

FORUMCIV.

Power to change



Annual report 2025: Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa





DEMOCRACY IN MOTION:
COLLECTIVE ACTION AND
NEW PATHWAYS FORWARD

ForumCiv Annual Report 2025

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Our 2025 milestones at a glance

A lot was achieved in 2025; here are some of the milestones we are proud of the most!



53

Total number of partners supported in 2025

Sub-granting



16.36M

Total sub-granting amount in 2025 (KES)



33

Number of partners sub-granted

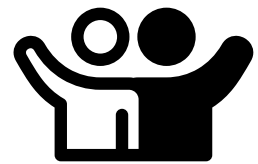


Programme development



2

Number of new programmes in 2025



20

Number of new local partners

New generation of change makers



16

Number of young leaders directly supported



20

Number of young artists empowered



Policy advocacy and collaborative campaigns



6

Key publications and academic reports in 2025



2

Number of policies influenced



3.89K

Number of participants at advocacy events

Media advocacy



10.3M

Number of audiences reached through television



5.6M

Number of audiences reached through radio



2.6M

Number of audiences reached through newspaper/print and web publications



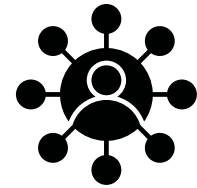
30.6K

Number of audiences reached through YouTube and livestreams





**Social media
presence**



542K

**Total social
media reach**

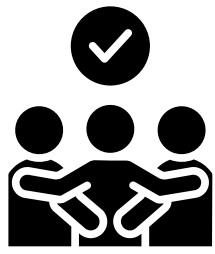


2.6K

**Number of new
online followers**

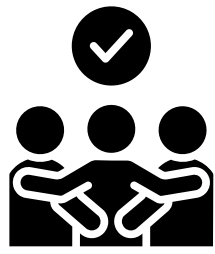


Capacity development and knowledge sharing



343

Number of individuals at knowledge sharing forums



378

Number of individuals at capacity development sessions



Innovative new approaches

We brought together 20 artists from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania for our first ever East Africa cohort of the Artivism Fellowship programme.

We convened 40 African civil society organizations to co-create a position paper for COP30, with tremendous wins.

We conducted 5 customized regional capacity development sessions in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, and Marsabit for partners in the regions, earning 5-star reviews from participants.

We awarded 30 gender equality champions for their exemplary work in advocating for gender equality in Kenya, some receiving such an award for the first time.

We transitioned the Public-Private Development Partnership (PPDP) project to PPDP for inclusive decent employment and productive livelihoods—A Market Systems Development (MSD) approach to sustainable socio-economic development.

We invested in the well-being of our partner CEOs by organizing the CEOs wellness retreat to relax, recharge, and reconnect.

We adopted the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in programme development and programme management, enhancing internal efficiency.

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HAKI KWA

HA



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

BUSINESS SCHOOL

Word from our Regional Manager

As we reflect on 2025, we recognize that we are standing at a defining moment not only for ForumCiv's Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa (ROESA), but for civil society across the continent. The landscape around us has shifted considerably. Democratic space continues to narrow in many contexts, regulatory environments are becoming more complex, and the global aid architecture that sustained civil society for decades is undergoing significant restructuring. Traditional funding flows are less predictable, compliance expectations are rising, and competition for limited resources has intensified. Yet within this period of uncertainty lies an important opportunity: to rethink how we work, collaborate, and sustain meaningful, long-term impact.

Throughout 2025, ROESA demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and strategic foresight. We sustained strong implementation of our core programmes: *Wajibu Wetu; Jumuika, Sikika! (WWJS!)*, Strengthening Agency for Social Accountability (SASA), Public-Private Development Partnerships (PPDP), and Enhancing Artivism for Social Transformation (EAST). Through these initiatives, we continued advancing democratic accountability, inclusive governance, youth engagement, climate justice, and gender equality across the region. These programmes have not only delivered results; they have strengthened citizen agency and reinforced the principle that democratic participation must remain central to development processes.

At the same time, 2025 marked a year of deliberate expansion and repositioning. We launched *Our Rights, Our Future! (OROF)*, *Caminos Staff Exchange Programme*, and laid the foundation for the *Transformative Partnership Programme (TPP)*. These initiatives reflect more than programmatic growth; they signal a strategic shift in response to a changing ecosystem. As funding models evolve and civic space tightens, ROESA is increasingly positioning itself as an ecosystem

builder strengthening institutions, convening diverse actors, and supporting long-term sustainability rather than short-term project cycles.

The year also reaffirmed the essential role of convening and collective civic engagement. ROESA created and supported platforms that brought together over 3,800 citizens, creatives, policymakers, development partners, and private sector actors to reflect on democratic futures and shared accountability. These convenings, whether focused on democracy, human rights, climate justice, or inclusive economic participation, were not simply events. They were deliberate acts of democratic protection and renewal in a time when civic voices are often constrained. By nurturing dialogue and solidarity, we strengthened trust and reinforced the collective responsibility to safeguard rights and freedoms.

Strategic networking became an increasingly central pillar of our work. Recognizing that the future of civil society financing will be more diversified and regionally grounded, ROESA deepened engagement in key regional and global platforms. Our participation in spaces such as the Africa Philanthropy Conference, the East Africa Philanthropy Conference, and COP30 and related climate justice forums allowed us to position our work within broader continental and global conversations. We also engaged in regional democracy dialogues, catalytic finance discussions, public-private partnership platforms, and local civil society assemblies. These engagements were not symbolic. They were strategic efforts to build alliances, expand visibility, attract new partners, and connect civil society priorities with emerging philanthropy, diaspora capital, climate finance, and responsible private-sector actors.

