

Annual Report 2025



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Overview



Vision

A Kenyan society with strong sustainable institutions that enhance equity and dignity of citizens.

Mission

To enhance institutional capacity and coordination of partnerships for effective service delivery and citizens transformation.

Our Core Values

- Respect for human rights and equity.
- Active participation & Engagements.
- Respect for the innate potential and ability of all people to design their own destiny.
- Integrity.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S WORD

As we reflect on 2025, we do so with pride in the resilience and innovation demonstrated by civil society organizations across Kenya despite shrinking civic space, shifting donor priorities, and increasing demands for accountability and sustainability. Guided by PEN Kenya's revised Strategic Plan, we remained committed to strengthening resilient communities, empowering citizen organizations, and promoting inclusive governance and civic participation.

During the year, PEN Kenya reached 13 counties, directly engaged 540 CSO beneficiaries, 10,800 Indirect beneficiaries across 27 county CSO networks. Through governance and advocacy initiatives, county networks actively contributed to shaping the Harmonized PBO Regulations 2025, while the launch of the Turkana Civil Society Network marked an important step toward stronger coordination and collective advocacy among CSOs at the county level. Our community resilience interventions in Makueni County continued to demonstrate the impact of sustainable, community-driven solutions. Through the solar-powered borehole and water distribution system serving Mutulani schools and dispensary, over 3,119 beneficiaries gained access to reliable clean water, resulting in improved health, hygiene, school attendance, and dignity for community members.

**Chris Mbiti, PEN Kenya
Executive Director**

The installation of smart water meters further strengthened sustainability and community ownership of the project. PEN Kenya also prioritized protecting civic and democratic space by supporting citizen engagement platforms such as the Civic Space Protection Summit, the Media-CSO Conference, and policy dialogues with PBORA. These engagements amplified the voices of youth, women, persons with disabilities, media practitioners, and grassroots organizations while strengthening collaboration between civil society, government, and other stakeholders on governance, human rights, and accountability issues.

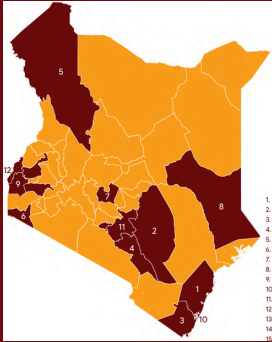
As we look ahead, we remain inspired by the resilience of communities and the power of partnerships. Despite a challenging funding environment, PEN Kenya continues to invest in sustainability and institutional resilience through innovative approaches such as PEN Management and Development Consultants (PMDC). We sincerely thank our partners, stakeholders, and communities for their continued trust and collaboration as we work together toward a more just, inclusive, and accountable society.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

