

The first quarter of 2026

Newsletter



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The first quarter of 2026 marks a period of deliberate action, resilience, and measurable progress for THRDC. Across all programmatic areas, the Coalition has demonstrated its ability to respond to a complex and evolving human rights environment while maintaining a strong focus on impact. From providing legal support to over 100 human rights defenders, to coordinating national and international advocacy processes such as the UPR, the results reflected in this report are not incidental, they are the product of sustained commitment, strategic coordination, and the courage of human rights defenders on the ground.

One of the most significant achievements this quarter has been the strengthening of protection mechanisms. The expansion of our advocacy footprint through media engagement and public dialogue further signals a shift toward more accessible, people-centered human rights work.

Equally important has been our progress in institutional strengthening. Through targeted capacity building, support to member organizations, and improved coordination across zones, THRDC is reinforcing its foundation as a membership-driven Coalition. Initiatives such as the Defenders with Disability Initiative have also ensured that inclusion remains central to our work, positioning the Coalition as a leader in advancing rights for marginalized groups within broader human rights frameworks.

However, these achievements have been realized within the context of increasing constraints. Financial limitations remain a persistent challenge. The growing demand for assistance from human rights defenders continues to outpace available resources, requiring difficult prioritization decisions. At the same time, operational challenges, including shrinking civic space, and regulatory pressures, have affected the efficiency and reach of



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certain interventions.

For CSOs more broadly, the environment continues to demand adaptability. Increased scrutiny, evolving compliance requirements, and uncertainties in donor funding trends are reshaping how organizations plan and operate. These dynamics underscore the urgency of strengthening institutional resilience, diversifying funding sources, and building stronger alliances at both national and regional levels.

As we look ahead, THRDC remains committed to deepening its protection work, expanding advocacy efforts, and strengthening partnerships. The lessons from this quarter are clear: impact is possible even in constrained environments, but sustainability will depend on collective effort, innovation, and continued investment in the human rights ecosystem.

This newsletter is therefore not only a reflection of what has been achieved,

but also a call to action, for partners, stakeholders, and the broader community, to continue supporting the protection and promotion of human rights in Tanzania. Enjoy your reading!

Quarter One in Focus

Consolidating Advocacy and Institutional Strength

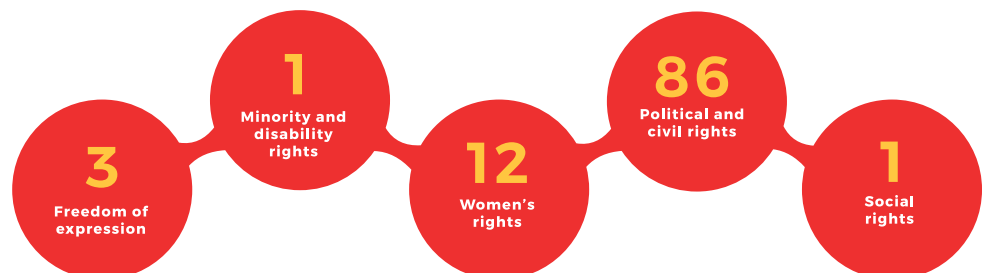
The first quarter reflects a deliberate consolidation of THRDC's dual mandate: advancing human rights advocacy while strengthening institutional capacity. Across all programmatic areas, the Coalition demonstrated measurable progress in visibility, coordination, and impact. Let us all see what has happened in a period of just three months.

1: Defending Civic Space at Scale: From Courtrooms to Crisis Response

During the first quarter of 2026, THRDC demonstrated a robust and multi-layered protection response, directly supporting 103 human rights defenders (12 female and 91 male) facing serious criminal charges, including treason and terrorism-related cases. This large-scale legal intervention reflects a tightening civic space environment, where defenders increasingly face judicial harassment. Through sustained legal representation and strategic case management, tangible results were achieved; most notably, the withdrawal of treason charges against 9 individuals and the release of several defenders through bail and court orders. These outcomes reinforce the centrality of legal defense as both a protection tool and a mechanism

for safeguarding due process. Complementing legal support, THRDC implemented a comprehensive protection model that included the relocation of 20 at-risk defenders and support to affected families. These emergency interventions were critical in mitigating threats, particularly in cases involving abductions and intimidation. Additional layers of support, ranging from psychosocial assistance to technical security guidance, ensured that defenders were not only protected in the immediate term but also equipped to sustain their work under pressure. This integrated approach illustrates a rights-based protection framework that responds to both acute risks and long-term resilience needs.