As we look ahead to 2026, we do so with clarity and resolve. Strengthening democratic resilience will remain at the core of our



3.8K

ROESA created and supported platforms that brought together citizens, creatives, policymakers, development partners, and private sector actors

mandate. As electoral cycles intensify and accountability actors face heightened scrutiny, our programmes will prioritize safeguarding civic actors, nurturing movement leadership, and protecting citizen participation. Democracy requires sustained investment in agency, solidarity, and community-driven accountability.

Institutional sustainability will also be a defining priority. The era of reliance on single-source funding and short-term grants is no longer viable. Strong governance systems, financial transparency, compliance capacity, digital visibility, and diversified resource mobilisation must become foundational components of civil society strength. Through the Transformative Partnership Programme and related capacity-building initiatives, we will support partners not merely to survive shifting funding trends but to emerge stronger, more credible, and more autonomous institutions.

Collaboration will serve as our multiplier. The pressures facing civil society, shrinking aid flows, regulatory tightening, and capacity gaps are shared challenges. No single organisation can navigate them alone. In the coming period, we will strengthen cross-regional learning, shared platforms, peer-to-peer exchange, and strategic partnerships across civil society, philanthropy networks, diaspora communities, academia, and responsible private-sector actors. Collective ecosystems will define our sustainability.

Inclusive livelihoods will continue to shape our regional identity. Through PPDP and related initiatives, we will further link market systems development with rights-based

approaches, ensuring that economic participation reinforces democratic inclusion rather than undermines it. Gender equality, youth leadership, and care economy advocacy will remain embedded across all our programmes, guiding both strategy and implementation.

Above all, 2025 has reminded us that resilience is not merely about endurance; it is about transformation. It is about adapting with intention, building new alliances, and holding firm to values even when the operating environment becomes more difficult. On behalf of the Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, I extend sincere gratitude to our partners, staff, networks, and supporters who have walked with us through this pivotal year. Together, we are not only defending democratic space but also shaping a future where rights, dignity, justice, and resilience are accessible to all.

With appreciation and solidarity,

Jackson Obare

Regional Manager,
ForumCiv Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa.



Celebrating 30 years of defending democracy and human rights globally

For three decades, ForumCiv has stood as a steadfast defender of democracy, human rights and civic space around the world. Founded in 1995 through the merger of two Swedish civil society organisations, ForumCiv (originally Forum Syd) began with a mission rooted in solidarity and justice and quickly evolved into Sweden's largest civil society platform with over 200 member organisations. Over the years, it has worked to strengthen people's ability to organise, influence decision-making and claim their rights, becoming a key actor in global civil society and development cooperation.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, ForumCiv's regional office, based in Kenya, has been a vital force in supporting local civil society and deepening democratic culture across the region. Since 2012, the office has coordinated sub-granting, built partnerships, and developed innovative programmes that reinforce democratic accountability, human rights, gender equality, and sustainable resource use.

ForumCiv's work in Eastern and Southern Africa reflects its broader commitment to a just and inclusive world where everyone is empowered to shape their own futures. By nurturing civil society networks, supporting local advocacy, and driving collaborations between right holders and duty bearers, ForumCiv contributes to strengthening democracy and human rights in contexts where the civic space is under pressure.







Introducing our new Secretary General: Göran Holmqvist

I want to provide long-term conditions for ForumCiv's important work for democracy and human rights, and broaden the organization's sources of funding.

Göran Holmqvist

In 2025, ForumCiv appointed Göran Holmqvist as its new Secretary General with the task of leading the organization through an important transition and developing new funding pathways for the future.

Göran Holmqvist most recently worked as a project researcher at the Institute for Futures Studies. He holds a PhD in Peace and Development Research from the University of Gothenburg and has an extensive background in international development cooperation. After his time as a department head at Sida, he has frequently contributed sharp analyses in the aid policy debate in Sweden in recent years.

The Board highlights that Göran Holmqvist, with his experience and analytical skills, can strengthen ForumCiv's voice in the discussion about Sweden's role in the world. A clear and fact-based narrative will, according to the Board, provide a strong foundation for building trust with institutional donors, philanthropists, foundations, and companies.

Göran Holmqvist brings long managerial experience, a broad network, and deep knowledge of development cooperation. He contributes unique qualities that will strengthen ForumCiv and our members for the future.

Magnus Lindell, Chair of ForumCiv

OUR RIGHTS! FUTURE!

Our Rights, Our Future!

Our Rights, Our Future! is a global initiative led by ForumCiv, in partnership with Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries (COSPE) and Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) and funded by the European Commission. The project, launched in 2025, empowers youth, especially from marginalized communities, to safely and meaningfully engage in civic and political spaces, defending the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly across Latin America, Africa, Middle East and North Africa, and Southeast Asia.

The project aims to strengthen the capacities of youth-led and youth-focused civil society organisations (CSOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and informal groups to actively and safely participate in civic and political spaces, with a focus on defending the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

Report on Kenya's civic Space

Kenya's civic space is experiencing a steady erosion. According to the 2024 CIVICUS Monitor report, Kenya's civic space rating has been downgraded from "Obstructed" to "Repressed" with a score of 37/100.

A study commissioned by ForumCiv under the Our Rights, Our Future! (OROF) project reveals that this regression has disproportionately affected youth, human rights defenders (HRDs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and marginalized communities. The study highlights the extensive and multifaceted threats; legal, physical, digital, and financial, undermining the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

37/100



Kenya's civic space rating has been downgraded from "Obstructed" to "Repressed"

Challenges facing the civic space in Kenya

The study identifies various challenges, key among them include:

- **Legal and policy challenges:** While Kenya's constitution upholds civic rights (Articles 33, 36, and 37), secondary legislation and enforcement tactics have eroded these guarantees.
- **Restrictive laws:** The Public Order Act, the Cybercrimes Act, and the pending Assemblies and Demonstrations Bill (2024) which criminalize public mobilization and digital dissent.
- **State harassment:** CSOs face deregistration, surveillance, and funding constraints. Plainclothes police and strategic lawsuits (SLAPPs) are deployed to intimidate protestors.
- **Digital repression:** Broad cybercrime provisions silence online activism and amplify fear of arrest or censorship.