**13 Counties Reached
540 Direct CSO
Beneficiaries
10,800 Indirect
Beneficiaries
27 CSO Networks
Strengthened**

2025 IN NUMBERS

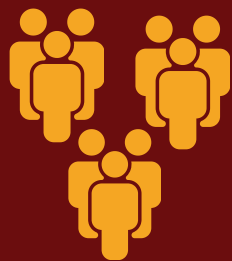
Governance Programme Statistics



13 Counties Reached



27 CSO Networks Strengthened



540 Direct CSO Beneficiaries



10,800 Indirect Beneficiaries

Community Resilience Statistics



3,119 Total Beneficiaries



960 Students



1,124 Women



BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

This pillar aims to promote innovation and sustainable technologies, as well as context-responsive interventions, that enhance community resilience to emerging threats and vulnerabilities. The organization's foremost priority is on strengthening community systems, improving access to essential services, and building long-term resilience through the strategic use of technology, partnerships, and sustainable resource mobilization. In July 2014, PEN Kenya supported the installation of a 10,000-litre water storage tank at Mutulani Primary School to facilitate roof catchment rainwater harvesting. Building on this intervention, the organization further enhanced water access by establishing a solar-powered borehole system that supplies clean and reliable water to Mutulani Primary and Secondary Schools, as well as Mutulani Dispensary. The initiative has improved access to safe water for a total of 3,119 beneficiaries, including 960 students and 2,159 community members, of whom 1,124 are women, thereby contributing to improved health, sanitation, and overall community resilience. As part of its long-term sustainability strategy, PEN Kenya is implementing a phased exit approach aimed at strengthening community-led ownership and management of the water system. In October 2025, Project Maji facilitated a partnership between PEN Kenya and Norwa Africa Ltd, resulting in the installation of smart water meters across the three beneficiary institutions (Mutulani Dispensary, Primary and Secondary Schools). These interventions are designed to support automated billing, promote efficient water use, and generate revenue for ongoing operation and maintenance, thereby ensuring system sustainability beyond the project lifecycle.

From Scarcity to Dignity: How Clean Water Transformed Life at Mutulani Dispensary

In the dry, sun-scorched plains of Makueni County, life in Mutulani village has long been defined by scarcity. For the more than 350 households who call this place home, water was never just a need, it was a daily struggle. Streams like Kyanduu would only flow seasonally, earth dams dried up quickly, and the few available water points were often unsafe. Women and children walked long distances under the harsh sun, returning with heavy jerrycans of water that was not always clean.

The consequences were severe as illnesses linked to contaminated water became common, and families already burdened by poverty faced even greater hardship. At the heart of the village, Mutulani Dispensary stood as a fragile line of defense against these health challenges, struggling to function effectively because there was no reliable water source. Expectant women, already exhausted, had to carry water with them to the facility just to ensure they could be attended to. Basic sanitation was difficult to maintain, and both patients and healthcare workers operated under constant strain.

Through the intervention of PEN Kenya, a solar-powered borehole was installed, bringing with it something Mutulani had long been denied: reliable, clean water. Piped directly to Mutulani Dispensary and nearby schools, the borehole began serving over 2,000 community members, including more than 1,100 women, and nearly 1,000 students.

The transformation at the dispensary was immediate and deeply felt. For the first time, there was running water. Showers were installed and hygiene improved dramatically. Expectant women no longer had to make the difficult journey carrying water from home, they could arrive with dignity, knowing the facility had what it needed to care for them, leading to a safe cleaner and more humane healthcare delivery.

Beyond the dispensary, the ripple effects spread quickly. At Mutulani Primary and Secondary Schools, access to clean water meant better hygiene practices. Handwashing became routine, and cases of waterborne diseases began to decline. With fewer illnesses, school attendance improved. The schools went a step further establishing kitchen gardens nourished by the new water supply. These gardens now supplement meals for students and teachers, improving nutrition, and during school holidays, surplus produce is shared with the wider community, extending the impact even further.

What was once a village defined by scarcity is now experiencing a quiet but powerful shift. Clean water has not only eased daily burdens, it has restored dignity, improved health, strengthened education, and planted the seeds of food security.



A solar powered water pump installed by PEN Kenya at Mutulani school

Strengthening the County Civil Society Networks through Self-Regulations and CSO Collaborations

In 2025, PEN Kenya continued to strengthen county Civil Society Organization (CSO) networks across 13 counties - Kilifi, Kitui, Kwale, Turkana, Siaya, Mombasa, Makueni, Machakos, Busia, Kisumu, Kakamega, Nakuru, and Nairobi. Guided by the belief that county CSO networks are central to driving inclusive development, PEN Kenya focused on enhancing their capacity to work collaboratively with citizens in creating demand for improved service delivery, accountability, and transparency from duty bearers at the county level. This support prioritized strengthening internal governance systems, deepening engagement with local authorities, and establishing sustainable operational mechanisms to ensure long-term viability.

