

# RELON-KENYA

Refugee-led Organization  
Network of Kenya



Connecting RLOs  
since 2020

#NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US #NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US



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## Glossary

**ACHPR:** International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

**ADR:** Alternative Dispute Resolution

**CLEP:** Community Legal Empowerment Project

**IGAD:** Intergovernmental Authority on Development

**INGO:** International Non-Governmental Organizations

**IRAP:** International Refugee Assistance Project)

**LGBTQIA+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual

**MKU:** Mount Kenya University

**RELON-Kenya:** Refugee-Led Organizations Network of Kenya

**RLOs:** Refugee-Led Organizations

**SGBV:** Sexual and Gender-based Violence

**UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**UON:** University of Nairobi

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RELON-Kenya



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RELON-Kenya

# Who is RELON-KENYA?

RELON-Kenya is a national network of RLOs in Kenya registered with the Registrar of Societies in 2019. RELON-Kenya exists to unite the refugee-led organizations (RLOs) in Kenya, and link them with opportunities, ideas and funding, as well as provide a platform for the RLOs to network amongst themselves, and with potential partners and stakeholders (at national, regional, and global levels). The idea to form such a network came about due to the lack of inclusion of refugees in policy dialogues. RELON-Kenya is a membership organization drawing members from both urban and camp-based RLOs to

promote their engagement with the government and INGOs. RELON-Kenya was founded on the principles of participation and inclusion of refugees in decision-making tables and policymaking processes on matters affecting their day-to-day lives. The network brings together refugee-led organizations (RLOs) and individual refugees found in Kenya; with the aim of forming a strong, credible, and influential national network that speaks with one voice when advocating for refugee rights and interests. RELON-Kenya's 2021-2023 strategy is based on the need for advocacy for the inclusion of refugees in policymaking processes, at decision-making tables and improving the RLO's self-representation.



The RELON-KENYA team

## OUR VISION

We envision a strong network that advocates for the inclusion and meaningful participation of RLOs and refugees at decision-making tables and in policymaking processes on matters affecting their day-to-day lives. This way, we speak "with one voice" when advocating for refugee rights and interests.

## OUR MISSION

Our daily mission is to influence policymakers and donors through advocacy to generate meaningful service provision. We continuously work on strengthening our network to achieve the participation of RLOs at decision-making tables and in policy-making processes.

# OUR CORE MANDATE

Our core mandate at RELON-Kenya is to advocate for refugee participation and inclusion at all decision-making tables and in policymaking processes at all levels. Embracing the principle of equality, we strive to ensure that every voice, regardless of background or origin, is not only heard but valued and given equal weight in shaping the policies that impact us all. By championing equality, we work towards creating a more just and inclusive society where every individual, including refugees, is recognized as an integral part of the collective effort to build a better future.

"NOTHING ABOUT US  
WITHOUT US"

## OUR CORE VALUES



### EQUALITY

We believe in fairness and equal treatment of all.



### TRANSPARENCY

We believe in openness, accountability and accessibility.



### INTEGRITY

We believe in honesty and have strong moral principles as we carry out our activities across the region.

### INCLUSIVITY

We believe in providing equal access to opportunities and resources for RLOs without marginalization of any kind.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

We believe in responsibility for all actions and fairness in the provision of services to the members.

### NETWORKING

We believe in interaction with others, sharing of information and collaboration.



# What does the situation for Refugees in Kenya look like?



**Kenya** is one of the countries in Africa hosting the largest number of refugees that originate from neighbouring countries, mainly Somalia and South Sudan but also other countries, such as the DRC, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. In July of 2023, the number of refugees hosted in the country amounted to **636,024**:

