

NEWSLETTER

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Standing
with
Defenders,
Standing
with the
Nation

January 2026

Issue #01

As we enter 2026, the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) does so with deep reflection and renewed determination. The year 2025 began with hope, but it soon became one of the most difficult periods for Human Rights Defenders

(HRDs) in Tanzania have faced in recent years. Civic space continued to shrink, risks to defenders increased, and the realities of a general election year placed heavy pressure on those who chose to stand for justice and human dignity.

Despite these challenges, 2025 also reminded us of the strength that comes from solidarity. Human Rights Defenders did not step back; they showed courage, supported one another, and continued to serve communities across the country. In moments of uncertainty, the Coalition stood close to HRDs and to the people of Tanzania, listening, responding, and walking together through the challenges.

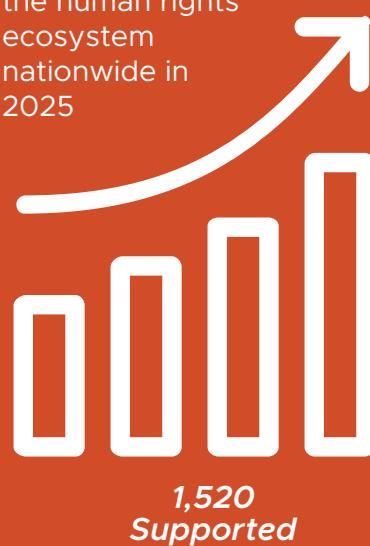
As we begin this new year, we carry forward the lessons of 2025 with hope. We start 2026 grounded in resilience, strengthened by partnership, and committed now more than ever to protecting human rights defenders and expanding civic space in Tanzania.

Overall Results at a Glance: Impact Beyond Numbers

In 2025, THRDC strengthened the human rights ecosystem nationwide by directly supported 1,520 Human Rights Defenders (CSOs, lawyers, journalists, and grassroots HRDs) across the country through protection, capacity building, coordination, and advocacy initiatives. Our engagement intentionally prioritized inclusion, reaching women human rights defenders, persons with disabilities, and actors working at the grassroots level through both physical and online platforms.

This scale of engagement reflects not only growth in numbers, but a deepening of confidence, skills, and collective action a clear indication of increased morale in defending human rights.

Strengthened
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2025



Widened Membership base, and Strengthening Defenders' Capacity

For the year 2026, THRDC was able to incept new member organizations, as well as strengthening their capacity in areas of monitoring human rights cases, documenting human rights cases, and proper reporting of the human rights cases. 94 new member organizations were inducted and trained in 2026. One of THRDCs' greatest successes for this capacity building, in the demonstrated increase in competence for the evidence collection and reporting by CSOs; 39 trained member organizations were able to properly document over 50 human rights violation cases in Tanzania.

These efforts ensured that defenders were not only active, but effective, strategic, and coordinated in their advocacy.



Protection That Works: Safety, Security, and Rapid Response

In a year characterized by elevated risks, THRDC's protection interventions proved both timely and effective. 1,500 HRDs received direct protection support, including:



These interventions underscore THRDC's commitment to ensuring that HRDs can continue their work safely, even in hostile environments.

Legal Empowerment and Strategic Litigation

Legal empowerment remained a cornerstone of THRDC's work in 2025:

206 lawyers were trained on national and regional human rights litigation mechanisms, including domestic courts, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and the East African Court of Justice (EACJ).

56 lawyers successfully litigated and won human rights cases, including landmark decisions at the High Court and Court of Appeal levels.

*A key milestone achieved was the *Onesmo Olengurumwa vs Attorney General* case (June 2025), which set an important precedent for civic freedoms.*



Trained on national and regional human rights litigation mechanisms, including domestic courts

Successfully litigated and won human rights cases

Through litigation, THRDC helped translate rights from paper into lived realities.

Public Engagement and Growing Civic Voice

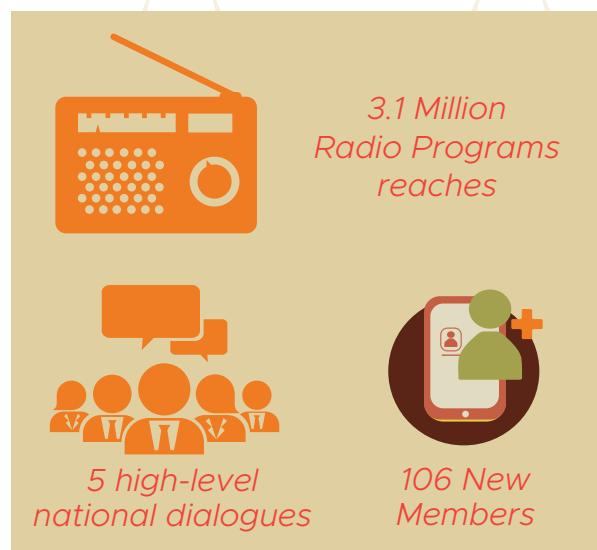
Despite a restrictive environment, public engagement expanded significantly in 2025:

3.1 million Tanzanians were reached through radio programs, dialogues, and social media engagement. Together with this reach, there was an average of 400 likes on every radio program posted on Instagram, 30 comments and 52 shares. This indicated an increase in knowledge and a great engagement level for the programs with the general public.

5 high-level national dialogues were convened, more than double the number held in 2024.

Coalition membership grew from **292 to 398 organizations** by December 2025. These figures reflect a growing public

demand for accountability, justice, and human rights protection.



Election Year Impact: From Advocacy to Policy Adoption

As Tanzania navigated a critical election year, THRDC worked closely with civil society actors to advance a shared vision for democratic governance.

The **Tanzania Civil Society Organizations' Election Manifesto** emerged as a defining achievement of 2025. Through coordinated advocacy and engagement, **approximately 90% of the Manifesto's recommendations were adopted by political parties**, demonstrating the power of unified, evidence-based civil society action.

This achievement confirms that even in difficult political moments, structured advocacy can shape national discourse and policy commitments.



Policy Reform and Regional Solidarity

THRDC's influence extended beyond national borders:

Coalition recommendations were reflected in the **Criminal Justice Reform Commission report**, particularly on investigations before charging and access to bail.

Inputs contributed to the ongoing development of a new **Criminal Justice Policy**.

Through the **East African Protection Hub**, more than **50 HRDs** received regional protection support, strengthening cross-border solidarity with partners in Kenya and Uganda.



Stepping into 2026

For this year, defenders can expect THRDC to remain present, responsive, and steadfast. We will continue to strengthen protection mechanisms, work to keep civic space open, and stand side by side with defenders across the country. Above all, our commitment remains clear to listen, to support, and to walk with human rights defenders and with the nation as we navigate the realities of 2026 together.