-Review of Self-Regulation Frameworks - PEN Kenya played a key role in strengthening the effectiveness and sustainability of county CSOs and county-based organizations by facilitating the review of self-regulation frameworks across all 27 CSO networks. This process helped identify gaps, enhance internal accountability, and improve corporate governance systems. In addition, PEN Kenya supported 4 CSO networks in Kwale, Kilifi, Turkana, and Kitui counties to develop sustainability plans that provide clear roadmaps for continuity and resilience beyond PEN Kenya's direct intervention. Specifically, PEN Kenya provided technical assistance to 6 county-based organizations, including SAPCONE in Turkana, BLINK and CHRCE in Kitui, KECOSCE in Kilifi, and ICJ in Kisumu, in developing self-regulation frameworks for their respective local partner networks and creating awareness on the PBO Act, thereby contributing to the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the organizations.



Kilifi County CSO Network members, Sauti ya wanawake Kilifi county, Youth Activista and PEN Kenya staff pose for a photo after their training.



Sauti ya Wanawake Pwani-Kwale County members during a training organised by PEN Kenya.



Kilifi CSO Network Members take part in a group discussion

Between May to October 2025, PEN Kenya strengthened the voice, coordination, and influence of county CSO networks in shaping the Harmonized PBO Regulations 2025. By providing technical, logistical, and advocacy support, PEN Kenya enabled county CSOs to meaningfully engage in a national policy process that directly affects the civic space and operations of Public Benefit Organizations and Community Groups in Kenya. Essentially the initiative contributed to:

•Enhanced CSO participation in governance processes: 16 County CSO networks were empowered to analyse complex PBO regulations and actively contribute through petitions, memoranda, and validation forums.

•Strengthened collaboration between CSOs and government agencies: The engagement created structured dialogue and collaboration between county CSOs, PEN Kenya, CFF, and PBORA, fostering trust and inclusive development of PBO regulations.

•Amplified county-level voices in national policymaking: Through consolidated physical and email submissions from the 10 county CSOs and representation at the national validation forum, concerns and recommendations from organizations were incorporated into national discussions on the PBO regulatory framework.

•Built technical and advocacy capacity of county CSOs: The sensitization forums and technical support advanced by PEN Kenya improved the ability of county networks to interpret policies, engage in legal and regulatory analysis, and participate effectively in civic advocacy.

Promoted accountability and protection of civic space: By facilitating inclusive consultation forum on the harmonized PBO Regulations for the 12 CFF members to consolidate and submit recommendations, PEN Kenya contributed to a more transparent, responsive, and enabling regulatory environment for civil society organizations in Kenya.



Youths from the Youth Activista Network-Kilifi Chapter participate during a training in Kilifi County.

