

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS' INFLUENCE IN PROMOTING AND  
PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN URBAN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN  
MATHARE SUB COUNTY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.**

**BY**

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**DECLARATION**


**DECLARATION AND APPROVAL**

**Declaration**

This thesis/project is my original work and has never been presented for any academic award in any institution.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research project is dedicated to my beloved Parents, Julius Mativo and Beatrice Mwikali, my brother Festus, and my sisters Irene and Carol, for their unwavering support.



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Mount Kenya

## ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights due to the gap between norms and responsible entities, enabling effective operations in globalization. However, their influence in informal urban settlements in Kenya is underexplored. This study aimed to investigate NGO influence in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare sub-county. The study's specific objectives included to assess critical factors influencing the promotion and protection of human rights NGOs, to determine strategies employed by NGOs, and to explore the challenges facing NGOs in Mathare sub-county, Nairobi county. This study used a descriptive survey design, where quantitative and qualitative data was collected through questionnaires and key informant interviews. The research targeted 87 human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Mathare sub-county. The study involved 80 respondents using the Yamane formula and used SPSS version 25 to analyze descriptive statistics to assess the effectiveness of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare sub-county. The study revealed that human rights NGOs play a pivotal role in community-based advocacy, with 78% focusing on legal empowerment, social service delivery, and public awareness initiatives. These organizations have contributed meaningfully to human rights advancement in Mathare Sub-County through legal reforms, community empowerment, and educational outreach. However, NGOs face political interference, limited funding, low literacy levels, and restrictive regulatory procedures. The study concluded that while NGOs are essential in promoting and protecting human rights, their effectiveness is hindered by financial constraints, negative community perceptions, and political instability. The effectiveness of these NGOs depends significantly on their ability to build public trust, strengthen partnerships with governmental institutions, and adopt inclusive, rights-based strategies. The study recommends the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships, enhanced legal protections for human rights defenders, and streamlined regulatory frameworks to support sustainable human rights advocacy in Mathare Sub-County, Kenya.

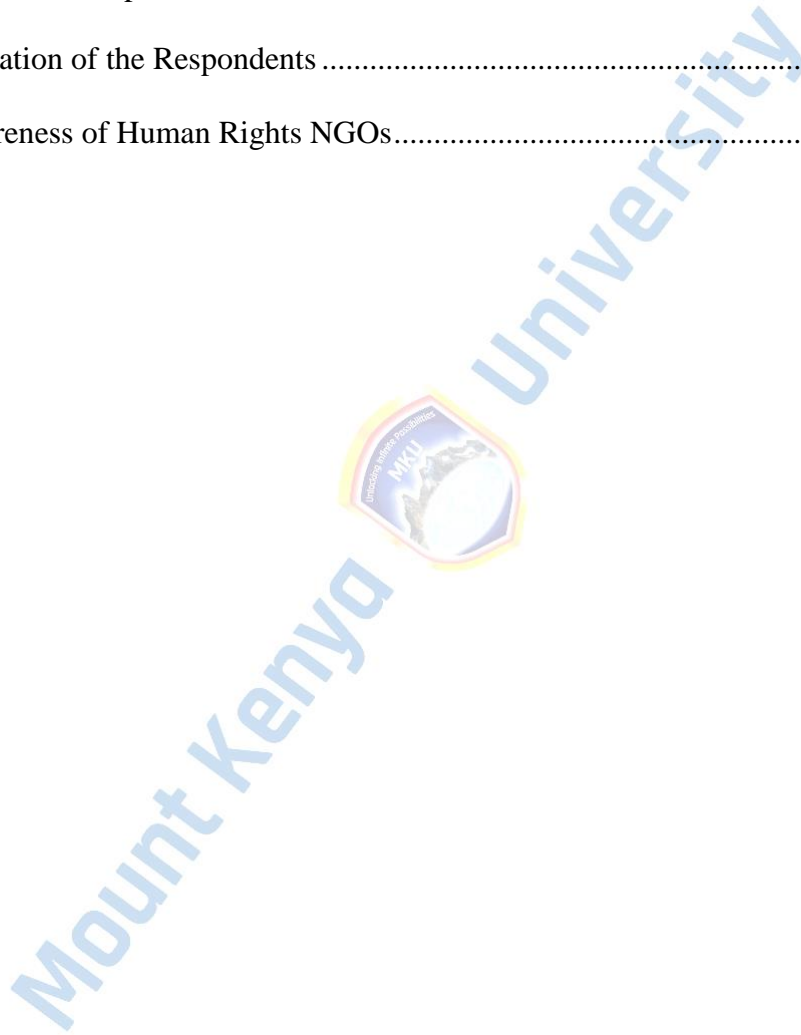
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>CBOs</b>	Community-Based Organizations
<b>GGR</b>	Global Gag Rule
<b>HRDs</b>	Human Rights Defenders
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>KNHCR</b>	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
<b>NACOSTI</b>	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of High Commission of Human Rights
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, serves as a foundational legal and moral framework for the protection and promotion of human rights globally. It articulates the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family, establishing a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations. The UDHR not only outlines individual entitlements but also delineates the responsibilities of states, institutions, and civil society actors in safeguarding these rights (Kimari, 2022). Of particular importance is its implicit recognition of human rights defenders, individuals, and groups who, through nonviolent means, advocate for the realization of fundamental rights and freedoms. These actors play a critical role in bridging normative frameworks and lived realities, often operating in complex and contested socio-political spaces.

The 1993 United Nations World Conference on Human Rights marked a significant milestone in global human rights discourse by formally recognizing the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as key actors in the promotion and protection of human rights. While acknowledging the visibility of NGOs focused on civil and political rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action emphasized that such organizations represent only a fraction of the broader human rights movement. The declaration expanded human rights normative understanding by incorporating economic, social, and cultural dimensions, identifying poverty, violence, racism, health, homelessness, and environmental degradation as legitimate issues. This broadened scope underscores the proliferation of human rights NGOs worldwide, suggesting the involvement of

hundreds of thousands of organizations actively engaged in diverse thematic and geographic contexts (UN, 1993). Analytically, this recognition affirms the multi-sectoral and intersectional nature of human rights advocacy and the centrality of civil society in translating universal principles into localized actions.

The UN Declaration on 'Human Rights Defenders asserts that individuals and groups have the right to promote and defend human rights and fundamental freedoms at national and international levels' (Forst, 2018). Non-profit or non-governmental organizations are generally characterized as constituents of civil society that exist for a goal other than pursuing financial gain. In this view, NGOs encompass various organizations, from small environmental pressure groups to large international organizations with numerous branches or members, ranging from environmental and human rights groups to educational charities and humanitarian assistance programs.

Non-governmental organizations are essential in advancing gender equality and safeguarding human rights. They proactively confront global challenges and advocate for women's rights as fundamental human rights, demonstrating their commitment to addressing specific international issues. Non-governmental organizations significantly influence public opinions of women's rights via various awareness campaigns, social media platforms, seminars, and community outreach efforts. These initiatives seek to educate society on the significance of gender equality and the protection of women's rights as essential human rights.

Globalization has played a pivotal role in reshaping the landscape of governance, development, and human rights advocacy. It has facilitated the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as influential non-state actors with the capacity to operate transnationally, challenge state-centric approaches, and contribute meaningfully to the promotion and protection of human rights across diverse socio-political contexts.

As global interconnectedness increases, NGOs have not only become instrumental in mobilizing international attention toward human rights violations but have also established themselves as key players in monitoring, reporting, and holding governments accountable to international human rights standards. This evolving dynamic raises critical questions regarding the extent of NGOs' influence on state behavior, particularly in contexts where state sovereignty and control over the treatment of citizens were historically regarded as exclusive domains of the state.

The proliferation of NGOs in global human rights discourse has introduced complex dynamics into rights governance, where authority, legitimacy, and accountability are increasingly contested and negotiated among a multiplicity of actors beyond the traditional state apparatus (Marcinkutė, 2011). This diversification of actors has reshaped the human rights landscape, creating both opportunities and tensions in the pursuit of justice and equity.

However, despite the growing influence of NGOs, critical research gaps remain. Specifically, there is limited empirical analysis of how NGOs translate normative human rights principles into actionable outcomes, particularly in settings marked by weak institutional capacity or authoritarian resistance. Moreover, the interactions between NGOs and state institutions, whether collaborative, adversarial, or co-option, are under-theorized in many regional contexts. Another significant gap lies in assessing the legitimacy of NGOs as representatives of marginalized populations, especially given concerns about donor dependency, urban bias, and accountability to grassroots constituencies. Addressing these gaps is essential for a more nuanced understanding of the role NGOs play in shaping both global and local human rights agendas.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are formed to ensure adherence to human rights norms, bridging the gap between their implementation and compliance. The rise of NGOs as new human rights actors has sparked a significant debate. Non-government organizations (NGOs), highlighted

by the 'Kenya National Commission on Human Rights' (KNHCR, 2019), advocate for fundamental liberties and human rights using peaceful methods. Their work is significant since they strive to safeguard and advance 'human rights, including economic, social, cultural, political, and civil rights'.

Human rights, as defined by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2011), are fundamental rights that transcend gender, race, religion, nationality, language, and place of residence. These principles are based on universal, interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible principles of dignity and worth, which are shared by all human beings. Everyone is born free, with inherent worth and dignity, the capacity for rational thought and moral judgment. They should be kind to one another and work together for global justice, peace, and freedom. Human rights are sets of societal principles that establish standards for human behaviour. The government is primarily responsible for preserving these rights, as stated by Carrard et al. (2020) through domestic legal institutions and global legislation.

Informal settlements are frequently stereotyped as spaces devoid of social order, often depicted as disorganized, conflict-prone, and lacking social cohesion (Morgner et al., 2020). These characterizations, though prevalent, risk oversimplifying the complex social dynamics within such communities. According to the United Nations (2003), informal settlements are defined by the absence of durable housing, inadequate access to essential services, and insecure tenure, conditions that persist in both urban and peri-urban areas globally. Within this context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as pivotal actors in advocating for the human rights of informal settlement residents, particularly in developing countries. Their interventions range from legal empowerment to resisting forced evictions, as exemplified by the work of Amnesty International.

Despite this critical engagement, notable research gaps persist. For instance, there is limited empirical investigation into how NGOs navigate the institutional and political constraints that characterize informal settlements, especially in contexts where the state is absent or complicit in rights violations. While NGOs often claim to amplify the voices of marginalized residents, there is insufficient scrutiny of whose voices are being represented and how legitimacy and accountability are established within these advocacy processes. Moreover, the existing literature remains descriptive, lacking analytical depth on how NGO interventions transform power relations or promote sustainable rights-based development within these spatially and socially excluded contexts. The current study sought to provide an investigation of the actual and perceived impact of NGO-led human rights advocacy in informal settlements.

NGOs ensure residents have access to legal aid for housing rights and help citizens exercise their freedom to speak creating equality throughout the environment. People have natural human rights to receive shelter along with medical care and access to learning while they need to live and maintain freedom and experience security. The rights remain vital throughout unstable urban regions where core rights usually find powerful threats. NGO organizations serve as fundamental guardians because they existence of rights defence mechanisms protects fundamental rights which must be maintained for every human being.

Organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other globally recognized NGOs play a critical role in the architecture of human rights protection through systematic monitoring and advocacy efforts. Operating as independent watchdogs, these organizations assess state compliance with international human rights obligations, often highlighting violations that would otherwise go undocumented or unaddressed (Weissbrodt & De La Vega, 2007). Their capacity to mobilize international attention, generate pressure on duty-bearers, and amplify the

voices of affected communities significantly enhances the visibility and impact of human rights defenders operating in high-risk or repressive environments.

The NGOs and human rights defenders lies in the synergistic relationship where NGOs provide structural, technical, and strategic support that bolsters defenders' effectiveness. Through evidence-based reporting, legal support, and transnational advocacy networks, NGOs contribute to creating enabling environments for defenders while also acting as intermediaries between grassroots actors and international mechanisms.

However, the effectiveness of this relationship remains under-examined in the empirical literature, particularly regarding how local defenders engage with global NGO agendas and how this engagement affects ownership, agency, and legitimacy in rights advocacy. A critical research gap, therefore, lies in understanding how NGOs can support human rights defenders without reproducing hierarchical relationships or undermining local contexts and leadership.

In addition, NGOs are well recognized for their pivotal role in collecting information on human rights violations and sourcing data from several channels, including victims, witnesses, other NGOs, newspapers, and testimonies. The goal is to raise awareness of human rights issues, particularly those faced by marginalized individuals, while also highlighting the challenges faced by the general public, governments, and other entities.

NGOs play a crucial role in society by standing up for the rights of underrepresented groups and those on the margins (KNCHR,2019). Some of these special interests include women, children, and persons living with disability, among others. NGOs function as independent platforms which take the lead in defending human rights among people living in informal settlements. NGOs take action to both strengthen local residents and push for direct impact on government institutions and continually remind governments about their human rights obligations (Dongwook, 2013). Kiplagat

and Kipkoech (2020) notes that NGO organizations identify all underlying conflict sources between political groups and cultural conflicts and clan divisions.

The threat level becomes significantly more dangerous according to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in areas where human rights activism faces major abuses and violations like informal settlements (Khayundif, 2017). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) help victims while raising community understanding of human rights and force governments through advocacy to safeguard human rights. The activities of these civic organizations hold essential value for nation building through their support of international community positions and their direction of human rights policies upheld by the nation's government (Wong, 2012).

The goal is to raise awareness of human rights issues, particularly those faced by marginalized individuals, while also highlighting the challenges faced by the general public, governments, and other entities. These challenges encompass financial constraints, government-imposed limitations on their activities, and restricted entry to the affected population. The aftermath of conflicts can pose difficulties for domestic human rights NGOs and their mission, priorities, finances, staffing, and collaborations with other organizations. The influence of these NGOs on national sovereignty and safeguarding human rights relies on various elements like the nation's development stage, political structure, and NGO size (Marcinkutė, 2011). Even though human rights are widely acknowledged as a norm, the global progress in realizing them remains inadequate. Hence, it is crucial to analyze the complete human rights landscape and assess the contributions of non-governmental entities such as NGOs in advancing, safeguarding, and mitigating human rights violations, especially in informal settlements.

Informal settlements, 'refers to as squatter towns, shantytowns, slums, favelas, or ghettos, are unplanned and improvised human habitats without legal tenure and public infrastructure,

characterizing the urban economy in developing nations'. According to Magigi and Majani (2010), informal settlements are regions where residents do not have fundamental living rights and legal access to land. This puts them in danger of eviction, inadequate basic amenities, informal land transactions, and unplanned housing growth. Informal settlements, which impact one billion people worldwide, are mainly concentrated in metropolitan areas of developing and newly industrialized nations.

According to Otieno (2016), this results from fast urbanization and population increase, worsened by insufficient regulations and the dynamics of slums. The main causes of informal settlements within developing nations stem from hazardous occupations, limited access to cost-effective housing, poor government administration, social and economic discrimination along with natural disasters including landslides and floods and riverbank erosion and cyclones (Awasthi, 2021).

Through these settlements urban poor people assert their rights which demonstrates the requirement for better urban resource access and enhanced governance (Niva et al., 2019).

Emerging nations together with rapidly developing countries mainly see the development of informal settlements within their urban areas. Worldwide millions of individuals live in areas built without proper government regulations. Urbanization together with fast population expansion has partially driven this phenomenon. Mankind continues to battle unsuccessfully against slum difficulties because of inadequate policies and complicated settlement conditions.

Uddin (2023) highlights the uncertain impact of human rights NGOs in Bangladesh, as they struggle to promote rights effectively and the government fails to fulfil its responsibilities, leading to curtailment of their operations. Challenges include obstruction by the ruling elite, government repression, and harassment of NGO officials in Bangladesh. The expansion of Human Rights NGOs is impeded through Bangladesh's pattern of impunity alongside its dependency on foreign

NGOs as well as financial constraints and political factors and restrictive laws which couple with inefficient human rights institutions. The government places limitations on human rights groups but NGOs continue to battle more actively to protect these rights. Both financial stability and political objectives of NGOs determine their performance levels which remain below standard.