Key recommendations from our report

1. Legal and institutional reform:

- Repeal or amend repressive laws, such as the Public Order Act and Cybercrimes Act.

Advocate against enactment of repressive laws like the proposed Assemblies and Demonstrations Bill (2024) and the Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Finalize and implement regulations under the PBO Act and the Community Groups Registration Act.

Strengthen judicial oversight and independent police oversight authority.

2. Protection of human rights defenders:

Institutionalize legal aid, rapid response funds, and physical/digital safety mechanisms.

Enact national HRD protection laws aligned with European Union Guidelines.

3. Inclusive civic participation:

Mainstream civic education and political history into schools and public discourse.

Support youth- and women-led civic initiatives, particularly at the grassroots level.

4. Donor and international support:

Promote unrestricted, core funding and emergency support.

Pressure state actors diplomatically to uphold constitutional freedoms.

5. Media and digital rights:

Support youth media collectives and establish journalist protection funds.

Reform cyber laws to protect free expression and fight disinformation.



CAMINOS: Building bridges across continents

You don't learn a language to sound sophisticated. You learn it to be understood and to understand others... I continue (learning Spanish) because languages shape the contemporary world. It opens doors to communities. It allows collaboration across borders. It strengthens advocacy. It builds trust. It makes change possible.

Spanish is no longer a subject I study. It is a tool I am sharpening so that one day, in boardrooms, in community forums, in policy discussions, and in las calles, I will not just speak it. I will use it to build, to connect, and to effect change.

John Kiruga, NOREC fellow on his experience learning Spanish and his interactions in Colombia.

In 2025, we launched the CAMINOS Staff Exchange Project, a groundbreaking initiative designed to strengthen cross-regional collaboration between our offices in Eastern and Southern Africa (ROESA) and Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC).

Funded by the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC), CAMINOS champions mutual learning through staff exchanges that leverage ROLAC's deep expertise in agroecological practices and ROESA's strengths in governance and public-private development partnerships (PPDPs). By fostering capacity building, cultural exchange and knowledge transfer between regions, the programme embodies ForumCiv's commitment to innovative solutions for sustainable development and inclusive governance.

Over its planned two rounds running from August 2025 to July 2027, CAMINOS aims to enhance institutional capacity and empower communities to adopt sustainable practices that improve livelihoods and foster resilient, equitable development. For ROESA, this means staff gaining valuable insights into agroecological methods that can be integrated into local programming.

In 2025, two staff members from ROESA, Rachel Juma and John Kiruga travelled to Colombia for the exchange and two colleagues from Colombia, Aura Cecilia Montalvo and Yuirman Parra came to Kenya for 6 months. In 2026 and beyond we look forward to similar exchanges that will also involve our partners.

Transitioning from Public Private Development Partnerships (PPDP) to Market System Development (MSD) for inclusive development

In 2025, the Public-Private Development Partnership (PPDP) project transitioned to PPDP for inclusive decent employment and productive livelihoods—A Market Systems Development (MSD) approach to sustainable socio-economic development.

The transition from PPDP to MSD is not a departure from our principles but a progression. We are building on the strong foundation laid by PPDP to achieve a more significant systemic impact, offering a promising future for inclusive development.

At ForumCiv, we believe that inclusive markets are resilient markets. Transitioning from PPDP to MSD means embedding transparency, accountability, and human rights at every stage of market system transformation. Our unwavering commitment to a participatory and sustainable approach ensures no one is left behind. Our partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) will enhance the integration of Rights-Based Approach into MSD, further strengthening our commitment to inclusivity and sustainability.



Strengthening community voices in Kenya's Public Private Partnerships (PPP) framework

In 2025, ForumCiv Eastern and Southern Africa contributed to advancing more inclusive infrastructure development in Kenya through a policy brief that reviewed the Public Private Partnerships (PPP) Act, CAP 430 of 2021. The brief, developed in partnership with Strathmore University (authored by Dr David Chiao, Dr Peggy Ngila, Jane Mugo, Mumbi Wachira, and Linet Mukami) provided a timely and constructive analysis of the Act.

While the PPP Act aims to accelerate infrastructure delivery through private sector partnerships, ForumCiv's review identified critical gaps that limit inclusivity, accountability, and community benefit. The study highlighted the absence of a clear benefit-sharing framework for project-affected persons, weak oversight mechanisms, and limited provisions for meaningful participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities.

The analysis also underscored gaps in climate responsiveness, transparency, and grievance redress mechanisms, key elements needed to align infrastructure investments with Kenya's constitutional values and climate commitments.

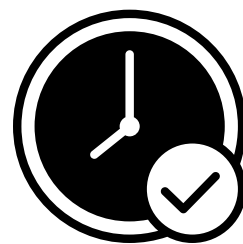
The findings were amplified during the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Forum on Community Engagement in Development held in May 2025 at Strathmore University, where stakeholders emphasised the importance of early and sustained community engagement throughout the PPP project cycle.

Through this initiative, ForumCiv strengthened national dialogue on reforming the PPP framework to embed rights-based, climate-responsive, and community-centred development principles thus contributing to more equitable outcomes, stronger public trust, and more sustainable investment in Kenya.