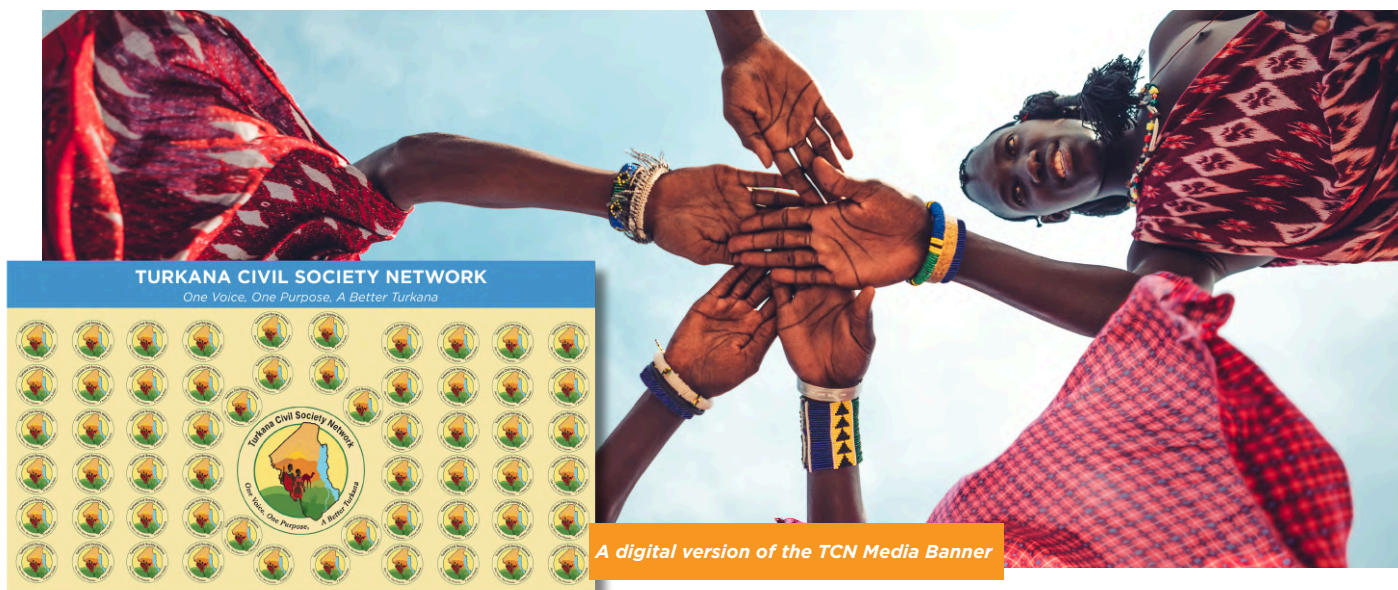


Kisumu CSO Network submitting memorandum on PBO regulations to PBO Regulatory Authority



A section of Kwale Youth Assembly Members take part in a group discussion.

The Birth of the Turkana Civil Society Network (TCN)



In 2025, Turkana took an important step toward stronger, more coordinated civic engagement with the formation of the Turkana Civil Society Network (TCN). The network emerged from a shared recognition among local organizations: that collaboration is essential for amplifying community priorities, protecting civic space, and engaging county processes with unity and credibility.

PEN Kenya supported the journey from early convenings to formal establishment creating safe, inclusive spaces where organizations could listen to one another, align on shared values, and agree on practical structures for collective action. This process was intentionally participatory, ensuring that the network reflected Turkana’s diversity and the lived realities of communities across the county.

The launch of TCN strengthened the foundation for sustained engagement in governance and development. With clearer coordination, member organizations are better positioned to contribute to county planning, monitor service delivery, and advocate for equitable, climate-resilient investments that respond to pastoralist and rural livelihoods.

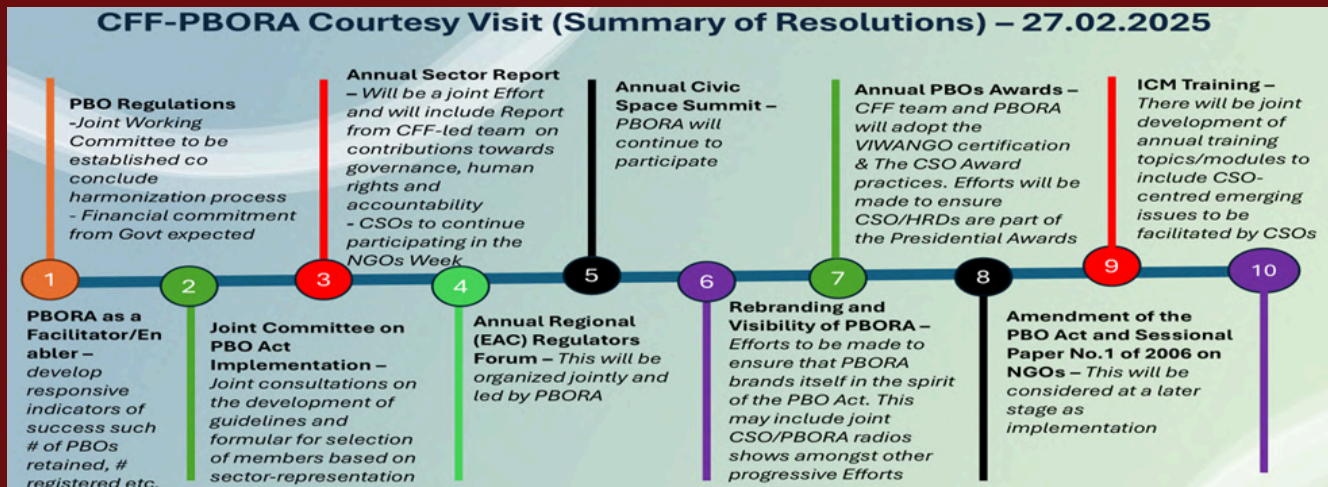
Beyond formal structures, TCN represents a renewed sense of confidence: that local voices can shape decisions when they are organized, informed, and connected. The network also creates a platform for peer support helping organizations share learning, strengthen compliance, and uphold standards that build trust with communities and partners.

