



**VOICES OF COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS AND LEADERS OF AFRICA
(VOCAL AFRICA)**

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SAFETY AND SECURITY PROJECT IN MOMBASA COUNTY

QUARTERLY REPORT

(Dec 2025 – Mar 2026)

March 2026

1.0 Introduction to VOCAL Africa

VOCAL Africa (Voices of Community Activists and Leaders of Africa) is a human rights organization committed to the promotion, protection and defense of fundamental freedoms, social justice and accountable governance across Kenya and the broader East African region. Founded on the principles of dignity, equality and the rule of law, VOCAL Africa works at the intersection of human rights and security, advocating for a society where state and non-state actors alike respect and uphold the rights of all citizens.

The organization has distinguished itself through its rapid response model, intervening in situations of rights violations with urgency, professionalism and a victim centered approach.



A social media post after VOCAL Africa's release of by-election monitoring report in December 2025

Over the years, VOCAL Africa has grown into a formidable voice within the civic space, building networks of human rights defenders, engaging state institutions and amplifying citizen voices through advocacy, litigation support and public engagement. Its work spans critical areas including police accountability, electoral justice, civic freedoms and community safety.

Through strategic partnerships and evidence based interventions, VOCAL Africa continues to champion reforms that advance human rights while fostering a collaborative and rights based approach to safety and security.

2.0 Background and Context of the Project

Mombasa County stands as one of Kenya's most critical economic lifelines - a gateway to East and Central Africa through its port and a hub of trade, tourism and industry. Yet, behind this image of economic vibrancy lies a stark and troubling reality: a county grappling with persistent insecurity, deep social inequalities and systemic neglect that continues to endanger the lives and futures of its people, particularly the youth.

For years, Mombasa has witnessed the steady rise and entrenchment of organized criminal gangs, making it one of the counties with the highest concentration of such groups in Kenya. These gangs are not isolated actors but part of a broader ecosystem of violence that includes drug trafficking, extortion, radicalization and politically instigated chaos. Young people, especially those from informal settlements and marginalized communities, have been both the primary victims and the most exploited targets of this system. Locked out of economic opportunities, burdened by poverty and excluded from meaningful civic participation, many youth are pushed to the margins where criminal networks become not just an option but a survival mechanism.



A chat showing Mombasa is leading in number of criminal gangs in Kenya

Equally alarming is the deep and long standing breakdown of trust between communities, particularly young people, and law enforcement agencies. What should be a relationship anchored on protection and partnership has, over time, degenerated into one defined by fear,

suspicion and confrontation. Persistent allegations of harassment, excessive use of force and lack of accountability have eroded public confidence in security institutions. As a result, the police are often perceived not as protectors but as adversaries. This fractured relationship has severely undermined community policing efforts, cutting off vital channels of information sharing and allowing criminal gangs to flourish in the absence of collective action.

Beyond the visible manifestations of crime, insecurity in Mombasa is also deeply structural. Entire neighborhoods are characterized by poor urban planning and neglect - dark, unlit streets that become breeding grounds for crime, broken sewer systems that expose residents to health risks, uncollected waste that signals abandonment and public spaces that have been left to decay. These conditions are not accidental. They are the result of years of systemic failure and underinvestment. The burden of this neglect falls disproportionately on women, children and persons with disabilities, whose mobility, safety and dignity are constantly under threat in such environments.



Mombasa's sewage problem has remained a health and safety hazard for years

What emerges, therefore, is a layered crisis. One where crime, poverty, exclusion, institutional mistrust and infrastructural decay intersect to create a cycle of insecurity that continues to reproduce itself. Addressing this crisis demands far more than reactive policing or short term interventions. It calls for a bold, deliberate shift toward a human rights centered, community driven approach that tackles root causes, restores dignity and rebuilds trust between citizens and the state.

It is against this backdrop that VOCAL Africa is implementing the Safety and Security Project

in Mombasa County. Grounded in its commitment to human rights, justice and community empowerment, VOCAL Africa seeks to confront these challenges head on by bridging the divide between youth and security agencies, strengthening community participation in safety governance and advancing sustainable, locally driven solutions. This project is not merely an intervention. It is a call to reimagine security as a shared responsibility, where communities are not passive recipients of protection, but active architects of peace, dignity and justice.

3.0 Project Goal and Objectives

3.1 Project Goal

The overall goal of this project is to transform the safety and security landscape in Mombasa County by rebuilding trust between communities, particularly young people and law enforcement agencies, while fostering coordinated, accountable and community driven approaches to crime prevention and peacebuilding.