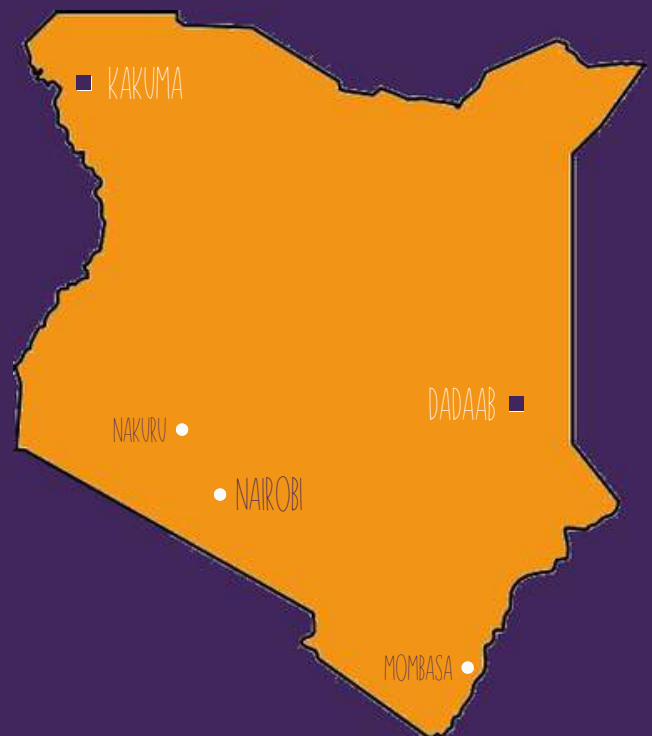
- 51 % Somalians
- 26.1 % South Sudanese
- 9.1 % Congolese

Source: UNHCR and DRS (2023)

Refugees are primarily dispersed into two large refugee camps, Kakuma and Dadaab. General hardship is exacerbated by police harassment and human rights abuses. Conflict is common not only within but also outside the barriers of the camps and crime rates are considered high, creating a precarious security situation.

- 42.2 % Dadaab
- 42.2 % Kakuma
- 15.1 % Urban areas

Source: UNHCR and DRS (2023)



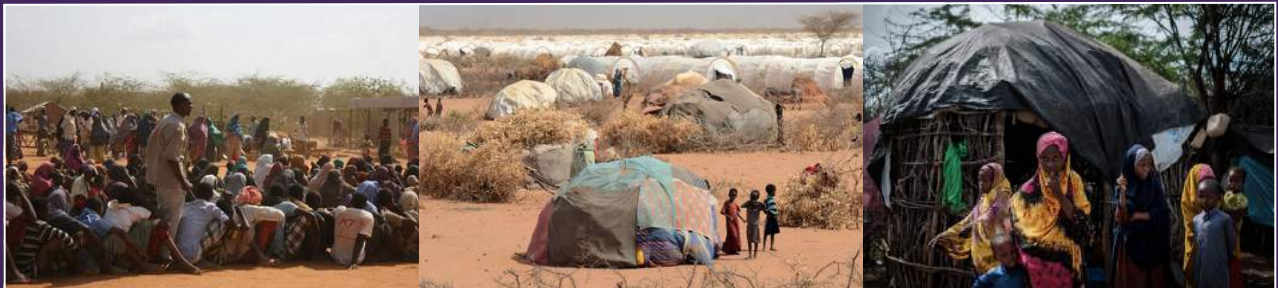
# Challenges and hurdles faced by Refugees

Kenya has become a central destination for individuals who have to flee their home countries, due to its proximity to countries and regions in which political and social tension is high. People living inside Kenya's refugee camps mostly seek refuge from persecution in their home countries or flee due to conflict or famine.

Refugees intend their stay to be of a temporary nature. Many, however, end up staying inside the camps for years or even generations.

This poses a particular problem as most refugee camps are designed to provide only temporary shelter. This state refugees find themselves in is called a "limbo state," which is hard to work past due to existing xenophobia and lack of social and economic stability.

They thus live in a state of great social insecurity and overall vulnerability, which can easily be exploited.



Kakuma camp is the largest refugee camp in the world, hosting refugees from almost twenty countries. Inside Kakuma camp, malnutrition and overcrowding are persistent issues. Dadaab hosts a complex made of a total of five refugee camps, representing the next largest refugee camps in the world. Overcrowding is a pressing issue, which has led to refugees living beyond the borders of the camps. This has caused friction between refugees and the host community.

Further, some of the camps are located in regions prone to flooding<sup>1</sup>.