As we look forward, PEN Kenya remains committed to walking alongside TCN as it grows nurturing leadership, strengthening systems, and supporting responsible engagement that keeps citizens at the center of development.

Milestone Timeline

- 1. MoU Development:** Member organizations agreed on collaboration principles and shared commitments.
- 2. Self-Regulation Framework Adoption:** Standards established to guide ethics, accountability, and membership practice.
- 3. Constitution Ratification:** Governance roles, decision-making processes, and leadership terms formalized.
- 4. Official Launch Ceremony:** Network introduced to stakeholders and positioned for county engagement.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS



This pillar focuses on creating inclusive spaces for constructive citizen participation through multicultural, multi-stakeholder, and multi-sectoral dialogue that influences policies affecting communities and civil society organizations. By fostering collaboration among citizens, the media, civic actors, and duty bearers, PEN Kenya promotes accountability, democratic participation, and community-driven development. Through the Civic Freedoms Forum (CFF) platform, PEN Kenya convened civil society organizations to engage with the Public Benefits Organizations Regulatory Authority (PBORA), resulting in strategic resolutions aimed at strengthening social justice and creating an enabling environment for citizens and their organizations.

PEN Kenya also advanced citizen participation by mobilizing resources to support 16 county CSO network representatives, including youth, women, and persons with disabilities, to attend the Annual Civic Space Protection Summit in Nakuru. The summit, themed “Youth at the Frontline: Reclaiming Civic and Democratic Space amid Shrinking Freedoms in Kenya,” brought together over 200 civil society actors from all 47 counties alongside government agencies, intergovernmental institutions, development partners, and the media to promote inclusive dialogue and civic engagement. Additionally, PEN Kenya supported discussions on key legislative and governance issues, including the Community Groups Registration Act, the PBO Act and its regulations, digital rights, and broader civic space challenges in Kenya. The use of activism as a tool for advocacy and expression amplified marginalized voices and enriched conversations on economic justice, institutional integrity, the protection of human rights defenders, and citizens’ rights. Through these efforts, PEN Kenya continues to strengthen collective action, inclusive participation, and civic dialogue as essential drivers of democratic governance and community development.

3rd Annual Media-CSO Conference

PEN Kenya facilitated the participation of 13 county CSO partners, equipping them with knowledge and skills to navigate policy issues affecting their work, engage effectively with stakeholders, and contribute to practical solutions on public affairs. Held under the theme “Media and Civil Society as Guardians of Kenya’s Democratic Space,” the conference played a key role in PEN Kenya’s efforts to strengthen the relationship between media, civil society, and democratic governance, with a focus on amplifying citizen voices and promoting access to information for all citizens to make informed decisions. The forum brought together over 200 media practitioners, civil society actors, and other key stakeholders to provide a platform for examining emerging challenges and opportunities within Kenya’s evolving digital and civic landscape. Discussions highlighted the need to strengthen governance and anti-corruption reporting at the county level, while also advancing coordinated advocacy to improve public awareness and enhance citizen participation in decision-making processes. Through this engagement, PEN Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to building strategic partnerships, facilitating knowledge exchange, and promoting collective action aimed at deepening civic participation and safeguarding democratic space across counties.



Panelists evaluating the state of media freedoms during the 3rd Media-CSO Conference 2025



KCDF program officer, Hellen Kuria speak to Busia COP during closeout meeting

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF PEN KENYA

This pillar focuses on strengthening internal systems, staff competencies, and organizational readiness to enhance effective program delivery. PEN Kenya promotes a culture of self-driven professional development among staff, while also providing targeted capacity-building support where resources allow to address critical institutional and programmatic needs.

