



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

**ENHANCED SAFETY AND CAPACITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS IN AFRICA**

GRANT APPLICATION FOR CORE SUPPORT

SUBMITTED TO

THE BELGIAN MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)

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INTRODUCTION

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (DefendDefenders) was established in 2005 and registered as a foreign Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Uganda, working in 11 countries within the East and Horn of Africa sub-region. Its vision is *“A region in which the human rights of every individual as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are respected and upheld”*. The mission of DefendDefenders is *“To enhance the safety and capacities of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in the region for greater resilience and effective fulfilment of their mandates”*. DefendDefenders strives to strengthen the work of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in the sub-region by reducing their vulnerability to the risk of persecution and by enhancing their capacity to effectively defend human rights and continue engaging in their work.

DefendDefenders is the secretariat (legal body) of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) and implements the plan of action of EHAHRD-Net. DefendDefenders organizes the general assembly and focal points meetings every 5 and 2 years, respectively. These meetings evaluate the plan of action, amends it, and give strategic direction to DefendDefenders.

In addition, DefendDefenders is the secretariat (legal body) of the Pan African Human Rights Defenders Network (AfricanDefenders). AfricanDefenders is an umbrella network which aims to share best practices, cross-pollinate protection expertise, establishes rigorous reporting, tracks African continental trends, and deals with transregional protection issues, emergency relocations, and resource shortfalls. AfricanDefenders coordinates activities in the areas of protection, strengthening capacities of sub-regional networks and HRDs, and advocacy at continental and international level.

The members of AfricanDefenders and five African sub-regional networks dedicated to the promotion and protection of HRDs across the continent are: North Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (hosted by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies in Tunis, Tunisia), the West African Human Rights Defenders Network (Lomé, Togo), the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (hosted by the International Commission of Jurists in Johannesburg, South Africa), the Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (Douala, Cameroon), and EHAHRD-Net (hosted by DefendDefenders in Kampala, Uganda). AfricanDefenders leads the continental Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative, a city-based programme for the relocation of HRDs facing risk and persecution, as a last resort. The Initiative aims at ensuring the physical and mental well-being of HRDs during their relocation period, while enabling them to continue their work: Safe but not Silent.

AfricanDefenders has a steering committee with members representing the 5 sub-regional networks as well as representatives (one per thematic area) of key interest groups identified as requiring specific protection due to their unique vulnerabilities: women HRDs, HRDs working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues, journalists fighting against impunity and corruption, HRDs working in armed conflict areas, HRDs working on election processes, HRDs working on extractive industries, natural resources and land rights, and a representative of the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative. The steering committee provides oversight of progress, reviews the AfricanDefenders Plan of Action (recently reviewed in 2019) and provides strategic direction and priorities for the network. This is then further reviewed and adopted by sub regions to suit their contextual needs. The sub regional networks are independently governed and have their own plan of actions. Sub-regional networks fundraise

for their own budgets and DefendDefenders fundraises mainly for EHAHRD-Net. For the identified joint initiatives that need to be implemented by the secretariat of AfricanDefenders, DefendDefenders leads the fundraising efforts. In cases where activities are implemented jointly with sub-regional networks, funds can be transferred to them following a signed MOU by both parties on purpose and conditions for the funds.

Collaboration with various networks

DefendDefenders establishes and build coalitions where it is needed and supports the work of national coalitions of HRDs. Both sub regional networks and national coalitions are key in enabling DefendDefenders reach more and the most community based and marginalized HRDs (including those with limited access to cities and internet) access protection services, as well as effective implementation of all our programmatic areas. DefendDefenders has a strong emphasis on partnerships and networks beyond the sub regional networks and national coalitions. This will continue to be a priority under this strategy.

The General Assembly sets the plan of action that is then followed up by the Advisory Council and implemented by DefendDefenders with oversight by the board. The advisory council members are elected by the general assembly and board members are part of the advisory council. The board has an oversight role in the operations of the secretariat (DefendDefenders).

DefendDefenders hosts AfricanDefenders and coordinates protection and advocacy efforts of the different sub regional networks. DefendDefenders's strategic plan and budget clearly indicate the activities to be implemented under DefendDefenders for the East and Horn of Africa sub region as well as those spearheaded under AfricanDefenders covering the entire continent.