Refugees face various challenges on a daily basis: lack of documentation is the biggest issue refugees face in Kenya. No documentation means no access to basic things, such as a bank account or m-pesa. Further, many lack access to movement passes, which impedes the refugees' right to freedom of movement. All of this leads to social and economic separation.

# Gender-specific challenges and hurdles

faced by women and girls in the refugee camps/settlements

Both girls and women are at risk of suffering human rights violations while residing inside refugee camps. Especially cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are prevalent.

Numbers of reported cases of violence against female refugees include child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) as well as intimate partner violence (IPV). And yet, even though the overall numbers are increasing many cases go unreported out of fear of repercussions.

With support from IRAP, RELON-Kenya launched the "Community Legal Empowerment Project" (CLEP-Project): We have trained and retained para-legals/community navigators from Kakuma and Kalobeyei to conduct legal intervention through legal aid clinics and referral to partner organizations.

RELON-Kenya works closely with RLOs, to ensure safety and confidentiality of the victims, So far, more than 140 women and girls, including LGBTQIA+ have benefitted from the CLEP-Project in Kakuma camp and Kalobeyie settlement.



A joint report by the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) and Amnesty International found that for **LGBTQIA+ persons** incidents of hate crimes and violence, including sexual violence, are common inside Kenya's refugee camps.

Source: [National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International 2023](#)

This makes the living situation for queer persons inside refugee camps "extremely dangerous." On top of that, opportunities to find a durable solution regarding their refugee status is being limited due to continuing discrimination inside the system.

## Why are RLOs important?

Unemployment levels among refugees are high, making economic hardship common for refugees living both inside the camps and in the urban centers. Many are not permitted to work and are thus reliant on support from agencies such as the UNHCR. Furthermore, when COVID-19 erupted, the large number of people living inside the refugee camps became a problem.

Safety measures such as keeping distance were hard to realise. Other diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and armed group recruitment are matters of concern. Kenyan governmental policies are not refugee-friendly. The communication with and activism for refugee rights has often been led by organisations that are not run by or staffed with refugees.

## Where does RELON-Kenya come in?

RLOs regularly suffer discrimination when trying to register due to stigma and discrimination. A number of organizations have been denied permission to operate in refugee camps. Many RLOs also lack skills in their area of work: fundraising, advocacy and networking. This is where we step in: capacity building among RLOs provides each of them with the skills and knowledge necessary to advocate for the inclusion and participation of refugees in policymaking processes.

Our network further provides the opportunity for RLOs to join their efforts and work together in their strive to advance the advocacy work for refugee rights. By joining force, the work of RLOs is better coordinated and the chances of duplicated efforts are lowered. Further, by providing training, we contribute to the growth of the respective organization not only in the number of members but also in fundraising, mobilization and advocacy efforts.

**Our main goal** is to provide guidance and unified direction in creating strong, well-coordinated and vibrant continental network advocating for participation and inclusion of RLOs and refugees in decision-making processes.



# HOW WE WORK

Advocacy, Research and Capacity Building for RLOs

**POLICY DIALOGUES & ADVOCACY** at the national, regional and global level

RELON-KENYA pursues policy dialogue and advocacy that aims to amplify refugees' voices, increases participation, and includes refugees & RLOs at decision-making tables. Meeting with the Parliamentary legal affairs committee in Mombasa, to push for the refugee integration in to the country.

**CAPACITY BUILDING** of RLOs in Kenya.

We are building the capacity of RLOs, enhance their skills, and facilitate continuous capacity strengthening programs for RLOs to effectively and meaningfully participate in decision-making processes, and policy formulation. The goals of RELON-Kenya is to equip well-developed RLOs with the capacity to advocate and participate in decision-making processes at national, regional and global levels.

**COORDINATION & PARTNERSHIP** at the national, regional and global level.

RELON-KENYA aims to strengthen co-ordination among RLOs, establish and maintain strong partnerships, and promote sustainable linkages for information sharing and access to opportunities.