In South Asia, as noted by Chaney (2022), Human rights defenders are subjected to a multitude of rights infringements, such as threats, acts of violence, and instances of homicide. The government's restrictions on freedom of association and speech are limiting the work of human rights defenders. The oppression faced by HRDs has a significant gendered aspect, with women in HRDs being especially susceptible to harm. The increasing implementation of restrictive laws in the area is a danger to democracy, and immediate changes are necessary to guarantee the enforceability of the 'United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders'.

Rehman (2019) reveals that NGOs in Bangladesh have contributed significantly to the nation's progress, particularly in human rights. These organizations, headed by donor enthusiasm, offer financial, logistic, operational, and legal help to vulnerable individuals, enabling access to justice. They also put pressure on the government to formulate and enforce laws pertaining to human rights. Nevertheless, NGOs often emphasize donor preferences and align their actions with government policy, stressing the need for more effective human rights advocacy.

According to Muriithi (2014), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in underdeveloped countries face challenges that impede their capacity to adapt to internal and external circumstances and ensure their continued operation and survival. The development of the African management sector faces various obstacles which stem from skilled workforce scarcity and inadequate funding and temporal objectives while political influence and corruption interfere with success. Poverty-stricken slums accommodate most residents who live in African urban

settings. At the start of 1990 the urban population in Africa amounted to one-third of its total inhabitants.

According to UN-HABITAT (2020) Africa's urban population is projected to reach the halfway mark by 2025, with 41% residing in Eastern Africa and 66% in Southern Africa. Wang'ombe (1995) attributes this urban population growth to the unprecedented expansion of urban settlements, raising concerns about poverty and living conditions in Africa. There has to be swift and decisive action on the pressing problem of Africa's urbanization trend. Sustainable urban development in Africa is essential for tackling poverty and housing challenges (UN-HABITAT, 2020).

Cameroon, as noted by Forst (2018), is grappling with escalating unrest and insecurity, particularly with the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram, which has killed approximately 2,500 Cameroonians between 2014 and 2017. Human rights defenders in Cameroon face increasing threats from smear campaigns, harassment, intimidation, physical attacks, and torture by state security forces. Journalists are practicing self-censorship, and defenders working on Anglophone issues, against government policy, and defending sexual orientation and gender identity rights face high risk.

In Kenya, the expansion of urban areas has frequently been marked by a lack of formal planning, unlawful practices, and spontaneous settlements. Wang'ombe (1995) holds the view that the genesis of challenges like unemployment, insecurity, and substandard housing and how they can be addressed to ensure adequate urban living conditions. In a rowdy environment, Kenyan human rights defenders encounter substantial personal risks, wherein the most prevalent threats are arbitrary arrest and judicial harassment. The widespread occurrence of this indicates that human rights work in Kenya has been effectively criminalized; assassination threats are another prevalent strategy.

The risks faced by NGOs working in informal settlements are increased by four main factors: insecurity, overcrowding, drug abuse, poor housing and limited access to sanitation and social services such as healthcare and water supply (Kimalel, 2017). In weak accountability environments, civic space shrinks, contributing to unfavorable working conditions for Non-Governmental Actors) (Kimari, 2018). The international community established mechanisms to safeguard human rights defenders, since they are integral to the system that protects advocates of human rights, according to Bennett et al. (2015). Non-governmental groups establish coalitions and networks to advocate for human rights, including a national coalition of Kenyan human rights defenders functioning domestically (law, 2020).

In Kenya, the Kenyan National Commission of Human Rights (KNCHR) collaborates with Human Rights Defenders, including institutions and individuals, and civil society organizations like 'NGOs like Front Line Defenders, Amnesty International, and Protection International, to ensure a healthy working environment for HRDs' (Kurki, 2021). Public members reported 20% of perceived human rights violations to civil society organizations. In comparison, 19% were reported to government agencies, emphasizing the significance of reporting such violations to Non-governmental organizations compared to state agencies (KNCHR, 2016).

On the contrary, numerous human rights defenders and workers in Kenya have been subjected to abuse, including arbitrary arrest, death threats, execution, defamation, torture, detention, and restricted movement (KNCHR, 2016). Further, current Kenyan urban informal settlement services are inadequate to meet the needs of current residents and new occupants, resulting in challenges like limited access to services like waste management, sanitation, garbage collection, and healthcare. Slum regions are also characterized by overcrowding, unemployment, elevated mortality rates, and insecure tenure. Notwithstanding the efforts of human rights NGOs, several

areas, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, continue to endure static or worse living circumstances for slum inhabitants.

In this study, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are legally constituted, non-profit entities that operate independently of government control and primarily engage in advocacy, service delivery, and oversight functions to promote and protect human rights. These organizations play a vital role in informal settlements such as Mathare Sub-County, where state presence and service provision are often limited. NGOs in these areas address systemic human rights challenges by raising awareness, offering legal aid, facilitating access to basic services, and empowering marginalized communities to claim their rights. Through partnerships, community mobilization, and policy advocacy, NGOs are critical in bridging the gap between underserved urban populations and state institutions, contributing to social justice, equity, and human dignity in vulnerable urban settings.

Informal settlements in Mathare Sub-County refer to densely populated residential areas developed outside formal urban planning and building regulations. These settlements typically emerge due to rapid urbanization, population growth, and a persistent shortage of affordable housing in Nairobi. As a result, structures are often constructed without adherence to official zoning laws, building codes, or land tenure systems. Residents in these areas commonly face inadequate access to essential services such as clean water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and security.

The lack of legal recognition and regulatory oversight in these settlements contributes to their vulnerability, exposing inhabitants to socio-economic marginalization, poor living conditions, and human rights violations. In the context of Mathare Sub-County, informal settlements are not only characterized by physical and infrastructural inadequacies but also by systemic neglect and exclusion from public policy interventions, thereby underscoring the critical role of non-

governmental organizations in advocating for the rights and welfare of residents in these underserved communities.

This research investigated the influence of Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on the advancement and safeguarding of human rights in Mathare, an informal urban settlement. This research examines the influence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that emphasize community-driven human rights concerns in Kenya.

### **1.2 Problem Statement of the Study**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role in advancing human rights through education, advocacy, monitoring, and strategic lobbying efforts. In contexts marked by state neglect or institutional incapacity, such as urban informal settlements, NGOs often serve as substitute or complementary actors in promoting social accountability and safeguarding fundamental rights (Nduta & Mutahi, 2020; OHCHR, 2021). With over one billion people globally residing in informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2020), including densely populated areas like Mathare Sub-County in Nairobi, the intersection of urban poverty, marginalization, and governance failure has resulted in widespread human rights deprivations ranging from lack of access to water, health care, and education, to increased vulnerability to state violence and forced evictions (Amnesty International, 2019).

Urbanization has exacerbated these challenges, creating pressure points for human rights NGOs operating within slum environments. Research by Uddin (2023), Chaney (2022), and Forst (2018) documents how NGOs and their personnel in informal settlements are routinely subjected to psychological, physical, and institutional violence, including harassment, arbitrary arrests, office raids, negative media framing, and threats to deregister their organizations. Such hostile conditions not only compromise organizational safety and autonomy but also erode the effectiveness of NGOs in delivering rights-based interventions and holding duty-bearers accountable.

While the normative role of NGOs in human rights protection is well established (Uddin,2023), empirical studies focusing on their localized impact in urban informal settlements remain sparse, fragmented, or overly descriptive. Existing literature often fails to critically assess the strategies, limitations, and adaptive capacities of NGOs working in contexts characterized by state hostility, informal governance, and structural violence (e.g., Nduta & Mutahi, 2020). Moreover, there is limited evidence on how these organizations navigate legitimacy, sustain community trust, and measure their effectiveness in such high-risk urban settings.

This study, therefore, addresses the gap in the human rights literature by systematically evaluating the effectiveness of human rights NGOs in the promotion and protection of human rights in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi. In doing so, it aims to generate contextually grounded insights that can inform policy, strengthen NGO practice, and enhance community-based rights advocacy. Given the persistent human rights violations and shrinking civic space in informal settlements, this research is both timely and essential to safeguard democratic accountability and the dignity of marginalized urban populations.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

This research assessed how NGOs affect human rights protection in Mathare sub-county an informal settlement located in Nairobi County. This research evaluated the effectiveness of Human Rights in protection and promotion of human rights in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

### **1.4. Specific Objectives of the Study**

- i. To determine the nature of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County.
- ii. To assess the influence of key factors on NGOs' effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County.
- iii. To determine strategies employed by NGOs in the promotion of human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County.
- iv. To explore NGOs' challenges in promoting human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

- i. What is the nature of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County?
- ii. To what extent do key factors impact NGOs' effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County?
- iii. How do the strategies employed by NGOs influence the promotion and protection of human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County?
- iv. What challenges do NGOs face in promoting human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This research made a valuable contribution to the field of human rights by evaluating the effectiveness of NGOs in safeguarding and advocating for human rights in informal settlements. While numerous studies focus on the demographics, structures, and behaviours in urban areas, this study offered new insights into the impact of these actors. The changing dynamics among governments, non-governmental entities, and the global community mirror the human rights crisis, with society playing a crucial role in upholding human dignity in Kenya. Non-governmental organizations are perceived as autonomous in serving as the proper channels for delivering financial resources to the intended recipients, particularly those residing in impoverished urban areas.

The study's findings could benefit activists defending human rights in informal urban areas. Policymakers focused on human rights may consider these findings when formulating regulations concerning human rights violations in urban informal environments. The study's suggestions and recommendations could also assist scholars conducting similar research in affluent regions to enhance and safeguard human rights.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The study focused on Mathare Sub-County, a densely populated informal settlement known for its socio-economic marginalization, precarious living conditions, and recurring human rights violations, highlighting the need for state intervention in these areas. The study was conducted in Mathare sub-county, an urban informal settlement in Nairobi County. The geographical scope was chosen due to Mathare's historical significance in Kenya's urban inequality landscape and its dynamic ecosystem of grassroots and international NGOs. These organizations often supplement

state efforts by advocating for social justice, enhancing access to essential services, providing legal aid, and empowering vulnerable populations to claim their rights.

The content scope of the study covered multiple dimensions of NGO engagement in human rights work. The study included an examination of the organizational structures and characteristics of NGOs operating in Mathare, as well as an analysis of both internal (e.g., leadership, funding, capacity) and external (e.g., state relations, civic space, community dynamics) factors influencing their effectiveness. Specifically, the study explored the strategies NGOs use to promote human rights, their approaches to community engagement, their advocacy and lobbying initiatives, and the awareness-raising mechanisms they employ within informal settlements. Further, it interrogated the systemic, political, and structural challenges these organizations face in executing their mandates.

The study's temporal scope was cross-sectional, focusing on a snapshot of NGO activities and experiences during the data collection period. While this design allowed for rich empirical insights, it posed limitations in capturing longitudinal changes or the evolution of NGO-state-community dynamics over time. Additional constraints included limited financial resources, political interference, insecurity in the field, weak policy support, and institutional resistance from some state actors, all of which potentially shaped both data access and the operating environment of NGOs under study.

The study was situated at the intersection of NGOs and human rights in urban informal settlements, offering a focused, critical, and context-specific analysis of how NGOs in Mathare navigate complex and often adverse urban governance environments to uphold and advance the rights of marginalized populations. The findings contributed to both scholarly debates and practical policy interventions in similar urban contexts across the Global South.

### **1.8 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study**

Limitation is defined as an element of a research project that falls outside the purview of the investigator's control. It is beyond the researcher's manipulation ability to facilitate the study (Kumar, 2018). The study was confined to instances of insecurity fears, as the study site is an informal settlement. Specific individuals may deliberately withhold certain aspects of their knowledge, primarily for security reasons. The research obtained institutional approval to conduct the study, ensuring anonymity for respondents and ensuring the information is solely for study purposes. To address these challenges, the researcher collaborated with local authorities to guide areas at risk due to security issues.

### **1.9 Assumption of the Study**

In order to formulate a research topic, the researcher is required to make certain assumptions about the study, as pointed out by Bell and Bell (2015). This study establishes that non-governmental organizations in Mathare Sub-County fulfil their role in supporting the protection of human rights. The study makes an assumption that the respondents were truthful in their answers however detailed enough to show current trends and situations. The study made the assumption that participants would be available and willing to share their involvement in human rights promotion and protection activities. The study depends on these fundamental assumptions to both determine the research question and maintain the accuracy along with the validity of final research results.

### **1.10 Operational Key Terms**

**Human Rights** refers to privileges that every individual has only by their humanity. Every individual, regardless of their gender, residence, nationality, or other status, is entitled to fundamental human rights that are crucial for preserving human dignity. They provide the groundwork for prosperity, safety, and harmony on a global scale (UNODC, 2011).

**Informal settlements** refer to densely populated residential areas that develop without formal urban planning, legal land tenure, or adherence to building regulations, and are often characterized by inadequate infrastructure and limited access to essential public services. In the context of this study, informal settlements specifically refer to residential areas within Mathare Sub-County that do not comply with established planning and construction norms.

**Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** refer to independent, non-profit entities that operate separately from the state to promote and protect human rights globally, with a particular focus on underserved areas such as informal settlements like Mathare Sub-County. They engage in advocacy, oversight, service delivery, and community empowerment to address human rights challenges.

**Promotion and protection of human rights** refer to the assistance and initiatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that implement professional aid programs and development cooperation based on human rights, thereby ensuring that the enjoyment of human rights is an inherent aspect of daily life.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The chapter outlines an overview of human rights, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and informal settlements. It is an empirical literature review aligned to specific objectives: To determine the nature of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County. To assess the influence of key factors on NGOs' effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County. To determine strategies employed by NGOs in the promotion of human rights in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County. Lastly, explore NGOs' challenges in promoting human rights in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County. In addition, the literature review identified research gaps, a theoretical review and a conceptual framework.

#### **2.2 Overview of Human Rights, NGOs, and Informal Settlements**

Human rights are essential and generally applicable entitlements, irrespective of country, race, gender, or any other attribute (Ramcharan, 2023). They are indivisible, interconnected, and interdependent and cannot be taken away or dismissed. Human rights are fundamental rights that every person is entitled to, unalienable and universal. They are defined differently in different literatures and are based on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and USAID support this legal assurance, affirming that every individual is entitled to these rights (USAID, 2016, p.6).

The European Union mandates states to adopt minority rights for membership in the 21st century. Military intervention has been utilized to safeguard them, as they are considered equivalent to

state-based security. Non-governmental organizations are now involved in discussions, as seen in the UN Human Rights Council's 2011 Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Enforcement agencies like NGO's should prioritize human rights by ensuring secure land tenure, improving infrastructure, and enhancing access to essential services to uphold dignity and equality. These actors can strive towards a more equitable and just society where 'every person's human rights are respected and protected'.

People who live in marginalized communities encounter substantial challenges especially when located in informal settlements. Such settlements typically build in developing and newly industrializing regions where population members struggle intensely to obtain proper shelter facilities and needed infrastructure alongside essential utilities. Settlements defined by illegal land occupation exist when residents maintain no legal ownership rights to the land or tenure rights and frequently encounter eviction by force. The problems faced by these communities become worse since they do not follow necessary infrastructure standards nor building codes.

The African Court effectiveness suffers due to the elimination of direct access provision because Tanzania withdrew in 2016 followed by Rwanda in 2020. Alarm exists regarding the African Court capability to manage human rights abuse cases despite this change. The court's challenges become more apparent because of Benin and Côte d'Ivoire's decision to stop participating in the optional declaration. The ability of citizens in sub-Saharan states to use the personal access mechanism to the court which handles human rights violations constitutes a fundamental requirement since its establishment in 2006. Three (3) applications came from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights while NGOs filed twelve (12) applications and individuals submitted 223 applications (De Silva, 2018).

The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 establishes the institutional and legal structure governing human rights in Kenya. Chapter 4 of the Constitution safeguards numerous fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression, media, information access, and assembly and association (Articles 33–37). However, in Kenya, the implementation of the ‘Declaration on Human Rights Defenders’ has been halted due to increased harassment and persecution of Non-governmental organizations, particularly by state actors.