HRDs supported during quarter one were 103 in total, working on these thematic areas



2: Evidence to Impact: Monitoring, Documentation, and Strategic Litigation

THRDC's evidence-based advocacy continued to yield measurable impact, anchored in rigorous monitoring and documentation. During the quarter, the Coalition documented 21 human rights incidents across Tanzania and the East African region, capturing patterns of violations including abductions, unlawful arrests, media restrictions, and limitations on political participation. This systematic tracking has strengthened THRDC's analytical capacity, enabling more targeted advocacy and reinforcing the credibility of its national and international reporting, including contributions to UPR processes.

At the same time, 10 trial observations conducted in politically sensitive cases revealed systemic concerns related to fair

trial rights, prolonged detention, and procedural irregularities. These observations were not merely passive; they directly informed advocacy interventions that contributed to concrete justice outcomes, including prosecutorial decisions to withdraw charges. Parallel to this, THRDC supported 5 strategic litigation cases addressing constitutional rights, digital freedoms, and access to justice. A landmark regional judgment during this period declared restrictions on public interest litigation inconsistent with regional legal standards, an outcome that strengthens jurisprudence and expands civic space protections beyond national borders.

3: Strengthening Regional Solidarity and Digital Resilience in a Changing Risk Landscape

Operating within an increasingly complex regional context, THRDC sustained engagement with the East African Protection Hub, responding to cross-border threats and restrictions affecting civil society organizations. While attempts to issue joint regional statements faced limitations due to varying levels of partner engagement, these challenges have provided critical institutional learning. They underscore the need for more structured coordination frameworks and have informed ongoing efforts to build a more responsive and unified regional protection mechanism capable of addressing transnational risks facing human rights defenders.

In parallel, THRDC is adapting to emerging dimensions of risk, particularly in the digital sphere. During the quarter, digital security audits were conducted for 10 human rights defenders, identifying vulnerabilities in communication systems, data protection, and online practices. The implementation of tailored recommendations has significantly improved secure communication and reduced exposure to surveillance and cyber threats. These efforts signal a strategic shift, recognizing that effective human rights protection today must extend beyond physical safety to include digital resilience, especially in environments where surveillance and online targeting are increasingly used to silence dissent.

4: From Voice to Influence: Expanding Advocacy and Public Engagement

THRDC sustained a strong advocacy presence through the issuance of strategic press statements addressing critical human rights developments. These interventions were widely disseminated, securing coverage across an average of 19 media outlets and reinforcing the Coalition's position as a credible national voice on human rights.

Public engagement was significantly amplified through seven media programs aired on ITV, Crown Media, Hope TV, and Radio One. These platforms enabled the Coalition to translate complex legal and human

rights issues, such as defamation law and civic rights, into accessible public discourse, reaching over 27 million individuals.

This approach reflects a broader shift toward rights-based public education, where media engagement serves not only as communication but as a tool for civic empowerment.



5: Shaping Accountability Nationally and Internationally: UPR and Civic Space Engagement

The UPR process remained a flagship advocacy priority. THRDC successfully coordinated over 60 civil society organizations across seven thematic clusters, ensuring that diverse human rights concerns were systematically captured.

The joint drafting of the civil society report, in collaboration with Legal and Human Rights Centre, and Save the Children Tanzania, reflects a high level of coordination and

technical rigor. The validation process, conducted with government participation, further strengthened the legitimacy of the submission.

Parallel to this, the Coalition convened a national dialogue on civic space, creating a platform for human rights stakeholders to critically assess the operating environment for HRDs and identify practical protection strategies.



6:Voices Unmuted: Confronting Digital Violence Against Women Human Rights Defenders

As part of the commemoration of International Women's Day 2026, THRDC convened a focused dialogue in Dar es Salaam bringing together 30 women human rights defenders to examine the growing challenge of digital violence and its impact on civic engagement. The session created a safe and reflective space to unpack how online harassment, misinformation, and targeted attacks continue to limit women's participation, expression, and visibility in public life. The discussion emphasized that digital

spaces are now central to human rights work, and the risks within them must be understood as real threats to safety, dignity, and democratic participation. The dialogue resulted in strengthened awareness among participants on digital risks and practical protection strategies, while also fostering solidarity and peer support among women defenders. Participants left with a clearer understanding of how to navigate online threats, including the importance of digital safety practices and mental well-being. The engagement reinforced the need for continued investment in capacity building, stronger protection mechanisms, and sustained safe spaces for women human rights defenders to collectively respond to emerging digital challenges.



International Women's Day 2026

7: Defending Inclusion: Advancing Disability Rights Through Strategic Action

The Defenders with Disability Initiative (DDI) emerged as a critical pillar in advancing inclusive human rights advocacy during the quarter. Through this initiative, THRDC demonstrated a structured approach to integrating disability rights within national and international processes

i. Positioning Disability Rights at the Center of Human Rights Advocacy

The DDI maintained active engagement in key frameworks, including the UPR and the development of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Shadow Report. By addressing data gaps and contributing technical inputs, the Desk ensured that disability perspectives are not treated as peripheral, but as integral to national human rights reporting.