Strengthening Staff Competencies- In March 2025, 9 PEN Kenya and CFF staff participated in a two-day organizational capacity-strengthening session focused on outcome harvesting and the documentation of success stories, aimed at enhancing their ability to effectively communicate results and impact.

Following the training, the organization developed and adopted standardized tools for outcome harvesting and success story documentation, strengthening its monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes. Setoral peer learning- Between September and November 2025, PEN Kenya staff participated in reflection forums held in Machakos, Kisumu, and Kitui, organized by UNDP Amkeni Wakenya for its partners. The forums which brought together 30 implementing partners, focused on promoting learning, accountability, and sustainability beyond UNDP support, with an emphasis on documenting and sharing lessons from Amkeni's interventions, particularly innovative and scalable approaches that advance access to justice, civic engagement, and human rights. The sessions also strengthened partners' capacity in results documentation and impact communication, while providing valuable opportunities for cross-learning and knowledge exchange across thematic areas.



PEN/CFF staff during Outcome harvesting and success story documentation training at Lukenya Getaway, Machakos



PEN Kenya staff with other CSO colleagues during UNDP Amkeni Wakenya (Call 7 Partners) Close-up meeting in Kisumu

SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH

PEN Kenya is committed to ensuring its long-term sustainability through a diversified resource mobilization strategy designed to address the challenges of a shrinking funding environment and changing donor priorities. The organization secures support from multiple sources, including local and international donor grants, corporate partnerships, CSOs partners contributions, and mission-aligned income-generating activities. These approaches reduces dependence on a single funding source and enhances PEN Kenya's ability to sustain its programmes and respond effectively to emerging needs and opportunities.

To strengthen its financial resilience, PEN Kenya actively participates in strategic consortia and partnerships with like-minded organizations to pursue joint fundraising, co-funding opportunities, and collaborative programme implementation. These partnerships increase the likelihood of securing larger grants, promote resource sharing, reduce operational costs, and minimize duplication of efforts.

In 2012, PEN Kenya established PEN Management and Development Consultants (PMDC), a consultancy arm that provides professional services to non-profit, public, and private sector institutions, with proceeds reinvested into the organization's programmes and operations to bridge funding gaps.

PEN Kenya recognizes that sustainable impact depends on strong partnerships and institutional capacity. The organization collaborates with government agencies, civil society organizations, development partners, and community groups to enhance programme reach, relevance, and effectiveness. Internally, PEN Kenya invests in robust governance systems, policies, continuous human resource development, and knowledge management processes to ensure accountability, continuous improvement, and evidence-based decision-making.

We partner with youth, women, and their grassroots organizations through mentorship and peer learning programs to foster their growth and sustainability. We are guided by sound governance, transparency, innovation, and strong stakeholder engagement in our programming and we remain committed to delivering sustainable and transformative impact across Kenya.



Knowledge Products

We published several blogs featured on the PEN Kenya website under the [Knowledge Management](#), [News](#), and [Blogs sections](#). Click the links below to interact with the blogs.

Formation and launch of Turkana CSO Network (TCN)- <https://www.penkenya.org/from-fragmentation-to-collaboration-pen-kenya-launches-turkana-civil-society-network/>

Strengthening Resilient Platforms for Civic Space Advocacy- <https://www.penkenya.org/strengthening-resilient-platforms-for-civic-space-advocacy-pen-kenya-and-the-5th-civic-space-protection-summit/>