Over the years DefendDefenders has developed working relationships with relevant duty bearer stakeholders in the countries of the region as the primary actors responsible for the protection of HRDs. Quality and nature of the relationships evidently vary from one country to another according to the context. The governments in each of the countries where DefendDefenders operates have a role to play by providing space for the work of HRDs, protecting and promoting human rights, respecting and complying with international obligations. Influencing these actors is therefore key.

The element of sustainability will be emphasized through the national coalitions so as to encourage independence which in turn will enable the human rights defenders to carry out resource mobilization. The national coalitions for HRDs will continue to serve as the contact point for DefendDefenders and this will allow us to easily stay in touch and collaborate on our work. These coalitions of HRDs have ensured that the voices of HRDs are amplified, have increased the levels of collaboration among HRDs and organizations both in country and with partners out of the country and has most importantly provided a vital support system to HRDs who are most at risk. National coalitions can reach out to HRDs working in remote areas who in most cases are not aware of other support systems and are vulnerable. This position is usually perceived by potential aggressors that they do not have backups and partners to support their human rights work. Activities for national coalitions will be conducted following further assessments of what the critical needs are for each coalition. Efforts will be made to establish new coalitions in countries where it is possible.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The context of human rights, and the situation of civic space as it pertains the work of HRDs in the region has been largely documented in the new DefendDefenders strategy 2021-2025. **Politically**, there have been notable improvements in various aspects of governance across a number of African countries, in line with the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, albeit irregular¹. Yet, the East and Horn of Africa (EHA) sub-region scores modestly compared to the rest of the continent. The EHA sub-region has registered a rise in abuse and attacks on freedom of expression and information. This includes the development and use of restrictive laws to crack down on operations of civil society organisations (CSOs), stifling political dissent, and undermining judicial independence². The noted restrictions on civic space have equally forced a growing number of HRDs to flee to neighbouring countries due to security threats such as detention, torture or death threats³. The highest number of exiled HRDs are from countries such as Burundi, Eritrea, South Sudan and Rwanda. More recently, COVID-19 measures have led to temporary restrictions of rights such as freedom of movement and peaceful assembly. On the **rule of law, Justice and Human Rights**, HRDs in Africa often operate in environments that do not respect fundamental rights and the rule of law as enshrined in national constitutions and international treaties. Instead, laws are enacted that repress media or ICT, hindering HRDs' work – e.g. in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. Serious human rights violations and abuses are of grave concern in several EHA countries. Legitimate civilian dissent through peaceful demonstrations and free expression of HRDs and media are restricted, in total disregard to governments' obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)⁴.

Djibouti and Eritrea are ruled by extremely repressive regimes, making it impossible for independent HRDs to freely operate. Ethiopia faces rising ethnic tensions and security breakdowns. South Sudan, Sudan, and Somalia/ Somaliland respectively continue to experience insecurity and human rights abuses, limiting the human rights scene to flourish⁵. Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda have limited space for dissent, with accusations of harassment of critics and political opponents, while Kenya has seen rising cases of extra judicial killings, forced evictions, enforced disappearances and limitations on freedom of expression and association⁶. The worldwide resurgence of populism and authoritarian nationalisms worsens the regional human rights situation and undermines the rule of law.

The **safety, security, capacity and wellbeing of HRDs** standing up for their rights across the sub-region continue to be subjects of human rights violations. Common restrictions on HRDs' rights include banning or restricting their activities, illegal arrests and bogus charges, loss of livelihood sources, criminalisation, stigmatisation, surveillance, harassment, intimidation, detentions, incommunicado detention, torture, enforced disappearances, and extra-judicial killings⁷. HRDs working on natural resources or sexual orientation and gender

¹ <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/africa/2363-2018-ibrahim-index-of-african-governance-index-report/file.html>

² <https://freedomhouse.org/article/5-governance-challenges-africa>

³ <https://defenddefenders.org/exiled-limbo-support-mechanisms-human-rights-defenders-exile-kenya-uganda-rwanda/>

⁴ <https://africandefenders.org/achpr63-joint-statement-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-africa/>

⁵ <https://defenddefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ACHPR-65-Bi-Annual-report.pdf>

