, and coordinated response capable of sustaining human rights work under complex and evolving risk conditions.

Strengthening Protection, Accountability, and Civic Space for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)



Figure 4: Show the overall strengthening of protection, Accountability and Civic Space for Human Right Defenders (HRDs)

1.3.1.4 Intermediary Outcome 1.4: Litigation, Emergency Support, and Rescue

This intermediary outcome consolidates THRDC's rapid response and remedial protection mandate by ensuring that Human Rights Defenders facing imminent threats, arrest, physical attack, or judicial harassment receive timely, coordinated, and multidimensional support. It operationalizes an integrated protection chain that combines emergency intervention, legal support medical and psychosocial stabilization, and safe relocation measures. The strategic objective is to prevent escalation of harm, safeguard due process rights, and preserve operational continuity of defenders and, where necessary, their dependents. During the reporting period, the protection ecosystem was strengthened through structured threat monitoring, activation of emergency response protocols, and reinforcement of referral pathways linking defenders to legal practitioners, medical service providers, psychosocial support, and safe shelter mechanisms. This integrated approach enhanced responsiveness, reduced fragmentation of support services, and improved survivability of high-risk incidents.

Implementation under this intermediary outcome was structured around the following operational components:

- (a) Provision of emergency legal representation, including bail applications, constitutional litigation, and strategic defense in cases of arbitrary arrest and criminalization.
- (b) Deployment of rapid relocation and safe extraction measures in high-risk situations.
- (c) Delivery of medical assistance and psychosocial support to survivors of physical attack, torture, or trauma-related incidents.
- (d) Conduct of trial observation and fact-finding missions to reinforce procedural fairness and documentation integrity.
- (e) Operationalization of a digital Watetezi incident reporting application to strengthen real-time documentation and early warning systems.
- (f) Strengthening of national and zonal Rapid Response Hubs to improve decentralized activation capacity and reduce response time.

Collectively, these measures reinforced both immediate protective capacity and longer-term accountability mechanisms. By integrating litigation, emergency response, and structured documentation within a coordinated protection framework, THRDC enhanced deterrence against reprisals, strengthened access to justice for defenders, and institutionalized a resilient protection architecture capable of addressing both acute threats and systemic violations.

1.3.2 Outcome Two: Institutional Building and Sustainability

Outcome Two consolidates THRDC's long-term institutional viability by strengthening governance architecture, financial sustainability, operational efficiency, and compliance integrity across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. The strategic intent is to transition from project-dependent functionality toward systems-driven institutional resilience capable of withstanding funding volatility, regulatory shifts, and geopolitical donor realignments. Implementation under this outcome reinforces internal control mechanisms, risk governance, fiduciary accountability, and structured performance management. Regular internal and external audits, policy harmonization processes, compliance reviews, and contingency planning frameworks are embedded to ensure regulatory conformity and organizational credibility. Parallel investment in human capital development, succession planning, and staff wellbeing strengthens organizational continuity and leadership depth, reducing operational vulnerability and enhancing institutional memory retention.

Institutional sustainability is further advanced through:

- (a) Diversification of resource mobilization streams, including structured fundraising strategies and exploration of domestic resource mobilization instruments such as a trust-based endowment facility and a Human Rights Grants Facility.
- (b) Governance strengthening through Board reform processes, policy upgrades, and enhanced oversight functions, including Zanzibar-specific constitutional and structural refinements.
- (c) Modernization of financial management systems and migration toward digital information management platforms to improve transparency, efficiency, and real-time reporting accuracy.
- (d) Expansion and consolidation of the Zanzibar office through targeted staff recruitment, systems development, and strengthened Board of Trustees oversight.
- (e) Upgrading of office infrastructure, ICT architecture, and zonal facilities to enhance operational functionality and service delivery capacity.

Collectively, Outcome Two positions THRDC as a compliance-driven, financially accountable, and structurally resilient institution capable of sustaining protection services, coordinating national membership structures, and maintaining strategic influence within Tanzania's evolving civic and governance landscape.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

2.1 Outcome one: Protection and Security Management

Over the year 2025, THRDC achieved substantial outcome-level progress in strengthening protection, security management, and institutional resilience across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar through an integrated empowerment, coordination, and protection framework. THRDC Membership was increased to 315 in 2025 from 244 in 2024 across 11 operational zones and 14 thematic areas. Furthermore, the coalition improved governance systems and strengthened vertical accountability between zonal structures and the Secretariat. Decentralized coordination mechanisms became fully operational, enabling predictable information flow, risk-responsive oversight, and coherent engagement during the 2025 electoral cycle. Preventive protection capacity was significantly enhanced through large-scale security management, legal, policy, and compliance interventions reaching over 1,500 HRDS, resulting in measurable competency gains, strengthened risk mitigation culture, and improved operational preparedness among HRDs, journalists, CSOs, and legal practitioners. Reactive protection systems were simultaneously reinforced, with 1,343 HRDs accessing legal representation, 1,256 securing release, and emergency relocation, medical, and humanitarian support provided to defenders and dependents at imminent risk. Strategic litigation delivered a landmark constitutional outcome restoring public interest litigation, while structured research, documentation, and public accountability mechanisms strengthened policy leverage and deterrence.

The achievement of these outcomes is further elaborated through the results presented below, which demonstrate a coherent shift toward strengthened institutional protection and coordinated security management across THRDC's national architecture.

2.1.1 Intermediary Outcome 1.1 Members Empowerment and Public Engagement

Intermediary Outcome 1.1 realized consolidated progress in strengthening institutional capacity, coordination coherence, and public engagement functionality across THRDC's national membership architecture in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. As of 2025, THRDC comprised 315 members organized within 11 operational zones and engaged across 14 human rights thematic areas, reflecting sustained institutional reach. Membership increased from 244 to 315 formally registered organizational members, demonstrating controlled portfolio

expansion aligned with quality assurance thresholds. Eleven zonal coordination meetings were convened, structured monitoring engagements were conducted, and 50 newly admitted members underwent institutional orientation and compliance-focused capacity strengthening. Post-engagement assessments indicated improved governance practices, strengthened documentation systems, enhanced communication interfaces between the Secretariat and members, and increased participation in coordinated advocacy initiatives. Fifteen member organizations implemented voter education interventions across 20 regions, while five were linked to prospective funding opportunities and three received emergency protection support, indicating activation of both empowerment and protection subsystems.

At outcome level, performance reflects strengthened resilience, operational vibrancy, and improved stakeholder engagement capacity rather than discrete activity outputs. The Secretariat transitioned from a membership expansion model toward institutional enablement, reinforcing reporting discipline, risk mitigation awareness, thematic alignment, and conflict-sensitive programming standards in preparation for the 2025 electoral environment. Decentralized coordination mechanisms enhanced vertical accountability between zonal structures and the national Secretariat, reducing fragmentation risks and strengthening policy coherence. Preliminary groundwork for the Watetezi House advanced long-term protection infrastructure planning, complementing ongoing portfolio management reforms. Collectively, these quantified achievements demonstrate enhanced legitimacy of THRDC as a nationally coordinated protection and advocacy platform capable of sustaining structured member empowerment, expanding civic engagement reach, and consolidating institutional resilience across both Mainland and Zanzibar jurisdictions.

2.1.1.1 Output One: Membership Portfolio within the THRDC Secretariat is Improved



Figure 5: Picture show THRDC zonal coordinator attending empowerment meeting to capacitate them on their role and responsibilities in defending human rights

Improvement of the membership portfolio was achieved through systematic institutional diagnostics, structured thematic strengthening, and evidence-driven capacity reinforcement. A comprehensive capacity needs assessment across 14 thematic groups generated granular institutional intelligence on priority performance gaps, enabling delivery of tailored technical support to 50 newly admitted member organizations. Core competency gaps were addressed, strengthened thematic specialization, internal governance discipline, advocacy coherence, and operational alignment with Coalition priorities. Complementary reinforcement of HRD thematic networks included structured training of 52 grassroots defenders (28 male, 24 female) across three zones, with measured knowledge gains ranging between 35% and 45% in risk assessment, security management, and human rights documentation. Development of institutional action plans translated learning into operational safeguards, embedding structured risk mitigation frameworks within member organizations and enhancing resilience across the membership portfolio.

Institutional accountability and decentralized coordination mechanisms were further consolidated through structured consultation processes and public engagement platforms. A membership-wide perception survey generated 101 responses, with 95 members expressing satisfaction and 94% confirming effective communication systems, providing quantitative validation of institutional legitimacy and internal trust. Diagnostic findings on zonal leadership visibility and communication functionality informed standardization of coordination protocols and strengthening of decentralized governance mechanisms. Coalition-supported public engagement during the Day of the African Child mobilized over 50 CSOs in partnership with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare, reinforcing inter-sectoral alignment and coalition visibility. Strategic outreach in Unguja and Pemba engaged 25 stakeholders, improved membership data accuracy, informed AGM agenda prioritization, and yielded four new membership applications. Collectively, these interventions substantively enhanced membership management systems, strengthened thematic cohesion, and reinforced institutional legitimacy across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.



Figure 6: Show THRDC members during AGM held in Dodoma 2025

2.1.1.2 Output Two: ZCUs are Operationalized in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar

Operational functionality of Zonal Coordinating Units (ZCUs) was strengthened through structured leadership reinforcement and institutionalized coordination architecture across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. Ten empowerment sessions involving 11 zonal coordinators (4 female, 7 male) enhanced supervisory capacity, clarified reporting lines, and improved vertical communication between zonal structures and the Secretariat. Regular coordination forums, comprising 11 meetings (10 virtual and 1 physical), institutionalized predictable information exchange, joint planning discipline, and alignment of zonal workplans with Coalition strategic priorities. These mechanisms strengthened decentralized governance integrity, improved responsiveness to emerging human rights concerns, and enhanced coherence of zonal-level advocacy and protection interventions. Functional consolidation of ZCUs shifted coordination from ad hoc engagement to structured oversight, reinforcing accountability interfaces and strengthening the operational chain of command across both Mainland and Zanzibar.

Field-level institutional verification further deepened operationalization of zonal structures. Structured monitoring missions reached 61 members in Unga and Pemba and 11 member organizations within the Southern Highlands Zone (Mbeya, Rukwa, and Songwe), functioning as decentralized institutional audits and compliance validation exercises. Engagements improved accuracy of the membership database, strengthened mapping of active grassroots actors, and reinforced coordination linkages with local authorities and stakeholders. Outreach to 15 of 19 targeted organizations within the Southern Highlands Zone enhanced data integrity and clarified zonal oversight responsibilities. These combined interventions transformed ZCUs from nominal coordination units into functionally integrated governance platforms, strengthened decentralized accountability systems, and improved regional synchronization of membership oversight across the Coalition’s operational geography.



Figure 7: Show THRDC staff with ELIMISHA staff during the Zonal Visit in Northern Highland

2.1.2 Intermediary Outcome 1.2: Protection, Engagement, Research, and Advocacy

Intermediary Outcome 2 resulted in strengthened legal safeguards, expanded access to constitutional justice, and improved institutional responsiveness to Human Rights Defenders across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar during the 2025 electoral cycle. Despite heightened regulatory enforcement, digital communication controls, and increased criminal prosecution of civic actors, the protection ecosystem demonstrated greater structural resilience. A landmark constitutional shift was realized through the Court of Appeal decision in *Onesmo Olengurumwa v. Attorney General (Civil Appeal No. 134 of 2022) [2025] TZCA 587*, which nullified restrictive locus standi provisions and permanently reinstated the right of civic actors to file public interest litigation. This judgment expanded constitutional accountability mechanisms, strengthened judicial oversight of executive power, and reduced procedural barriers for rights-based litigation. Concurrent policy engagement advanced deliberations on the Draft Model National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, positioning defender protection within formal state reform discourse.