When infrastructure projects prioritize local sourcing of labour and materials, they create jobs and stimulate local economies. Households benefit from new water access points and off-grid power systems. Children spend less time fetching water; parents save on energy costs and eventually communities thrive.

Jackson Obare, ForumCiv Regional Manager, Eastern and Southern Africa.





3 hours and 36 minutes more than men

Time dedicated by women per day to care and domestic tasks on average



ForumCiv champions Kenya's landmark National Care Policy for gender equality

In 2025, the PPDP for inclusive decent employment and productive livelihoods project, played a pivotal role in advancing Kenya's National Care Policy from advocacy to national adoption by supporting multi-stakeholder dialogues and media advocacy.

As part of these efforts, ForumCiv partnered with the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Narok County Gender Department, and the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancy Association (MMWCA) to host a town-hall event on the International Day for Care and Support, which was broadcasted on national television. The discussion highlighted how women disproportionately shoulder the burden of unpaid care work and the consequent negative effects on their social, political, and economic welfare. This public engagement played a key role in building momentum for the policy, which was subsequently approved by Cabinet on December 15, 2025.

Kenya's National Care Policy is a landmark framework aimed at addressing longstanding gender inequalities arising from unpaid domestic and care work, a burden that women and girls disproportionately carry. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, women spend significantly more time on unpaid care than men, with women dedicating about three hours and 36 minutes more per day to care and domestic tasks than men on average, underscoring the scale of the inequality the policy seeks to tackle.

The PPDP project operates in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) of Narok and Kajiado Counties, regions marked by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms where women

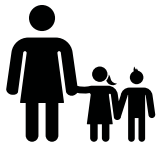
face pervasive challenges such as gender-based violence, lack of agency, limited voice, and scarce economic resources. These structural inequities are compounded by high unpaid care burdens that restrict women's time for education, paid employment, civic engagement, and leadership.

The National Care Policy will help address these challenges by:

- Recognizing unpaid care work as essential economic and social labour that must be accounted for in policy and planning.
- Promoting the redistribution of care responsibilities within households, communities, and public institutions.
- Encouraging the reduction of care burdens through investments in care infrastructure and public services, such as childcare, eldercare, water and energy access.
- Advocating for representation and support for caregivers through social protection, decent work standards, and gender-responsive public services.

The Policy aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 5.4, which commits countries to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through public services, infrastructure, and social protection, and to promote shared responsibility within households.

Over the next two years, the National Care Policy will be an instrumental tool for the PPDP project. The project will collaborate with national and county gender departments to support the roll-out of policy-aligned interventions.



60%

widows face harmful practices, economic exclusion or social isolation

Community advocacy shaped the Siaya Widows Protection Act

Through three phases of the Wajibu Wetu programme, ForumCiv has provided sustained financial and technical support to RONA Foundation to organize widows, strengthen community advocacy, and connect grassroots voices to county decision-making. This long-term support contributed to a major result in 2025: the Siaya Widows Protection Act, a landmark step toward protecting widows from harmful widowhood practices, abuse, and exclusion.

The foundation for this win was built under Wajibu Wetu phase II through the “Mjane ni Kwanza” project, implemented in six sub-counties of Siaya. RONA helped form six community action teams with 76 members who supported widows to report and respond to violence and advanced a widow charter that called for a county law.

This new law is significant because it moves widowhood from a hidden cultural issue to a public rights and governance issue. It outlaws harmful widowhood practices and creates protection and support structures, including County and Ward Committees, a Department of Widow Affairs, and a Widows Welfare Fund.

In a region where more than 60% of widows face harmful practices, economic exclusion or social isolation, this marks a concrete shift in dignity, protection and justice.



**ForumCiv at COP30: African voices
at the centre of climate justice**

ForumCiv and other CSOs are in COP30 to ensure that re-centring climate action around people is worth protecting. This COP30 is turning promises into people-centred progress.

Jackson Obare, ForumCiv Regional Manager, Eastern and Southern Africa

At COP30 in Belém, Africa’s civil society was louder and more visible than ever, and ForumCiv helped make that possible. As co-lead of the Africa CSOs Pre-COP30 process, ForumCiv helped shape a unified position paper that reflected the needs of more than 40 organisations across the continent. We carried these shared demands into the talks, putting African voices at the centre of climate justice discussions.

What African CSOs demanded

The position paper set out concrete, Africa-centred demands across the core negotiation tracks:

- **Climate finance:** time-bound, binding commitments aligned to Paris Agreement Article 9.1; finance that is clearly defined, transparent, new and additional (not re-labelled ODA), predominantly grant-based, and accessible through simplified systems that reach communities.
- **Loss and Damage:** a fully operational Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage with grant-based support, simplified direct access, rapid disbursement, and a dedicated window for slow-onset events and displacement.
- **Adaptation:** a robust Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) framework with measurable indicators, especially on Means of Implementation (finance, technology, capacity), to drive accountability.
- **Just transition:** a COP30 “breakthrough” beyond dialogue, including the proposed Belém Action Mechanism (BAM) and support for an equitable energy transition that avoids deepening debt and protects workers and communities.

What COP30 delivered that strengthened African leadership

1. A stronger platform to demand finance at scale (even if not yet enforceable)

COP30 politically anchored the “Baku to Belém Roadmap” toward USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2035 and launched a two-year work programme on climate finance. This is a procedural win that creates a formal route to press for definitions, transparency, and accountability rules that African CSOs demanded.

Africa now has recognized negotiating “hooks” to insist that how finance is counted (grants vs. loans; public vs. private; “new and additional” standards) must be decided, not waved away.

2. Measurable adaptation architecture Africa can use as leverage

COP30 advanced the operationalization of adaptation tracking through new Belém Adaptation Indicators, including indicators that track adaptation finance provided/received and link adaptation progress to means of implementation.