VOCAL Africa staff at a community partner organisation

At its core, this project seeks to shift the paradigm of security from one that is reactive, force driven and exclusionary, to one that is preventive, participatory and rooted in human rights. It envisions a Mombasa where safety is not imposed on communities, but co created with them and where young people are no longer viewed as threats to be contained but as partners and leaders in shaping safer, more just societies.

3.2 Objectives

- **To rebuild trust and restore legitimacy between youth and law enforcement agencies:**
The project seeks to confront the deep-seated mistrust that has long defined relations between young people and security actors. Through structured dialogues, joint engagements and confidence-building initiatives, it aims to replace fear and hostility with mutual respect, cooperation and accountability.
- **To amplify community participation in safety and security governance:**
Recognizing that sustainable security cannot be achieved without the active involvement of communities, the project will create and strengthen platforms for engagement between youth, local administrators, religious leaders, elders, women's groups and civil society organizations. This will ensure that security solutions are informed by lived realities and grounded in local ownership.
- **To address structural and environmental drivers of insecurity:**
The project will advocate for and support community-led identification and monitoring of infrastructural risks such as poor street lighting, unsafe public spaces and neglected basic services. By pushing for responsive action from duty bearers, it seeks to dismantle the physical conditions that enable crime and insecurity to thrive.
- **To reduce the influence and recruitment capacity of criminal gangs:**
By engaging young people in meaningful civic action, leadership development, community safety initiatives and income-generating opportunities, the project aims to provide viable alternatives to criminal networks. It seeks to break the cycle of vulnerability by empowering youth as agents of change rather than targets of exploitation.
- **To strengthen coordination among security and justice sector actors**
The project will promote collaboration among the National Police Service, county government departments, community policing structures and other justice sector actors. This coordination is essential in ensuring that responses to insecurity are inclusive, preventive and aligned with human rights principles.

4.0 Key Activities Implemented

During the reporting period (December 2025 – March 2026), VOCAL Africa implemented a series of strategic, community driven and rights based interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity, strengthening trust between communities and security agencies and advancing access to justice across Mombasa County. These activities were deliberately

designed to combine advocacy, community engagement, institutional collaboration and direct support to affected individuals.

4.1 Project Launch and Stakeholder Induction

The Safety and Security Project was officially launched on 30th December 2025 at Swahili Pot Hall in Mombasa, bringing together over 100 participants drawn from government institutions, youth groups, civil society organizations and community leadership structures.

The launch served as a critical entry point for stakeholder engagement, providing a platform to introduce the project's objectives, scope and implementation strategy. Participants actively contributed to shaping the project direction, with strong recommendations emerging on the need to expand interventions beyond Kisauni and Likoni sub counties to cover the entire county.



Participants following proceedings during the launch

While the project initially focused on the two sub counties as priority areas, VOCAL Africa emphasized a flexible and responsive implementation model which allows for scaling based on emerging realities and community needs. This participatory launch set the tone for a project grounded in inclusivity, local ownership and shared responsibility.

4.2 Legal Aid, Social Solidarity and Strategic Litigation

Recognizing that insecurity is deeply intertwined with injustice and lack of accountability, VOCAL Africa prioritized access to justice through legal aid, strategic litigation and direct support to victims of human rights violations.

4.2.1 Legal Aid Clinics

Legal aid clinics were conducted in Old Town on 23rd January 2026, providing free legal advice and representation to vulnerable community members. These interventions significantly enhanced access to justice for individuals who would otherwise remain excluded from the legal system.

A targeted legal aid engagement was also conducted at Hindi Prison (Lamu County) on 26th February 2026, reaching over 200 inmates. The exercise exposed serious human rights concerns, including:

- Lack of access to court documentation
- Inhumane and unfavorable detention conditions
- Allegations of physical abuse by prison authorities



VOCAL Africa staff posing with other participants at the Hindi Prison after the legal aid clinic

Documented cases are currently under legal follow up, with affected individuals guided on mechanisms for seeking redress through the courts.

4.2.2 Strategic Litigation and Case Support

During the reporting period, VOCAL Africa actively engaged in high impact cases to defend rights, challenge impunity and stand in solidarity with victims and affected communities:

- **Protection of Press Freedom**

The organization attended court proceedings in Mombasa on 2nd January 2026 in solidarity with journalist Peter Mwita, who was charged with cybercrime for refusing to disclose

confidential sources. VOCAL Africa continues to monitor the case as part of broader efforts to safeguard media freedom and resist intimidation of journalists.