At protection delivery level, legal representation was extended to 1,343 HRDs nationwide, resulting in 1,256 releases through acquittals, withdrawals, or procedural discharge, indicating strengthened legal defense capacity and reduced exposure to prolonged detention. In Zanzibar, coordinated legal aid mechanisms reached approximately 18,000 individuals across all 11 districts, prioritizing women and children and reinforcing community-level access to justice. Structured policy mainstreaming through the Civil Society Election Manifesto secured measurable adoption of human rights commitments by major political parties, establishing a documented accountability framework beyond the electoral cycle. Regulatory predictability improved through development of an NGO Compliance Toolkit clarifying permitting processes under the Non-Governmental Organizations Act, while fiscal governance analysis of the 2025/2026 Budget allocations strengthened advocacy for institutional independence of oversight and justice bodies.

Evidence generation and structured public accountability mechanisms further consolidated the enabling environment. Twenty-four national press statements amplified documented violations, each reaching an average of 33 media outlets, strengthening public oversight. Major research outputs reached over 654 stakeholders immediately upon dissemination and informed sector-wide contingency planning. Structured dialogue platforms in Zanzibar and Mainland produced measurable knowledge gains from 37 percent to 79 percent on legal compliance and safety protocols. Engagements with the Judiciary, Police, CHRAGG, and

electoral authorities improved procedural safeguards for journalists and civic actors facing summonses, thereby reducing arbitrary administrative exposure during a politically sensitive period. Collectively, these results demonstrate strengthened institutional protection architecture, enhanced policy leverage, and improved operational resilience of HRDs within Tanzania's constrained civic environment.



Figure 8: Show the infographics data for improved legal reforms in Tanzania for the year 2025

2.1.2.1 Output One: Legal and Policy Frameworks Amended in Favour of Human Rights Defenders

Implementation under this output produced measurable improvements in regulatory clarity, constitutional safeguards, fiscal governance oversight, and operational protection standards affecting Human Rights Defenders across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. Structured legal

analysis of the *2025 Regulations for the Election of the President, Members of Parliament, and Councillors* informed formal evidence-based submissions to the National Independent Electoral Commission, contributing to refinement of electoral dispute management procedures and reinforcing constitutional compliance on participation, association, and expression. Concurrently, engagement on regulatory administration under the *Non-Governmental Organizations Act* resulted in development of a specialized NGO Compliance Toolkit in collaboration with oversight authorities, standardizing project permitting procedures and reducing discretionary enforcement practices. Targeted high-level engagement with revenue authorities advanced structured dialogue on taxation and fiscal compliance burdens affecting non-profit entities, initiating review processes aimed at improving predictability within the civil society operating environment.



Figure 9: Show the participants during the NGOs Tax Compliance events.

In Zanzibar, reform-oriented influence extended beyond fiscal review into operational policy safeguards. A structured governance analysis of the 2025/2026 Budget Speech for the President's Office (Constitution, Legal Affairs, Public Service and Good Governance) interrogated allocations to oversight, justice, and rule-of-law institutions, generating policy recommendations on adequacy of resourcing and institutional independence. This fiscal engagement was reinforced by strategic interface meetings with the Judiciary, the Police Force, and the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance, which strengthened procedural dialogue on due process standards, management of police summonses, bail practices, and protection-sensitive handling of journalists and civic actors during the electoral period.

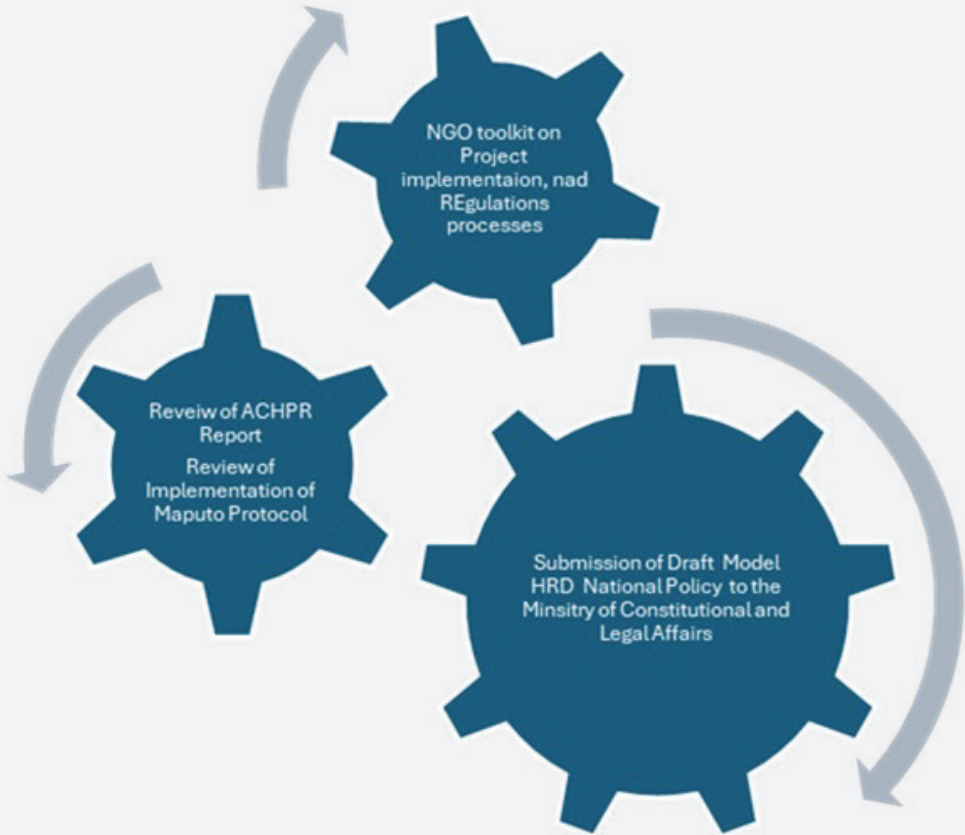


Figure 10: Advocate Paul Kisabo with Hon. Commissioner Idrissa Sow, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, following his election on 21 October 2025 in Banjul, The Gambia, during the 85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

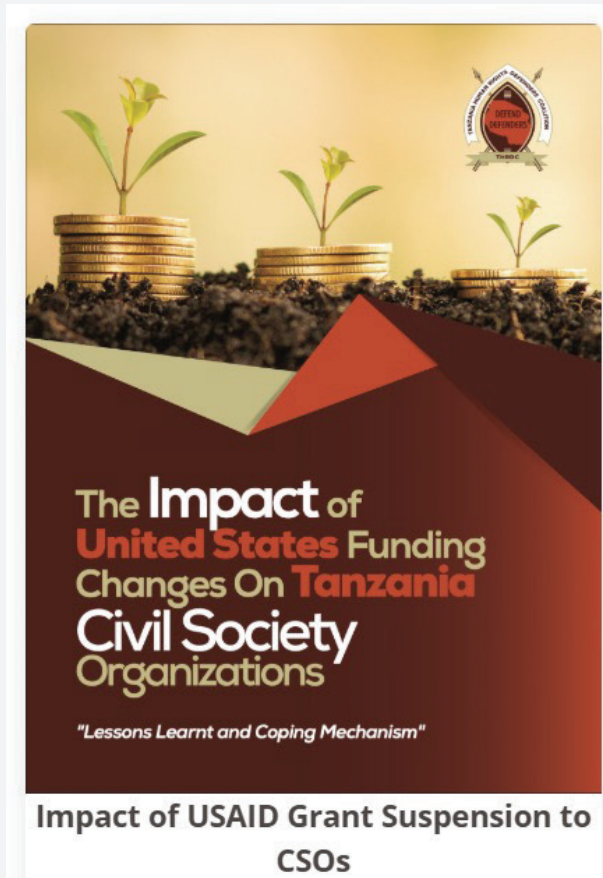
At regional compliance level, technical review of Tanzania's Draft State Report on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Maputo Protocol ensured integration of civil society-generated data into state reporting. The High-Level Strategic Policy Dialogue on the Draft Model National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders formalized inter-ministerial engagement and established a structured legislative pathway toward adoption of a dedicated national protection framework. Collectively, these interventions shifted defender protection from ad hoc advocacy toward institutionalized legal reform, fiscal accountability scrutiny, and operational safeguards embedded within both regulatory and enforcement practice.



Figure 11: Group photo with Hon. Eliakim Maswi, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs during the development of the HRDs policy.



2.1.2.2 Output Two: HRD-Related Issues Addressed through Research, Assessment, and Publications



Implementation under this output institutionalized evidence generation, structured documentation, and strategic communication as core protection instruments across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. A rapid-response communication framework resulted in issuance of 24 formal press statements nationally, particularly during the 2025 electoral cycle, addressing verified incidents of arbitrary arrest, abduction, regulatory enforcement, accreditation barriers, and restrictions on civic participation. Each statement reached an average of 33 media outlets, reinforcing deterrence value and public accountability. In Zanzibar, coordinated regulatory engagement through the Zanzibar Media Committee consolidated collective responses to summonses and administrative directives, strengthening defensibility of media actors.

Analytical production was consolidated through publication of the 2024 Human Rights Situation Report, the Impact of U.S. Aid Suspension Assessment¹, the Zanzibar Media and Human Rights Report 2025, and the CSO Election Barometer. These outputs converted monitoring data into structured policy intelligence used by over 654 stakeholders, including oversight bodies, diplomatic missions, and development partners.

Electoral governance engagement generated measurable policy traction and institutional learning. Structured advocacy under the CSO Election Manifesto secured documented policy uptake of 93% by ACT Wazalendo, 85% by Chama Cha Mapinduzi, and 80% by NCCR-Mageuzi, embedding civil society priorities within dominant party platforms. Thirty-five member organizations obtained formal election observation and voter education permits, with 10 implementing civic education programs nationwide, including Zanzibar.

¹ THRDC - Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition

Complementary forensic documentation of internet disruptions, accreditation constraints, and regulatory enforcement trends strengthened evidence bases for post-election accountability. Fiscal governance analysis of the Zanzibar Budget 2025/2026 interrogated allocations to oversight and justice institutions, expanding advocacy into public finance scrutiny.



Figure 12: Show THRDC engaged with CCM on the submission of 2025 CSOs election manifesto

SN	NAME OF POLITICAL PARTY	ABBREVIATION	%
1	ACT Wazalendo	ACTA	93%
2	Alliance for Democratic Change	ADC	43%
3	Chama Cha Mapinduzi	CCM	85%
4	Chama Cha Ukombozi wa Umma	CHAUMMA	57%
5	Civic United Front	CUF	73%
	NCCR- MAGEUZI	NCCR	80%

National dialogue on rule-of-law and journalist safety yielded knowledge increases from 37% to 79%, catalyzing adoption of internal safety protocols and gender policies within media institutions and reinforcing structured coordination with law enforcement bodies. Collectively, these interventions demonstrate strengthened research-to-policy translation capacity, improved institutional responsiveness, and expanded accountability mechanisms for the protection of Human Rights Defenders.

Two national dialogues on rule of law and policy reform were conducted. The Dialogue convened 180 participants (112 women, 68 men) strengthening collaboration between government institutions and civil society organizations. The dialogue enhanced CSO capacity on policy advocacy, fostered evidence-based engagement, and reinforced the Bar Bench Forum as a platform to advance legal reforms, accountability, and rule of law in Tanzania.



Figure 13: Show THRDC staff ,representative from East Africa Law Society, MOCLA and NGOs Coordination Board during the national dialogue on Policy and Legal is Reforms, from left, Hon. Elimo Massawe - President of the Judges and Magistrate Association of Tanzania, Adv. John Seka - Secretary General from East Africa Law Society, Adv Onesmo Olungurumwa - National Coordinator THRDC, His Lordship George Masaju who is the Chief Justice of Tanzania, Hon. Mwantumu Mahiza who is the Chairperson of NGOs Coordination Board, Pili Mtambalike-THRDC Board of director chairperson and Dr. Iddi Mandi - Commissioner from Law Reform Commission.