Indicators can be turned into political pressure enabling African negotiators and CSOs to show, with evidence, where delivery is failing and what must change.

3. Meaningful steps on Loss & Damage operationalization

COP30 welcomed early operational steps for the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, including grants and direct access modalities, and captured an initial pledging. This aligns with the CSO push for swift operationalization and accessible, grant-based support.

4. A just transition mechanism process that puts Africa's realities on record

COP30 initiated a process toward a Just Transition Mechanism and embedded important framing around labour rights, social protection, human rights and debt burdens, key justice language African CSOs prioritised.

While COP30 made meaningful progress, some priorities remain unfinished: binding, grant-based public finance with clear "new and additional" definitions was not secured, adaptation ambition was extended toward 2035 rather than strengthened for this decade, and although Loss and Damage and just transition processes advanced, they are not yet fully resourced or scaled to meet Africa's needs.

We look forward to bringing more partners on board for a post-COP30 forum in March 2026 to reflect on the progress made, streamline implementation, and build momentum and unity as Africa CSOs ahead of COP31 and beyond.





16 young leaders, one transformative journey



On June 3rd, we proudly celebrated the graduation of 16 ambitious young leaders from across the country, who completed the first cohort of the NextGen Leaders Fellowship Programme. Notably, 8 of the 16 graduates were women, reflecting our commitment to putting young women in the limelight and championing inclusive leadership. The fellowship is a transformative leadership journey powered by ForumCiv in partnership with Strathmore Business School at Strathmore University.

The graduation marked the culmination of six months of learning, reflection, co-creation, networking, and inspirational community projects. The journey was a testament to the commitment of young leaders to shape inclusive, democratic, and sustainable societies.

In addition to the mentorship, ForumCiv supported the fellows by providing a seed grant for each of their capstone projects that turned bold ideas into meaningful impact, addressing local challenges with innovation and resilience.

The results are already visible: fellows have led initiatives tackling period poverty in Nairobi's informal settlements and created youth-friendly civic spaces such as Katiba Hang-Outs to build constitutional awareness ahead of the 2027 elections.



Art as civic power in East Africa

ForumCiv's Artivism Fellowship 2025 delivered an intensive, interdisciplinary learning and production experience for 20 emerging artists from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. While previous cohorts were run in Kenya and Tanzania separately, this was our first joint East Africa cohort. Fellows were selected through a competitive multi-stage process from 600+ applicants, resulting in a cohort that reflected wide geographic, artistic, and civic diversity. Delivered over a five-month period (August–December 2025), this fellowship combined human-centered design, Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and African ancestral frameworks to support politically grounded, care-centered creative practice. The Pedagogy of the Oppressed and our Artivism model was showcased by our consultant Gregory Mwendwa at the Global Artivism Conference in Brazil.

Programming was offered through a hybrid model featuring an in-person residency, virtual learning series, individual coaching/mentorship, a midpoint regional convening, and a public capstone showcase.

A structured onboarding needs assessment informed the curriculum, strengthening contextual relevance and participant ownership. Core learning areas included civic storytelling, systems thinking, digital activism and safety, creative sustainability, legal awareness, and trauma-informed practice, facilitated by regional experts and alumni from previous cohorts of the fellowship.

A central outcome of the fellowship was the development of individual capstone projects, supported through mentorship and project-based learning. Fellows progressed from collaborative civic problem-mapping to individual proposal development, producing full project plans (problem statements, artistic strategies, stakeholder analysis, budgets, and workplans). Capstones addressed pressing civic issues such as gender-based violence, food sovereignty, disability inclusion, land and ancestral rights, menstrual equity, police brutality, mental health, neurodivergence, and statelessness, using diverse mediums including film, animation, music, poetry, textile installation, and public performance. Projects were reviewed for clarity, feasibility, originality, and alignment, and were publicly presented at the Artivism Showcase in December 2025.





Meet our 2025 activism fellows



A woman she never met, but who lives inside her energy field like a steady pulse. A guide. A guardian. A mirror.

Nile Dawta
Kenya



Joy visits me in unexpected ways.

Alua Hamisi Mkwinda
Tanzania



I promise you this is my natural voice.

Mwaringa Mae
Kenya



Speaking in Tongues of Fire.

Laker Patience
Uganda





*She doesn't begin by painting.
She begins by breathing.*

Mary Kakesa
Kenya



Between Trash and Memory

Joachim Ogwodo
Uganda



*When I wrote, I didn't have to
divide myself into Somali or
Kenyan, quiet or loud. I could just
be.*

Bint Aisha
Kenya



*My father was a policeman, but I
loved him.*

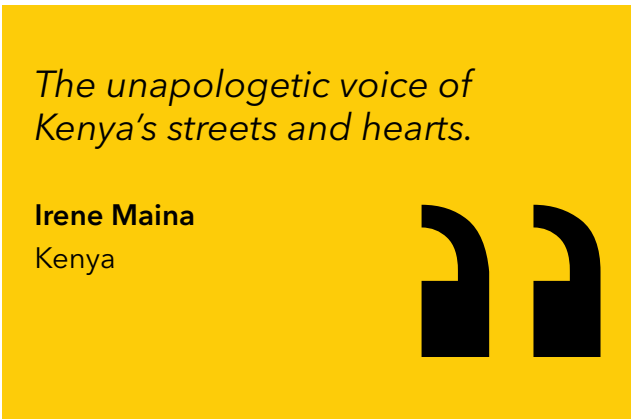
Emmanuel Mdaijasho
Tanzania





The heart of a filmmaker.