⁶ <https://defenddefenders.org/country/kenya/>

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/report-africa/>

identity (SOGI) rights are most targeted, because of exploitative capitalism and growing religious and cultural conservatism. Female HRDs are especially prone to sexual violence, defamation, and discrimination due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Moreover, WHRDs face additional psychological burdens linked to often being primary caregivers⁸. There is growing recognition that HRDs lack the capacity to protect themselves, undertake advocacy, and effectively carry out their daily work. To exemplify, most HRDs have limited knowledge of national laws on protection and related conventions⁹. While advances in ICT infrastructure have great potential for expanding programme reach, the same have equally been used for surveillance of HRD, further compromising their security. In Kenya, surveillance technology has significantly undermined data security and security of HRDs¹⁰.

DefendDefenders' strategy

Over the years, DefendDefenders has supported thousands of HRDs with emergency grants; established national coalitions of HRDs across the region; supported the establishment of sub regional networks in other parts of Africa; created pools of trainers across the region; provided tools to HRDs to do their work safely; launched relocation programs across Africa; and enhanced the voices of HRDs through advocacy and communications. DefendDefenders will continue to support the safety and protection of human rights defenders in the region through core funding support from the Belgian Ministry of Development Cooperation to deliver the commitment made for the period 2021-2025 as elaborated in the new DefendDefenders strategy 2021-2025 named "Enhanced Safety and Capacity of HRDs for greater resilience and effective fulfillment of their mandates".

The strategy aims to contribute to enhancing the safety and capacity of HRDs for greater resilience and effective fulfillment of their mandates through its program areas comprising protection and security management; advocacy, research and communications; and capacity building. DefendDefenders implements a very high-risk program defending some of the most marginalized groups specifically the following:

- Women human rights defenders
- HRDs working on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity
- HRDs working on business and human rights, in particular on extractive industries and protection of the environment
- HRDs working on high-level/high-profile corruption cases, with a view to ending impunity
- HRDs working in conflict situations
- HRDs and journalists working on elections – with increased risks of harassment and persecution for HRDs across the region, especially in pre-election contexts

The protection and security management component aims to increase the safety and security of HRDs, whether they face threats and imminent risk due to their human rights work or due to limited skills and knowledge in the area of safety and security. Advocacy and policy

⁸ https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/2019-2022_strategic_plan.pdf

⁹ <http://www.knchr.org/Our-Work/Human-Rights-Defenders/Training-of-Human-Rights-Defenders>

¹⁰ NCHRD-K. State of Surveillance in Kenya. <https://hrdcoalition.org/state-of-surveillance-in-kenya-january-2018/>

influencing is derived as a main tool to address the legal and policy environment that is increasingly restricting HRDs and organisations supporting or executing HRD work. Capacity building is hinged on the realisation that the safety and continued operation of HRDs depends on the level of capacity/skills (*capacity to do*, *capacity to be*, and *capacity to relate*) resident within individual HRDs, their organisations, national coalitions, and the sub-regional networks.

Finally, DefendDefenders also focuses its collaboration to improving the internal capacity and processes that strengthen the smooth running of the organisation, including financial management, human resources management, governance and management, risk management, fundraising and resource mobilisation, institutional sustainability, programme management, process management, inter-organisational linkages, and infrastructure management. Specifically, the sought collaboration and support seeks to deliver on 3 programmatic objectives including:

Objective 1: Enhanced availability, accessibility, and utilisation of emergency and medium-term protection services to HRDs at risk.

Objective 2: Strengthened policy influence and advocacy engagements at the global, African, sub-regional, and national level for HRD safety.

Objective 3: Improved capacity of sub-regional networks and national coalitions, organisations and individual HRDs to effectively do their work, and respond and mitigate imminent risks and threats.

DefendDefenders' Theory of Change

DefendDefenders' theory of change constitutes an elaborate explanation that underpins how we envisage change, in terms of results, as a project and at organisation level. At DefendDefenders, we believe that the universal respect of human rights can be achieved. HRDs are central to effecting this change. Protecting HRDs and building their resilience and capacity is core. DefendDefenders anticipates that change will be realised if we continue to support protection mechanisms, enhance the capacity of HRDs, and amplify their voices and profiles. This is based on an analysis of the critical underlying contradictions that limit or make it difficult to achieve lasting changes in the safety and security of HRDs and their working environments. These underlying contradictions are found at the individual HRD level and organisation level.