2.1.3 Intermediary Outcome 1.3: Protection, Planning, and Risk Management

Intermediary Outcome 1.3 generated measurable systemic strengthening of the national preventive protection architecture, repositioning the Coalition’s security framework from reactive crisis response toward anticipatory risk mitigation and institutionalized safety governance. During the 2025 reporting period, structured capacity interventions reached 1,236 stakeholders across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, embedding standardized risk assessment methodologies, digital security safeguards, statutory compliance controls, and evidence-based advocacy competencies within the broader civic protection ecosystem. Performance metrics recorded a 70% aggregate competency increase among journalists in digital security, threat analysis, and incident documentation, confirming substantive enhancement in preventive protection capabilities and operational preparedness within high-risk electoral contexts.

Concurrent reinforcement of fiduciary governance and regulatory compliance systems among 244 CSO representatives reduced exposure to administrative sanctions and operational disruption during the election cycle. Specialized capacity strengthening of 82 legal practitioners and 1,030 CSO actors enhanced litigation readiness, procedural compliance discipline, and structured accountability engagement. At outcome level, these consolidated results reflect strengthened institutional resilience, improved legal defensibility, enhanced risk management culture, and sustained continuity of human rights operations within a volatile and compliance-intensive operating environment.

2.1.3.1 Output One: HRDs and CSOs are Empowered with Preventive Protection Management Skills

This output achieved measurable strengthening of preventive protection competencies among frontline Human Rights Defenders and media actors operating within high-risk and politically sensitive contexts. Structured security management and risk assessment interventions reached 206 participants, comprising 56 HRDs (30 men, 23 women, 3 persons with disabilities) and 150 journalists (118 men, 28 women, 5 persons with disabilities). Post-intervention evaluations recorded a 70% aggregate competency increase among journalists in digital security protocols, threat analysis, incident documentation, and operational risk mitigation. Participants demonstrated improved application of encrypted communication tools, formulation of organizational security plans, and enhanced situational awareness frameworks, resulting in strengthened capacity to conduct investigative reporting and human rights monitoring during the electoral cycle without compromising personal or institutional safety.



*Figure 14:
Journalist
attended training
on security
management
during election*

Sustainability of these protection gains was institutionalized through the establishment of a Digital Training Infrastructure. Engagement of a specialized technical consultancy-initiated development of an accredited, modular Learning Management System designed to decentralize preventive protection training at national and regional levels. This digital architecture creates a scalable, standardized platform for continuous capacity reinforcement, embeds structured security culture within the defender ecosystem, and strengthens long-term operational resilience of HRDs and CSOs across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.

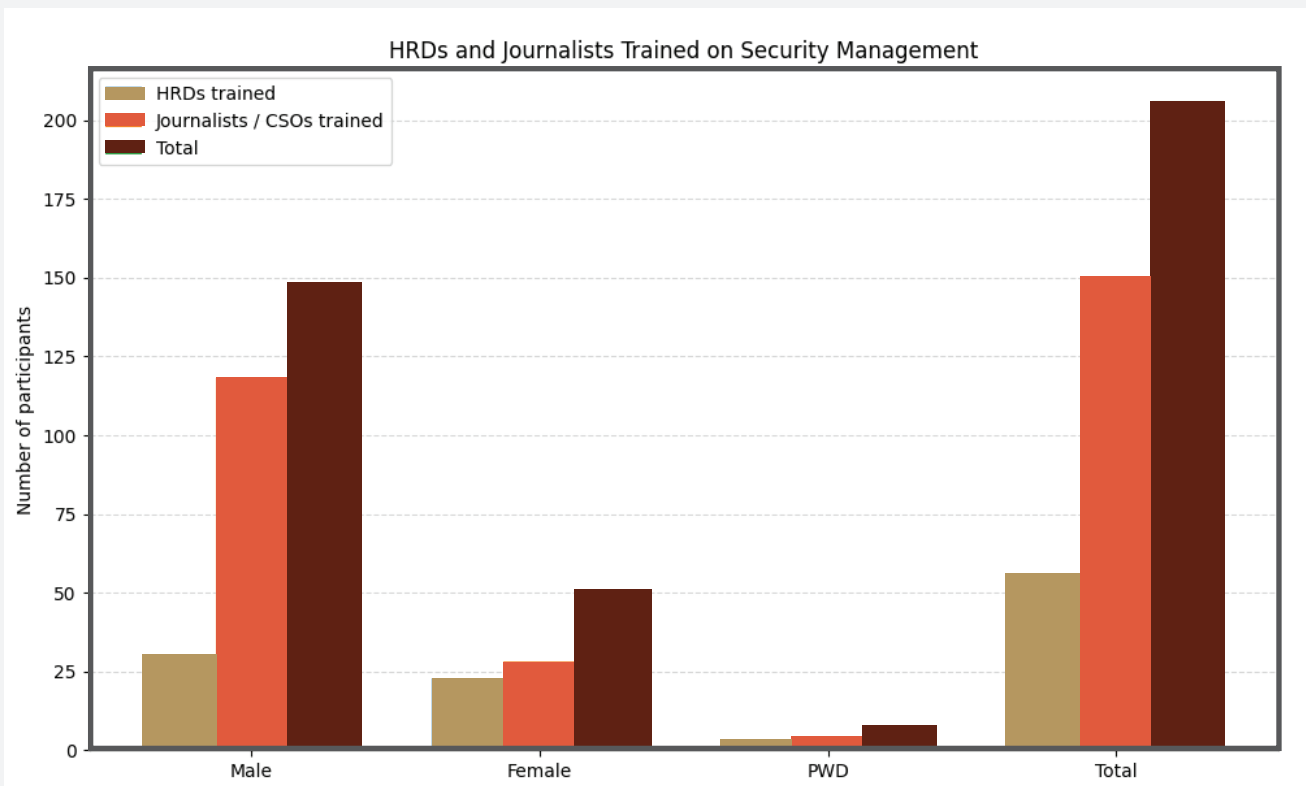


Figure 15: Show HRDs and Journalist trained on Security management

2.1.3.2 Output Two: Capacity on Human Rights, Legal, and Policy Frameworks Is Enhanced

A stratified capacity reinforcement model strengthened the broader human rights advocacy ecosystem across multiple stakeholder categories. A total of 1,030 CSO representatives (646 men, 324 women, 60 persons with disabilities) improved competencies in governance systems, regulatory compliance, financial accountability, and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning frameworks, resulting in enhanced institutional transparency and structured reporting discipline. At grassroots level, 60 HRDs and CSOs (27 men, 33 women, 1 person with

disability) strengthened practical skills in monitoring, documenting, and safely reporting violations, improving credibility and evidentiary robustness of community-level advocacy. Professional legal capacity was reinforced through refresher training of 82 lawyers (57 men, 25 women, 2 persons with disabilities), strengthening strategic litigation techniques and application of constitutional, regional, and international human rights instruments.

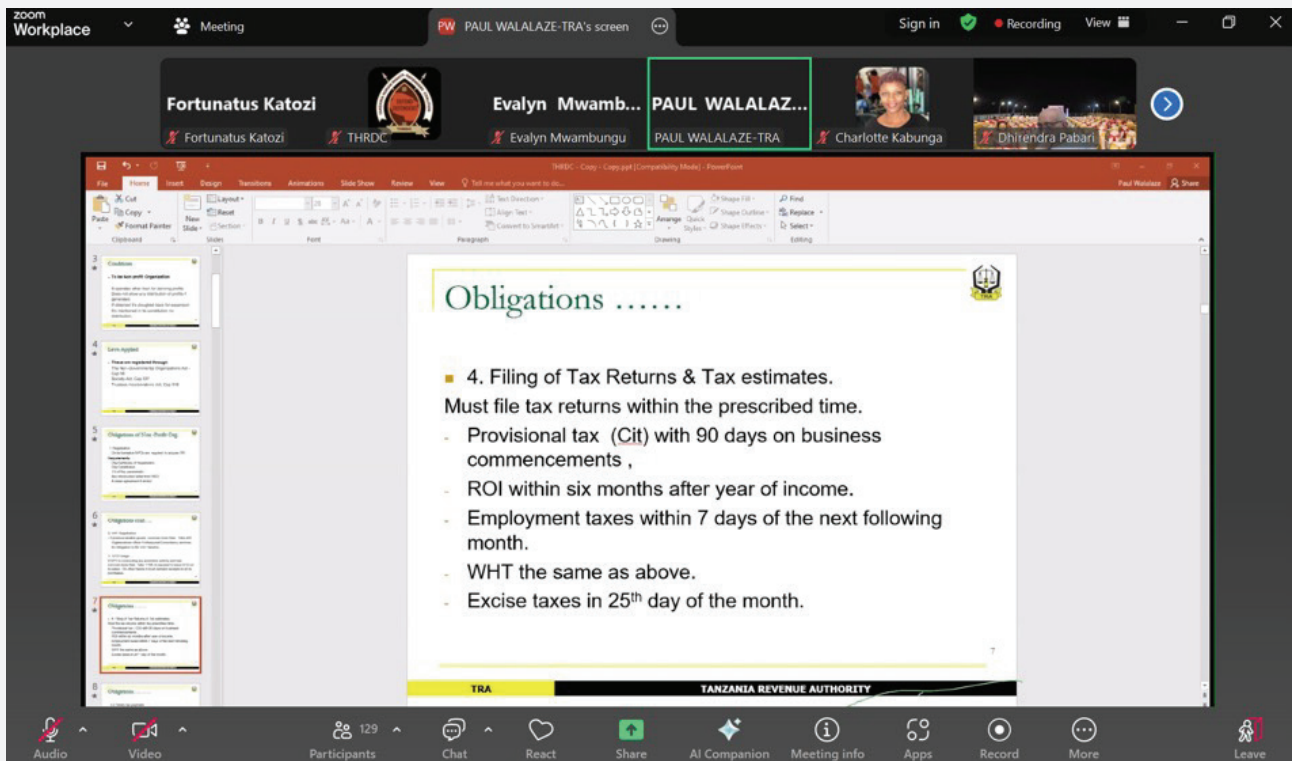


Figure 16: Show THRDC members and non-members participated during online training on taxation and regulatory

Multi-stakeholder coordination was enhanced through engagement of 40 CSOs and 20 Bar Association representatives, reinforcing structured rule-of-law collaboration. Additionally, 40 child rights defenders strengthened engagement with the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, while 40 CSOs institutionalized resource mobilization dialogue through establishment of an OECD/DAC Reference Group and a 13-member Technical Committee. These cumulative results strengthened legal defensibility, policy coherence, and advocacy alignment across the national protection framework.



Figure 17: Participants of the training on how to engaging with regional and international human rights mechanisms such as UNCRC, UPR, and ACERWC

2.1.3.3 Output Three: Organizational Development and Statutory Compliance Among HRDs and CSOs Is Improved

Institutional upgrading interventions directly mitigated risks associated with regulatory enforcement pressures by strengthening internal control systems among 244 CSO representatives (170 men, 74 women). Digital training modalities on organizational development and statutory compliance enhanced practical navigation of registration obligations, fiscal accountability standards, governance mandates, and reporting requirements under national regulatory frameworks. Participating organizations adopted standardized financial reporting templates, compliance matrices, and ethical governance protocols, reinforcing accountability structures and protecting legal status. Integration of functional MEL systems enhanced project management efficiency, performance traceability, and data integrity, strengthening donor confidence and institutional credibility. These structured improvements reduced vulnerability to compliance-related sanctions, improved eligibility for funding opportunities, and enhanced operational legitimacy within a compliance-intensive environment. Collectively, Output 1.3.3 delivered measurable strengthening of institutional resilience, enabling HRDs and CSOs to sustain rights-based programming within a structured, accountable, and legally compliant framework.