**NETWORKING** - gaining new members and strengthening our networks.

We aim to strengthen our network with the help of sustainable governance. RELON-Kenya aims to establish a national secretariat in Kenya to facilitate networking and gain new members., which will enhance the visibility and branding of RELON-Kenya.



# Our Impact

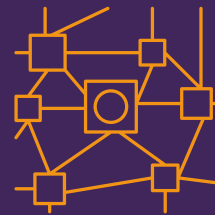
Three years of providing RLOs with impactful networking opportunities.



Participation in policy development:

- 3 with African Union
- 2 with IGAD
- 2 with ACHPR
- 4 In-Country
- 1 Nairobi County level

RELON-Kenya connects 148 RLOs in six regions/cities



1,292 RLOs and individuals benefitted from a total of 28 capacity-building measures

162 clients assisted with legal assistance and counseling sessions since February

'2023\*

\*until October 31st, in cooperation with IRAP



# PAST WORKSHOPS & TRAININGS

Advocacy, Research and Capacity Building for RLOs

In the following, we will provide an overview on some of the workshops and trainings that were provided by our team. More detailed information can be accessed via our social media channels.

## Kakuma Camp: Legal empowerment and capacity building for RLOs

Part of our service is also the legal intervention and community legal empowerment program. Back in April of 2023 we have led a workshop on the legal empowerment and capacity building for RLOs in the fields of financial management, leadership and governance structures

Our training for RLOs to enhance their capacity building abilities includes training on financial management for RLOs. Further, our trainings entail training on matters concerning leadership and governance structures of RLOs. Further, training is conducted on leadership skills and accountability.

Our law empowerment workshops entail:

- education on Kenyan laws
- education on terminology
- education on legal pro-cesses
- education on children's rights and protection

Our capacity building workshops entail:

- education on financial policies and procedures
- education on relevant policies
- training on concept and proposal writing



RELON-Kenya team and participants

## Paralegal Training

Refugees face myriads of difficulties in society, lack of access to justice is one major hindrance to security and protection. Access to justice among refugee communities is limited, which is why we have made the training of paralegals one of our objectives.

The goals of the paralegal training include:

- To equip knowledge on the law, human rights and court procedure
- To capacity build by offering sufficient expertise to offer general or case-specific advice to individuals or group
- To build capacity selected individuals to enable them facilitate Legal programs in the community
- To maximize access to legal aid in the community

The 2023 Paralegal training targeted 20 participants from the Daadab and Kakuma camps and Nairobi. We made sure that all participants had different countries of origin and that the group had both women, men and LGBTQIA+ persons present.

The goal of all our trainings is to equip our community paralegals with the ability to provide accessible legal services as to enhance community resilience and prevent exploitation of the refugees. The access to legal aid is enhanced in the process and bridges as well as decentralizes the access to legal services for the community.

This way, all paralegals trained under RELON-Kenya authority function as community gatekeepers.



*RELON-Kenya team and participants*

The Paralegal Society of Kenya (PSK) under the Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) is the consultancy for the training. Together with the PSK our team has held meetings during which the modules for the training were discussed. The respective curriculum is accredited by the Council of Legal Education (CLE).

## Workshop: Refugee Law Training for MKU and UON Student Club

During this capacity building meeting with law students from Mount Kenya University (MKU) and the University of Nairobi (UON), our team was able to educate the attendees on the issues surrounding legal aid refugees in Kenya face on a daily basis.

The objective of the meeting with MKU and UON students was:

- To educate current law students on refugee law
- To create a link between academia and the application of their theoretical knowledge in the field
- To offer a learning experience on legal aid and alternative dispute resolution (ADR)

The goal of these workshops is to expose current law students to refugee law through the observation of legal aid work provided by our organization. This cooperation offers the opportunity for current students to find a platform for their refugee law related articles, i.e. in the form of publication.

Further, the students were invited to sit in on mediation sessions at our office to continue their training on ADR. A selection of students was also granted the opportunity to help our team with legal aid matters, workshop and seminar preparation.