- **Environmental Justice in Watamu**

VOCAL Africa supported community resistance against the acquisition of a public park in Watamu in various dates in December 2025. The park, home to historical neem trees and critical ecological functions including water catchment, was under threat from private development. Through legal intervention, community mobilization and direct participation in court processes, a court order was secured halting construction activities. The organization also maintained a physical presence on the ground to enforce compliance with the court directive.

- **Victim Support and Accountability Cases**

VOCAL Africa provided sustained legal and psychosocial support to families affected by grave human rights violations, including the following cases of police brutality and gender based violence:

- Dennis Ringa: a 14-year-old boy fatally shot on New Year's Eve. VOCAL Africa supported the family through postmortem processes, engagement with the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), burial arrangements and continuous follow-up in the month of January 2026. The case is currently at an advanced stage, with arrest and prosecution of perpetrators pending.
- Salim Masha: a 27-year-old man shot dead by a Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) officer in Kinango on 18th January 2026. VOCAL Africa facilitated logistical and legal support for the family, including transport, postmortem attendance and burial processes.
- Gloria Kiza: an 11-year-old girl who was brutally sexually assaulted and murdered on 14th March 2026. VOCAL Africa provided psychosocial support to the family and organized a public protest to demand justice and stronger security measures, while pushing for expedited investigations.

Through these interventions, VOCAL Africa reaffirmed its commitment to confronting injustice, amplifying victims' voices and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.

4.3 Institutional Engagement and Police Human Rights Training Framework

In line with its commitment to reform oriented engagement, VOCAL Africa initiated high level institutional processes to secure collaboration with the National Police Service.

Following sustained efforts, the organization engaged the Inspector General of Police and met with him at his office on 5th February 2026. He endorsed the project and committed to supporting the training of police officers on human rights, rule of law and community centered policing approaches. This engagement resulted in formal communication directing the Coast Region police leadership to collaborate with VOCAL Africa in project implementation.

Subsequently, engagement with the Coast Regional Police Commander was undertaken on 20th February 2026, laying the groundwork for a planned induction meeting with sub county police leadership (OCPDs and OCSs). This process is expected to pave the way for structured human rights trainings targeting police officers across Mombasa County.

This milestone represents a critical step toward institutional reform shifting policing practices toward accountability, legality and respect for human rights.

4.4 Community Safe Spaces and Dialogue Forums (Maskani Initiatives)

VOCAL Africa facilitated a series of community dialogue forums, referred to as Maskani Safe Spaces, across different parts of Mombasa County. These forums provided inclusive platforms for communities to openly discuss safety, security and human rights concerns, while collectively identifying solutions. Key thematic areas addressed included:

- Environmental Justice and Infrastructure Failures**



Danger posed by Mombasa's unfinished sewage projects

Discussions on the persistent sewage crisis in several neighborhoods of Mombasa led to collective demands for county government action on 15th January 2026. Community members issued an ultimatum for repair of sewer systems, with plans for mass action in the event of inaction. A follow-up baraza held on 28th February 2026 in Old Town brought together key government stakeholders, including the area chief, Deputy County Commissioner and County Executive for Urban Planning.

- **Youth Vulnerability and Economic Exclusion**

In Bangladesh settlement, one of the largest informal settlements in the coastal region, VOCAL Africa, in partnership with Alpha and Omega CBO, engaged youth on safety, security and economic marginalization on 3rd January 2026. Youth proposed innovative solutions such as carbon credit entrepreneurship through mangrove conservation, highlighting the potential for sustainable, community led economic empowerment.

- **Police Accountability on Use of Force**

A dialogue forum in partnership with Sisters for Justice (S4J) was held in Kisauni on 9th February 2026 to convey public outrage over alleged “shoot to kill” directives. Communities, civil society actors and elders collectively condemned such statements and demanded accountability. Subsequent clarification by the police leadership reaffirming adherence to constitutional standards was welcomed as a step toward restoring public trust.

- **Women’s Rights and Safety**

On 8th March 2026, VOCAL Africa commemorated International Women’s Day under the theme “Rights, Justice, Action for All Women and Girls”, convening over 100 participants at Mpeketoni in Lamu County. The forum provided a platform for women to voice grievances, organize and strategize on advancing their rights and safety.