2.1.4 Intermediary Outcome 1.4: Litigation, Emergency Support, and Rescue

Intermediary Outcome 1.4 produced quantifiable improvements in access to protection, due process safeguards, and emergency risk mitigation for Human Rights Defenders operating in a highly restrictive 2025 electoral environment. A total of 1,343 HRDs received direct legal representation across Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, resulting in the release of 1,256 individuals through successful defense, prosecutorial withdrawal, or procedural discharge. Emergency relocation and protection assistance was provided to 125 HRDs at imminent risk, with 17 dependents supported through humanitarian relief. In addition, 13 HRDs accessed medical and psychosocial services to address trauma and detention-related harm. Structured monitoring documented 42 abduction or enforced disappearance incidents and 2,045 election-related arrests, strengthening evidence-based intervention and oversight of due process compliance. These results demonstrate expanded protection coverage, reduced detention exposure, and improved responsiveness to acute protection risks.



Figure 18: show advocates during the public interest litigation case of *Onesmo Olengurumwa v. Attorney General*

At structural level, nine strategic and public interest litigation cases advanced systemic accountability, including the Court of Appeal decision in *Onesmo Olengurumwa v Attorney General (Civil Appeal No. 134 of 2022) [2025] TZCA 587*, which removed statutory barriers to public interest litigation and expanded constitutional access to justice for civic actors. Strengthening of the Regional Protection Hub, coupled with participation in the 85th Ordinary

Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, enhanced cross-border referral pathways and regional escalation capacity. Collectively, these outcomes reflect a reinforced national protection architecture characterized by improved legal defense success rates, institutionalized emergency response mechanisms, strengthened regional coordination, and measurable enhancement of defender safety and judicial protection safeguards during a high-risk political period.

2.1.4.1 Output One: Emergency and Rapid Response Mechanisms Enhanced

Emergency and rapid response mechanisms were strengthened through formal consolidation of the HRDs Regional Protection Hub and activation of structured cross-border referral pathways within the East African protection framework. In April 2025, the National Coordinator assumed the position of Chairperson of the East African Protection Hub, strengthening Tanzania's formal coordination role in regional emergency case management. This institutional positioning improved referral sequencing for high-risk cases requiring relocation, legal reinforcement, or cross-border protective support. Throughout the reporting period, emergency cases were escalated through the Hub using established verification, referral, and follow-up protocols, ensuring continuity of protection for defenders assessed to be at imminent risk.

Engagement at the 85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, held from 20–25 October 2025 in Banjul, enabled direct submission of protection concerns affecting HRDs in Tanzania to continental human rights mechanisms. This participation strengthened formal reporting interfaces with Commissioners and regional civil society networks. Although development of the digital Watetezi Incident Reporting Application was deferred due to financial constraints, existing incident intake systems, referral documentation procedures, and case tracking mechanisms remained operational. As a result, emergency support, legal referral, and relocation coordination were maintained without interruption during the 2025 electoral period.

2.1.4.2 Output Two: Monitoring, Risk Assessment, and Documentation Mechanisms Strengthened

Institutional monitoring and documentation systems were reinforced through structured fact-finding, trial observation, risk analysis, and publication of situation reports. A fact-finding mission conducted between 10–12 March 2025 in Bombo Village, Kilindi District, established that approximately 2,600 villagers were evicted without adequate compensation or consultation, with HRDs facing intimidation for defending affected communities. Trial observation was undertaken in the treason proceedings involving Hon. Tundu Lissu, alongside

systematic monitoring of cases involving 2,045 individuals arrested during October and November 2025 in connection with the General Elections. Court and police station oversight enhanced transparency and procedural compliance monitoring.

Throughout the year, 42 incidents of abduction or enforced disappearance were documented. Additionally, 2,045 individuals were arbitrarily arrested during the electoral period on charges including treason, arson, armed robbery, and electoral violence, with reports of torture and ill-treatment. A further 52 members of Glory of Christ Church Tanzania were arrested on 29 June 2025 while exercising their right to worship. Risk assessments and a commissioned contextual analysis generated strategic recommendations for long-term protection programming. The 2024 Situation Report on Human Rights Defenders and Civic Space in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar was disseminated, while the 2025 report was finalized for distribution, strengthening evidence-based advocacy and coordinated national and regional response frameworks.

2.1.4.3 Output Three: Threats Addressed through Legal Representation, Emergency Protection, and Strategic Litigation

Legal aid interventions and strategic litigation significantly strengthened due process safeguards and constitutional oversight mechanisms. Legal representation was provided to 1,343 HRDs at risk (1,029 men and 315 women) across Mainland and Zanzibar. As a result, 1,256 defenders secured release through successful legal aid, prosecution withdrawal, or procedural discharge. Seventy-eight cases remained pending, involving charges such as treason, arson, and armed robbery. Legal interventions mitigated prolonged arbitrary detention and reinforced judicial scrutiny over prosecutorial conduct.

Nine strategic and public interest litigation cases were supported to address systemic civic space constraints. A landmark constitutional victory was secured in *Onesmo Olengurumwa v Attorney General* (Civil Appeal No. 134 of 2022) [2025] TZCA 587, where the Court of Appeal invalidated restrictive provisions limiting public interest litigation, thereby expanding constitutional access to justice and strengthening judicial review authority.

Emergency relocation assistance was provided to 125 HRDs (84 men and 41 women) assessed to be at imminent risk, alongside humanitarian support to 17 family members. Protection measures included confidential relocation, temporary accommodation, subsistence assistance, and structured follow-up monitoring. Medical and psychosocial support was extended to 13 HRDs (9 men and 4 women) to address trauma and health complications arising from detention and threats. Collectively, these interventions reinforced immediate safety, restored operational continuity, and strengthened resilience of defenders within an environment marked by heightened repression.

Litigation, Emergency Support and Rescue – 2025

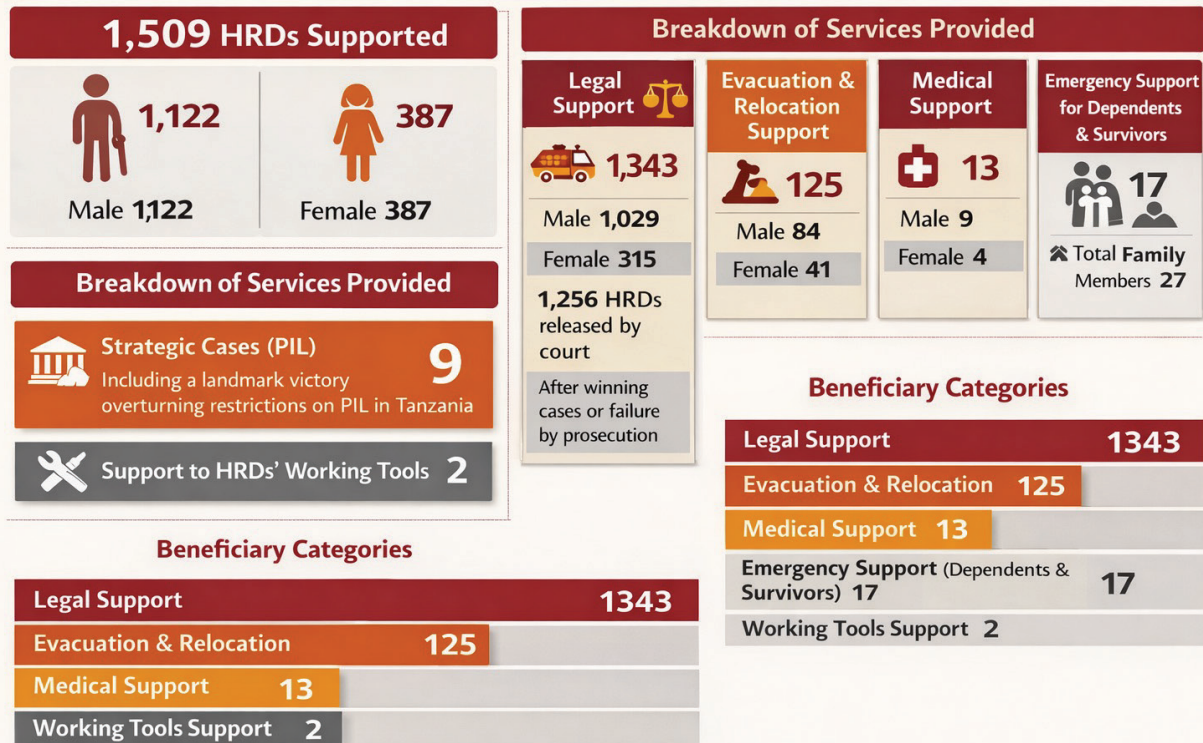


Figure 19: Show infographics data for Litigation, Emergency and Rescue support for the year 2025

2.1.5 Success Stories

*“My name is Joseph Mohonia. I sincerely thank THRDC for the cooperation and support extended to me during my detention. The advocate assigned by the Coalition came promptly and secured my release on bail. I am truly grateful for this timely intervention” – **Joseph Mohonia, HRD from Mwanza***

*“Detention and constant threats affected my health and mental well-being. Through THRDC, I received medical and psychosocial support that helped me regain strength and confidence. I am now able to continue my work without fear overwhelming me.” - **HRD Beneficiary of Medical and Psychosocial Support***

*“When the threats intensified, I had no choice but to leave my home for safety. THRDC facilitated my relocation and ensured I had a safe place to stay. That support protected my life and gave me time to recover and plan my next steps.” - **Relocated Human Rights Defender***

During the election period, I was arrested together with many others and accused of serious offences. In those moments, I feared for my safety and did not know what would happen next. When THRDC intervened and provided legal representation, everything changed. The lawyer stood with me in court, my case was heard, and I was released. Without that support, I might still be in detention today. THRDC's intervention restored my freedom, my dignity, and my ability to continue my work as a human rights defender- **Human Rights Defender supported during the 2025 General Elections**

"After receiving threats for speaking out against the forced eviction in our village, I feared for my safety. THRDC documented our case and helped bring national attention to what was happening. Their support made us feel heard and protected." -**Community HRD from Kilindi District**

2.2 Outcome Two: Institutional Building and Sustainability

Outcome Two operationalized a resilient governance and fiduciary control framework, securing institutional continuity across Mainland and Zanzibar. Internal control systems were strengthened through the execution of annual and project-specific audits which confirmed full statutory compliance and adherence to donor financial standards, including rigorous oversight of EU partner reporting to ensure timely liquidation. Governance maturity in Zanzibar was advanced through the amendment of the *THRDC-Zanzibar Constitution* and the revision of the *Board of Trustees Charter*, which established a centralized coordination model under the National Coordinator to eliminate structural fragmentation and enhance supervisory clarity. Fiduciary discipline was further reinforced by institutionalizing monthly compliance reporting cycles and daily financial reconciliation protocols in the Zanzibar office, significantly reducing exposure to administrative and compliance risks. Additionally, the Coalition mitigated operational volatility by maintaining **100% staff retention** through comprehensive health insurance renewal and hardening security protocols at key facilities during the election period.

Institutional sustainability was consolidated through the diversification of resource mobilization streams and the modernization of performance management infrastructure. The Coalition fully operationalized a digital *Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)* system, replacing manual reporting with real-time data tracking to enhance evidence-based decision-making and result traceability. Financial resilience was strengthened on the mainland by securing a new grant from UNESCO and advancing the formal registration of the *Human Rights Grant Facility*, with trustees successfully selected to oversee domestic resource mobilization mechanisms. Concurrently, the Zanzibar Office executed a structured fundraising strategy by submitting coordinated protection and election preparedness proposals to SIDA, EISA, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy structured around a budget of TZS 121,135,000 establishing a diversified funding pipeline to support long-term human rights programming.

The results below demonstrate how THRDC’s institutional capacity was strengthened through deliberate systems building, coordination reforms, and performance-oriented management.