At the individual level, HRDs (including women, disabled and minority groups) face imminent risks and threats compounded by limited skills and knowledge in safety and security management, as well as inadequate and disproportionate access to different protection tools, mechanisms, and services. The planning for interventions will entail deliberate actions that enhance gender equality with special considerations for female HRDs. At the organisation level, there are gaps in the *capacity to do*, *capacity to be*, and *capacity to relate*. Encompassed under this dimension is the ability to mobilise HRDs and other actors to work together and merge the lone and divided voices into more unified and stronger voices to achieve effective advocacy and policy changes. At a legal and policy level, there is a marked increase in the restrictive legal regime characterised by harsh legislation in different countries, targeting HRDs, individuals, and organisations supporting or executing HRD work. DefendDefenders is

aware that most of the countries in the region suffer from democracy deficits including shrinking and shifting civic spaces.

DefendDefenders believes, that safety and security of HRDs can be attained when their capacity and that of their organisations is built. It also believes that strengthening access to protection services builds the resilience of HRDs to recover and continue engaging in their work. DefendDefenders understands that building institutional capacity of HRD organisations and coalitions, to provide effective protection services to HRDs and engaging in evidence-based advocacy, will contribute to change. DefendDefenders will work with and through the different national human rights institutions to deliver on the different programme result areas. To advance change, DefendDefenders believes that strengthening capacity of HRDs, improving access to medium-term protection and emergency protection services for HRDs under imminent risk, and improving advocacy and policy engagements with international and African human rights systems, sub-regional economic blocks, national human rights institutions, and other relevant stakeholders will contribute towards the safety and security of HRDs and enable them to continue doing their work effectively.

Anticipated Outcomes

The Belgian Ministry of Development Cooperation support to DefendDefenders during the period 2021 to 2025 will help to deliver on key results including:

OE1. Enhanced HRD security, resilience, and continued operation.

OE1.1 Improved access to protection support for HRDs at risk.

OE2.1: Better policy reform and advocacy engagements with international and African human rights systems, sub-regional economic blocks, national institutions, and other relevant stakeholders for HRD safety.

OE2.2: HRD work, visibility, and protection amplified.

OE2.3: Strengthened strategic impact litigation in order to achieve effective reforms, formulation and implementation of international standards.

OE3.1 Strengthened technical and organisational capacity of the sub-regional networks and national coalitions.

OE3.2 Increased capacity of HRDs and their organisations to effectively respond and mitigate imminent risks.

Institutionally, DefendDefenders envisages that the support will contribute to:

OE4.1 Increased compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness resulting from consistent application, consolidation of systems, and processes.

OE4.2 Improved financial management systems and practices.

OE4.3 Improved risk management, and timely risk detection and mitigation.

OE4.4 Strengthened governance, leadership, and organisational oversight.

OE4.5 A motivated, engaged, and performing workforce.

OE4.6 A diversified and sustainable resource envelop.

OE4.7 Strong M&E system with better programme quality, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, learning, and innovation.

OE4.8 Improved profiling, visibility as a major player in the HRD sphere, innovative communication, and collaboration with stakeholders.

See DefendDefenders 2021-2025 strategy

Implementation Methodology

Protection and security management

All activities will integrate a participatory approach, an educational approach founded on principles of mutual respect and reciprocal learning and seeks out and includes the voice of the beneficiaries. The ability to build human rights activities incorporating this approach is essential to the transfer of ownership of the protection mechanisms to national coalitions and the sub-regional networks. DefendDefenders' approach enables people with different backgrounds and cultures to learn effectively together and from each other, as well as encourages social analysis aimed towards empowering participants to develop concrete actions for social changes that are in accordance with human rights values and standards.

- **Protection program model**

We use the tried and tested methods of providing emergency protection services to HRDs, including strengthening of protection systems within sub-regional networks. The visits to national coalitions and sub-regional networks and the peer learning exchanges will encourage networks to share best practices.