- **Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)**

Two dedicated forums were held to create safe spaces for persons with disabilities to articulate their challenges and advocate for inclusive safety and security interventions. These were held on 1st December 2025 and 14th March 2026.

- **Child Protection and School Safety**

In Likoni, VOCAL Africa partnered with Likoni Social Justice Centres to follow up on the safety of school going children including the case of a missing form 3 student Ramadhan Athman who disappeared on 22nd February 2026 after allegedly going to visit his father in Kongowea, Mombasa. His whereabouts remain unknown to date and VOCAL Africa is working with the family and police to try and track him.

- **Disaster Preparedness and Climate Related Risks**

A convening of human rights defenders in 9th March 2026 addressed preparedness in anticipation of heavy rains, emphasizing the need for urgent county action on drainage systems and infrastructure.

These forums reinforced the centrality of community voices in shaping security interventions and demonstrated the power of collective action in demanding accountability.

4.5 Digital Advocacy and Public Awareness Campaigns

During the reporting period, VOCAL Africa leveraged digital platforms including X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Threads and TikTok to amplify advocacy, disseminate information and mobilize public engagement on safety and human rights issues. Key campaign areas included:

- Public accountability in service delivery, including sustained engagement on electricity access and outages
- Community safety awareness during the rainy season
- Public sensitization during Ramadan on peaceful coexistence and safety
- Promotion of human rights and community cohesion

To complement digital efforts, the organization developed and distributed educational materials, including informational booklets, branded T-shirts and calendars, to key stakeholders such as chiefs' offices, police stations and social justice centres. These materials reinforced awareness and strengthened grassroots engagement on safety and security.



VOCAL Africa placards displayed during a protest

5.0 Key Achievements/Results

During the reporting period (December 2025 – March 2026), the Safety and Security Project delivered tangible results in both enhancing public safety conditions and strengthening security, justice and accountability systems. The interventions contributed not only to addressing crime and violations but also to improving the everyday safety, dignity and wellbeing of communities across Mombasa County.

5.1 Successful Project Launch and County Wide Demand for Safety Interventions

The project was successfully launched with over 100 stakeholders, marking a critical step in building a shared understanding of safety and security as a collective responsibility. Notably, stakeholders strongly called for expansion of the project beyond Kisauni and Likoni to the entire county demonstrating widespread demand for community driven safety interventions and recognition of the urgency of the challenges faced.

5.2 Improved Community Safety Through Collective Action on Environmental Risks

The project catalyzed community led action to address environmental and infrastructural drivers of insecurity:

- Community forums highlighted the sewage crisis, poor drainage and unsafe public spaces as major safety risks
- Residents collectively issued demands to county authorities to repair sewer systems and improve infrastructure
- A high-level baraza in Old Town brought together government officials to directly respond to these concerns

These interventions elevated safety from a private struggle to a public accountability issue, pushing duty bearers toward action and reducing environmental conditions that enable crime and endanger lives.

5.3 Increased Safety Awareness and Preventive Action at Community Level

Through sustained engagement, the project strengthened public awareness on safety risks and prevention:

- Communities were sensitized on safety during heavy rains, including the need for proper drainage and infrastructure preparedness

- Public awareness campaigns during Ramadan promoted peaceful coexistence and community vigilance
- School based engagements in Likoni raised awareness on child protection and risks of sexual exploitation, particularly for girls

These efforts contributed to a shift toward preventive safety practices, reducing vulnerability before harm occurs.

5.4 Strengthened Inclusion in Safety and Security Processes

The project ensured that safety interventions were inclusive and responsive to vulnerable groups:

- Over 100 participants engaged in International Women’s Day forums, amplifying women’s voices on safety, justice and protection
- Dedicated forums for persons with disabilities (PWDs) created safe spaces to address their unique safety challenges
- Youth from marginalized areas actively participated in safety dialogues and solution-building processes



VOCAL Africa’s staff sharing a women’s day message on social media

This inclusive approach ensured that safety is not selective, but accessible to all, especially those most at risk.

5.5 Enhanced Access to Justice and Protection of Rights

In parallel, the project strengthened security and justice responses:

- Over 200 inmates at Hindi Prison accessed legal support and rights awareness
- Legal aid clinics in Old Town and Hindi expanded access to justice for vulnerable populations
- Multiple cases of rights violations were documented and are under active legal follow-up

These interventions ensured that violations are not normalized and that communities have pathways to justice and protection.