2.2.1 Output One: Internal Operational Mechanisms, Including Policies, Are Developed and Complied

Internal control and compliance systems were strengthened through systematic audit execution, regulatory adherence, and structured financial management oversight. The annual Internal Audit, conducted in accordance with Section 3.10(ii) of the Financial Manual by an NBAA-registered audit firm, covered January–September of the financial year and concluded with no major findings. Minor observations were addressed through corrective action plans, and the Audit Report was approved by the Board. Concurrently, statutory audits covering the full financial year were completed, and financial verification processes for the Save the Children-funded MKUA Project were finalized with clean audit opinions. Project audits for MKUA and PIA (USAWA) further validated compliance with donor contractual obligations.

Regulatory and fiscal compliance obligations were fully met, including submission of tax returns to the Tanzania Revenue Authority, publication of UNESCO grant notices in the NGO Information System, filing of mandatory reports to the Office of the Registrar, and preparation of monthly and quarterly compliance reports. Donor reporting compliance was reinforced through preparation and submission of financial reports to ABA, PIA, Save the Children (quarterly and annual), and SIDA (Annual Work Plan, Operational Plan, and Budget). EU partner reports were technically reviewed to ensure consistency and compliance, followed by structured engagement meetings to standardize reporting frameworks. Financial operations were stabilized through efficient payment processing in line with procurement policies and structured engagement with CRDB Bank management to resolve payment system constraints, improving transaction reliability.

2.2.2 Output Two: THRDC–Zanzibar’s structures, systems, and operational mechanisms are established and fully operationalized

Institutional governance architecture and operational systems within the Zanzibar Office were substantively consolidated through the implementation of structural reform instruments. The ratification of amendments to the *THRDC-Zanzibar Constitution* established a definitive legal framework that clarified decision-making authority, streamlined reporting hierarchies, and reinforced the structural coherence between the Secretariat and the Board of Trustees. This governance realignment was complemented by the technical review of the *Zanzibar Board of Trustees Charter*, which advanced the standardization of supervisory mandates and procedural rules, thereby reducing institutional ambiguity regarding oversight functions.

Fiduciary oversight and strategic direction were operationalized through the convening of three quarterly Board of Trustees meetings, which functioned as high-level control mechanisms for reviewing implementation performance, financial compliance, and strategic alignment. Simultaneously, administrative continuity was secured through the formalization of asset management protocols and facility maintenance systems, ensuring a functional operational environment for uninterrupted program delivery. Collectively, these interventions transitioned the Zanzibar component from a foundational establishment phase to a fully operationalized governance structure characterized by clearly defined command lines and robust internal accountability mechanisms.

2.2.3 Output Three: Institutional Governance and Management Bodies Improved

Institutional governance architecture was fortified through the rigorous execution of statutory oversight functions and the structural alignment of decision-making bodies. The Board of Directors and the Zanzibar Board of Trustees operationalized **quarterly fiduciary control mechanisms**, convening the **50th and 53rd Board Meetings** to execute critical supervisory mandates. These sessions facilitated the ratification of the **2025 Annual Work Plan**, the review of internal audit reports, and the issuance of binding strategic directives regarding election-period operational continuity. The oversight framework was further strengthened by the active engagement of technical sub-committees specifically the **Finance, Program, and Fundraising Committees** which conducted preliminary technical reviews to ensure evidence-based decision-making at the Board level.

In Zanzibar, governance efficacy was structurally enhanced through the formal **amendment of the THRDC-Zanzibar Constitution** and the **revision of the Board of Trustees Charter**. These instruments codified the delegated authority of the National Coordinator and harmonized supervisory mandates, thereby eliminating ambiguity in the reporting hierarchy and strengthening vertical accountability.

Governance capital was augmented through the execution of targeted technical capacity-building modules focusing on **ethical leadership, fiscal sustainability, and institutional risk management**. These interventions, which targeted both the Board of Directors and the Zanzibar Board of Trustees, directly strengthened the strategic cohesion between the Secretariat and the governance organs. This alignment was further consolidated during the **Annual Board Retreat** held in December, which served as a platform for collective reflection on performance milestones and the joint formulation of strategic priorities for the upcoming cycle.

Administrative protocols were institutionalized to ensure the seamless execution of governance mandates. The Secretariat maintained a structured feedback loop, finalizing and circulating official Board minutes and tracking the implementation status of strategic directives to ensure accountability. This continuous interface facilitated the adoption of **diversified resource mobilization strategies** specifically regarding the **Watetezi House** infrastructure project and validated updated safety protocols for the 2025 electoral cycle. Consequently, these interventions ensured that the Coalition maintained strict statutory compliance and fiduciary discipline while navigating a volatile external operating environment.

2.2.4 Output Four: Quantities, Qualities, and Retention of Human Resources Improved

Organizational stability was secured through effective talent retention strategies which achieved a 100% retention rate for the core Secretariat team during the reporting cycle. The Coalition maintained a workforce of 19 full-time staff (12 men, 7 women), representing a 37% female to 63% male gender ratio, supported by 4 technical volunteers (2 men, 2 women) embedded within programmatic desks. Strategic recruitment processes were executed for the positions of Director of Program and Operations (DPO) and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Manager, reinforcing the executive management structure to meet the demands of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. Continuous investment in human capital was institutionalized through a hybrid capacity-building model combining internal operational standardization and external high-level specialization.



Figure 20: Show THRDC staff, Volunteers and Board of Director during the team building session

Internal institutional capacity was reinforced through structured in-house workshops designed to standardize operational procedures and enhance fiduciary literacy. Mitriya Group Financial Educators facilitated a technical session on Financial Literacy, Organizational Manuals, and Time Management on October 13, 2025, which aligned staff competencies with the Coalition’s Financial, HR, and Procurement Manuals. Operational efficiency metrics were further optimized through a Team Performance, Productivity, and Accountability training conducted by ESAUN on December 11, 2025, focusing on workflow optimization and inter-departmental collaboration. Staff welfare mechanisms were maintained to mitigate burnout during the high-pressure electoral period, comprising the renewal of comprehensive health insurance following a rigorous service provider evaluation, the continuation of Friday half-day schedules, and quarterly Wellness Days dedicated to physical and mental health. The operational year concluded with an Annual Staff Retreat in December, serving as a strategic platform for performance reflection and collective planning for the 2026 cycle.

Specialized Technical Competency Acquisition Staff technical capacity was significantly enhanced through participation in high-level international fellowships, accredited certification programs, and regional advocacy platforms. A total of eight staff members (4 female and 4 male) benefited from targeted external capacity-building interventions implemented during the reporting period. These included the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP), the Inaugural Gaborone Democracy Lab, the Inaugural EACJ Bar-Bench Forum, participation in the ACHPR 85th Ordinary Session, training on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights in Africa, the Advanced Advocacy Training Workshop, and initiatives focused on strengthening CSO government relationships.

2.2.5 Output Five: Management and Maintenance of Office Facilities, Assets, and Space Improved

Operational security architecture was fortified to ensure business continuity and personnel safety amidst the volatile 2025 electoral landscape. Risk mitigation protocols were activated through the physical hardening of the Secretariat headquarters and the private residences of high-risk protection personnel, thereby establishing a secure operational perimeter for critical human rights defenders. Simultaneously, the working environment was optimized through the maintenance of the Resource Centre and the initiation of procurement processes for ergonomic office assets, ensuring that staff possessed the requisite physical infrastructure to execute high-intensity election monitoring functions. Organizational visibility was further reinforced through the production and deployment of strategic branding materials, including institutional banners, which enhanced the Coalition’s corporate identity during public engagements.

The Coalition's digital ecosystem was upgraded to support remote operational capability and data integrity across Mainland and Zanzibar offices. Cybersecurity defenses were strengthened through the procurement and deployment of an enterprise-grade firewall system, effectively mitigating digital intrusion risks. ICT support services prioritized the stability of internet connectivity and the execution of comprehensive software upgrades, ensuring seamless communication channels between decentralized units. Furthermore, operational efficiency was advanced through the finalization of the internal digital Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) infrastructure and the continued utilization of internet banking platforms. These digital interventions streamlined fiscal management, enhanced data reporting accuracy, and secured the organization's virtual infrastructure against election-related cyber threats.

2.2.6 Output Six: Sustainability, Resource Mobilization, and Management Strategies Established and Operationalized

Financial resilience was secured through a high-yield resource mobilization strategy that achieved 88% funding coverage against the 2025 operational budget, effectively mitigating the impact of global development assistance contraction. The Coalition successfully diversified its revenue streams by securing critical grants from UNESCO, Save The Children, and the Embassy of Sweden, while simultaneously advancing a robust pipeline of consortium-based proposals targeting the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the Commonwealth. In Zanzibar, decentralized fundraising capabilities were demonstrated through the submission of targeted project proposals to SIDA, EISA, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, establishing a validated funding pipeline valued at TZS 121,135,000 to support electoral governance and protection interventions.

Domestic capital generation was strengthened through the strategic capitalization of the Solidarity Fund, with assets invested in the Unit Trust of Tanzania (UTT) to generate aggregate returns. This internal fiscal mechanism reduces reliance on external basket funding and strengthens the institutional balance sheet. Concurrently, the Human Rights Grant Facility (HRGF) advanced from a conceptual framework to a pre-operational phase. The Board of Trustees selection process was completed, and the facility now awaits final ratification to formalize the fiduciary governance structure required for THRDC to function as a specialized intermediary donor for the sector.

Institutional risk management was fortified through the comprehensive review of the 2020 Contingency Plan, facilitated by an external consultant to reflect the current operating environment. The updated framework now incorporates protocols for program restructuring,

compliance system hardening, the adoption of a formal Succession Plan, and the expansion of banking relationships to mitigate liquidity risks. Regarding infrastructure assets, negotiations for the Watetezi House project continued with site assessments in Dar es Salaam and high-level engagement with the Dodoma Regional Commissioner. However, land acquisition remains strategically paused pending the identification of viable plots that align with the Coalition’s long-term capital expenditure framework and affordability indices. Operational resilience was further supported by ongoing efforts toward offshore registration and the operationalization of the East Africa Human Rights Institute (EAHRI).

2.2.7 Output Seven: Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning strategies designed and implemented

The internal digital Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) infrastructure was fully operationalized, marking a strategic transition from manual data aggregation to a centralized management system. Technical collaboration between the MEAL and ICT departments optimized the platform to enhance data granularity, ensuring real-time verification of programmatic indicators and streamlining reporting protocols. This digital transformation strengthened the Coalition’s institutional accountability framework, enabling evidence-based decision-making and the rigorous tracking of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan targets. Simultaneously, ICT infrastructure resilience was maintained through proactive system upgrades and cybersecurity reinforcement, guaranteeing uninterrupted digital operations and securing communication channels against external disruptions.