This aligns with global best practice, where inclusive reporting has proven essential in influencing state accountability and even policy reform.

ii. From Policy to Practice: Building Evidence and Influencing Systems

A notable intervention was participation in the Qualitative Care and Disability Assessment in collaboration with UN Women. This initiative generated critical evidence on the intersection between disability and care economy, an area often overlooked in policy discourse.

For instance, findings from similar studies in East Africa have demonstrated how unpaid care burdens disproportionately affect people with disabilities and their caregivers, reinforcing structural inequality. THRDC's engagement in this research positions it to advocate for more inclusive social protection frameworks.

iii. Strategic Partnerships Driving Inclusive Solutions

For this quarter, DDI strengthened collaboration with key stakeholders, including government authorities and organizations such as SHIVYAWATA, TUSPO, and KAYA Foundation. Strategic engagement with the Mkuranga District Commissioner and partners regarding defenders with disabilities has been instrumental in advancing the construction of a pre-primary school for children with psychosocial disabilities.

iv. Innovating Advocacy: Arts, Media, and Digital Engagement

The Desk explored innovative advocacy approaches, including the use of arts and media storytelling to communicate disability rights issues. Through Watetezi Media scripts and digital campaigns, complex issues such as inclusive infrastructure and environmental justice were translated into relatable narratives for the community. It is a very good strategy to reach a larger intended audience, including the government with the intention to influence policy reforms

8. Institutional Resilience: Strengthening Systems for Long-Term Impact

THRDC continued to reinforce its institutional foundations across governance, finance, and human resources.

The successful convening of the 54th Board Meeting ensured strategic oversight and alignment with organizational priorities. Financial

accountability was maintained through timely reporting, audit processes, and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Human resource stability remained a key strength, with a 100% retention rate supported by continuous professional development and staff welfare initiatives. This stability is critical in sustaining institutional memory and even programmatic continuity.

9. Investing in Sustainability: Resource Mobilization and Strategic Partnerships

The Coalition strengthened its resource mobilization efforts through multiple funding proposals and high-level

engagements with development partners. The successful acquisition of a new grant contributes to operational

continuity.

Efforts to establish the Human Rights Grant Facility and secure Watetezi House remain ongoing, representing long-term investments in institutional independence. However, the reliance on traditional funding streams continues to pose a strategic risk, necessitating diversification and innovation in fundraising approaches.

10. Building Stronger Networks: Zonal Coordination Meetings Driving Grassroots Impact

During the first quarter, THRDC successfully convened two strategic meetings with Zonal Coordinators,

aimed at reinforcing the foundation of the Coalition's nationwide network. These engagements focused on enhancing leadership capacity at the zonal level, particularly in areas of resource mobilization, internal coordination, and member cohesion. The discussions also

emphasized the importance of unified advocacy approaches and consistent communication between the Secretariat and zonal structures.

As a result, Zonal Coordinators demonstrated improved alignment in program implementation and member engagement strategies across regions. This strengthened coordination has begun to translate into more structured local-level advocacy. The meetings also contributed to a more cohesive institutional identity, reducing fragmentation and reinforcing collective action among members.

11.Targeted Support, Tangible Impact: Strengthening 12 Member Organizations

Throughout the quarter, THRDC provided tailored technical and programmatic support to 12 member organizations, reinforcing their operational capacity and advocacy effectiveness. This support ranged from advisory services on project implementation and compliance, to direct facilitation of activities aligned with human rights priorities at community

level. This intervention resulted in improved organizational performance among supported members, including enhanced reporting standards, better program design, and increased engagement in advocacy initiatives. Notably, several supported organizations were able to actively contribute to national human rights processes, demonstrating how targeted institutional support can directly strengthen the broader human rights ecosystem.

12.Investing in the Future: Capacity Building for 74 New Human Rights Defenders

In a deliberate effort to expand and strengthen its membership base, THRDC conducted comprehensive training for 74 newly registered members. The training covered core areas including organizational orientation, security and protection mechanisms, and resource mobilization strategies, equipping participants with the foundational tools

required for effective human rights work. The outcome of this training is already evident in the increased confidence and engagement of new members within Coalition activities. Participants demonstrated improved understanding of risk management and advocacy strategies, positioning them to operate more safely and effectively within their respective contexts. This initiative contributes to long-term sustainability by ensuring that the next generation of human rights defenders is both informed and resilient

Quarter One Highlights at a Glance



Looking Ahead: Priorities for Quarter Two



The first quarter of 2026 demonstrates a clear trajectory toward integrated, inclusive, and evidence-based human rights advocacy. By combining strategic engagement, institutional strengthening, and innovative approaches, particularly in advancing disability rights, the Coalition continues to shape a more responsive and accountable human rights ecosystem in Tanzania