- **Ubuntu Hub Cities Initiative**

Under AfricanDefenders umbrella, DefendDefenders will support HRDs with medium to long term support through the Ubuntu Hub Cities relocation program. HRDs in severe cases of imminent threat especially where lives are in danger in their country, they can relocate to any of our established Ubuntu Cities or other identified 'safe' countries for that particular HRD given their level of threats. The Ubuntu Hub Cities enable African HRDs to access support for relocation without leaving the continent. The program aims at equipping exiled HRDs with the requisite skills and knowledge to integrate into a hub city and continue being active "*citizens of the continent.*" In addition, the initiative connects HRDs to local institutions and networks of HRD coalitions to expedite this integration process. In our strategies, relocation is considered a last resort option to avoid the "drain brain" of HRDs from a particular area where they are doing good and necessary work. However, in certain cases where HRDs face profound risks to their physical security, life, or liberty, relocation is the only appropriate intervention. Currently there are 6 official Ubuntu Hub Cities-- **Accra, Ghana, Kampala, Uganda; Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg, South Africa; Tunis, Tunisia and Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.** Two additional hubs will be officially launched in 2022 in Ghana and Cape Verde. The hub cities best function because of collaborations with existing national coalitions of HRDs and sub-regional human rights networks- to strengthen the already existing protection mechanisms, foreign ministries, and other relevant government departments and ministries, National Human Rights Coalitions and Institutions within each country, donors, and other relevant local, regional and international stakeholders.

Benefits to HRDs: HRDs will no longer be sent out of their continent for protection but can remain within the continent while engaging in some productive initiatives. The cultural adjustments for HRDs are enormous when they leave the continent and often have difficulties coping in the new environments. When HRDs remain in the region, they are more likely to stay connected to their countries and can easily continue their human rights work on the

continent. AfricanDefenders establishes partnerships with educational institutions like Universities and other human rights organizations and sign agreements/ MOUs so they can place HRDs for educational programs (short courses and advanced degrees) or placements as interns/ fellows. The project will in turn meet the costs of placing these fellows and interns. Additionally, the hub cities strengthen the protection mechanisms that have already been established at the sub regional and national levels through the national coalitions of HRDs.

- **Security Management model**

We further the deployment of the best-practice preventive protection model found in the Protection model, in which international, regional, and national actors cooperate to provide context-relevant security assessments and trainings for HRDs at risk. DefendDefenders will build the capacity of African HRDs in security management.

Capacity building as mutual learning

Transfer of expertise and best practices through joint actions and mentoring

In deploying protection program and security management models, as well as in conducting various trainings and advocacy efforts, the prior experience and lessons learnt from respective actions taken by DefendDefenders in other countries which now have stronger networks such as East and Horn will be transferred between the partners for mutual learning.

Implementing team

Activities are implemented by an experienced and dedicated team of over 40 members which is made up of the Executive Director, Director of Programs and Administration, Department Managers, Program and Project Officers, Finance Officers, Advocacy and Research Officers, Technology Officers, Capacity Building Officers, support staff, fellows, and interns. DefendDefenders' representative in Geneva has helped reduce on the staff travel from Kampala as the representative can take the lead on handling delegations (HRDs) traveling to the HRC and representing the organization before and during sessions, as well as conduct research, both in-country and desk based. Our staff has first-hand experience as HRDs and technical expertise. DefendDefenders' Advocacy, Research and Communications department has dedicated staff who are able to undertake both advocacy and conduct advocacy missions, and research, as well as provide capacity-building (in the form of trainings) to HRDs at the national and regional levels.

However, we acknowledge the need to keep abreast of new developments in our field and provide staff professional development opportunities. Training needs are assessed in annual appraisal discussions and staff members are active in attending trainings on various issues. In the past couple of years, a lot of emphasis has been on the technology team to ensure up-to-date knowledge on systems that help both DefendDefenders and HRDs stay up to date. This includes the ability for DefendDefenders to conduct risk assessments and put in place mitigation strategies.

Role, participation, and implication of the other actors At Continental level

Main partners during implementation of the 2021-2025 strategy will be EHAHRD-Net members, National Coalitions of HRDs, along with country focal points of the Network, as well as sub-regional networks. Other important collaborators are other human rights organizations at the national and international level, national authorities, international

decision makers, local diplomatic missions and individual HRDs. DefendDefenders will strengthen working relations with other state bodies including national human rights institutions and the African Union through the African Governance Architecture.