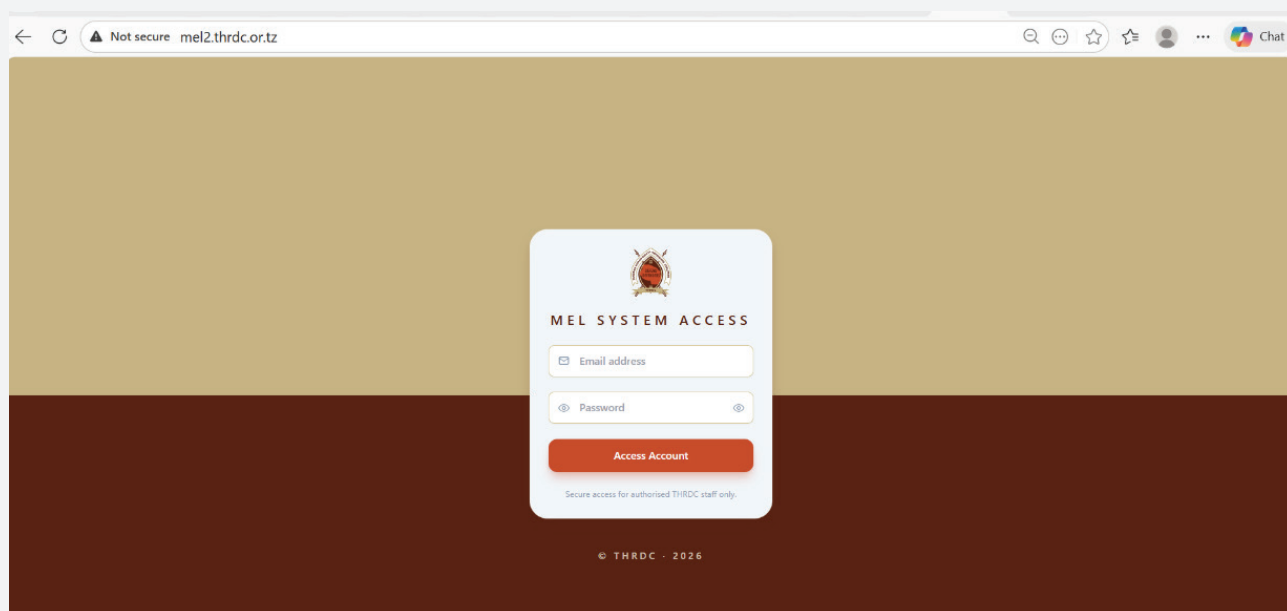


Figure 21: Show THRDC MEL system home page

Financial control architectures were validated through the execution of the Annual Internal Audit and the specific project audit for the Save the Children–funded MKUA Project. These independent assessments confirmed strict adherence to fiduciary standards and donor compliance requirements. Governance oversight was reinforced through the convening of the Board Meeting, which ratified key policies and issued binding strategic directives. Institutional stewardship was elevated through high-level technical training for both the Board of Directors and the Zanzibar Board of Trustees, focusing on ethical leadership and strategic growth. These interventions fostered cohesive decision-making and strengthened the Secretariat-Board interface.

Human capital stability was secured with a 100% staff retention rate, supported by a robust welfare framework comprising renewed health insurance and wellness programs. Operational security architecture was simultaneously hardened through the deployment of enhanced safety protocols at the Secretariat and key staff residences to mitigate election-related risks. Financial sustainability was bolstered through a strategic donor diversification roadmap, resulting in the successful securing of a project extension from Save the Children and the unlocking of a new funding pipeline with the Ford Foundation following high-level bilateral engagement. Resource mobilization efforts further prioritized thematic expansion, evidenced by the submission of strategic proposals to the European Union (for the USAWA Project extension with PIA), International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), and UNESCO for environmental journalism protection.

CHAPTER THREE

CROSS-CUTTING ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LERNED

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the key cross cutting achievements, challenges, and lessons learned during the 2025 operational cycle of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC). It reflects on how the Coalition sustained its protection mandate during a politically sensitive election period marked by regulatory scrutiny, funding uncertainty, and heightened risks for human rights defenders. The chapter reviews progress in gender inclusion, partnerships, media visibility, digital transformation, democratic governance, and institutional strengthening.

At the same time, it provides an honest assessment of the strategic, operational, and environmental constraints that shaped implementation. The experiences of 2025 reinforced the importance of proactive protection systems, institutional diplomacy, digital security, strong governance, and staff welfare as pillars of resilience. These lessons will guide future planning and strengthen THRDC's capacity to operate effectively within an increasingly complex civic environment.

3.1.1 Gender and Inclusion

Institutional gender parity and social inclusion were operationalized through a rigorous internal policy framework that maintained a 37% female representation within the Secretariat, comprising 7 women and 12 men, alongside 4 dedicated volunteers. The Coalition successfully integrated gender-sensitive safeguards into its revised Human Resource Manual and procurement protocols, ensuring that the unique protection needs of women human rights defenders are structurally addressed. A specialized Disability Desk remained functional throughout the 2025 reporting period, providing technical oversight to ensure that the intersectional challenges faced by defenders with disabilities are captured in national risk assessments. These internal mechanisms established a baseline for institutional diversity, ensuring that the organization's workforce reflects the demographic complexities of the civic space it serves.

Programmatic interventions further reinforced this commitment by ensuring that 60 grassroots defenders and over 1,030 CSO representatives trained in human rights and legal frameworks included balanced participation from women and marginalized groups. The Coalition's advocacy during the election period prioritized the protection of female journalists and activists, who often face disproportionate online harassment and physical threats. In Zanzibar, the amendment of the THRDC-Zanzibar Constitution and the revision of the Board of Trustees Charter incorporated inclusive governance standards, guaranteeing that women and youth voices are represented in high-level decision-making organs. These efforts culminated in a more inclusive protection architecture that successfully mobilized diverse stakeholders to monitor and document human rights violations with a lens on gender and social equity.

3.1.2 Partnerships & Strategic Engagement

Strategic diplomacy and institutional partnerships served as the cornerstone for expanding the Coalition's influence within the national and regional rule-of-law ecosystem. High-level engagements with the Zanzibar Judiciary, the Police Force, and the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) resulted in a binding procedural consensus regarding the protection-sensitive handling of civic actors during the electoral cycle. The Coalition leveraged its technical expertise to review Tanzania's Draft State Report on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Maputo Protocol, ensuring the inclusion of civil society data in international compliance mechanisms. These partnerships transitioned the organization from traditional advocacy toward a model of institutional diplomacy, fostering a collaborative environment between the state and non-state actors in both Mainland and Zanzibar.

Financial and technical sustainability was concurrently bolstered through strategic alignment with multilateral and bilateral development partners, including Save the Children, UNESCO, SIDA, EISA, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy. The successful submission of project proposals valued at TZS 121,135,000 for Zanzibar-specific interventions demonstrates the efficacy of the Coalition's decentralized resource mobilization strategy. Furthermore, bilateral sessions with the Ford Foundation enabled the alignment of future funding cycles with the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, securing a predictable pipeline for human rights programming. These multifaceted alliances have not only provided the necessary fiscal space but have also enhanced the Coalition's legitimacy as a primary intermediary for international human rights standards implementation within the East African Community.

3.1.3 Media and Visibility

Communication architecture was modernized to amplify the visibility of human rights violations and neutralize restrictive narratives during the 2025 General Election cycle. The Coalition operationalized a rapid-response communication strategy, issuing 24 strategic press statements that addressed arbitrary arrests, abductions, and regulatory restrictions affecting the civic space. Joint interventions through the Zanzibar Media Committee (ZAMECO) ensured that media freedom concerns in the islands were publicized and addressed through coordinated regulatory responses. This high-frequency communication ensured that the international community and domestic stakeholders remained informed of the shifting human rights landscape, thereby providing a crucial layer of public protection for frontline defenders and journalists operating in high-risk zones.

Digital branding and information dissemination were further enhanced through the modernization of the institutional website and the production of high-impact audiovisual materials. The publication and promotion of the 2024 Human Rights Situation Report and the CSO Election Barometer provided verified forensic data that served as a reference point for policy analysts and human rights monitoring bodies globally. Training interventions for 150 journalists resulted in a measurable 70% competency gain in safety reporting and digital security, directly translating into more resilient independent media coverage. These efforts were complemented by the deployment of updated institutional visibility materials and banners, which reinforced the Coalition's corporate identity and branding across all regional offices and public engagement platforms.

3.1.4 Digital Transformation & ICT

Technological infrastructure underwent a substantive modernization phase to secure the Coalition's virtual perimeter and improve operational efficiency across decentralized units. The procurement and deployment of an enterprise-grade firewall system effectively mitigated cyber-intrusion risks, protecting sensitive defender data during the politically sensitive election period. ICT support services prioritized the stability of high-speed internet connectivity and the execution of comprehensive software upgrades across Mainland and Zanzibar offices, ensuring seamless communication between the Secretariat and field monitors. This infrastructure hardening was essential for maintaining business continuity in an environment characterized by internet shutdowns and digital surveillance, providing a secure platform for the documentation of human rights violations.

Staff technical proficiencies were augmented through specialized certifications in Cyber Security at Regenesys Business School and Artificial Intelligence & Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. These competencies enabled the ICT department to provide one-to-one desk support

and manage complex digital security systems, ensuring that all 19 staff members operated within a secure digital environment. The full operationalization of the digital Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system transitioned the organization toward real-time results tracking and automated data aggregation. This digital transformation reduced administrative latency in report generation and improved the accuracy of performance tracking against the Strategic Plan, positioning the Coalition as a technologically advanced leader in the human rights sector.

3.1.5 Elections and Democratic Governance

Democratic governance interventions centered on embedding civil society priorities into the national political agenda through the CSO Election Manifesto process. This strategic engagement engineered a paradigm shift in political discourse, securing verifiable policy integration of 93% by ACT Wazalendo and 85% by CCM, effectively transitioning the election toward evidence-based policy debate. The Coalition successfully secured 35 official permits for election observation and voter education, enabling the deployment of accredited monitors to observe polling conduct and regulatory compliance nationwide. These interventions provided a robust framework for assessing the integrity of the electoral process and ensuring that the rights of voters and candidates were monitored against international democratic standards.

The forensic monitoring of the electoral environment was executed through the CSO Election Barometer, which generated verified data on internet shutdowns, regulatory enforcement trends, and the status of fundamental freedoms. In Zanzibar, strategic interface meetings with law enforcement and oversight bodies established procedural consensus on mitigating arbitrary summonses of political actors and defenders, thereby reducing the risk of pre-election intimidation. The Coalition also executed technical reviews of the 2025 Regulations for the Election of the President, MPs, and Councillors, submitting formal amendments to the National Independent Electoral Commission. These efforts collectively strengthened the regulatory architecture governing the elections, ensuring that the democratic process remained subject to civil society oversight and human rights accountability.

3.1.6 Institutional Strengthening

Sustainability frameworks were reinforced through the legal and fiduciary consolidation of the Coalition's internal governance structures. The successful selection of the Human Rights Grant Facility (HRGF) Board of Trustees transitioned the facility into its pre-operational phase, establishing the governance foundation for THRDC to function as a specialized intermediary donor for grassroots CSOs. Governance maturity was further demonstrated through the

convening of the 50th and 53rd Board Meetings, where strategic directives were issued to ensure operational continuity during the election period. In Zanzibar, structural reforms included the amendment of the THRDC-Zanzibar Constitution and the revision of the Board of Trustees Charter, effectively eliminating structural fragmentation and reinforcing vertical accountability within the regional office.

Fiduciary integrity was validated through the achievement of 88% funding coverage against the 2025 operational budget and the reception of clean audit reports for the Save the Children-funded MKUA Project. Internal resource mobilization was advanced through the Solidarity Fund, with assets invested in the Unit Trust of Tanzania (UTT) to generate aggregate returns for the future Watetezi House infrastructure project. The organization maintained a 100% staff retention rate, ensuring that institutional memory and technical expertise were preserved during a high-pressure year. These cumulative institutional reinforcements have created a resilient, legally compliant, and fiscally sound organization capable of executing its human rights mandate within an increasingly complex and shrinking global funding environment.

3.2 CHALLENGES

3.2.1 Strategic Challenges

Global shifts in development assistance priorities and the contraction of traditional basket funding mechanisms presented a significant hurdle to long-term fiscal predictability. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) frameworks increasingly prioritized emerging geopolitical crises elsewhere, causing a noticeable delay in the renewal of multi-year core support grants for human rights organizations in the East African region. This donor volatility necessitated a rapid and resource-intensive pivot toward diversified domestic resource mobilization and specialized project-based funding, which often carries more restrictive compliance burdens. The Coalition operated under the persistent pressure of aligning its ambitious 2023–2027 Strategic Plan with a fluctuating financial landscape, requiring constant budgetary re-alignments and the prioritization of emergency protection interventions over long-term institutional projects like the Watetezi House infrastructure development.