Despite a vibrant civil society, defenders continue their work under minimal threat. Reprisals have become more frequent since President Uhuru Kenyatta's election in 2013, and government officials have publicly criticized defenders, contributing to a hostile climate. Judicial harassment is also common, with some human rights organizations deregistered and offices raided.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

An empirical review is a systematic approach used to evaluate the strength of evidence in a particular field of study. This study aims to replicate previous research to assess the replicability and robustness of the findings on the phenomena being studied. This study examines empirical research using an evidence-based approach to assess the influence of NGOs in advocating for and safeguarding human rights in informal urban settlements. The section provides an analysis of existing research studies that are based on specific objectives in the following sections.

### **2.4 The Nature of NGOs in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

Globally, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as indispensable actors in the architecture of human rights governance, operating in dynamic interplay with intergovernmental institutions such as the United Nations, regional human rights courts, and national human rights institutions. Their role extends far beyond service delivery; NGOs have become central to norm

diffusion, standard setting, and the operationalization of human rights frameworks at multiple levels (Smith, 2018).

The rise of transnational NGOs has paralleled the deepening of globalization, facilitating the transboundary flow of information, resources, and strategies that enable coordinated responses to rights violations across national jurisdictions. These organizations function as watchdogs, monitors, and advocates, holding states accountable for both legal and moral compliance with international human rights treaties and conventions. Through systematic reporting, shadow submissions to treaty bodies, and strategic litigation, NGOs have become instrumental in exposing violations, influencing agenda-setting, and shaping the evolution of human rights jurisprudence (United Nations, 2015).

In addition to formal advocacy, NGOs contribute significantly to grassroots empowerment by engaging in capacity-building, legal literacy campaigns, and community mobilization, especially in contexts where state institutions are absent, repressive, or complicit in rights violations. Their embeddedness within communities enables them to localize global human rights norms and amplify the voices of marginalized populations.

The institutionalization of NGO participation in global governance is reflected in the establishment of mechanisms such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and various UN treaty bodies, which regularly engage NGOs through consultative status, periodic reviews, and special rapporteurs' mandates (United Nations, 2015). This shift signifies a transformation from state-centric models of protection to multi-actor, transnational governance frameworks, where NGOs are no longer peripheral but central agents in the human rights ecosystem.

Nevertheless, this expanded role is not without critique. Scholars have raised concerns about NGO accountability, representation, and the democratic legitimacy of transnational advocacy networks (Banks et al., 2015). Moreover, the uneven distribution of resources among global and local NGOs raises questions about power asymmetries, donor-driven priorities, and the potential for disconnection from community realities. At global scale, NGOs' role in promoting and protecting human rights has evolved into a complex, multi-scalar, and often contested field of practice, requiring nuanced analysis of their strategies, constraints, and contributions within global and local arenas.

Within the African continent, NGOs have similarly gained prominence amid complex socio-political challenges, including conflicts, governance deficits, and widespread poverty. African NGOs operate in diverse contexts, from post-conflict reconciliation to combating gender-based violence and advocating for indigenous peoples' rights. However, their work is often constrained by limited financial resources, political restrictions, and sometimes hostile government attitudes toward civil society (Thompson & Tripp, 2010).

Despite these challenges, African NGOs have demonstrated resilience and innovation, often engaging in community-led approaches that resonate with local cultural contexts and mobilize grassroots participation. Regional bodies like the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights actively encourage civil society participation, recognizing NGOs as essential contributors to promoting and enforcing human rights standards across the continent (African Union, 2015).

In Kenya, the role of NGOs in human rights promotion and protection is particularly critical given the country's rapid urbanization and the proliferation of informal settlements, such as Mathare Sub-County (Mwangi, 2015; Amnesty International, 2016).

These areas face systemic challenges, including inadequate housing, poor sanitation, limited access to education and healthcare, and frequent violations of socio-economic and political rights. Kenyan NGOs operate at the intersection of these challenges, advocating for marginalized communities, providing legal aid, and implementing programs that promote social justice and equity (Mutahi, 2017). The Kenyan Constitution of 2010, with its robust Bill of Rights, provides a progressive legal framework that NGOs leverage to advance human rights protection (Government of Kenya, 2010).

However, Kenyan NGOs also navigate a complex regulatory environment, including laws such as the NGO Coordination Act and the Public Benefit Organizations Act, which can both enable and constrain their activities (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2018). Notably, community-based organizations (CBOs) and grassroots NGOs play a pivotal role in informal settlements by fostering local participation, enhancing community resilience, and bridging gaps between citizens and state institutions

Overall, NGOs remain central to advancing human rights from global to local scales, especially in contexts where state capacity is limited or compromised. Their ability to adapt strategies, mobilize communities, and advocate for systemic change underscores their indispensable role in the ongoing struggle to realize human rights for all (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015; Donnelly, 2013).

## **2.5 Key Factors Influencing NGOs in the Promotion of Human Rights**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as pivotal actors in advancing human rights, particularly in underserved urban informal settlements. Their effectiveness, however, is not automatic; it is influenced by various contextual and operational factors that shape their capacity to protect and promote rights. These include the level of trust they command within communities,

the partnerships they cultivate, financial and strategic sustainability, and responsiveness to local needs. Understanding these elements is essential in evaluating how NGOs navigate complex environments to drive transformative social change.

Globally, trust plays a foundational role in determining the impact of NGOs on human rights promotion. Fattah (2023) notes that residents in informal settlements such as Dhaka often express initial scepticism or resistance to outside organizations due to historical neglect or exploitation. However, this distrust can gradually shift toward cooperation and acceptance when NGOs prioritize participatory approaches and consistently commit to community welfare. Building long-term trust allows NGOs to implement programs effectively and foster local ownership and sustainability of interventions.

In the broader African context, NGOs frequently operate within spaces of contested authority, where traditional leadership, local government, and informal governance structures interact. In Senegal, for example, NGOs must negotiate their legitimacy across multiple power centers, which requires diplomatic tact and strategic partnerships (Fattah, 2023). Collaboration with local authorities, community-based organizations, and international actors enables NGOs to pool resources, align priorities, and avoid duplication of efforts. These partnerships serve as platforms for shared knowledge, technical expertise, and coordinated action, ultimately amplifying the reach and effectiveness of human rights initiatives.

At the community level, NGOs often work closely with grassroots actors to implement development projects to improve living conditions in informal settlements. Engaging with local leaders and community-based entities enables NGOs to contextualize their interventions, making them more culturally appropriate and locally accepted. Such collaborations help reduce vulnerabilities and improve resilience in urban slums, particularly in housing, sanitation,

education, and health service provision. Including informal leaders and community, voices strengthens social capital and ensures that projects are responsive to the most pressing community needs.

In the Kenyan context, NGOs face a series of complex and often interrelated financial challenges. Badurdeen (2023) observes that policy shifts, such as the Global Gag Rule (GGR), have significantly affected NGO funding streams. This has led to the scaling down or termination of key services, especially in the areas of reproductive health and women's rights. NGOs struggle to retain qualified staff, maintain operations, and uphold the continuity required for meaningful human rights advocacy without financial stability.

NGOs' financial sustainability in Kenya largely depends on the diversity and consistency of donor funding. Wachira (2016) emphasizes the need for robust donor relationship management and diversification of income sources to mitigate risks associated with donor withdrawal. Many NGOs are overly reliant on international donors, which makes them vulnerable to fluctuations in global political climates and economic priorities. Sustainable financial strategies, such as income-generating activities, local fundraising, and private-sector partnerships, can enhance organizational resilience and autonomy.

Government policies and internal management systems also significantly influence NGO performance. According to Karanja and Karuti (2014), NGOs must navigate a complex regulatory environment that includes registration laws, operational guidelines, and reporting requirements. Strong governance structures, transparent financial practices, and adaptive management systems are crucial for ensuring compliance and securing long-term funding. The alignment between strategic planning and operational execution determines how effectively NGOs respond to emerging human rights issues.

Strategic leadership and planning are increasingly recognized as core determinants of NGO success in Kenya. Kimani (2022) finds a direct relationship between strategic planning and organizational effectiveness in the contemporary NGO landscape. Effective leaders anticipate environmental shifts, allocate resources efficiently, and drive innovation through evidence-based decision-making. Strategic planning also enables NGOs to monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, and scale interventions that demonstrate impact.

Beyond institutional capabilities, contextual factors also shape NGO performance. Predisposition variables such as age, gender, education, and previous human rights exposure influence staff dynamics and community engagement. Additionally, demand-side factors such as the need and urgency for services shape program priorities while enabling conditions, like infrastructure, local security, and access to technology, facilitate or hinder program implementation. A detailed understanding of these factors allows NGOs to tailor their strategies for maximum relevance and impact.

The reviewed literature emphasizes the ability of NGOs to effectively promote human rights in informal settlements hinges on an intricate interplay of trust, collaboration, financial management, leadership, and contextual sensitivity. Global experiences, African regional insights, and Kenyan-specific challenges all point to the need for adaptive, inclusive, and well-resourced strategies. NGOs that invest in community relationships, strategic partnerships, and sustainable operation models are better positioned to address systemic human rights violations. Moving forward, policy support and community engagement must remain central to strengthening the role of NGOs in rights-based development.

## **2.6 Strategies Employed by NGOs in Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as indispensable actors in fortifying human rights frameworks, particularly where state institutions are weak, inaccessible, or repressive. Their role transcends basic service delivery; they act as watchdogs, advocates, and partners in shaping and reinforcing national and international human rights standards. As Nelson (2015) asserts, NGOs are instrumental in advancing the legal and moral underpinnings of human rights by applying rights-based approaches that respond to the socio-political dynamics of the communities in which they operate.

Through these approaches, NGOs empower individuals and grassroots networks to hold public authorities accountable, encouraging civic participation and promoting justice across civil, political, social, and economic domains. Furthermore, by reinforcing the rule of law and challenging impunity, NGOs help create more inclusive and equitable societies. Their ability to bridge gaps between citizens and the state strengthens institutional responsiveness and broadens the reach of democratic governance. In this way, NGOs serve as catalysts for structural transformation and localized human rights empowerment.

A key element in the strategic engagement of NGOs lies in their tailored programming that responds to local political realities while also echoing global human rights norms. These initiatives typically include legal literacy campaigns, policy advocacy, participatory governance programs, and capacity-building for marginalized populations. They also frequently support law enforcement and justice systems through community policing strategies and training programs to build mutual trust between communities and the police. For example, NGOs often facilitate dialogue forums between citizens, local law enforcement, and civil society to co-create sustainable safety models. This strategic approach fosters community ownership of safety and enhances the legitimacy of law

enforcement actors within marginalized settings. In fragile contexts, such interventions are critical for conflict prevention and addressing grievances that may otherwise escalate into violence. Therefore, NGOs help institutionalize peace and trust within communities historically neglected by formal governance structures by serving as mediators, trainers, and dialogue facilitators.

According to Schimmel (2019), NGOs can act as extensions of governmental efforts or serve as critical voices against state excesses, depending on the political climate and legal space within which they operate. When governments are unwilling or unable to protect human rights, NGOs fill the governance vacuum by implementing community-based programs, providing humanitarian aid, and promoting awareness of legal entitlements. This dual capacity to complement or contest state authority enables NGOs to maintain flexibility and responsiveness, which are often lacking in formal institutions. Nelson (2015) reinforces this perspective by highlighting how NGOs have expanded their focus over time to include a wide array of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, thereby offering holistic support to vulnerable populations. Moreover, NGOs often take on the risky but essential role of promoting dissent and challenging unjust state practices in authoritarian or post-conflict societies. This advocacy is supported by strategic alliances with international organizations and donors who can apply external pressure on repressive regimes. Consequently, NGOs play a vital balancing role in supporting state development when appropriate and resisting when necessary to uphold human dignity.

Core strategic functions of NGOs include monitoring human rights violations, documenting abuses, initiating legal proceedings, and mobilizing public opinion to press for reform. These functions are often embedded in broader advocacy campaigns that seek to influence legislation, reform judicial practices, or alter the conduct of law enforcement agencies. Freeman (2017) and Leyh (2017) emphasize NGOs' critical role in shaping international human rights law by providing

empirical evidence, expert testimonies, and shadow reports informing treaty bodies and special rapporteurs. Furthermore, these organizations enhance public consciousness through civic education programs, public forums, and media engagement, thereby nurturing a culture of rights and civic responsibility at the grassroots level. The ability to generate data and produce alternative narratives through research and field reports allows NGOs to contest state-sanctioned versions of truth, especially in contested political environments. Their watchdog function becomes even more important where democratic institutions are under threat, providing checks and balances that help sustain accountability. Hence, NGOs often blend legal, communicative, and mobilization tactics to defend and expand civic space.

Schimmel (2020) elaborates that NGOs prioritize education, training, and capacity building as integral components of their strategic arsenal. Through workshops, seminars, and continuous professional development sessions, NGOs target rights-holders and duty-bearers from community leaders and youth groups to law enforcement officers and judicial staff. These efforts contribute to a more informed citizenry and responsive administrative structure, fostering long-term social change and institutional accountability. NGOs often collaborate with academic institutions and international donors to develop context-specific training materials, policy briefs, and awareness toolkits tailored to diverse audiences. Education-focused strategies promote behavioral change, reduce stigma, and empower local actors to defend their rights. As a result, these educational strategies increase immediate knowledge and build a foundation for intergenerational shifts in rights consciousness and community resilience. Such capacity-building also enhances the operational efficiency of community-based organizations and grassroots coalitions working alongside NGOs.

In the African context, particularly in South Africa, Geoghegan (2019) provides a case study highlighting how NGOs engage in practical interventions such as coordinating meetings with provincial authorities, advocating for improved infrastructure like street lighting, and participating in police patrols. These strategies aim to enhance public safety and reduce vulnerability to crime. However, the study critiques the sustainability of such interventions, noting that many are implemented without adequate integration of community voices or long-term planning frameworks.

The lack of consistent collaboration between community members and law enforcement agencies ultimately limits the impact and scalability of these strategies. Without sustained engagement and participatory planning, many well-intentioned projects risk becoming top-down and technocratic, failing to address more profound structural inequalities. Moreover, the overreliance on donor funding and lack of institutional continuity further constrain the long-term viability of such approaches. Thus, while these efforts may yield immediate benefits, they must be embedded within broader participatory governance models to remain effective.

To improve their effectiveness, NGOs must prioritize participatory models that emphasize local communities' co-ownership of safety and human rights agendas. Sustainable strategies are those that not only address immediate concerns but also build institutional memory, local leadership, and resilience. As Geoghegan (2019) argues, lasting change requires that NGOs move beyond reactive interventions and invest in structural solutions that integrate citizen participation with state accountability mechanisms. This entails a shift toward rights-based development paradigms where communities are not just recipients but active agents of change. Enhancing community agency ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate, context-specific, and rooted in the lived realities of local populations. In doing so, NGOs can cultivate a sense of ownership and legitimacy

among beneficiaries, thereby increasing the durability of their initiatives. Therefore, long-term impact is likely when NGOs design and implement strategies collaboratively with those whose rights they seek to protect.

In sum, the strategies adopted by NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights are diverse and context-dependent yet unified by a rights-based framework that emphasizes empowerment, accountability, and systemic transformation. Whether through litigation, policy advocacy, civic education, or community engagement, NGOs remain vital actors in the global and local pursuit of justice. Their ability to navigate complex socio-political landscapes, forge multi-stakeholder alliances, and mobilize local and international resources underlines their indispensable role in contemporary human rights work. Importantly, their strategies must be adaptive, inclusive, and reflective of the voices of those most affected by human rights violations. As the global human rights agenda evolves, NGOs must remain agile and innovative, balancing advocacy with pragmatism to ensure their efforts translate into meaningful, lasting change.

## **2.7 Challenges Facing NGOs in The Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), essential components of civil society, oversee a diverse array of operations and face many management difficulties, both internally and outside (Bromideh, 2011). NGOs encounter internal obstacles in managing human resources, finances, and organizational structures. Additionally, they must navigate external factors such as registration processes, collaborations with other NGOs, engagement with commercial sectors and government entities, worldwide expansion, and the impact of financial crises. Thuku (2021) found many obstacles encountered by Non-governmental organizations in community policing, such as a shortage of trust, collaboration, and resources. Thuku (2021) suggests that resource availability might greatly enhance NGOs' effectiveness in this domain in Kenya.