*RELON-Kenya team and participants*

# Workshop: Gender Responsive Advocacy training

in cooperation with Henrich-Böll-Stiftung and RELON-UGANDA

The workshop on Gender-Responsive Advocacy within Refugee-Led Organizations was organized with support from the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung and took place from January 30 to February 1, 2023, at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel in Nairobi.

This event served as a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange among regional organizations, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), public institutions and academia fostering discussions and presentations on a wide range of critical topics. The workshop culminated in a series of resolutions aimed at enhancing the support and empowerment of Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs).

The participating organizations included representatives from RELON-Uganda, Makerere University Refugee Law Project, the Samuel Hall Foundation,

Amnesty International Kenya, UNHCR, HAAR-Kenya, and GIZ. All participants contributed to the workshop by sharing their insights and expertise in areas such as inclusive technology, trafficking in persons, financial inclusion, participating in online campaigns as well as legal aid and governance, peacebuilding and social justice, women's empowerment, and mental health.

The resolutions generated during this workshop are a testament to the collective commitment to improving the support and empowerment of RLOs. By advocating for direct funding, fostering collaboration, and allocating a significant portion of annual budgets, these organizations are taking concrete steps to enhance their impact on refugee communities. This workshop's success lies not only in the insightful discussions held but also in the actionable resolutions that will shape the future of refugee advocacy.



*Participants listening to the team's presentation*

## Workshop: Advocacy Strategy Training

in cooperation with the GRN, Urban Refugees & Amnesty International

In September of 2020, RELON-Kenya conducted an advocacy strategy training in cooperation with the Global Refugee Network (GRN), Urban Refugees and Amnesty International.

This workshop marked a significant step towards growing the capacity of refugee-led organizations in using their voice to advocate for the rights and well-being of refugees in Kenya.

The goal of this workshop was to enhance the decision-making processes that RLOs partake in by providing training on how to make these processes more inclusive and simultaneously effective.

This will ultimately benefit the local refugee community and advance the overall cause of refugee advocacy.



Workshop situation, group discussion



Group presentation during training session

## Workshop on peacebuilding and conflict transformation

in cooperation with GIZ

From May 15th to 19th RELON-Kenya held a capacity-building workshop on peacebuilding and conflict transformation at Kasarani Sport View Hotel in cooperation with GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH) for a total of twenty beneficiaries representing four RLOs.

With the help of this workshop the conveners have provided the participating RLOs with information on the promotion of peace in their daily work. The goal of this workshop was to empower and strengthen the participant's capacities to address conflict on the community level.



Participants from Action Pour le Progres, Youth Voices Community, Nguono farmers of Poultry and Permaculture, Umoja Tunaweza, YEDA Africa.

The objective of this capacity-building measure was to:

- provide information on peacebuilding and conflict transformation
- create awareness and reduce tension between refugee and host communities

# Workshop: “VOICES RISING” – REFUGEE-LED SOLUTIONS EVENT

in Kakuma Refugee Camp

The “Voices Rising” event brought together a diverse group of participants, which included 65 RLOs, nine donor organizations, and 28 participant organizations that actively engaged in panel discussions. Altogether there were 102 individuals who participated in the conference.

The objective of the event was to emphasize the importance of RLOs in addressing the challenges within Kakuma and Kalobeyei, enable opportunities for partners and go-vernment entities to support RLOs in achieving their objectives, and facilitate meaningful conversations among representatives from RLOs, International Non-Governmental Organizations,

government entities, and other stakeholders.

This conference was a pivotal event that shed light on the challenges faced by refugees living in Kakuma and Kalobeyei. This is done by emphasizing the role said challenges play and creating opportunities for support.

By facilitating meaningful conversation, the event paved the way for a more inclusive and effective approach to refugee issues. It is imperative that the momentum generated by this event is sustained to ensure a more promising future for refugees in Kakuma & Kalobeyei.



*RELON-Kenya team presentation*



*RELON-Kenya team and participants*



# Workshop: WEZESHA ADVOCACY TRAINING

In cooperation with the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)

The Wezesha training program, conducted in collaboration with the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI), took place from July 11 to July 13, 2022, at the Kasarani Sports View Hotel. The program aimed to build the capacity of refugees and RLOs from the Kakuma and Dadaab camps, as well as urban centers in Nairobi and Mombasa.