The 2025 General Election cycle introduced a layer of strategic complexity as the political landscape became increasingly polarized, affecting the Coalition's neutral positioning in multi-stakeholder engagements. State oversight bodies and regulatory authorities exercised heightened scrutiny over the strategic objectives of civil society, often interpreting human rights monitoring as a politically motivated activity rather than a statutory oversight function. This environment required the Board and the Secretariat to invest significant time in institutional

diplomacy and high-level negotiations to preserve the organization's operational legitimacy and safety. Maintaining a balance between rigorous human rights reporting and the necessity of diplomatic engagement with state actors remained a delicate strategic maneuver, especially as the Coalition sought to embed the CSO Election Manifesto into the agendas of competing political parties without compromising its non-partisan mandate.

3.2.2 Operational Challenges

Operational security for frontline personnel and the protection of decentralized office assets emerged as a primary concern due to the high-risk environment characterizing the electoral period. Physical threats and the potential for arbitrary surveillance required a substantial reallocation of administrative resources toward hardening office perimeters and securing the private residences of key protection staff in both Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. These security imperatives introduced logistical delays in field operations, as staff movements were restricted during peak political moments to mitigate the risk of targeted harassment or detention. Furthermore, the rising costs of private security services and the procurement of enterprise-grade cybersecurity systems placed an unforeseen strain on the operational budget, necessitating the deferral of non-essential administrative upgrades to ensure the continuity of the primary protection architecture.

Logistical coordination between the mainland headquarters and the Zanzibar office faced hurdles related to rising inflationary pressures and the increased cost of regional travel and communication. Managing a synchronized response to human rights violations in a decentralized model proved difficult when internet fluctuations and periodic digital communication blackouts disrupted the real-time flow of information. Procurement processes for essential office equipment also faced delays due to supply chain disruptions and stringent regulatory requirements for the importation of specialized ICT hardware, such as the new firewall systems. These operational bottlenecks required the Secretariat to adopt more flexible, albeit more labor-intensive, manual backup protocols to ensure that administrative and financial reconciliation tasks remained on schedule. The dual-office management model, while strategically sound, faced periodic strains in personnel capacity as staff were frequently redeployed to address urgent crises in different geographic zones.

3.2.3 Programmatic Challenges

Regulatory barriers and the slow processing of essential permits for election observation and civic education activities significantly hampered the timely execution of programmatic milestones. Bureaucratic delays within the National Independent Electoral Commission and other regulatory bodies resulted in a shortened window for the deployment of accredited monitors, forcing the Coalition to compress its training schedules and field assignments. These

administrative hurdles were often compounded by the restrictive interpretation of the NGO Act regulations, which required frequent and detailed reporting to multiple oversight offices, thereby diverting technical staff from direct implementation to compliance management. The delay in receiving formal approvals for certain community-level workshops meant that some grassroots interventions had to be scaled back or rescheduled for post-election cycles, limiting the immediate impact of the “Youth-Centred Civic Reporting” initiatives.

Digital security risks and the increasing prevalence of online harassment against female journalists and defenders created a hostile environment for programmatic engagement. Internet shutdowns and the throttling of social media platforms during key electoral moments impeded the Coalition’s ability to disseminate its findings and mobilize joint responses through the Zanzibar Media Committee (ZAMECO). Programmatic continuity was further tested by the societal polarization that made it difficult to conduct neutral, evidence-based dialogues in certain regions where political tensions were at their peak. Many defenders at the grassroots level reported a “chilling effect,” where the fear of legal repercussions or social ostracization led to a temporary withdrawal from active monitoring. These external pressures necessitated a shift in programmatic focus toward more covert and secure documentation methods, which required additional time and technical expertise to implement effectively across the member network.

3.2.4 MEAL & Reporting Challenges

Transitioning from traditional manual data aggregation to the new digital Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system revealed a significant technical learning curve among both staff and member organizations. While the system was designed to improve data granularity, the initial stages of operationalization faced hurdles related to data entry errors and inconsistent reporting formats from remote field monitors. These technical glitches required frequent troubleshooting and supplementary training sessions, which temporarily slowed the production of quarterly results summaries. Aggregating qualitative impact data, such as the long-term “psychological shield” provided by legal interventions, remained more difficult than tracking quantitative outputs, often leading to a reporting bias toward activities rather than outcomes. The ICT department had to prioritize system stability over feature expansion, delaying the integration of certain advanced analytics modules into the dashboard.

Capturing the specific impact of advocacy in a volatile environment presented a challenge for traditional evaluation frameworks, as many successes in the human rights sector are preventative and thus “invisible.” Proving that an intervention stopped a violation from occurring requires a complex forensic analysis that current MEAL tools struggle to quantify without extensive narrative documentation. Reporting timelines were often disrupted by the same internet

shutdowns that affected program implementation, making it difficult to maintain the real-time data flow expected by some international development partners. Furthermore, the necessity of maintaining strict anonymity for high-risk defenders meant that certain “Success Stories” could not be shared in full detail, limiting the qualitative richness of the reporting. These constraints required the MEAL team to develop more sophisticated, encrypted reporting channels that balanced the need for transparency with the paramount requirement of beneficiary safety.

3.2.5 External/Environmental Challenges

The continued shrinking of the civic space and the normalization of restrictive legislative frameworks remained the most pervasive environmental challenge for the human rights community in Tanzania. Legislative amendments that expanded administrative discretion over the registration and operation of NGOs created a pervasive sense of legal uncertainty, making it difficult for the Coalition to plan long-term institutional growth. Judicial bottlenecks and the backlog of cases in the national courts meant that strategic litigation efforts often took years to yield a verdict, during which time defenders remained in legal limbo or under restrictive bail conditions. This environment of “legalistic repression” used the law as a tool for administrative harassment rather than justice, forcing the Coalition to spend a disproportionate amount of its legal budget on defensive litigation rather than proactive rights-based lawsuits.

Societal polarization and the spread of misinformation during the electoral cycle created an environment where human rights defenders were often unfairly branded as partisan actors. This environmental hostility made it difficult to engage with certain community leaders and government officials who were wary of being associated with civil society during a high-stakes political period. Internet shutdowns and the digital divide also meant that the Coalition’s reports and statements did not always reach the rural populations who were most vulnerable to rights violations. Additionally, the global economic environment and the fluctuating value of the local currency against the US Dollar increased the cost of international services and subscriptions, further eroding the purchasing power of the operational budget. These external factors combined to create a high-pressure environment that tested the institutional resilience and the adaptive capacity of the entire HRD protection ecosystem.

3.3 LESSONS LEARNED

3.3.1 Program Implementation Lessons

The 2025 election cycle validated the necessity of a pre-positioned emergency protection architecture rather than ad-hoc crisis management. Frontline interventions, such as the successful rescue of defenders in Mwanza and Zanzibar, proved that immediate legal deployment drastically reduces the likelihood of prolonged pretrial detention and procedural abuse. This proactive

stance facilitated a faster recovery for defenders and maintained the momentum of grassroots advocacy despite the high-risk environment. Experience showed that localized protection hubs are significantly more efficient than centralized responses, as they navigate regional law enforcement dynamics with greater cultural and political nuance. Future implementation strategies must prioritize the decentralization of emergency funds and legal mandates to ensure that regional coordinators can activate safety protocols without the administrative latency associated with headquarters-level approvals. This shift secures a more agile and responsive protection ecosystem capable of operating under extreme political pressure.

Internet shutdowns and digital surveillance during the election period underscored the vulnerability of traditional communication channels. Programmatic success increasingly depends on the adoption of encrypted communication protocols and offline data collection methods to ensure the continuity of human rights monitoring. The 70% competency gain among journalists in digital security demonstrates that technical capacity building is as critical as legal aid in modern human rights work. Experience gained from the Zanzibar Media Committee (ZAMECO) highlighted that independent media houses require institutionalized safety policies rather than just individual training to survive regulatory crackdowns. Future implementation must prioritize the decentralization of digital security skills to ensure that defenders in remote areas can securely document violations even when national networks are throttled. Integrating cybersecurity into the core of every programmatic activity has transitioned from an elective preference to a fundamental requirement for the operational integrity of the human rights movement.

3.3.2 Stakeholder Engagement Lessons

The shift from confrontational advocacy to a “Strategic Engagement” model proved vital for securing civic space in Zanzibar and the Mainland. High-level interface meetings with the Judiciary, Police, and the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) established a procedural consensus that mitigated the risk of arbitrary arrests during the election cycle. These engagements revealed that state oversight bodies are more responsive when human rights data is presented as a technical contribution to governance rather than a political critique. Building professional relationships with key decision-makers within the justice system created a “human rights buffer,” allowing for the safe handling of sensitive cases and the reduction of administrative harassment. This lesson suggests that institutional diplomacy is a prerequisite for effective protection work, providing the necessary political capital to negotiate the release of defenders when legal mechanisms are stalled by bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Collaborating with diverse stakeholders, including the Zanzibar Media Committee and international partners like UNESCO and Save the Children, expanded the Coalition’s protective reach. The integration of the CSO Election Manifesto into the agendas of ACT Wazalendo

and CCM proved that evidence-based advocacy can successfully influence political discourse when executed through broad-based coalitions. Lessons from 2025 suggest that human rights protection is most effective when it is embedded within wider governance and development frameworks, rather than operating in isolation. This multi-layered approach facilitated a more comprehensive monitoring of the electoral environment and enhanced the legitimacy of the Coalition's reports. Engaging with political parties as stakeholders rather than adversaries allowed for the mainstreaming of human rights priorities into party platforms, ensuring that civil society concerns are represented in the highest levels of political dialogue regardless of the election outcome.

3.3.3 Institutional Lessons

The 2025 reporting period highlighted the correlation between governance integrity and institutional resilience. Amendments to the THRDC-Zanzibar Constitution and the revision of the Board of Trustees Charter successfully eliminated structural fragmentation, creating a more cohesive reporting hierarchy. This structural realignment ensured that the regional office could operate with a high degree of autonomy while remaining aligned with national strategic objectives. Governance maturity, evidenced by the regular convening of Board meetings and retreats, provided the necessary fiduciary oversight to maintain donor confidence during a fiscally volatile period. The lesson learned is that strong internal governance organs act as a stabilizer during external political turmoil, allowing the Secretariat to focus on implementation while the Board manages high-level political risks. Structural clarity has directly improved the speed of decision-making, which is a critical factor in the effective execution of emergency protection and rescue mandates.

Maintaining a 100% staff retention rate during a high-pressure election year proved that a robust welfare and wellness framework is an essential investment for institutional continuity. The provision of comprehensive health insurance, psychological support, and professional development opportunities ensured that institutional memory and technical expertise remained within the organization. A stable workforce allowed the Coalition to execute complex transitions, such as the operationalization of the digital MEAL system, without the disruptions associated with personnel turnover. Lessons from the field indicate that Human Rights Defenders are susceptible to burnout and trauma, making mental health support a non-negotiable component of institutional sustainability. Future institutional growth depends on the continued professionalization of staff and the adoption of succession plans to mitigate the risks of leadership gaps. This investment in human capital has transformed the Coalition into a resilient entity capable of sustained performance under the most challenging environmental conditions.

3.3.4 MEAL Lessons

Moving from manual data aggregation to a centralized digital system revealed that the quality of reporting is directly linked to the technical proficiency of field monitors. While the system improved data granularity and real-time tracking, the initial learning curve necessitated a rethink of data entry protocols and the simplification of reporting templates. The primary lesson is that digital transformation is as much a cultural shift as it is a technical one, requiring consistent internal capacity building to ensure data accuracy. High-speed internet stability and hardware compatibility across Mainland and Zanzibar offices emerged as critical prerequisites for the successful scaling of digital monitoring tools. Experience showed that automated systems reduce the risk of data loss during physical office raids, as sensitive evidence is securely stored in encrypted offshore repositories. This technical evolution has improved the Coalition's ability to provide verifiable, forensic data to international human rights mechanisms.