Steering Committee of AfricanDefenders

Will oversee the work of the Secretariat, monitor the progress of the project and give advice on the strategic direction. The Steering Committee meet regularly to inspect the reports of the project generated by the Secretariat and discuss the planning processes.

Sub-regional Networks

Sub-regional networks will be the key partners as well as indirect beneficiaries. Each network will benefit from the expertise and activities generated as well as offer its own expertise for the use of the other sub-regional networks. Sub-regional networks and hub cities host organisations will be strengthened in maintaining the protection programs once in place and in using the gained skills and knowledge in their respective advocacy, capacity building and protection work.

Ubuntu Hub Cities

The Ubuntu Hub City will strengthen the protection mechanism/ program that has already been established at the sub regional and national levels. The protection mechanisms will seek the support of governments, cities, and other relevant institutions and organizations. The Ubuntu Hub City will look as well at a possibility of twinning with other cities to share values and principles.

National Coalitions and Members of Sub-regional Networks

Through their sub-regional networks, the members of these networks as well as the national coalitions within the networks (where applicable) will benefit from the improved capacity of sub-regional networks. Some representatives from the national level will also be included directly in the activities of the project, including trainings, advocacy work and meetings.

National, regional and international decision-makers

Decision-makers at different levels will be indirectly involved in the project, as the sub-regional networks gain capacity to do advocacy and networking and gain further contacts and linkages to decision-makers. The most direct involvement of decision-makers in this project will be during the action-learning element where the advocacy skills of the sub-regional networks will be enhanced through joint actions at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and at the UN HRC. The AU and its organs are considered as stakeholders in the protection of human rights defenders and thus as targets of advocacy efforts to promote an improved safe working environment for HRDs. In particular the ACHPR is the regional body in charge of protection and promotion of the human and peoples' rights and responsible of interpreting the African Charter. The ACHPR Ordinary Session is a venue for such advocacy activities, as well as several action activities involve advocacy at the ACHPR, and such advocacy may be targeted at the AU Heads of States Summit. AU organs though are not included in the project as partners and there are no plans for co-implementation or partnership unless such partnership arises organically. Similarly, the Special Rapporteur on HRD in Africa, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and access to information in Africa, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of women in Africa are important stakeholders whose mandates would seek to bolster through advocacy and through increased reporting of cases from the sub-regional networks. Likewise, organic collaborations may arise with these special procedures when possible and desirable.

Other civil society organisations

Existing contacts and linkages at the sub-regional networks and existing national coalitions will be used to draw on the expertise of other CSOs to offer consultancy services in this project. Expertise will be facilitated by outsource qualified persons where necessary together with the experts already present at the sub-regional networks.

See organisational organogram on page 42 in the strategy 2021-2025 document

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Monitoring, documenting and reporting**

DefendDefenders will apply a results-based monitoring and evaluation approach guided by the Theory of Change (ToC) to track progress, key outcomes and impact accruing from its programmes during the grant period. The process of monitoring, evaluation and learning has been summarily described in the Strategy 2021 – 2025 (pages 34-36) and will be elaborated in the M&E manual and M&E policy, yet to be revised, separated and updated. A results Framework for the strategy has been developed covering all the focus areas, with an alignment of the key objectives, results, performance indicators and targets. Baseline data will be finalised after conducting the previous strategic plan evaluation (2016 – 2020). Lessons learnt will be integrated and in the programme for quality improvement and sustainability planning.

DefendDefenders will integrate quarterly progress monitoring, reporting, and learning events as part of the results-based monitoring and evaluation processes. We shall conduct a series of project specific evaluations as well as the mid-term and end of strategy evaluations in 2023 and 2025 respectively. A combination of M&E methods, tools and templates will be used to cover contextual dynamics and relevance of the data needs.

For monitoring and evaluating progress on gender, disability and other elements on social inclusion, a social relations framework that has been developed will be utilised across the cycle including planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluations. Databases both in Jira and CiviCRM will continue to be utilised for storage of information. Finally, Jira will be the major programme management tool used by DefendDefenders during the program/ strategy period.

- **Needs assessments and trainings**

Prior to each training, a training needs assessment will be conducted to inform the content of the expected training. The assessment will work as a basis for tailor made trainings as well as basis against which progress on capacity changes and capacity assessments will be based. The general gaps and needs in capacity of HRDs are known, but in order to get each training accurately tailored for the participants, further information will be sought. Trainings will be participatory and draw from knowledge and expertise of participants, external facilitators and partners. Each training will entail a follow up on the participants to ascertain the level of progress on capacity enhancement, further support requirements and ascertaining the sustainability of the training.