Calvin Ochieng
Kenya



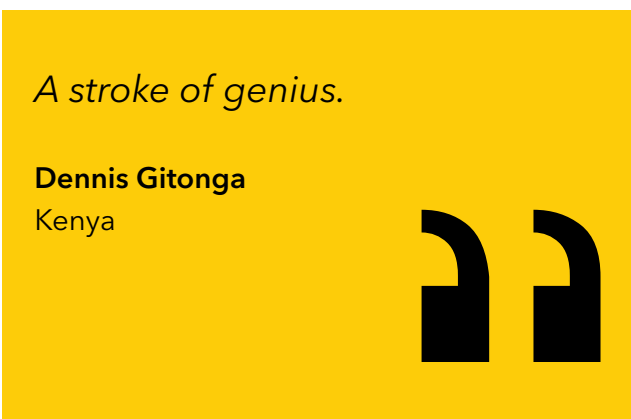
*The unapologetic voice of
Kenya's streets and hearts.*

Irene Maina
Kenya



The voice for the voiceless.

Doricas Kinyonga
Tanzania



A stroke of genius.

Dennis Gitonga
Kenya





I was named after my grandmother, Kwekwe, a name that translates to unwanted.

Neema Kwekwe
Kenya



Tanzania's bold storyteller and cultural animator.

Fadhili Meta
Tanzania



Filming the Revolution of the Mind.

Jante Juma
Kenya



Evansquez is anything but ORDINARY. Mabruk!

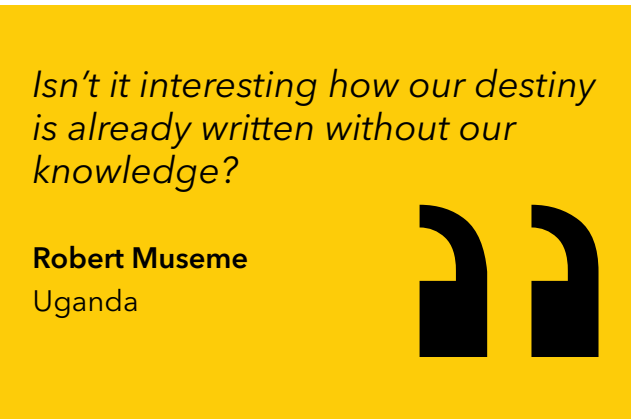
Evans Ndirangu
Kenya





To teach through tenderness, to build through connection, to love without apology.

Michelle Jahari
Kenya



Isn't it interesting how our destiny is already written without our knowledge?

Robert Museme
Uganda



We are using art as our main weapon

Hamisi Omollo
Kenya



Dominion never tried to be a God, but he was good.

Moses "Dominion" Kiptoo
Kenya





Rising voices in Tanzania

In Dar es Salaam, many women and young people have long been discouraged from stepping into leadership. Deep-rooted cultural traditions, limited opportunities, and lack of confidence meant that their voices were often missing from the spaces where important community decisions are made. For years, leadership felt like something reserved for others, not for them.

Over nine months, women and youth received training, mentorship, and safe spaces to build leadership skills, learn about rights and governance, and strengthen their confidence. Participants who once hesitated to speak out began to see themselves as capable leaders, ready to challenge barriers and claim their place in public life. This was courtesy of the 'Empowering Women and Youth for Inclusive Governance' project, implemented by ENVIROCARE (Environmental, Human Rights Care & Gender Organization) with support from ForumCiv under the Strengthen Agency for Social Accountability (SASA) programme.

The impact has been deeply personal and real: several trained participants went on to contest for political and party leadership positions, and some won. One young woman shared how the training gave her the courage to run for office, turning a dream into reality.

The training from ENVIROCARE had a huge impact in our lives as young people. We did not only run for office but also participated in influencing other young people to run for grassroot political seats. Young people participated in the 19 out of the available 43 political seats in the local government.

Nice Lazaro Sumari, Secretary of Bavicha, Kibamba Constituency.

These upcoming leaders are not only changing their own futures, but also inspiring others in their communities, proving that when women and youth are supported, they can shape a more inclusive and representative Tanzania.







Stronger partners, stronger communities

Throughout the year, we implemented a robust and strategically sequenced capacity development agenda to strengthen partner effectiveness and advance rights-based, inclusive development across the region.

In April, we kicked off a three-day resilience training workshop to build partners' capacity to integrate resilience principles into their programming and activities. In the same month, in partnership with VOCAL Africa, we co-hosted a three-day regional conference on movement building, convening activists, journalists, lawyers, and social workers from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania to foster collaboration in advancing human rights and social justice in East Africa.

In May, we hosted a multi-stakeholder forum on community engagement models in development under the theme "Bridging the Gaps: Policy Discourse for Inclusive, Effective, and Sustainable Community Engagement in Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) Projects." The forum created space for dialogue on policy, rights, and meaningful participation, strengthening approaches to inclusive development within PPP frameworks.

In June, we convened a knowledge-sharing forum on "Reimagining Care Work," promoting inclusive discussions on fair pay, legal protections, and supportive infrastructure for caregivers. During the same month, learning exchange sessions for Nairobi-based partners were conducted on environment and climate justice, financial management,

monitoring and evaluation, and the use of artificial intelligence in communications and advocacy. These thematic capacity-building sessions continued in August with North-Eastern partners and in September with Lake Victoria region partners, ensuring regionally tailored support.

In September, we further reinforced our Rights-Based Approach through a week-long Right(s) Way Forward (RWF) Methodology Workshop, bringing together community facilitators and the Network of Trainers to reflect on over a decade of practice, deepen inclusive facilitation and communication strategies, address structural inequalities, and co-create Community Action Plans grounded in the principle "nothing about us without us."

In October, we hosted the Pre-COP30 African Civil Society Convening in Nairobi, uniting civil society actors to amplify African voices and shape collective climate justice strategies ahead of COP30.