Despite notable progress in development, Bangladesh continues to grapple with profound poverty, which poses the greatest hindrance to realizing human rights (Hossain, 2013). Human Rights Non-governmental organizations in a country comply with universal human rights principles; however, their comprehension of these rights is influenced by the specific institutional and national contexts in which they operate (Noh, 2016).

In Bangladesh, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to human rights actively conduct legal awareness campaigns and provide aid, education, and protection for human rights. They highlight marginalized persons who face poverty, discrimination, and hardship. The occurrence of extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances in Bangladesh is a grave violation of human rights. Human rights NGOs attempt to raise awareness of these issues via regularly published reports to provoke strong opposition to these violations (Rana & Islam, 2021). Nevertheless, HR NGOs face substantial barriers to effectively executing their operations.

Otieno (2016) highlights that NGO challenges in Kenya include insufficient financial resources and the community's attitude and reading competency. A significant proportion of participants (47.1%) agreed that the engagement of NGOs and CBOs had enhanced service delivery in the settlement. Nonetheless, the people of the community and officials from the collaborating organizations collectively concurred that substantial efforts are necessary to enhance the quality of life in other informal settlements within Kisumu County.

The collaboration with various entities, including NGOs, government, corporates, funding organizations, and community-based organizations, offers valuable insights into the challenges, possibilities, and dynamics of these partnerships. KNCHR reports that human rights defenders face impunity and lack of redress. The Committee Against Torture highlighted the lack of measures to

prevent and punish harassment, intimidation, and violence against them, including the deaths of Hassan Ali Guyo in 2013 and John Kituyi in 2015.

Chaney (2022) highlights the ongoing oppression of human rights defenders in South Asia, including threats, violence, and homicide. Government-imposed restrictions restrict freedom of association and speech, primarily targeting women. The increasing implementation of restrictive laws threatens democracy and requires immediate changes. Kiplagat and Kipkoech (2020) argue that NGOs face challenges like insufficient financial resources, lack of commitment from parties, state opposition, and the complex nature of lengthy conflicts. Further, Kimani (2022) indicated that several favoured tactics included drama, movies, debates, and case studies. These strategies considerably impacted the efficiency of human rights teaching programs in Kenyan secondary schools.

## **2.8 Research Gaps**

Related literature studied how NGOs affect human rights promotion and protection in Kenya and Mathare sub-county particularly so more studies need to assess this phenomenon. The present study filled the gaps regarding Human rights by examining the major operational factors and strategic dynamics while evaluating the difficulties faced by NGOs in their activities. This research evaluated how NGOs protect human rights when working in informal urban areas of Mathare sub-county. The literature assessment shows many worldwide studies that omit specific investigation of this subject in Kenyan conditions.

This research project investigates human rights activities of NGOs working in Mathare sub-county who protect human rights in Kenyan informal settlements. Past research on this matter delivered inconsistent findings which demonstrates that multiple research approaches should study this issue. This research utilized a descriptive survey design to analyze the impact of human rights

NGOs on human rights promotion and protection in the Mathare sub-county. This research adopted systems theory to analyze human rights NGOs' influence when promoting and defending human rights within Mathare sub-county area of Nairobi County, Kenya.

## **2.9 Theoretical Review**

The theoretical framework in research is crucial for understanding complex social issues and provides a foundation for analyzing phenomena. This study examined the influence of NGOs on promoting and protecting human rights in informal settlements. The systems theory was employed to provide insights into the structural dynamics of human rights engagement and the socio-environmental conditions that influence rights violations and enforcement. These theories are applied to critically examine organizational interactions within the human rights ecosystem and the micro-level conditions that shape community-level responses and vulnerabilities.

### **2.9.1 Systems Theory**

Ludwig von Bertalanffy created systems theory in the 1940s to address the increasing complexity of global concerns. All phenomena are conceptualized as systems of relationships among constituents (Bertalanffy, 1968). A system is a collection of interrelated components collaborating to accomplish a certain objective, such as the cosmos or an entire organism (Petricca et al., 2018). To empower vulnerable groups living in informal urban areas it is essential to understand the connections between family, education, religion and the legal system and governmental institutions. The framework of systems theory suggests human conduct possesses goals since its theory adopts universal social system structures which continually generate new development. Social organizations operate with internal systems which create a method to understand intricate social networks. The basis for empowering vulnerable groups comes from system theory which generates both strategies and activities.

According to Montuori (2011), systems theory identifies how systems need their administrators to implement social policies that target marginalized communities. According to systems theory, a system boundary exists that contains both environmental factors and essential operational resources, which produce measurable effects through specific operations.

Therefore, systems theory is a crucial notion for solving decision challenges in adaptive and complex systems. It helps organizations manage system-related issues in informal urban settings, and human rights organizations achieve success by formulating adaptive intervention strategies that align with the socio-political environment and cultural factors. Settlements exhibit indeterminable functional relationships linking causes with effects.

The study of systems theory looks at temporal organizational processes and their dependent relations to maintain steady operations of larger organizational units. Human rights NGOs, working with other systems, make up a larger social structure that includes governments and international organizations. Their feedback mechanisms, coupled with adaptive processes, facilitate the transformation of systems, resulting in significant societal transformations. Non-governmental organizations locate system weaknesses while uniting stakeholders with needed assistance to support cooperation between organizations, focus on problems, and enhance human rights protection effectiveness.

The Systems theory demonstrated how NGOs promote human rights in informal urban settlements through system navigation, cooperative initiatives to address challenges, community empowerment, constructive transformation support, and sanitary improvements for settlement integration in Mathare sub-county.

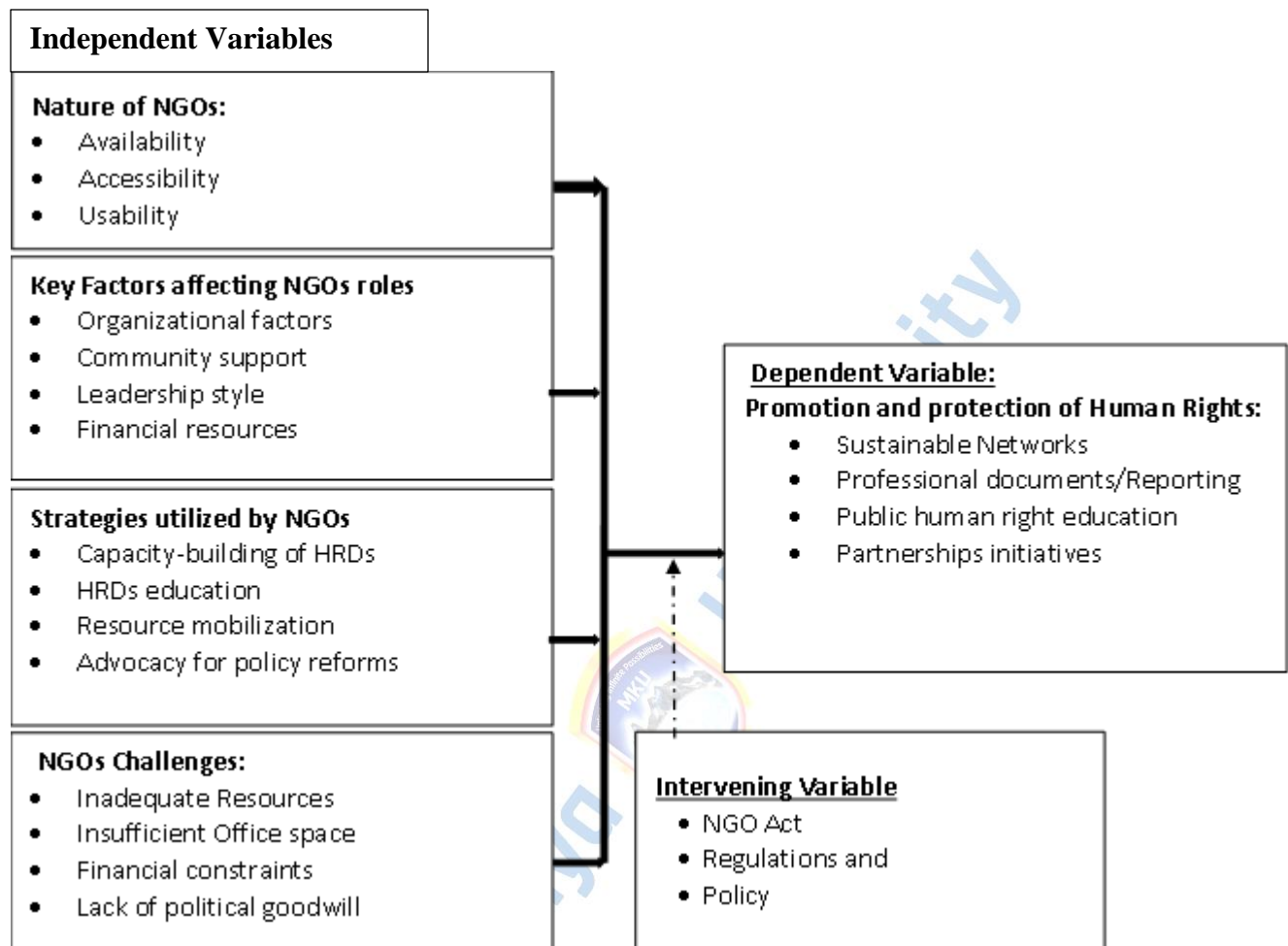
Therefore, the systems theory provided a systematic understanding of how NGOs functions through unified operations while explaining well how informal settlements interact. The systems

theory assessed how NGOs operate through a network of relationships which include various processes and subsystems in combination with their social, economic and political systems. The particular context presents informal settlements as an outstanding research landscape which enables clear observation of urban informal effects.

The study proves that social regulations and community involvement create essential foundations for safe living spaces in informal settlements. The statement demonstrates the importance of human rights protection through its emphasis on NGO and community-based collaboration for successful problem addressing while advocating a comprehensive method. This research evaluated the connection systems theory and NGOs influence in protecting human rights within informal settlements of Mathare sub-county in Kenya.

### **2.10 Conceptual Framework**

The study variables are connected and visually presented (Kumar, 2018).



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

*Source: Modified Concepts from Theory and Literature*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines 'research design, study site, target population, sampling techniques, sample size determination, research instruments, reliability and validity, data collection procedures, data analysis plan and ethical considerations'.

#### **3.2 Research Methodology**

The study methodology provided a blueprint plan that clearly outlined the research design, including its objectives, methods, instruments, and anticipated outcomes. The methodology also guided research approaches that employed a mixed-method approach to investigate the phenomena by integrating quantitative and qualitative data.

Further, the approach guided the design of research tools and the methods for data collection. It also explained how to analyze data by looking at descriptive data and theme analysis separately but then bringing them together to compare and contrast the study's results. The design integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches, enhancing the research experience.

The NGO personnel were evaluated using a questionnaire, while key informants were assessed using an interview method to gather in-depth views about the subject matter. This multimodal approach guaranteed a thorough comprehension of the issue, rendering the findings solid and pertinent in investigating the influence of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in urban informal settlements in Mathare sub-county Nairobi County.

#### **3.3 Research Design**

This research used a descriptive survey approach to get a better understanding of the population and the phenomena being examined. Research design is a systematic framework used in the application of research, it serves as a blueprint for conducting the research goals (Devi, 2017). Creswell (2014) characterizes research designs as categories of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and blended techniques, offering explicit direction on research procedures. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that descriptive survey designs use questionnaires and interview schedules to examine the phenomena under issue.

This research used a descriptive survey approach to get a better understanding of the population and the phenomena being examined. This research use both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to collect data. Consequently, the design was appropriate for comprehending the impact of NGOs on the promotion and protection of human rights in Mathare Sub County.

### **3.4 Study Site**

Kumar (2018) defines a research site as a geographically bounded area inhabited by a population of interest, often sharing specific socio-economic and environmental characteristics. In this study, Mathare Sub-County in Nairobi County was selected as the research site due to its high concentration of informal settlements and the active presence of human rights NGOs.

Mathare comprises six administrative wards, including Mabatini, Hospital, Huruma, Kiamaiiko, Mlango Kubwa, and Ngei, which collectively contain 34 administrative villages. As one of Nairobi's oldest informal settlements, Mathare is characterized by dense population growth, inadequate infrastructure, and chronic socio-economic deprivation. The area has long struggled with insecurity, including frequent incidents of burglary, armed robbery, and looting, which have contributed to its reputation as a high-risk environment (Thuku, 2021).

Amidst these challenges, a number of NGOs have emerged in Mathare, focused initially on resisting land grabs and forced evictions. Over time, their mandates have broadened to address six key areas: land rights protection, action-based research, community safety, reproductive health, government accountability, and creative arts for development. These NGOs now function as critical social hubs where activists, community members, and artists converge to support one another, organize protests, and advocate for justice.

Notably, many of these NGOs are youth-led, driven by the passion of young community members who seek to advance social justice and challenge structural inequality. However, persistent threats of retaliation and violence have made advocacy work highly precarious, often deterring open expression and civic engagement.

Understanding the organization, operational frameworks, and the structure of these NGOs, whether reliant on volunteers or staffed by professionals, was crucial for assessing their efficacy. The study emphasized that NGOs in Mathare are not only service providers but also movement defenders of human rights operating from within urban informal settlements. Therefore, evaluating their effectiveness is crucial for informing policy, strengthening local governance, and promoting human dignity and rights in contexts of marginalization.

### **3.5 Target Population**

Cooper and Schindler (2014) describe a population as the collection of elements from which conclusions are drawn through inference. The target population denotes the whole group of persons with identical characteristics that captivate the researcher's consideration. In this study, the target population included all human rights NGOs operating in Mathare sub-county. The NGO board reported 6,938 recognized local NGOs in Kenya and 3,334 registered NGOs in Nairobi, with 770 currently operating in the city, including local, regional, and international NGOs (NGO board,

2017). This research included all 87 officially registered human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Mathare Sub County.

### **3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

Eighty-seven non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Mathare sub-county were selected for this research based on a sample size calculation following Yamane (1967). This is an indication of the study's sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n is the sample size

N is the size of the population

e is the margin error (5%)'

Hence,

$$n = 87 \div 1 + 87(0.05)^2$$

$$n = 71 \text{ NGO members}$$

Further, the study used 10% to 87%, as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), to select a sample size of critical informants from 9 human rights NGO managers was interviewed.

Hence, the total sample size was 80 human rights defenders. The study employed a simple random sampling technique to select NGOs and a purposive sampling technique to identify and recruit key informants with Mathare sub county, Kenya.

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

Data was gathered through questionnaires and interviews with key informants for this study.

### **3.7.1 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is utilized to collect data from a sample using predetermined questions. The research employed a semi-structured questionnaire with predetermined answer options using a 5-point Likert scale. This approach facilitates coding and analysis but may restrict participants' views. Further, open-ended questions allowed for insights and in-depth information from the respondents.

### **3.7.2 Key Informants Interviews**

For qualitative data collection, in-depth interviews were conducted with administrative officials (Managers) working in NGOs in Mathare Sub County. These individuals served as key informants. The interview guide featured open-ended questions to enable respondents to express their views, experiences, and viewpoints about the nine human rights NGO managers interviewed.

## **3.8 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments**

The study instruments were pretested to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Validity refers to the extent to which the instruments accurately measure what they are intended to measure, ensuring that the data collected truly reflects the research objectives. Reliability, on the other hand, pertains to the consistency and stability of the instruments over time, indicating the degree to which the same results can be obtained under similar conditions. Pretesting allowed for the identification and correction of ambiguities, thereby strengthening the overall quality and trustworthiness of the data collection tools used in this study.

### **3.8.1 Validity of Instruments**

Validity is the extent to which a specific instrument accurately measures the intended construct in research. The research used expert judgment to assess the validity of the instruments, namely their accuracy in measuring the targeted outcomes, as Bajpai et al. (2014) recommended. Therefore, in

this study, a group of experts thoroughly assessed content validity. In addition, the researcher verified that the facial content of the instrument is congruent with the specified goals and is both relevant and logical for the study's participants.

### **3.8.2 Reliability of Instruments**

A reliable instrument accurately measures the stated output. The study used a reliability scale to assess the instruments using a consistency test, mainly by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficients, a statistical measure widely employed in social sciences, as Taber (2018) describes. The Cronbach alpha coefficients range from  $\pm 1$ . Taber (2018) highlights the significance of achieving a Cronbach's alpha estimate of 0.70 or above for the internal consistency of the items. This threshold implied that the instruments used in the research are reliable and trustworthy in drawing inferences.