- **Follow up and evaluation**

Following implementation of activities, follow ups will be organised periodically to assess the progress and impact of the actions. On a quarterly basis, specific follow-up events will be

conducted, and the findings disseminated through skills share and other learning events. Specific project evaluations linked to the strategy outcomes will be conducted while a mid-term evaluation and end of strategy evaluations will be conducted, halfway and at the end of the strategy.

Perceived risks and risk management

Possible internal and external risks to the implementation of DefendDefenders' work are outlined in the strategic plan. Below are some selected risks:

- Restrictive laws
- Possibility of disruption of activities by authorities
- Resistance from authorities
- Surveillance of staff and HRDs
- Lack of interest from HRDs to activities
- Immigration issues where staff permits might be delayed or denied
- Physical security risks of the work due to negative perception of the public
- Lack of support from stakeholders
- Possible corruption
- Global pandemics

While it is not possible to predict political turbulence, the broad nature of the work based on cooperation between national coalitions and sub-regional networks is itself a strategy of diversification and risk management. When it is not possible to carry out work in one country due to prevailing conditions, the work may be moved to another country within or outside of the sub-region. Similarly, the emergency relocation of HRDs is improved through the sub-regional/continental approach in which they are able to access a safety network along their path of safest escape. An important way of mitigating the risks related to the overall operational environment of the sub-regional networks is being conversant with the legal requirements relevant to the functioning of the networks and each individual activity. Risk management measures already in practice within the sub-regional networks will be extended to the work of DefendDefenders.

See risk matrix attached

Financial Management Systems and Controls

The board of directors, as the governing body of the organization, oversees the financial management of the organization. The treasurer of the board is one of the signatories on the accounts. All financial actions conducted are in line with the procedures in the financial policy. The policy details actions on accounting systems policies, authorization policies and levels, staff advances, payroll, salaries and benefits, use of assets and property, the budgeting cycle, cash and bank management, petty cash, payments, asset management, incomes and revenue, procurement of goods and services, the strategic reserve fund, financial reporting, and control and risk management.

The day-to-day finance duties are handled by a Finance manager and four Finance Officers and overseen by the Director of Programs and Administration and the Executive Director. The annual performance of the staff is evaluated based on key performance indicators, on a bi-annual basis. DefendDefenders uses a modified cash basis accounting, where transactions are only recognized in the system upon accountability of the cash paid, in the form of receipts, with unpaid invoices being accrued at the end of the year. DefendDefenders has several policies including procurement and financial policies. The accounting system used by the

department is Quickbooks. The system has the ability to generate donor specific reports and is a multicurrency user. Individual transactions are tracked using a charter of accounts, with items separated into sections, and each item assigned a unique identifying number. In the charter of accounts, the grants are input as incomes and each grant given a unique number.

To allow for effective segregation of duties the organisation is split into different departments, which helps with the streamlining of duties and functions. The responsibilities of the finance department include the routine finance activities led by a Finance Manager with four Finance Officers. The duties of the Finance Manager are to review the work of Finance Officers. The individual Finance Officers are assigned projects to manage. In the managing of these projects, the Finance Officers prepare payments, maintain proper filling, and enter data into QuickBooks, and draft project reports.

Internal audits are conducted on a quarterly basis by an internal auditor. The auditors commissioned to conduct the annual audit are approved by the board. The management letter and audit report are shared with management and the board.

Requested Funding

DefendDefenders is seeking core funding from the Belgian Ministry of Development Cooperation to implement the 2021-2025 strategy. **The total requested amount under this grant is €500,000 (five hundred thousand Euros) over two years.**

The strategic budget has worksheets indicating contributions from other funders both available (with contracts) and that which we are pursuing but not yet confirmed. The annual financial audit for the organization includes all funds received by the organization as well as related expenditures. The report also has individual donor pages showing what was received and the relevant expenditures to ensure transparency of what each funder has contributed to and the related expenditures. As the governing body of the organization, the board of directors oversees the use of funds and general financial management of the organization.

See strategic budget attached