In November, alongside the International Labour Organization and the Embassy of Sweden, we participated in the Maa Cultural and Tourism Festival in Amboseli, supporting women, youth, and indigenous groups to engage in inclusive cultural economies. Collectively, these initiatives reflect ForumCiv ESA's sustained commitment to inclusive, community-driven, and sustainable development across Eastern and Southern Africa.



Collaborative campaigns and networking

Honouring 30 gender equality champions

ForumCiv marked International Women's Day 2025 on March 7th in Nairobi under the global themes #AccelerateAction and #ForALLWomenAndGirls: Rights-Equality-Empowerment, celebrating three decades since the Beijing Declaration and ForumCiv's own 30 years of advancing gender justice. The gathering brought together government leaders, civil society, feminists, youth and media to reflect on progress made and the urgent work still needed to achieve equality for women and girls.

The event spotlighted ForumCiv's sustained investments in gender equality, including support for women's leadership, governance participation and youth-driven movements through initiatives such as the NextGen Fellowship and the Artivism Academy. Speakers and performers powerfully amplified calls for economic inclusion, equal pay, stronger prevention of gender-based violence, and education as a transformative pathway for lasting empowerment.

A defining highlight of the celebration was the awarding of 30 Gender Equality Champions, honouring intergenerational leaders whose courage and commitment have accelerated action for all women and girls.





Resilience through equality

On 14 May 2025, ForumCiv, together with some of its Northern Kenya partners; Saku Accountability Forum (SAF), the Horn of Africa Development Initiative (HODI), the Indigenous Resource Management Organization (IREMO), the Initiative for Progressive Change (IfPC), and Isiolo Gender Watch, convened community leaders, government officials, civil society actors and representatives of marginalized groups in Marsabit County for the “Jumuika Sikika Mtaani” dialogue forum to advance resilience through equality.

The forum demonstrated the power of inclusive dialogue in a county facing overlapping challenges of climate shocks, resource-based conflict, and gender inequality. By bringing together voices from seven sub-counties, including women, youth and persons with disabilities, the dialogue strengthened trust between communities and duty-bearers and positioned equity as a practical strategy for preventing violence and enhancing climate adaptation.

Crucially, the forum secured commitments to scale women-led economic empowerment programmes, institutionalize indigenous early-warning knowledge within county systems, replicate youth assemblies across sub-counties, and enhance public participation in budget oversight.



Advancing the fight against plastic pollution

On 5 June 2025, ForumCiv joined government agencies, civil society partners and community members in Malindi to mark World Environment Day under the theme “Ending Plastic Pollution.” As part of the build-up activities, we organized together with our partners in the region, visits to recycling plants in Mombasa and Malindi.

The commemoration moved beyond awareness-raising to secure concrete commitments from sub-county and municipal authorities to strengthen waste segregation, decentralize collection systems, and fast-track the review of Kilifi County’s Solid Waste Management Act. Duty bearers publicly pledged to support multi-sector partnerships and enforce environmental regulations, reinforcing accountability in the fight against plastic pollution. The forum catalyzed practical action at community level. The office of Malindi’s Member of National Assembly reaffirmed its collaboration with Kenya Wildlife Service and local groups to sustain monthly beach and estate clean-ups and expand tree-planting programmes across schools. Through the thematic panel, stakeholders advanced circular economy solutions anchored in the 7Rs framework (Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Repurpose, Repair, Recycle, Recover) and committed to supporting youth- and women-led waste enterprises, positioning environmental action as both a civic duty and a source of green livelihoods. Community concerns on illegal dumping and weak enforcement were formally captured for integration into municipal planning processes.

In her remarks, ForumCiv Senior Advisor Ingrid underscored the urgency of tackling plastic pollution while highlighting the power of grassroots leadership and youth activism in driving global climate action. She reaffirmed ForumCiv’s commitment, with support from the Swedish Embassy, to stand alongside local partners in amplifying community voices and advancing a rights-based approach to environmental justice.







Freeing the CEO

ForumCiv's CEO Forum & Networking Dinner 2025 convened 33 CEOs and Executive Directors of partner organizations on 3rd July 2025 in Nairobi under the theme "Freeing the CEO: Structuring Organizational Support for Strategic Leadership." The gathering created a reflective space for civil society leaders to confront the realities of burnout, micromanagement, and the growing demands of leading in complex socio-political and technological contexts.

A key highlight was the "Freeing the CEO" session moderated by Jackson Obare, which challenged leaders to embrace delegation, strengthen second-tier leadership, and prioritize mental wellness as a strategic necessity. Participants reflected on the cultural pressure to "appear busy" and explored how clearer structures and role definition can enable CEOs to focus on vision, sustainability, and long-term impact rather than daily operational overload.

The forum also looked outward to emerging forces shaping civic space, including Artificial Intelligence. A hands-on training by Abdul-

latif Omar on AI for resource mobilization showed CEOs how Artificial Intelligence can support fundraising, donor engagement, and proposal development to further free the CEO. This session underscored the need for organizations to build their AI capacity and adapt these tools to local realities so they can be used effectively in resource mobilization.

Through interactive discussions and an inspiring keynote by Hussein Khalid of VOCAL Africa, leaders examined how civil society must adapt by leveraging innovation, building intergenerational solidarity, and supporting youth-led movements as a present force for change.

In response to the forum's call to strengthen not only organizational leadership but also the well-being of those who lead, ForumCiv planned a wellness retreat for CEOs of partner organizations in November 2025. The two-day retreat helped the leaders pause, recharge, reconnect, and reimagine through mindful relaxation, team bonding, and personal reflection.