### **3.9 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher received an introduction letter from Mount Kenya University and obtained research license from NACOSTI prior to data collection. Then, the researcher scheduled an appointment with Mathare sub-county authorities to sought permission for data collection. The researcher used a Key Informant Interview (KII) method to engage with manager of NGOs and conducted interviews by posing questions. The KII was conducted for 20-30 minutes to allow respondents ample time to answer all questions. Further, the study self-administered questionnaires to NGO staff. A drop-and-pick approach allowed respondents to respond to all questions.

### **3.10 Data Analysis Plan**

Blumberg et al. (2014) define data analysis as a process involving the verification of collected data, identification of patterns, application of statistical tools, and development of summaries to derive meaningful conclusions.

In this study, descriptive statistics were applied to analyze quantitative data obtained from closed-ended questionnaires. This approach facilitated the assessment of the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting and protecting human rights within Mathare Sub-County. Measures such as frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation) were computed to summarize participant responses. These statistical outputs provided a clear understanding of trends and distributions in the responses regarding NGO interventions.

For qualitative data, key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted, and the responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involved organizing and interpreting the data by identifying, summarizing, and categorizing recurring themes, trends, and patterns that emerged from participant narratives. The qualitative findings were presented in detailed narrative form to capture the depth and context of respondent perspectives. Thematic coding was applied manually and supported by insights from existing literature to validate emergent issues. This allowed the study to illuminate complex, nuanced factors influencing NGO roles that may not have been captured through quantitative data alone.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings. This combination allowed for triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and depth of the analysis regarding the role and effectiveness of NGOs in advancing human rights in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County. The integration of these two datasets enabled the researcher to cross-validate information, reducing biases inherent in single-method approaches. Consequently, the findings present a more holistic and credible depiction of the contributions, challenges, and community perceptions of NGOs operating in informal settlements.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical research standards, respecting respondents' confidentiality and ensuring no disclosure of their details outside the study's context. Informal consent was obtained before data collection, during which participants were informed and explained the purpose of the study.

Data was collected through interview guide and questionnaires and was only used for scholarly purposes. The study addressed bias, discrimination, data falsification, plagiarism, and conflicts of interest. Further, proper citation of sources should be maintained, and respondents' identities was anonymised. The data was gathered and evaluated using suitable procedures from a sample of respondents.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter provided a data analysis of the study, interpretations, and discussion of the previous findings to juxtapose with current research. The data analysis was aligned with the study's objectives. The study examined the nature of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights and identified key factors that influence human right NGOs effectiveness. In addition, the challenges encountered by NGOs promoting and protecting for human rights, and the strategies employed by human rights NGOs in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County.

#### 4.2 Return Rate

The response rate is the percentage of actual individuals who respond to a survey. It indicates the quality of the data and is a crucial measure of the number of respondents who complete and return a survey (Baruch,1999). A return rate of over 70% is considered representative, setting a high bar for quality data collection.

A return rate above 50% is deemed acceptable, an indication that the researcher had a solid foundation with participants. In this study, the overall return rate of 92% met the thresholds of 70% and above for both instruments, which demonstrated that the obtained data met the required standards to draw meaningful inferences. The study's return rate was presented in Table 4.1

**Table 4.1: Instruments Return Rate**

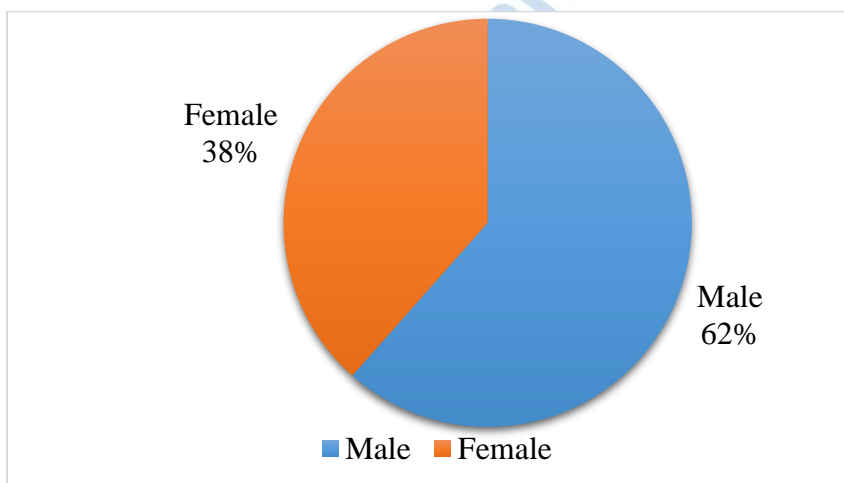
<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Administered</b>	<b>Returned</b>	<b>Return rate</b>
NGO staff	Questionnaires	80	65	81%
NGO managers	Interviews	100	100	100%
<b>Total</b>		<b>180</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>92%</b>

### 4.3 Demographic Information

The study aimed to identify demographic factors to enhance the analysis of results and illustrate how the traits of sample members influence research findings, as mentioned by Creswell (2014). The study focused on age distribution, gender representation, and educational backgrounds of participants, the work experience to understand precisely what influences NGO human rights protection efforts across Mathare Sub County. The study captured the essence of the target population and provided findings that depict greater analytical significance and a deeper insight into the phenomena being examined.

#### 4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

Gender is crucial in understanding human rights concerns and their impact on NGOs' effectiveness. Gender roles and expectations influence people's experiences, requirements, and vulnerabilities, including access to education, healthcare, and protection from assault. To explore these distinctions supports acknowledging gender-specific issues and guarantees inclusive NGO initiatives. The gathered data was computed and demonstrated in *Figure 4.1*.



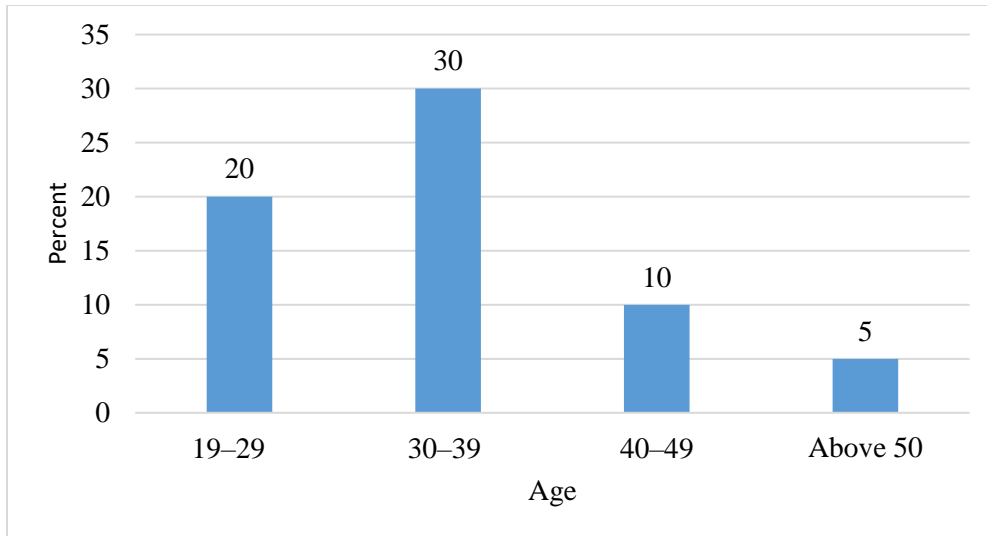
### **Figure 4.1: Gender of the Respondents**

Figure 4.1 showed that 62% of the participants were male, while 38% were female across Mathare Sub-County. This indicated a gender imbalance in participation, which may have influenced perspectives on safety and reporting experiences captured in the study. The study's findings were corroborated by Kumar (2018), who indicated that male participants exceeded female participants, mirroring gender patterns evident in companies and communities. The cultural and social context of Mathare Sub-County has fostered gender disparities, as traditional male dominance intersects with men's enhanced access to human rights financing and resources (Thuku, 2021).

Research by Creswell and Poth (2018) proves how equitably distributing participants by gender provides understanding regarding human rights advocacy practices of Mathare NGOs in their work against forced evictions along with political accountability and land grabbing conflicts. The method allows better examination of the work activities which leads to more resilient and complete results. Diverse gender representation within the study increases the comprehension of barriers that human rights-promoting NGOs experience when operating in Mathare Sub County.

### **4.3.2 Age of the Respondents**

The age factor is crucial for understanding human rights perspectives and NGOs' roles in informal settlements. Age-related data helps identify NGO interventions for specific age demographics, identifying vulnerabilities within age differences to provide insights for designing inclusive policies and programs among NGOs for human rights in Mathare Sub-county. The obtained results from respondents are depicted in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2: Age of the Respondents**

Figure 4.2 demonstrated that the majority of respondents engaged in NGO-led human rights programs in Mathare Sub-County were aged between 30 and 39 years, representing the largest segment of the sample. Respondents aged 19–29 accounted for 20% of the total, while only 10% fell within the 40–49 age bracket, and a minimal 5% were above 50 years. Notably, 50% of the participants were within the 19–39 age range, highlighting significant youth engagement in human rights initiatives.

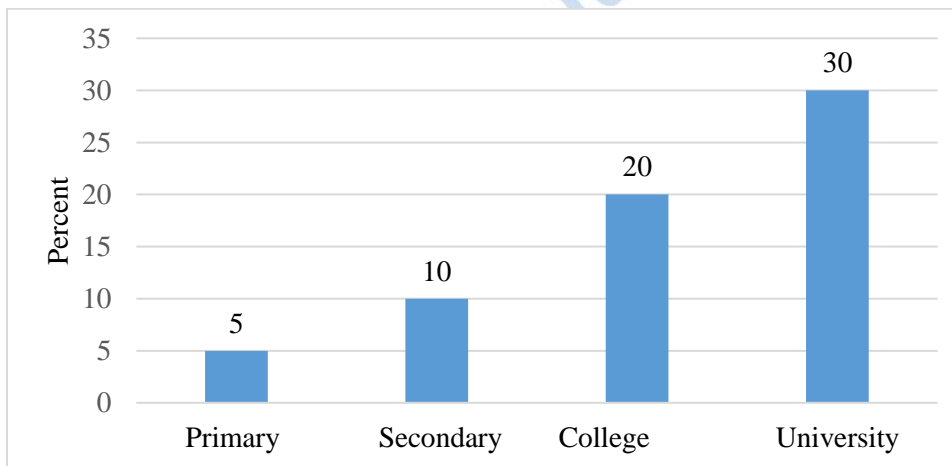
This trend suggested a generational shift in civic participation, where young adults are emerging as the primary drivers of NGO-supported advocacy. The findings align with increased digital activism and heightened awareness through social media platforms, which have amplified youth involvement in socio-political discourses. Moreover, the data reflected an evolving demographic landscape in which youth occupy a central role in shaping human rights narratives and interventions in Mathare Sub-County.

Thuku (2021) supports this discovery that NGO initiatives driven from informal settlements primarily emerge from members below forty years of age, which positions them as primary activists.

The minority of NGOs human rights aged 40 and above indicated different levels of human rights commitment within successive generations of Mathare residents. The findings suggested that NGO participation rates may decrease primarily due to experiential differences and limited resources since older community members may avoid NGO activities because of family obligations and unstable financial situations. The age composition of study participants affects their dedication to human rights advocacy and their viewpoints and strategies for regional rights advancement in Mathare Sub-County.

### 4.3.3 Highest Education Level of the Respondents

Education plays a significant role in sharpening different aspects of development, such as social, economic, cultural, human rights, and access to justice. The study sought to assess the education level of NGOs' human rights in Mathare sub County. The assessment included primary, secondary, college, and university education among NGOs' human rights. The obtained data is summarized in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.3: Education of the Respondents**

Figure 4.3 demonstrated that majority of NGOs' human rights members had university, college, secondary, and primary school education levels, at 30%, 20%, 10%, and 5%, respectively in Mathare sub-county. The results revealed that half of the human rights members had university

and college-level education, comprising 50% of the study group. The results indicated that half of NGOs human rights members were well educated, understood the laws, and were empowered to create awareness of human rights values in urban informal settlements in Mathare sub-county.

The findings suggested that the advanced educational background of such human rights personnel relates to the specialized capabilities needed for NGO work in the area. Higher education levels maintain consistency with Kumar (2018) because knowledgeable individuals tend to pursue social justice remedies because they discern rights and governance systems. A study by Bajpai et al. (2014) established that educated populations develop better familiarity with human rights concerns, stimulating more substantial participation in human rights campaigns.

Educational attainment influences NGO advocacy because those with primary or secondary education only represent 15% of participants combined. The results depicted education gaps for some NGOs human rights members, nevertheless, education remains essential for activism globally. Further, the low level of educational attainment of NGOs human rights members was attributed to low economic status, limited access to education resources, and local community beliefs hinder formal education opportunities. This is an indication that NGOs should enhance their educational outreach methods by training more members from all educational levels in Mathare sub county, Nairobi.

#### **4.3.4 Work Experience of the Respondents**

The study sought the work experience of NGO members to understand to which extent their work experience influences the effectiveness of NGOs' Human rights in promoting and protecting human rights in urban informal settlements in Mathare sub-county. The obtained results are tabulated in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Work Experience of NGOs Members**

<b>Work experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Below 5 years	40	61.5
Above 5 years	25	38.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.2 indicated that around 62% of NGO professionals involved in human rights activities in Mathare Sub-County has fewer than five years of field experience. The data suggested that most NGOs personnel were in the initial phases of their professional growth, potentially constraining their contextual comprehension and ability to address the complex and deeply ingrained human rights issues in informal settlements.

The prevalence of inexperienced staff may indicate elevated turnover rates, short-lived project funding cycles, or insufficient investment in long-term capacity development within NGOs in the region. These findings underscore a possible deficiency in institutional memory and strategy continuity, which may influence the longevity and efficacy of rights-based initiatives. The findings highlight a significant gap in institutional memory and capacity development, underscoring the need for structured mentorship programs and continuous professional training to enhance rights-based advocacy and service delivery competencies.

A smaller proportion of NGO human rights workers demonstrated more extensive professional experience, having served more than five years in Mathare Sub-County. These individuals likely offer valuable institutional knowledge and practical insight into human rights work's operational and socio-political dynamics in urban informal settlements. However, their minority status implies limited mentorship opportunities and restricted peer-to-peer knowledge transfer within

organizations. This imbalance between novice and seasoned professionals presents both a challenge and an opportunity for NGOs to invest in capacity building strategically.

The findings align with previous empirical research by Uddin (2023), Chaney (2022), and Forst (2018), which collectively noted that human rights NGOs operating in high-risk urban settings like Mathare are frequently exposed to multiple forms of violence, psychological, emotional, and physical, including instances of torture, arbitrary detention, and inhumane treatment. These studies emphasized that the degree to which such experiences affect NGO personnel often varies with the level of professional experience; less experienced staff may be more vulnerable to trauma and professional burnout due to limited coping strategies and unfamiliarity with risk mitigation protocols.

Furthermore, consistent with Forst (2018), the current study confirms that NGO staff in informal settlements operate in hostile environments where they may face threats of arrest, harassment, and surveillance. Organizations are susceptible to public backlash, license revocation, and office raids. These external pressures compound NGOs' operational difficulties and highlight the urgent need for protective legal frameworks, psychosocial support systems, and advocacy training to fortify personnel resilience.

The study findings underscore the importance of developing a well-supported and experienced human rights workforce, particularly in vulnerable urban areas such as Mathare. Strengthening the professional experience of NGO staff through targeted mentorship, training, and institutional support could significantly improve the sustainability and impact of human rights advocacy in informal settlements.