Part of the program was the introduction of all participants to the concept of human rights, advocacy work and the significance of promoting the rights of refugees. All participants were encouraged to actively engage in the advocacy process.

Specific areas of advocacy work that were discussed included the improved access to education, economic inclusion, proper documentation and recognition of refugees' identification cards to access services. Further, the issue of addressing mental health challenges

refugees face and the implementation of effective advocacy strategies in this context were discussed.

Also, the process of identifying actors and target groups were discussed. Participants were guided through the process of how to research, analyze, and engage with stakeholders in an effective manner. This step is considered particularly crucial as the actions of these groups can significantly impact the success of advocacy efforts.

The Wezesha training program successfully equipped refugees and RLOs with the knowledge and skills required for conducting effective advocacy work. By being able to identify key actors and target groups, understanding the advocacy process, and focusing on essential areas of refugee rights, the program has paved the way for meaningful and impactful advocacy work in the future.



*RELON-Kenya presentation during Wezesha advocacy training*

# Workshop: Capacity-building Mombasa-based RLOs

Legal & social empowerment, leadership & governance structure and financial management

The three-day capacity-building workshop took place from November 6th to November 8th, at Bamburi Beach Hotel in Mombasa. This workshop aimed to build the capacity of refugees and RLOs located in Mombasa.

All participants were taken through the topics that will be discussed during the upcoming Global Refugee Forum (GRF). RELON-Kenya collected the participant's expectations for the event. Specifically discussed were the issue of freedom of movement and the documentation status of refugees in Kenya.

The main objectives were for the participants to understand Kenya's policies regarding refugees and how they apply to them and the RLOs in the country.

RELON-Kenya's goal was to empower the participating RLOs in:

- public participation of refugees in the lawmaking processes and policy dialogues
- family reunification
- mental health advocacy

The policy dialogue session also entailed education on existing refugee policies, service and support opportunities for refugees as well as Kenyan law and the rights and responsibilities of refugees.

Further, the participants were engaged in the topics of financial management, bank compliance, statutory deductions, and how to source funding in the RLO sphere.



*group photo: RELON-Kenya team with workshop participants*



*participants actively listening to a presentation held by Mathew Akeyo*

# MEET OUR TEAM



**JeanPaul B. Kasika**  
Programs Coordinator



**Evalyne Nyambok**  
Psychosocial/Social Worker



**Racheal Wambui Wahome**  
Legal Officer/Program Officer



**Mathew Owino Akeyo**  
Project Accountant



**Flavier Kazira Jumba**  
Administrative Assistant



**Emmanuel Wetnhiak Ambrose**  
Communication Officer

Find out more!