Traditional MEAL frameworks often prioritize quantitative outputs, such as the number of people trained, over the qualitative "invisible" successes of human rights work. For example, preventing a violation through diplomatic engagement is harder to quantify than documenting a violation that has already occurred. This experience highlighted the need for more sophisticated storytelling and narrative documentation to capture the "psychological shield" and "legal security" provided by the Coalition. Future reporting must integrate more rigorous qualitative analysis tools, such as the Most Significant Change technique, to provide a comprehensive picture of the institutional impact on the safety of the HRD ecosystem. Lessons from 2025 suggest that the most valuable impact of the Coalition is the confidence it instills in defenders to continue their work safely. Capturing this shift in perception requires a nuanced approach that combines statistical evidence with deep qualitative insights into the lived experiences of defenders across the country.

3.3.5 Risk Management Lessons

The prevalence of "administrative harassment" through the strategic use of NGO regulations and bail conditions required the Coalition to adopt a more defensive legal posture. Lessons from 2025 show that legal aid must be complemented by administrative compliance support to protect member organizations from "regulatory asphyxiation." Organizations that prioritized statutory compliance and governance documentation were significantly more resilient against state-led scrutiny. This environmental reality necessitates the integration of "Compliance Clinics" into the protection menu to ensure that member organizations maintain their operational legitimacy even when faced with aggressive regulatory enforcement. Proactive compliance is no longer just an administrative task; it is a critical protection strategy that prevents the state from using legal technicalities to silence civic voices. Managing these legal risks requires a specialized team that can navigate the intersection of NGO law, tax regulations, and constitutional rights.

The volatility of the election cycle underscored the importance of decentralized emergency response hubs to manage localized threats. Centralized decision-making often suffers from time-lag, which can be detrimental in cases of arbitrary detention or physical threats. Empowering regional coordinators in Zanzibar and Mwanza with the authority and resources to activate rapid response protocols ensured that defenders received support within the critical first hours of an incident. Future risk management strategies must focus on hardening the physical and digital security of these decentralized units and establishing offshore data backups to safeguard sensitive human rights evidence against physical raids or digital seizures. The lesson learned is that institutional safety depends on a “security-first” culture that permeates every level of the organization, from the Board to the grassroots volunteers. This decentralized approach ensures that the protection architecture remains functional even if the national headquarters faces operational disruptions or communication blackouts.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key recommendations and concluding reflections from the 2025 operational cycle of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC). It draws from the Coalition’s experiences during a politically sensitive election year marked by regulatory pressure, financial uncertainty, and increased risks to human rights defenders.

The recommendations provide a practical roadmap focused on financial sustainability, institutional diplomacy, decentralized protection, digital modernization, and governance consolidation. Together, they aim to strengthen THRDC’s long-term resilience and guide the effective implementation of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan.

4.1.2 Strategic Recommendations

Diversification of the institutional funding portfolio is a critical priority for mitigating the impact of global shifts in donor assistance and the contraction of traditional basket funding. This involves the aggressive capitalization of domestic resource mobilization mechanisms, such as the Solidarity Fund and strategic investments in the Unit Trust of Tanzania (UTT). Transitioning from a donor-dependent model requires the full operationalization of the Human Rights Grant Facility (HRGF) as a sustainable internal grant-making vehicle for the human rights sector. This strategic shift will provide the fiscal buffer necessary to support emergency protection mandates without reliance on volatile overseas development assistance. Sustained investment in long-term infrastructure projects, specifically the Watetezi House, remains a fundamental goal to eliminate rental overheads and build a permanent institutional asset base that secures the Coalition’s physical and financial autonomy.

Institutional diplomacy must be prioritized as the primary mechanism for preserving civic space in a polarized political environment. This strategy requires the Secretariat and the Board to deepen structured engagements with the Judiciary, Police, and regulatory bodies like the Registrar of NGOs and the Zanzibar Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance. Maintaining a non-partisan yet rigorous oversight posture during the post-election cycle will

be critical for reclaiming democratic gains and ensuring the safety of civic actors. Strategic alliances with regional bodies, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the East African Court of Justice (EACJ), must be leveraged to provide external accountability for domestic human rights violations. These high-level engagements ensure the Coalition remains a legitimate and protected intermediary between grassroots defenders and international human rights mechanisms.

4.1.3 Programmatic Recommendations

Scaling decentralized protection hubs in high-risk regions like Zanzibar and Mwanza is a programmatic necessity for ensuring timely legal and physical support to frontline defenders. This model requires the delegation of emergency rapid response funds to regional coordinators, effectively reducing the administrative latency that often characterizes centralized, headquarters-based interventions. Establishing specialized protection desks for marginalized groups, including women defenders and persons with disabilities, will ensure that the intersectional risks of advocacy are addressed with technical precision. Future programming must focus on creating localized "safety nets" through community-level monitoring committees that can document violations and provide immediate solidarity during crises. These decentralized structures enhance the Coalition's agility and ensure that the protection architecture remains functional even during national-level communication disruptions or internet shutdowns.

Integrating digital security and artificial intelligence (AI) literacy into the core of human rights training is essential for navigating the evolving digital landscape in Tanzania. This involves the development of specialized coursework for journalists and defenders on encrypted communication, data privacy, and the mitigation of online harassment. Programmatic efforts should prioritize the expansion of the Zanzibar Media Committee (ZAMECO) model to other high-risk regions to harmonize media protection and advocacy strategies. Strengthening "Youth-Centred Civic Reporting" initiatives will build a resilient generation of defenders capable of utilizing digital tools for evidence-based advocacy and real-time monitoring. These interventions must be supported by the procurement of advanced digital protection software for member organizations, ensuring that the entire human rights network operates within a secure and resilient virtual perimeter.

4.1.4 Institutional Recommendations

Governance consolidation remains the primary driver for institutional stability and international donor confidence. Finalizing the registration and full operationalization of the Human Rights

Grant Facility (HRGF) Board of Trustees is a critical milestone for the upcoming cycle. This process involves the rigorous implementation of the amended THRDC-Zanzibar Constitution to ensure that vertical accountability and regional autonomy are structurally harmonized. Strengthening the Secretariat-Board interface through quarterly strategic retreats and joint planning sessions will facilitate more cohesive leadership during periods of external political turmoil. Institutional policies, particularly the HR and Financial Manuals, require periodic reviews to reflect emerging global compliance standards and donor requirements. These structural reinforcements establish the fiduciary transparency necessary for the Coalition to function as a sustainable anchor institution for the human rights sector.

Sustaining a high-performance culture requires continuous investment in human capital and staff welfare. Maintaining the current 100% staff retention rate involves the institutionalization of comprehensive wellness programs, including mental health support and competitive insurance benefits for all personnel. Professional development modules focused on specialized competencies like cybersecurity, forensic auditing, and project management will bridge existing technical gaps within the Secretariat. Adopting a formal succession plan for key leadership positions is a strategic necessity for mitigating the risks associated with personnel turnover or sudden leadership transitions. These measures ensure that institutional memory is preserved and that the organization remains capable of executing complex mandates in high-pressure environments. Strategic recruitment for senior roles, such as the Director of Program and Operations (DPO), will further strengthen the executive management capacity of the Coalition.

4.1.5 MEAL Recommendations

Scaling the digital Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system to include all 200+ member organizations is a priority for improving national data granularity and results tracking. This expansion requires the ICT department to develop a mobile-compatible interface that allows field monitors to submit encrypted reports from remote locations in real-time. Continuous technical training sessions for regional coordinators will minimize data entry errors and ensure that all programmatic outputs are captured with forensic precision. Enhancing the system's analytical capabilities through AI-driven data visualization modules will facilitate the production of real-time Situation Reports for the Board and development partners. These technical upgrades transition the organization from retrospective reporting to a proactive, evidence-based management model. A centralized digital repository will also safeguard sensitive human rights data against physical seizures or office raids.

Developing qualitative evaluation methodologies is essential for capturing the "invisible" successes of human rights advocacy and protection. This involves the adoption of the Most

Significant Change (MSC) technique to document the psychological and legal impact of the Coalition’s interventions on the lives of defenders. MEAL frameworks must move beyond quantitative output tracking to assess the long-term outcomes of institutional diplomacy and policy advocacy. Creating a “Learning Culture” within the Secretariat will involve regular post-implementation reviews to identify best practices and areas for programmatic optimization. These insights should be synthesized into annual “Lessons Learned” publications to share knowledge with the wider human rights community in the East African region. Improved qualitative reporting provides a more comprehensive picture of the Coalition’s value proposition to international development partners and ensures accountability to the beneficiaries.

4.1.6 Risk Management & Emergency Response Recommendations

Hardening the physical and digital security of decentralized offices is a critical risk mitigation requirement for the 2026 operational cycle. This involves the installation of advanced surveillance systems, enterprise-grade firewalls, and secure data backup servers across all regional hubs. Implementing a “Security-First” culture requires all staff to undergo mandatory periodic safety drills and digital hygiene training. Regulatory compliance must be treated as a core protection strategy, necessitating the establishment of “Compliance Clinics” to assist member organizations in navigating the NGO Act and tax regulations. Proactive adherence to statutory requirements prevents the state from using legal technicalities to silence or suspend civic actors. These measures ensure that the Coalition maintains its operational legitimacy and physical integrity in an increasingly restrictive legal and environmental landscape.

Scaling the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) requires the creation of a pre-positioned emergency fund that can be activated within the first hour of an incident. This involves a formal partnership with a nationwide network of human rights lawyers who can be deployed instantly to provide legal counsel in cases of arbitrary arrest or detention. Strengthening the “Psychological Shielding” component of the RRM will involve providing trauma-informed care and relocation support for defenders facing immediate physical threats. Continuous risk mapping of high-vulnerability regions will allow the Secretariat to anticipate and mitigate threats before they escalate into institutional crises. Establishing offshore data mirrors ensures that sensitive evidence documented by field monitors remains accessible even if national networks are compromised. These advancements in risk management secure the Coalition’s position as a resilient and reliable guardian of the human rights defender ecosystem.

4.2 Conclusion

The 2025 operational cycle solidified the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition's (THRDC) position as a resilient anchor for civic space amidst a complex and volatile electoral landscape. Sustaining a 100% staff retention rate and securing 88% of the projected annual budget highlights a robust institutional foundation that successfully withstood the pressures of a shrinking global donor pool and heightened domestic regulatory scrutiny. Successful legal interventions in Mwanza and Zanzibar, alongside the accreditation of 35 election monitors, validated the efficacy of the Coalition's Rapid Response Mechanism and its ability to provide a critical safety net for frontline defenders. Fiduciary integrity remained a hallmark of the period, confirmed by clean audit reports for the MKUA project and the broader Strategic Plan. These accomplishments reflect an organization that has transitioned from reactive protection to a proactive, evidence-based leadership model within the East African human rights ecosystem.

Future institutional growth hinges on the full operationalization of the Human Rights Grant Facility (HRGF) and the continued capitalization of the Solidarity Fund to ensure long-term fiscal autonomy. Strategic priorities for 2026 will center on the digital transformation of the MEAL system and the expansion of decentralized protection hubs to manage localized risks with greater agility. Ongoing negotiations for the Watetezi House land acquisition in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma represent a significant commitment to building a permanent, secure asset base for the human rights movement. Maintaining a rigorous, non-partisan oversight posture remains essential as the Coalition navigates the post-election regulatory environment and seeks to embed human rights standards into national development frameworks. The Coalition stands prepared to execute its 2023–2027 Strategic Plan with a focus on institutional sustainability, technological resilience, and the unwavering protection of the human rights defender community.

📍 Mikocheni B, Eyasi Road, P.o.box 105926,
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

☎ +255 769 642208

✉ info@thrdc.or.tz

🌐 www.thrdc.or.tz

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