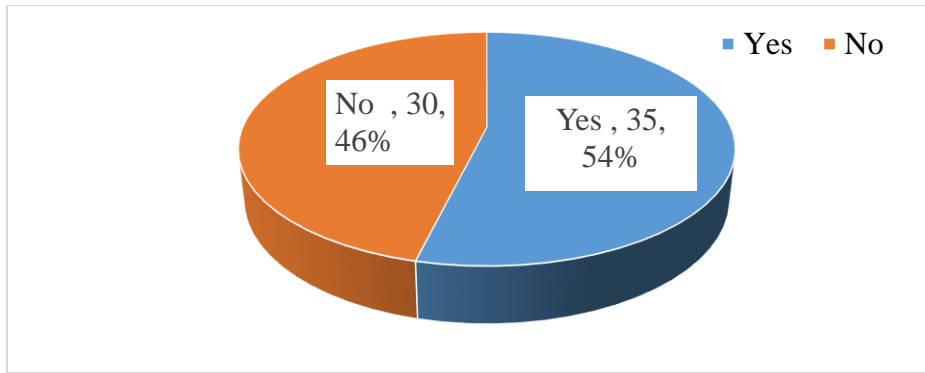
#### **4.4 Nature of Human Rights and Promoting and Protecting of Human Rights**

The study provided analysis of the nature of human rights and highlights the active protection of these rights by NGOs in Mathare Sub County. According to Devi (2017), NGOs comprise the universal entitlement base to fundamental protections and freedoms regardless of their social position or background. Further, protect human dignity and ensuring social equity demands these fundamental rights to justice and protection against violence and education.

The human rights violations affecting Mathare's marginalized communities are primarily addressed through NGOs in this settlement area (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Non-profit entities work to create community empowerment through policy transformation, legal representation, and mobilization activities, which build the local population's capacity to assert their rights. This study assessed how well these methods, strategies, function to advance human rights in Mathare sub county.

##### **4.4.1 Awareness of Human Right NGOs**

Awareness of NGOs in urban informal settlements is essential for people to comprehend the resources and programs available for the promotion and protection of their rights. It enables citizens to pursue assistance, engage in initiatives, and demand accountability from NGOs. Awareness connects community needs with resources, promoting involvement and facilitating social change. The study sought to assess NGOs awareness of human rights in Mathare Sub-County, see Figure 4.4.



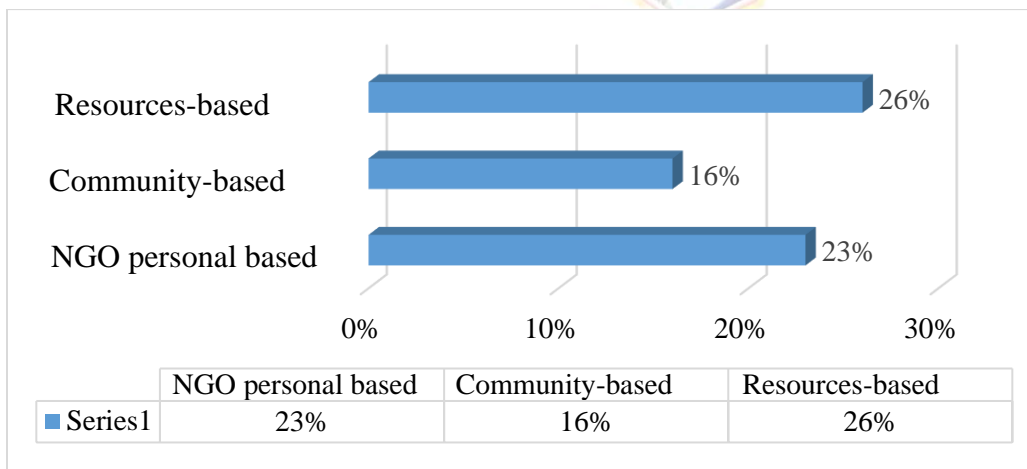
**Figure 4.4: Awareness of Human Rights NGOs**

Figure 4.4 demonstrated that 54% of respondents recognized the existence and activities of human rights NGOs in Mathare Sub-County, whilst 46% indicated a lack of awareness. The findings indicated a considerable degree of community awareness of the existence and operations of such groups.

The nearly equal distribution of awareness indicated that despite the physical presence of NGOs, outreach and visibility initiatives may not be consistently effective throughout the sub-county. This lack of information may impede community engagement, restrict access to accessible resources, and diminish the overall effectiveness of human rights advocacy.

The findings highlighted the necessity for enhanced community involvement tactics, encompassing localized communication, public awareness campaigns, and collaboration with grassroots entities to augment NGO visibility and significance. Nonetheless, some respondents remain unaware of these important organizations in urban informal settlements in Mathare Sub County. Awareness is essential for NGOs because it defines how well people in communities gain access to services, join advocacy activities, and obtain human rights protections (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data shows that NGOs have achieved some success in becoming more noticeable with an indication that marginal communities in Mathare requires more vigorous outreach and information-based education programs.

The vast difference in awareness levels exists primarily because of limited communication pathways and extensive organizational and geographic dispersion. According to Thuku (2021), NGOs encounter obstacles in Mathare's formal settlement area because this space consists of complicated economic networks and informal housing structures, which hinders their ability to spread information efficiently through limited resources and complicated delivery methods. According to Kumar (2018), NGO outreach programs often fail to connect with all community segments because high-risk zones produce two challenges: social stigma and fear of organization retaliation. Organizations that play a vital role often fail to achieve their highest community service potential. The effectiveness of these NGOs will increase substantially when they use focused public awareness strategies combined with community leader partnerships and digital media outreach to enhance regional participation. The data on nature of NGOs was computed and portrayed in Figure 4.5



**Figure 4.5:**

### Nature of Human Rights NGOs

Figure 4.5 demonstrated the various types of NGOs operating in Mathare Sub County that protect human rights. Public feedback from Figure 4.5 revealed that resources-based NGOs received a 26% response rate, 16% identified them as community-based, and 23% chose NGO personal-based

as their selection. Human rights NGOs employ different organizational approaches to address problems in Mathare's community through distinct methods that extend human rights protection. The 26% of NGOs in the resources-based category underscores how external funding and partnership networks support non-profit sustainability. Organizations that need sponsored funds must maintain relationships with donors while seeking backing from international organizations and receiving governmental funding, which creates potential operational and strategic influences. Financial backing serves as the primary focus for resource-based NGOs who excel at implementing human rights advocacy as well as policy reforms and education programs, as noted by Blumberg et al. (2014). Community-based NGOs utilize 16% of their operations to build effective grassroots programs that actively engage local community members in decision-making. According to Kumar (2018), communities usually lead local organizations and display profound sensitivity to neighbourhood problems and requirements. From 23% of NGOs, it can be seen that personal-based organizations utilize motivated activists, leaders, and volunteers who make a dedicated effort to advance human rights through their actual commitment.

The multiple models showcase the intricate dimensions of human rights activism in Mathare because NGOs must handle resource limitations, community requirements, and individual performance elements to generate meaningful change. Understanding human rights advocacy requires functional diversity among NGOs, according to Creswell and Poth (2018).

The challenge lies in bridging operational gaps between resource-based NGO models and community-based and personal-based counterparts to maximize collective benefits through their combined efforts. Stakeholders with different operational models better connect their resources to promote and defend human rights in Mathare as an urban informal settlement community.

The study sought information from human rights NGO members regarding the nature of NGOs operating in Mathare sub-county. The obtained data is presented in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Nature of NGOs that Promote Human Rights**

<b>Nature of NGOs that promote human rights</b>	<b>‘Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree(5)’</b>
NGOs assume social welfare traits.	5(8%)	10(15%)	5(8%)	20(31%)	25(38%)
NGOs are preventive	4(6%)	10(15%)	5(8%)	32(49%)	14(22%)
NGOs are community policing.	5(8%)	8(12%)	2(3%)	20(31%)	30(46%)
NGOs are community-based	2(3%)	9(14%)	14(20%)	15(23%)	25(39%)
NGOs are technology-based	22(34%)	14(22%)	10(15%)	15(23%)	4(6%)
NGOs are faith-based	10(15%)	30(46%)	10(15%)	5(8%)	10(15%)

Table 4.3 showed the distribution of responses of Human rights NGOs in relation to nature of business operations in the promotion and protection of human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County. The majority of human rights members at 69% affirmed that NGOs in Mathare display social welfare characteristics because they deliver crucial services to disadvantaged groups. According to study 71% of human rights members acknowledged that NGOs pursue advanced preventative methods to handle human rights matters. All NGOs share preventive action as a core function because they use advocacy alongside education and community engagement to combat human rights breaches (Blumberg et al., 2014). Kumar (2018) demonstrated that the

essential role that NGOs play in solving social problems that affect marginalized populations. The divergence in how people view NGO involvement in welfare activities became noticeable through the answers of 23% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Perceptions vary regarding preventive measures in NGOs, as reflected by the 21% who did not agree with this assessment. Resource constraints and organizational priorities explain this variation.

The study indicated that 77% of study participants endorsed NGOs' community protection work in Mathare sub county. NGO involvement in security establishments has achieved a high response rate because informal settlement safety demands community-centered law enforcement approaches (Devi, 2017). A significant portion of participants (20%) shared concerns about NGO implementation of community policing in the region either reluctantly or outright. According to 62% of survey respondents, the local population receives essential human rights education through NGO community-based sensitization efforts.

The majority of stakeholders, 56 percent, disagreed with NGO technology orientation due to barriers to adopting up-to-date outreach and advocacy solutions. The data demonstrates that although some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are integrating technological solutions into their activities, most NGOs continue using conventional methods for community outreach.

Further, the study showed that 61 percent of participants did not agree or strongly disagreed with the notion that NGOs in Mathare lack faith-based components. The findings are in tandem with Cooper and Schindler (2014); human rights NGOs in Mathare sub-county operate without religious affiliations, utilizing various organizational frameworks to address various human rights problems.

In interviews with managers of human rights NGOs, it became apparent that most of these organizations are *"community-based and focused on the social empowerment of marginalized*

groups," particularly those in urban informal settlements. Some managers indicated that "NGOs leverage technology to promote digital literacy." However, NGOs face challenges due to limited resources in Mathare Sub County. The insights gathered from human rights NGO managers were consistent with those from the members of these organizations.

#### 4.5 Key Factors Influencing NGOs in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights

Key factors such as social, economic, and political variables influence the effectiveness of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting and protecting human rights, especially in marginalized regions. The activities of NGOs may be either facilitated or obstructed by social variables, such as cultural norms and community awareness. NGOs' capacity to implement initiatives is directly impacted by economic factors, including the availability of funding and financial stability. The operational landscape is significantly influenced by political elements, including governmental policies and legal structures. Advocacy may be improved by supportive political frameworks; however, restrictive policies or intervention may present challenges.

The study sought information from Human rights NGOs to comprehend how these factors influence human rights NGOs in promoting and protecting rights in urban informal settlements in Mathare sub-county, see results are computed in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Key Factors Influencing NGOs in the Promotion Human Rights**

<b>Key factors influencing NGOs in promoting human rights</b>	<b>'Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree(5)'</b>
<b>Social factors</b>					
Community attitude towards NGOs	14(22%)	8(12%)	15(23%)	20(31%)	8(12%)
Trust and stakeholder engagement	16(25%)	21(32%)	13(20%)	10(15%)	5(8%)
Social conditions hinder operations.	8(12%)	12(18%)	15(23%)	23(35%)	7(11%)
<b>Economic factors</b>					

Access to financial sources & donor	10(15%)	15(23%)	5(8%)	25(38%)	10(15%)
Sources of income and services	3(5%)	7(11%)	14(22%)	30(46%)	11(17%)
Access to financial services	4(6%)	6(9%)	12(18%)	35(54%)	18(12%)
<b>Political factors</b>					
Partnership and cooperation	6(9%)	9(14%)	6(9%)	25(38%)	17(29%)
Physical destruction	7(11%)	11(17%)	10(15%)	16(25%)	21(32%)
Predisposition factors	9(14%)	14(22%)	8(12%)	20(31%)	14(22%)

Table 4.4 illustrated that social, economic, and political variables influence the activities of human rights NGOs, particularly in human rights advocacy within Mathare Sub County of Nairobi. The results demonstrated positive community perceptions about NGOs because 31% of respondents agreed, and 12% firmly accepted human rights NGOs in Mathare sub county. A substantial number of 22% expressed their strong disagreement about the important work undertaken by NGOs, thereby reflecting community distrust or unfavorable views of NGO functions.

Community distrust of NGOs emerges because recipients have direct experiences or incorrect beliefs about NGOs' objectives and performance. The crucial role of trust and stakeholder engagement for NGO success emerged in survey results, where 38% agreed and 8% strongly agreed about their importance. The number of participants who strongly disagreed in number equalled 25%, indicating multiple people believe NGOs are insufficient at stakeholder outreach and trust development. The inconsistent answers confirm that building trust between NGOs and their community participants remains a complex ongoing procedure for achieving effective collaboration.

The results indicated that social conditions create significant obstacles for NGOs to operate effectively. Thirty-five percent of survey participants concurred that poverty, insecurity, and insufficient infrastructure structures impeded NGO human rights promotion activities.

International organizations commonly experience operational difficulties in Mathare settlements because of financial limitations and an unstable social context.

The poverty levels alongside poor living environments found in places like Mathare restrict local inhabitants from participating actively in human rights advocacy work, as noted by Thuku (2021). Human rights NGOs experience more success in tackling social problems by fighting poverty or establishing service access programs. A non-profit organization requires effective social environment management as a fundamental component to implement its strategic goals within hostile areas.

All three economic components of financial resources, income sources, and local community financial services determine how well NGOs can carry out human rights programs. Financial resources from donors emerged as a dominant factor for NGO success because 38% of respondents agreed and 15% strongly agreed that financial sources were essential. Organizations face persistent fund-raising challenges, as demonstrated by the 23% of respondents who disagreed. Researchers have found that developing world NGOs depend significantly on external donor support despite this unstable fundamental financial structure (Baruch, 1999). NGOs without stable funding sources struggle to develop enduring community programs while sustaining continuous local service.

The study demonstrated the importance of multiple funding sources because 46% of respondents agreed, and another 17% strongly agreed about the necessity of obtaining funding from local sources and partnerships. The data reveals that NGOs must break their dependence on international donations by developing local financial sources to establish long-term operational sustainability.

The study found that community-based funding is crucial for stable NGO financial operations, with 54% of participants strongly agreeing, indicating that this economic aspect is a vital indicator for NGO success. The survey data establishes beyond doubt that neighbourhood participation

serves essential functions in rights advocacy funding. Devi (2017) explains how microfinance programs and grassroots fund drives established by local communities generate steady revenue channels for NGOs running in underprivileged areas.

The model works best for NGO when they establish strong community relationships which leads to increased local community members' organizational loyalty and accountability. This method leads to suitable financial resource management which benefits community needs as well as human rights causes. Political aspects created substantial impact on NGO operations through their influence on collaboration developments and infrastructure damages and governmental support.

A significant number of research participants (38%) endorsed strong backing of coordination between humanitarian organizations and local governmental agencies and NGOs when performing genuine human rights advocacy work. Twenty-six percent of respondents did not support collaboration advantages yet reported that political disputes with organizational inefficiencies act as barriers to productive organizational partnerships.

The NGOs suffers due to political barriers such as government-imposed limitations and scarcity of backing from human rights stakeholders as Baruch (1999) reports. Organizations must engage public authorities to fight human rights opposition while establishing productive alliance networks in order to succeed through political environments. Non-profits that forge enduring partnerships between governmental bodies and local non-governmental stakeholders achieve tremendous success during their advocacy work.

The assessment identified physical destruction that caused harm to NGO infrastructure and their personnel due to local conflict or violence. According to 67% of respondents who answered positively, local physical destruction affects NGO activities in Mathare. Physical attacks upon

NGO infrastructure, as well as facilities and personnel, become significant operational risks because they create service disruptions and facility damage and possibly result in staff fatalities. Non-governmental organizations working in volatile settings must consider the elevated dangers this discovery demonstrates. The analysis revealed predisposition factors, including political and cultural resistance, as substantial barriers to human rights work. Human rights activities of NGOs face challenges from cultural beliefs and political attitudes that oppose human rights work, according to both 31% agreement and 22% strong agreement. To achieve successful community acceptance, human rights initiatives necessitate sensitive advocacy that considers cultural facts and political realities.