# MEET OUR TEAM



**Tolossa Asrat Koricka**  
Paralegal



**Ebengo Honore Alfani**  
Paralegal



**Judith Sawe**  
Intern

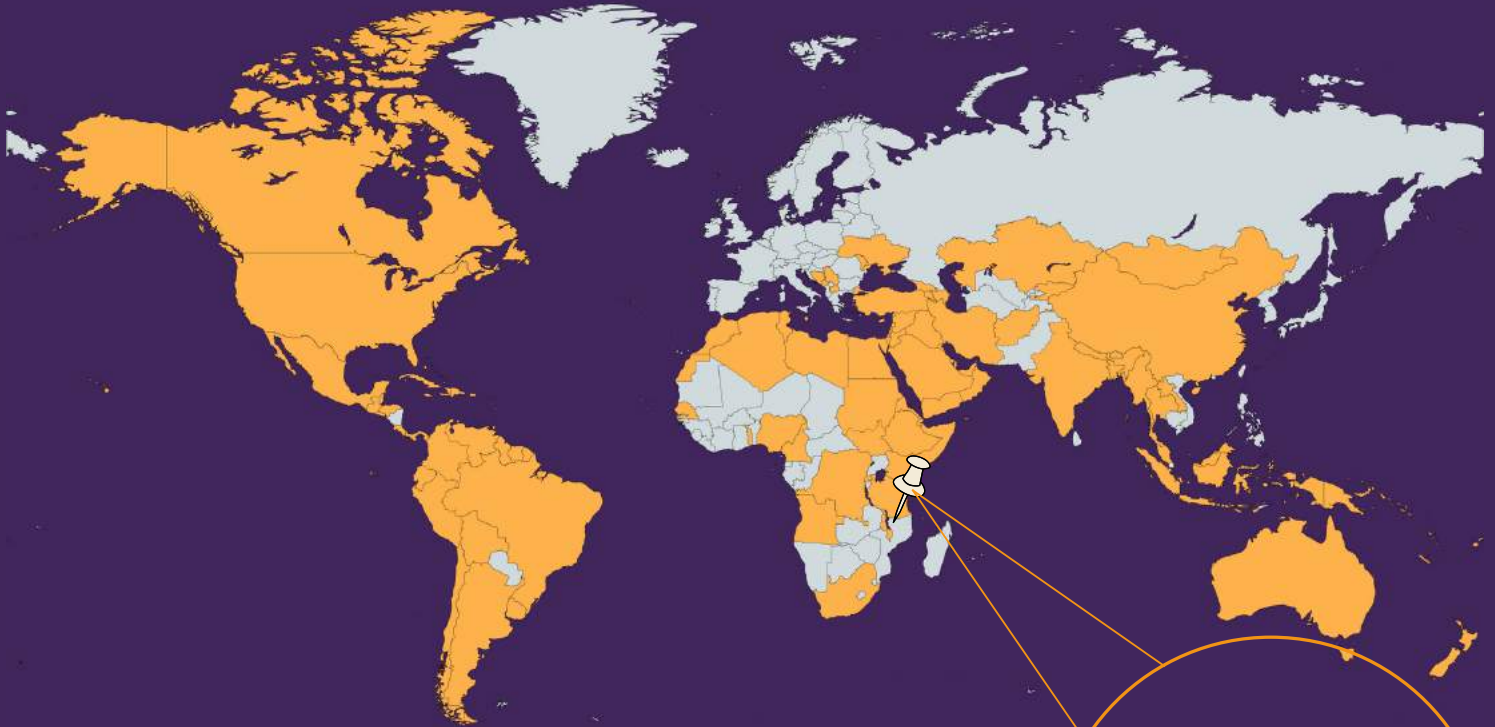


**H. Carlotta Wichmann**  
Intern

Find out more!



# Meet Our Partners



RELON-Kenya has established **37** partnerships that are active in a total of about **90** countries.

## List of our partners

- Africa Refugee-Led Network
- Amnesty International Kenya
- Asylumaccess
- CoHere
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
- Global Defenders Human Rights
- Global Refugee-Led Network
- Global Strategic Litigation Council for Refugee Rights
- HIAS
- Haki Na Sheria
- Heinrich Böll Foundation
- Independent diplomats (ID)
- INKOMOKO
- International Labour organization (ILO)
- International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)
- Kenya Editors Guild
- Kenya Human Right Commission
- Kituo Cha Sheria
- Legal Resources Foundation
- Mastercard
- Mount Kenya University
- Pamoja Trust
- Paralegal Society of Kenya (PSK)
- Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)
- Refuge Point
- Refugee-Led Organization Network of Uganda
- RELON-ANGOLA
- RELON-TANZANIA
- RELON-MALAWI
- RELON- NIGERIA
- Republic of Kenya
- South African Refugee-Led Network (SARLN)
- Slum-TV
- UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency)
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
- World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
- Young African Refugee for Integral Development
- Youth Alive Kenya

# Our partners



HAKI NA SHERIA



WUSC EUMC



Mount Kenya University



LEGAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION  
Haki Itawale



International Labour Organization



Oxfam International



U.S. COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS



Welcome the stranger. Protect the refugee.



GLOBAL STRATEGIC LITIGATION COUNCIL FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS



KITUO CHA SHERIA LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE we care for justice

# RELON-KENYA

The Refugee-led Organization  
Network of Kenya



Connecting RLOs  
since 2020

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