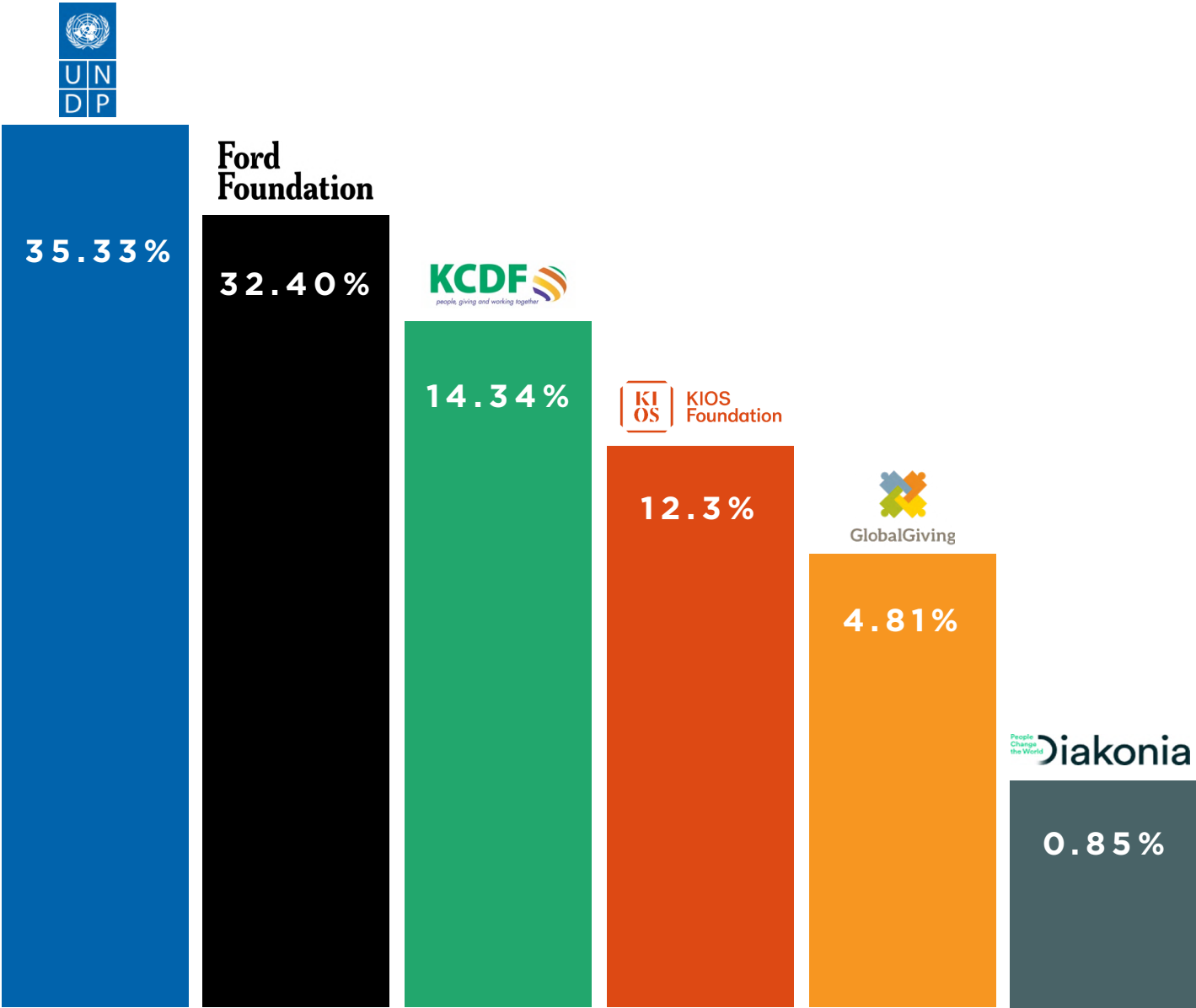
Breaking the Silence - <https://www.penkenya.org/breaking-the-silence-government-finally-opens-the-channels-for-civil-society-voice-in-new-pbo-regulations/>

Drop of Hope Amidst a Sea of Scarcity - <https://www.penkenya.org/a-drop-of-hope-amidst-a-sea-of-scarcity/>

A Lifeline Flows in Mutulani Village- <https://www.penkenya.org/a-lifeline-flows-in-mutulani-village/>

A Return to Kalama:Two Decades of Flowing Impact- <https://www.penkenya.org/a-return-to-kalamatwo-decades-of-flowing-impact/>

OUR FUNDING PARTNERS



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