During interviews with human rights NGO managers, it emerged that the *"economic factor"* was reported as the major obstacle that undermined the effectiveness of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub-County. Further, the *"social factor"* was reported to positively influence human rights NGOs' effectiveness in Mathare Sub-County. In addition, the *"political factor"* was reported to be a hindering factor for Human rights NGOs in promoting and protecting Mathare Sub-County. The findings indicated that government policies are hindering the operations of human rights NGOs in Mathare Sub-County of Nairobi county, despite their crucial role in protecting and promoting human rights.

#### **4.6. NGOs' Challenges Influencing the Promotion of Human Rights**

NGOs face challenges in promoting human rights due to insufficient funding, stringent government regulations, low public awareness, and insufficient group coordination. The study sought to identify inequities in resource distribution and examine how such variables affect the effects of political instability on NGO activities in Mathare sub-county. The obtained results are summarized in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: NGOs’ Challenges Influencing the Promotion of Human Rights**

<b>NGOs’ challenges affecting the promotion of human rights</b>	<b>‘Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree(5)’</b>
Insufficient financial resources	4(9%)	9(14%)	13(20%)	30(46%)	7(11%)
Community's negative attitude	7(11%)	10(15%)	6(9%)	26(40%)	16(25%)
Low literacy rates in the community	3(5%)	5(8%)	10(15%)	32(49%)	15(23%)
Extrajudicial executions of HR actors	6(9%)	15(23%)	6(9%)	25(38%)	13(20%)
Difficulty in registration processes	3(5%)	12(18%)	9(14%)	31(48%)	10(15%)
Shortage of trust and resources	4(6%)	17(26%)	10(14%)	24(37%)	11(17%)

Results in Table 4.5 demonstrated that inadequate funding stands as a significant barrier, according to 46% of respondents, and 11% strongly supported the statement. The survey reveals that 9% of local NGOs headquartered throughout the region feel extensive financial difficulties. The findings correspond with human rights NGO managers. Further, funding deficiencies limit NGOs' capacity for conducting extensive programs alongside adequate human rights support (Creswell, 2014). Previous research supports this finding because NGOs experience operating challenges when financial support is unreliable (Devi, 2017).

Public attitudes work against NGOs because they find widespread acceptance among 40% of the population, while 25% strongly agree that they negatively impede NGO operation capabilities. The negative attitude toward NGOs stems from previous mistrust and confused perceptions between non-profit organizations and locals who perceive them as foreign institutions working through outside agendas. Creswell and Poth (2018) illustrated that public distrust and incorrect beliefs hinder NGO effectiveness across certain regions. The study demonstrated that public resistance toward NGOs stands strong since just 11% of respondents disagreed.

Low literacy rates, affecting 49% of survey participants, hamper readiness to address human rights promotion. Limited literacy skills prevent local citizens from understanding their fundamental rights and accessing vital protection resources. The results indicate limited success rates because NGOs struggle to connect effectively with an uneducated audience (Bajpai et al., 2014). The data shows that 23% of survey respondents strongly approved of this observation, pointing toward the need for NGOs to implement holistic local education programs to conquer this problem.

Human rights NGOs members experience extrajudicial killings at high rates, according to findings which show agreement from both 38% of the group and 20% of the group strongly agreeing. The findings demonstrated that human rights defenders must navigate serious safety risks because their efforts lead to possible violent reprisals. Operations of NGOs face barriers because of registration hurdles (48% agreement) and insufficient trust and resources (37% agreement), which demonstrate institutional issues that block effective human rights defender operations (Kumar, 2018). The numerous challenges encountered by NGOs in Mathare Sub County illustrate intricate obstacles that need coordinated assistance from financial institutions, social frameworks, and political networks.

#### **4.7 NGOs Strategies Enhanced in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights**

The study assessed how well different NGO advocacy approaches functioned by applying legal standards combined with community support along with transparency measures and trust-building practices to resolve human rights problems in Mathare sub county. The research aimed to establish participant opinions about the methods NGOs use for human rights defence and goal advancement in Mathare sub-county. The obtained results are summarized in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: NGOs Strategies Enhanced in Promoting Human Rights**

<b>Rate the Statements on NGOs’ Strategies</b>	<b>‘Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree (5)’</b>
Legal framework of human rights	2(3%)	6(9%)	13(20%)	26(40%)	18(28%)
Use of rights-based programs	4(6%)	9(14%)	10(15%)	30(46%)	12(18%)
Empowerment of community	10(15%)	21(17%)	5(8%)	24(37%)	15(23%)
Transparency and accountability.	7(14%)	12(18%)	16(18%)	18(28%)	14(22%)
Adoption of trust-building strategies	5(8%)	10(15%)	15(23%)	25(38%)	10(15%)
Take legal action tactics and aids.	2(3%)	6(9%)	14(22%)	36(55%)	7(11%)
Use of technology strategy	10(15%)	16(25%)	6(9%)	20(31%)	13(20%)
Service Delivery	4(6%)	7(11%)	17(26%)	21(32%)	16(25%)

Table 4.6 revealed that 68% of NGOs in Mathare Sub-County prioritized strengthening human rights legal structures as a core focus of their interventions. This emphasis underscored a strategic orientation toward legal advocacy, reflecting the sector’s recognition that robust legal frameworks are essential for ensuring accountability and addressing systemic human rights violations.

The strong consensus among respondents regarding the importance of legal mechanisms affirmed existing literature, which identifies weak enforcement structures as a key barrier to adequate rights protection in informal settlements (Wamalwa, 2019). These findings suggested that NGOs are aligning their efforts with broader institutional reform agendas, aiming to influence legal and policy environments as a pathway to sustainable human rights protection. However, the data also implied a possible underinvestment in complementary strategies such as community empowerment and grassroots education, which are equally critical for long-term impact.

The study found 64% of respondents support rights-based programs, which aim to identify and eliminate human rights violations, empowering individuals to demand their rights. These programs are essential for lasting sustainable change (Kenyatta, 2017). The data indicates that rights-based approaches used by NGOs to advance human rights receive endorsement because they challenge social inequalities and boost marginalized communities' capacity to fight back.

Most human rights NGO members, 60 percent supported community empowerment strategies through strong agreement. Local empowerment is a fundamental human rights practice because it develops community abilities and provides tools for rights-based advocacy (Abdi, 2020). High assessment scores for community empowerment demonstrate the widespread belief that enabling communities to build strength is critical for permanent transformation.

The study reveals that tactics built around technology and legal action strategies obtained less agreement than approaches that apply legal frameworks and community empowerment (Wamalwa, 2019). Public opinions consider legal action vital to fighting human rights violations, but its reduced ranking suggests obstacles with legal resources and institutional restrictions exist. Technological approaches for violence reduction show limitations when applied across broad sectors because they lack universal adoption and experience access and performance challenges within disadvantaged communities.

Approximately fifty (50%) percent of those surveyed acknowledged transparency and accountability as essential solutions for human rights promotion. The development of trust between NGOs and their supported communities depends fundamentally on their transparency alongside accountability methods (Kenyatta, 2017). A considerable number of participants (40 percent) supported using strategies to build trust while indicating the crucial role trust plays in NGO success in human rights work.

Further, results demonstrated that community-based approaches and legal protection networks are the most effective methods for safeguarding human rights. The analysis in Table 4.4 demonstrates that human rights promotion and protection prioritizes legal frameworks combined with rights-based programs and community empowerment strategies. The chosen approaches represent successful methods and a comprehensive understanding of human rights advocacy's multifaceted dimensions. The emphasis on transparency and trust-building also points to the growing recognition of the need for accountability in NGO operations (Abdi, 2020).

In interviews with human rights NGOs, managers reported that their strategies involve “*stakeholder engagement*” to promote and protect the rights of marginalized groups living in informal settlements. Some NGOs are actively “*mobilizing*” resources by pooling together assets to support operations in Mathare sub-county. Additionally, these organizations are establishing “*networks and partnerships with like-minded groups to safeguard and advance human rights in Mathare Sub County.*” However, it was noted that “*financial support poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness of human rights NGOs in Mathare sub-county.*”

The qualitative results from interviews with managers of human rights NGOs indicated many interconnected strategic methods utilized to advocate for and safeguard the rights of marginalized groups in Mathare Sub-County. A dominant theme was the centrality of stakeholder engagement, which was consistently cited as a foundational strategy for enhancing community participation, legitimacy, and responsiveness in rights-based interventions.

Respondents also highlighted resource mobilization as a critical operational priority, with NGOs actively pooling financial and material assets to sustain their programs. This collaborative effort was not limited to financial inputs but extended to building networks and partnerships with like-minded civil society organizations. These alliances were described as instrumental in expanding

advocacy reach, leveraging technical expertise, and amplifying collective influence in policy spaces.

However, a recurring constraint noted across interviews was the persistent challenge of financial sustainability. Several managers emphasized that limited and irregular funding streams significantly undermined the scale, continuity, and overall impact of human rights interventions. The findings suggest that while NGOs in Mathare have developed adaptive and collaborative strategies to advance human rights, their long-term effectiveness remains contingent on stable funding mechanisms and institutional capacity-building.

These insights reflect broader structural tensions in urban informal settlements, where NGOs often serve as the primary human rights defenders amid systemic neglect. The emphasis on partnerships and stakeholder inclusion highlights a shift toward networked advocacy, while financial vulnerability underscores the fragility of grassroots human rights ecosystems.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter five provided a summary, conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions for further investigation regarding the influence of human rights NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County. The chapter presented the study's findings, which are crucial for improving human rights NGOs in Mathare sub county. Further, the study provided findings regarding the nature of Human rights NGOs, key factors influencing NGOs' effectiveness, strategies applied as resolutions, NGO challenges encountered by NGOs initiatives, mechanisms, and following recommended strategies for enhancing human rights promotion and protection in Mathare sub-county, Kenya.

#### **5.2 Summary of the Study**

The study examined the effectiveness human rights NGOs in the promotion and protection of human rights in urban informal settlement Mathare sub county in Nairobi County. Further, the study examined their nature, effect-determining variables, and organizational difficulties. The study utilized a descriptive survey design that combined quantitative and qualitative methods to compressively underscore the phenomenon. The study sample size was 65 human rights NGOs and 9 Key informants who participated in the study. The study utilized simple random sampling to sample NGO members and purposive sampling to select key informants within Mathare sub-county.

The study found that most NGO members (54%) acknowledged awareness of human rights NGOs operating in Mathare Sub County. The study demonstrated that local NGOs operate as community-

based organizations with core operations centered on human rights advocacy, social service delivery, and community program awareness initiatives.

The study established that Human rights NGOs varied widely regarding their funding models and operational structures between resource-dependent groups and volunteer-run efforts. These included ineffective operations within human rights NGOs operates under insufficient funding and the community's unfavorable disposition toward NGO activities. Further, the study revealed that legal frameworks, empowerment programs, and transparency initiatives were the leading platforms NGOs use to advance human rights.

Technology combined with community outreach structured fundamental aspects of their human rights promotion initiatives. Some NGOs struggled to maintain continuous operations because of political turbulence along with extrajudicial victimization of human rights advocates and insufficient funding sources. The study found multiple barriers limiting NGO effectiveness in urban informal settlement ranging from adverse community sentiments toward NGOs and poor literacy rates to insufficient government support. Operational capabilities of NGOs decrease because of demanding registration procedures and restricted funding sources. The findings show that human rights NGOs successfully accomplish human rights progress by improving laws and empowering communities despite their operational challenges.

The study suggested that the human rights advocacy initiatives of NGOs in Mathare sub-county's urban informal settlements will be successful by fostering partnerships, enhancing trust connections, and eliminating existent restrictions. The findings demonstrated that NGOs should redirect their work to implement community-based methods that unite technological approaches with rights-based strategies to achieve maximum impact.

The study revealed that NGOs provide essential human rights protection in Mathare Sub County, although encounter many internal and external challenges. Consequently, fortifying collaborations across NGOs, governmental bodies, and community organizations might augment the efficacy of human rights promotion. The study found that NGO organizations explore multiple funding channels, strengthen community bonds, and create training platforms for human rights defenders. Thus, policymakers should create a supportive environment, simplify registration frameworks, and protect defenders from political and social implications in urban informal settlement in Mathare sub county.

### **5.3 Main Findings per Specific Objective**

The study analyzed the roles of NGO in human rights protection in Mathare Sub County, examining features, operational factors, obstacles, and chosen approaches. The main findings for each objective are provided below.

#### **5.3.1 Nature of NGOs in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights**

The study revealed that human rights NGOs and community-based organizations provide essential services like legal aid, healthcare, and education, promoting community sensitization and grassroots advocacy in Mathare Sub County. The study found that 54% of respondents recognized the existence and activities of human rights NGOs in Mathare Sub-County, whilst 46% indicated a lack of awareness. In addition, NGOs, either foundation-dependent resource organizations or locally run activist-led community-based organizations, aimed to raise awareness and deliver essential services to marginalized communities in Mathare sub county. Thus, community-based organizations effectively reached local communities through ground-level human rights attention, while resource-based organizations often obtained substantial resources.

The operational diversity among NGOs enabled the application of multiple human rights advocacy strategies. Figure 4.5 showed that 26% of respondents identified resource-based NGOs, 23% recognized personal-based NGOs, and 16% referred to community-based NGOs as key actors in their locality. This variation in organizational models demonstrated the flexible and adaptive nature of human rights programming in Mathare. NGOs employed distinct approaches, ranging from resource mobilization to grassroots engagement, to address local challenges and extend human rights protection.

All human rights NGOs possess different degrees of success and specific hurdles when protecting human rights within a complex, resource-deprived environment. The research underscored how resource-based and community-based NGOs work together to fulfil community members' fundamental human rights needs in Mathare Sub-County.

### **5.3.2 Key Factors Effect on Human Rights NGOs in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights**

The study identified several critical factors influencing the effectiveness of human rights NGOs in promoting and protecting rights within Mathare Sub-County. Notably, community perception and trust in NGOs emerged as significant determinants of program success. Positive collaboration between NGOs and community members was found to enhance acceptance and support for human rights initiatives.

The findings showed that 31% of respondents agreed with the role of human rights NGOs, while 12% strongly supported their presence. In contrast, 22% expressed strong disagreement, reflecting a lack of trust or scepticism toward NGO operations. Such unfavorable perceptions pose a challenge to program implementation and can undermine advocacy efforts.

Additionally, the study revealed that the sustainability of NGO interventions was highly dependent on external donor funding and internal economic resource mechanisms. This reliance on fluctuating financial sources raises concerns about long-term program continuity and institutional resilience. For instance, the majority of respondents (38%) and 15% strongly agreed that financial resources are essential for NGO success, while 23% disagreed, indicating persistent fundraising challenges for organizations.

Further, Table 4.5 showed that 46% of respondents believe inadequate funding is a significant barrier, with 11% strongly supporting this statement, and 9% of local NGOs experiencing significant financial difficulties. The human right NGOs community's lack of accessible financial services hindered the effective implementation of specific NGOs' programs in Mathare sub county. Thus, human rights NGOs should collaborate with local authorities to effectively implement human rights initiatives and overcome bureaucratic obstacles. Human rights NGOs develop joint initiatives with local authorities to help organizations navigate bureaucratic obstacles.

Political unrest created significant challenges for organizational initiatives in Mathare Sub-County since the instability led to physical destruction within the area. Non-government organizations achieved human rights goals with success by having strong financial systems in addition to well-built community connections and political affiliations. The advancement of human rights made by NGOs met various obstacles derived from external and internal elements which restricted their work in Mathare sub-county. For instance, public attitudes towards NGOs are influenced by 40% of the population's acceptance, while 25% strongly disagree, largely due to past mistrust and confusion between non-profit organizations and locals, who perceive them as foreign institutions with outside agendas in Mathare Sub-County.

### **5.3.3 Strategies Employed by NGOs in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights**

Several strategies used by human rights NGOs include educational activities and advocacy work which strengthen legal structures in Mathare Sub County. Rights-based programs aimed to achieve dual objectives which included both community strengthening and vulnerability groups' elevation of human rights awareness. Community development programs run by the studied NGOs served to develop local capabilities that address human rights issues. The organizations promoted transparency and accountability through public operation together with integration of local stakeholders into their decision-making. Various human rights NGOs secured sustainability by developing trust with their communities through leader involvement and involvement of the general population.