Democracy as a force for dignity, inclusion and peace

ForumCiv and partners commemorated the International Day of Democracy 2025 at the University of Nairobi under the theme “Reaffirm Democracy as a Force for Dignity, Inclusion and Peace: From Voice to Action.” The event convened students, civil society, state institutions and development partners for dialogue, activism, and reflection on Kenya’s democratic progress and emerging challenges.

Presentation of the 2025 Civic Space Survey highlighted a worrying decline in freedoms globally and Kenya’s downgrade to a “repressed” civic space. Speakers, including Chief Justice (Emeritus) David Maraga, called for active defense of democratic institutions, accountability, and meaningful youth participation beyond tokenism.

Blending data, performance and dialogue, the commemoration underscored that democracy must translate into dignity, justice, and inclusion. Participants committed to sustained civic engagement, stronger partnerships and practical actions to protect rights and expand democratic space beyond the annual observance.



Human rights, our everyday essentials

On 10 December 2025, ForumCiv convened citizens, civil society, activists, policymakers and oversight institutions at the Annual Democracy and Human Rights (ADHR) Festival in Nairobi under the theme “Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials.” At a time of shrinking civic space and rising misinformation, the festival created a rare, safe platform for open dialogue, creative expression and direct citizen-institution engagement. Through plenaries, performances, three thematic breakout sessions and a mock voting exercise, participants critically examined elections and public participation, propaganda and information integrity, and youth civic resistance, culminating in the co-creation of The People’s Manifesto, a citizen-led vision for “The Kenya We Want”.

The festival generated concrete, actionable outcomes. Participants developed recommendations to strengthen inclusive public participation, counter misinformation ahead of the 2027 elections, and protect digital and physical civic space. Clear calls to action were directed at institutions including the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and the National Assembly, while practical strategies, such as enhanced civic education, grassroots engagement mechanisms, direct funding for youth-led initiatives, and digital security measures for activists, were agreed upon.

By centering youth voices, amplifying women leaders, and leveraging activism as a tool for accountability, the ADHR Festival strengthened collective advocacy for democratic integrity and human rights protection in Kenya.





Financial statements

ForumCiv Kenya
Annual report and financial statements
For the year ended 31 December 2025

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Revenue	Notes	2025 Shs	2024 Shs
Grant income	3	400,012,123	431,202,201
Other income	4	1,852,235	7,886,298
Total income		401,864,358	439,088,499
Expenditure			
Sub granting	5	158,683,538	200,139,443
Personnel costs	6	120,910,386	98,331,726
Office costs	7	35,261,460	108,643,835
Operational costs	8	87,008,974	31,973,495
Total expenditure		401,864,358	439,088,499
Surplus for the year		-	-

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Notes	2025 Shs	2024 Shs
Current assets			
Other receivables	10	3,473,603	8,913,479
Cash and cash equivalents	11	65,282,456	50,283,663
		68,756,059	59,197,142
Current liabilities			
Intercompany liability	13	54,581,752	48,443,684
Accruals and other liabilities	12	13,566,263	10,753,458
Tax payable		608,044	-
		68,756,059	59,197,142

STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS

	Notes	2025 Shs	2024 Shs
Cash from operations			
Surplus for the year		-	-
Adjustments for non-cash income and expenses:			
Changes in working capital:			
- other receivables	10	5,439,876	(877,557)
- intercompany payables	12	6,746,112	(32,306,579)
- other payables		2,812,805	3,462,538
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities		14,998,793	(29,721,598)
Increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		14,998,793	(29,721,598)
Movement in cash and cash equivalents			
At start of year		50,283,663	80,005,261
Increase/(decrease)		14,998,793	(29,721,598)
At end of year	11	65,282,456	50,283,663

Strategic allies and partners

Funding partners

- Embassy of Sweden, Nairobi
- European Union
- Hewlett Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC)



Strategic allies

- East Africa Philanthropy Network (EAPN)
- Strathmore Business School
- Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries (COSPE)
- Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)
- County Governments of Narok, Kajiado, and Nakuru



Implementing partners

Action Network for the Disabled (ANDY) • Africa Uncensored • African Social Development Focus (ASDEF) • Akili Dada • Badili Africa • Bloggers Association of Kenya • Brave Media Ltd • Bunge Mashinani • Buni Media • Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) • Collaboration for Women in Development (CWID) • Consortium of the Disabled persons in Kenya (CDPOK) • Creative Spills • Dandelion Africa • Environmental, Human Rights Care & Gender Organisation (ENVIROCARE) • Galck+ • Githurai Social Justice Centre (GSJC) • HAKI Africa • Horn of Africa Communications for Development • Horn of Africa in Development (HODI) • Human is my ID network • Indigenous Resource Management Organisation (IREMO) • Initiatives for Progressive Change (IfPC) • International Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Development in Africa (IPHRD) - Africa • Isiolo Gender Watch • Kilifi Citizen Forum • Kawangware Youth Paralegal Trust • Kenya Youth Indigenous Network (KYIN) • Kituo Cha Haki • Kwacha Africa • Manyatta Africa • Mukuru Youth Initiative (MuYI) • Pamoja Youth Initiative • Plateforme des femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (PFPC)- Senegal • Rona Foundation • Saku Accountability Forum (SAF) • Siasa Place • Social Justice Centre Working Group • Sitarusha Mawe Tena • Talanta Africa • Tanzania Youth Vision Association (TYVA) • The Youth Café • Tribeless Youth • Twaweza Communications • VOCAL Africa • Wajir Community Radio • Wajir Peace and Development Agency (WPDA) • White Ribbon Alliance • Women Human Rights Defenders Hub • Youth Agenda • Youth Alive Kenya • Youth Senate • Youth Serving Organisations Consortium • Zanzibar Fighting Against Youth Challenges Organization (ZAFAYCO)

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