The study found that 68% of NGOs in Mathare Sub-County prioritize strengthening human rights legal structures, while 64% support rights-based programs to identify and eliminate violations. The research indicated that when human rights NGOs use legal procedures to fight human rights violations, they select cases for legal intervention. Additionally, 50% of respondents acknowledged transparency and accountability as essential solutions for human rights promotion. Non-governmental organizations have adopted technology at the forefront as their growth strategy, thus enhancing their communication capabilities. Human rights expansion within urban informal settlements continues to depend heavily on service delivery approaches that focus on health and educational services. Although NGOs commit themselves to future and present community needs, their operational effectiveness faces restrictions due to systematic barriers and funding resource shortages.

#### **5.4 Conclusion of the Study**

The study examined influence of human rights NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights within Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County. The findings indicated a moderate however growing level of public awareness regarding the presence and activities of these organizations. Through various advocacy strategies, ranging from legal interventions and civic education to community mobilization, NGOs played a critical role in shaping public discourse on human rights in urban informal settlement in Mathare Sub County.

Importantly, NGOs were found to advance human rights awareness by both disseminating key principles and offering direct support services, such as legal guidance, psychosocial aid, and rights-based interventions. These organizations also engaged in strategic reform initiatives aimed at challenging and transforming oppressive laws and institutional practices.

However, the study also revealed significant operational challenges, including limited funding, staff turnover, and varying levels of community trust, all of which affect the scope and sustainability of NGO efforts in urban informal settlement in Mathare sub county.

Further, the findings underscore that while NGOs have made notable strides in advocating for human rights in informal settlements like Mathare, their long-term impact will depend on deepening grassroots engagement, building institutional capacity, and fostering stronger collaborations with both state and non-state actors.

NGOs established powerful methods for human rights defenders to exercise their rights through their rights-based programs and legal interventions as well as technological implementations. When promoting human rights in Mathare sub county the NGOs encounter multiple barriers according to the research results. Organizations struggle to extend their programs because limited funding prevents them from launching important interventions as well as sustaining their programs. Members of the community demonstrated negative feelings toward NGOs because they lacked correct understanding of these organizations and held distrust toward them. The area faced hurdles in human rights advocacy because of limited reading skills among local residents combined with unresolved partnership issues between important local participants. The combination of intricate barriers caused the overall achievement decline of NGOs who operated to protect vulnerable individuals together with their human rights advocacy missions.

The study established that NGOs faced ineffective results in Mathare sub county because of combined social and economic challenges along with political obstacles. A positive relationship between residents' trust in non-profit organizations and their perceptions determines how effectively NGOs implement their initiatives in Mathare sub-county. Operational capacity of NGOs faced adverse economic consequences because of restricted financial resources together

with limited budgets and barriers from local community support. The effectiveness of NGOs dramatically depended on their partnerships with government agencies together with their political cooperation. The combination of robust government-NGO partnerships usually improves human rights projects, but political instability and systemic political issues cause additional complications for NGOs' operations.

The study revealed that human rights NGOs perform crucial functions in Mathare sub county, although their success suffers from numerous financial, financial, and political obstacles. To enhance impact, NGOs must develop better operational approaches and enhanced collaboration with governmental institutions and local communities. NGOs enhanced the effectiveness by directing energy toward resource acquisition efforts, staff capability growth, and better outreach in Mathare sub county. However, human rights NGOs need long-term sustainability, which requires no less than solving the socio-economic barriers linked to inadequate education and poor community relations. Finally, human rights NGOs navigate their difficulties will shape their capability to achieve success because NGOs stand central in human rights advancement in Mathare sub county.

### **5.5 Recommendations of the Study**

The research offers recommendations for NGOs to enhance their effectiveness in protecting human rights activities, guiding policymakers, NGOs, and rights advocacy stakeholders in Mathare sub-county

The study recommended that NGOs actively identify multiple funding options. NGO support should be developed from regional business initiatives and state-based programs. Additionally, NGOs should initiate partnerships with international aid organizations or local commercial entities. The establishment of stronger financial institution relationships helps improve financial

institutions' lending and grant opportunities. Non-government organizations must create various funding sources to sustain operations beyond dependency on restricted pools of donors. Moreover, effective resource utilization demands financial management capabilities for practitioners in Mathare sub county.

The study recommends that human rights NGOs must enhance their outreach programs because study results show widespread negative neighbourhood attitudes alongside high illiteracy indicators. Educational measures about human rights, legal protective standards, and NGO functions must become central elements of these initiatives. NGOs must start dialogues that bring together local community members and influential leaders to develop mutual trust and teamwork. The proposed actions would reduce misunderstandings and create progressive community approaches to human rights protections in Mathare sub county.

The research supports better legal policies together with rights-oriented solutions for communities specifically in informal settlements while it encourages NGO partnerships between government decision-makers. Local rights training through partnerships between NGOs and legal experts should combine with direct support for legal representation of residents. Non-Government Organizations need to establish legal procedures and continuing advocacy work to bring national laws in line with international human rights standards in Mathare sub county.

The research reveals that NGO success suffers from barriers originating from political factors together with societal elements that harm their ability to produce results effectively. The establishment of effective human rights practices along with safety-based social connections and policy reforms constitute the core strategies for NGOs to overcome obstacles in Mathare sub county.

The study recommends that NGOs should employ technology to achieve operational and service delivery system improvements and maximize beneficiary outreach. Digital awareness and data acquisition tools with advanced platforms for tracking operations must be introduced into the NGO workflow. The implementation of technological systems enhances transparency and accountability and enables better trust with donors and receives better community backing. The suggested approach will enhance the operational capability of NGOs which focus on human rights issues within Mathare Sub County.

### **5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies**

- 1) The study suggests an evaluation of human rights NGO performance to determine which factors affect human rights work throughout various parts of Mathare sub-county.
- 2) There is a need for a research to comprehend the shift in human rights conditions over periods and second the most effective NGO interventions alongside sustainable NGO practices and community-led initiatives required for maintaining ongoing human rights conditions in Mathare Sub-County.
- 3) There is need for a study to understand community-centered human rights activism, specifically the process of building local community capacity to manage rights concerns, and to assess grassroots movements, community-based organizations, and local leadership roles in Mathare Sub-County.
- 4) The study suggests that NGOs utilize digital tools for human rights advocacy in informal settlements with limited internet connections and explores how these tools engage stakeholders and operationalize protection strategies in Mathare Sub-County.
- 5) There is need for further research to explore the relationship between local NGOs and global human rights organizations, expand Kenya's human rights advocacy knowledge

base, and enhance NGO effectiveness, which is essential for the success of rights protection work in Mathare Sub County.



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Mount Kenya University

## APPENDICES

### I) Research tools

#### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NGO MEMBERS

The questionnaire aims to collect information on the following: “**Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Influence in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in Urban Informal Settlement in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County.**”

**Instructions:** Please read and understand the questions and respond honestly and accurately. Tick [✓] and fill out the spaces provided.

#### Section A: ‘Demographic Information

1. Tick your gender
  - i) Male [ ]
  - ii) Female [ ]
  
2. Tick your age bracket
  - i) Below 18 [ ]
  - ii) 19–29 [ ]
  - iii) 30–39 [ ]
  - iv) 40–49 [ ]
  - v) Above 50
  
3. Indicate your highest education level
  - i) None [ ]
  - ii) Primary [ ]
  - iii) Secondary [ ]
  - iv) College [ ]

v) University' [ ]

4. What is your work experience at your NGO.....?

**Section B: Nature of Human Rights and Promoting and Protecting of Human Rights**

Please rate the statement provided ‘using a 5-point Likert scale’, with one (1) being the smallest and five (5) being the largest.

<b>The nature of NGOs that promote human rights</b>	<b>‘Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree(5)’</b>
NGOs assume social welfare traits.					
NGOs are preventive					
NGOs function as community policing.					
NGOs are community-based in sensitization.					
NGOs are technology-based in nature.					
NGOs are faith-based					

**Section C: Impact of Key Factors NGOs in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights**

Please rate the statement provided ‘using a 5-point Likert scale’, with one (1) being the smallest and five (5) being the largest.

<b>Key factors influencing NGOs in facilitating human rights</b>	<b>‘Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree(5)’</b>

<b>Social factors</b>					
Community attitude towards NGOs					
Trust and stakeholder engagement					
Social conditions hinder operations.					
<b>Economic factors</b>					
Access to financial sources and donor					
Sources of income and services					
Access to financial services in the community					
<b>Political factors</b>					
Partnership and cooperation					
Physical destruction					
Predisposition factors					

#### Section D: NGOs' Challenges Influencing the Promotion of Human Rights

Please rate the statement provided 'using a 5-point Likert scale', with one (1) being the smallest and five (5) being the largest.

<b>NGOs' challenges Influencing the promotion of human rights</b>	<b>'Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree(5)'</b>
Insufficient financial resources					
Community's negative attitude					
Low literacy rates in the community					

Extrajudicial executions of HR actors					
Difficulty in registration processes					
Shortage of trust and resources					

### Section E: NGOs Strategies Enhanced in Promoting Human Rights

Please rate the statement provided ‘using a 5-point Likert scale’, with one (1) being the smallest and five (5) being the largest.

Rate the Statements on NGOs’ Strategies	‘Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)’
Enhancing legal framework of human rights					
Use of rights-based programs					
Empowerment of community strategies					
Embrace transparency and accountability.					
Adoption of trust-building strategies					
Take legal action tactics and aids.					
Use of technology strategy					
Service Delivery					

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS (NGOs MANAGERS)**

1. Are you aware of human rights NGOs in Mathare Sub-County? (Yes/No).

Mention them?

2. Describe the NGO that promotes human rights in Mathare Sub-County. (Probing are NGO personal, community-based, resources-based, types of NGO or local category).
3. In your view, do NGOs promote and protect human rights in Mathare Sub County? Yes/No.  
Explain your answer.
4. Explain the strategies NGOs in the Mathare sub-county use to promote and protect human rights.
5. What factors influence NGOs to promote and protect human rights in the Mathare sub-county?
6. In your view, what challenges do NGOs encounter in promoting and protecting human rights in the Mathare sub-county?
7. What interventions are to be established to enhance the effectiveness of NGOs in promoting and protecting human rights in Mathare?

## II) ERC certificate



REF: MKU/ISERC/4664  
TO: ISAAC MUUO MUENDO

Date: 08 January 2025

REG: MIRD/2022/30086

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS INFLUENCE IN PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN URBAN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN MATHARE SUB COUNTY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.**

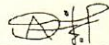
This is to inform you that **Mount Kenya University** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **3386**. The approval period is **08/01/2025 - 07/01/2026**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used
- ii. All changes including amendments, deviations and violations are submitted for review and approval by **Mount Kenya University**
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **Mount Kenya University**

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr. Alfred Owino, PhD**  
**Chairman, Mount Kenya University ISERC**



Main Campus, General Kago Road, P.O. Box 342-01000 Thika.  
Tel: +254 20 287 8000, Cell: +254 709 153 000  
Email: info@mku.ac.ke, Web: www.mku.ac.ke  
Chartered and ISO 9001 : 2015 Certified

### III) Introduction letter from MKU

Mount Kenya University.  
School of Social Sciences,  
Department of International Studies.  
Main Campus, Thika.  
March 2024.

Dear Respondent,

RE: RESEARCH PARTICIPATORY REQUEST

I am Isaac Muuo Muendo, a postgraduate master's student at Mount Kenya University. As mandated by the university, I am currently doing a research study on:

“Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Influence in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in Urban Informal Settlement in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County.”

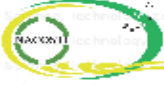
You have been selected to participate in a study work, with your preferred location designated for scholarly purposes. Strict confidentiality is assured; data gathered was used only for academic reasons. Answer the research questions honestly and transparently, giving thorough and precise information. The research is voluntary and requires agreement, and personal identity will not be considered in any aspect of the study.

Yours faithfully,

Isaac Muuo Muendo

IV) NACOSTI research license

  
REPUBLIC OF KENYA

  
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

RefNo: **179000** Date of Issue: **20/January/2025**

**RESEARCH LICENSE**



**This is to Certify that Mr. isaac muno Muendo of Mount Kenya University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kiambu, Nairobi on the topic: Non-Governmental Organization Influence in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in Urban Informal Settlements in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. for the period ending : 20/January/2026.**

License No: **NACOSTI/P/25/415265**

**179000**  
Applicant Identification Number

  
Director General  
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &  
INNOVATION

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**See overleaf for conditions**

ML

V) Field entry /Research Authorization



## DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MIRD/2022/30086

9<sup>th</sup> January, 2025

National Commission for Science Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI)  
Off Waiyaki, Upper Kabete  
P.O Box 30623- 00100  
NAIROBI, KENYA

Dear Sir/Madam,

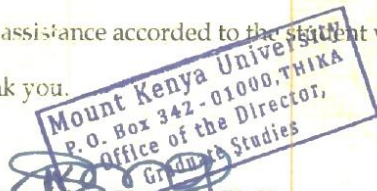
RE: ISAAC MUUO MUENDO-REGISTRATION NO. MIRD/2022/30086

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the above named student who is pursuing **Master of International Relations and Diplomacy** in the department of **Institute of Security Studies, Justice and Ethics** in the school of **Social Sciences**.

The title of the research is **“Non-Governmental Organizations Influence in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in Urban Informal Settlement in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi County, Kenya.”** It has been cleared by the University's Ethics Review Committee (Certificate attached) and now has to proceed to the field to collect data between **January, 2025 and March, 2025**.

Any assistance accorded to the student will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

  
Dr. Samuel M. Karenga, Ph.D  
Director, Graduate Studies  
Enc.

## VI Turnitin report (First two (2) pages)





### 10% Overall Similarity

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#### Match Groups

-  **153 Not Cited or Quoted 8%**  
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#### Top Sources

- 0%  Internet sources
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#### Integrity Flags

##### 0 Integrity Flags for Review

No suspicious text manipulations found.

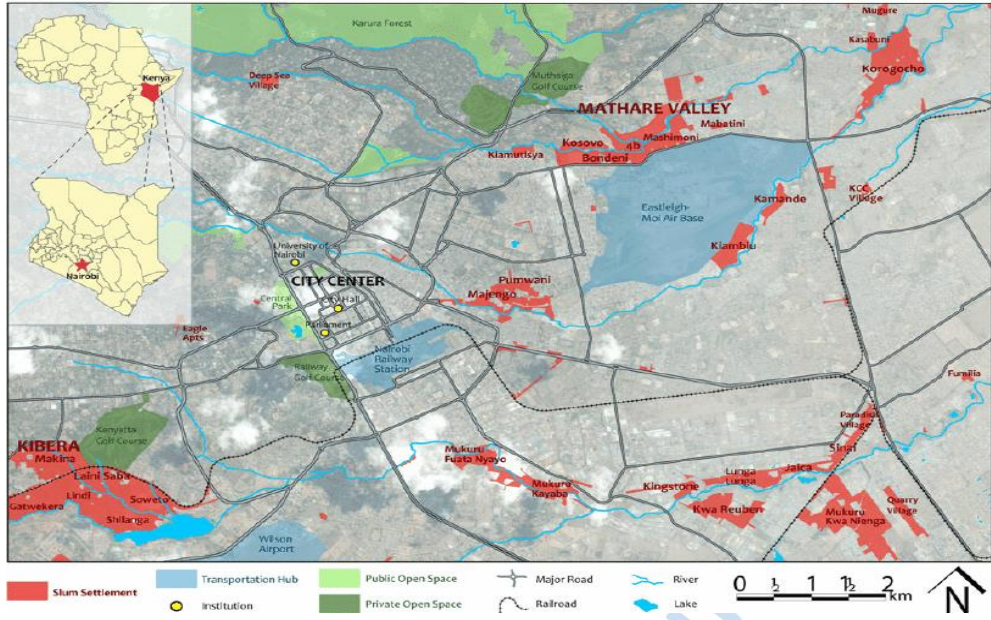
Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.

Moun

## VII) Research site map

### NAIROBI Residential Slums



### Mathare aerial view map



VIII) Long tables (if any)

Time/Activities	Jan, 2024	Feb, 2024	Aug 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Aug, 2025
Concept writing	■							
Proposal writing		■						
Proposal defense			■					
Data collection				■				
Data analysis					■			
Project writing						■		
Project defense							■	
Clearance & Graduation								■