5.6 Strategic Litigation Advancing Environmental and Community Safety

Legal interventions directly contributed to protecting both rights and public safety:

- A court order in Watamu halted незакон development of a public park, preserving an important ecological and community safety space
- Protection of such spaces contributes to environmental stability, climate resilience and safer communal environments

This demonstrated that litigation can be a powerful tool not just for justice—but for protecting shared spaces critical to community safety.

5.7 Direct Support to Victims Strengthening Safety and Accountability

VOCAL Africa provided comprehensive support to victims of violence, reinforcing both justice and deterrence:

- Families affected by police brutality and gender based violence received legal, logistical and psychosocial support
- Cases such as Dennis Ringa, Salim Masha and Gloria Kiza progressed through justice processes with sustained follow-up

By standing firmly with victims, the project contributed to breaking cycles of impunity and reinforcing a culture of accountability that deters future violations.

5.8 Breakthrough Engagement with Police on Rights Based Policing

Institutional engagement with the National Police Service resulted in:

- Formal endorsement of the project by the Inspector General of Police

- Directive for Coast Region police to collaborate with VOCAL Africa
- Planned rollout of human rights–based training for officers

This lays the foundation for safer policing practices, where enforcement is guided by law, accountability and respect for human rights.

5.9 Strengthened Community Voice and Responsiveness of Duty Bearers

The project empowered communities to speak out and demand safer conditions:

- Community forums resulted in direct engagement with government officials
- Public pressure contributed to clarification and accountability on issues such as alleged “shoot to kill” directives
- Increased willingness among residents to report violations and organize collectively

This represents a shift toward communities becoming active defenders of their own safety and rights.



VOCAL Africa’s CEO with other partners including Law Society of Kenya (LSK) condemning shoot to kill orders

5.10 Emerging Youth-Led Safety and Economic Solutions

Youth engagement produced innovative, prevention-focused solutions:

- Youth proposed carbon credit entrepreneurship through mangrove conservation, linking environmental protection to economic empowerment
- Increased youth participation in civic and safety initiatives was observed

These initiatives address root causes of insecurity by reducing vulnerability and creating sustainable pathways away from crime.

5.11 Expanded Reach Through Digital Advocacy and Public Education

Digital campaigns and educational materials strengthened public awareness and engagement:

- Campaigns addressed public accountability, safety during rains and peaceful coexistence
- Educational materials were distributed to chiefs' offices, police stations and social justice centres

This ensured that safety messaging reached communities consistently, reinforcing behavior change and awareness at scale.



VOCAL Africa's Coast Coordinator's poster in one of the national televisions

6.0 Project Outcomes So Far

The implementation of the Safety and Security Project between December 2025 and March 2026 has begun to yield meaningful shifts in how communities experience safety, engage with security actors and respond to injustice. While many of these changes are still emerging, there is clear evidence that the project is contributing to a gradual transformation in both community dynamics and institutional responsiveness.

6.1 Gradual Restoration of Trust Between Communities and Security Agencies

One of the most significant emerging outcomes is the slow but visible rebuilding of trust between communities, particularly young people and law enforcement agencies.

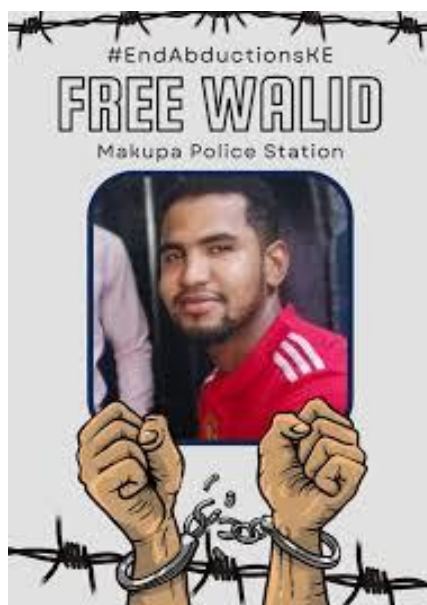
Through structured dialogues, joint forums and sustained engagement, spaces have been created where communities and security actors can interact constructively rather than confrontationally. The willingness of police leadership to engage, clarify public concerns and commit to human rights based approaches signals a shift toward more accountable and responsive policing.

While mistrust has not been fully resolved, there is growing openness on both sides which lays the foundation for longer term collaboration in maintaining safety and security.

6.2 Increased Community Agency and Collective Responsibility for Safety

Communities are increasingly moving from passive victims of insecurity to active participants in shaping their own safety outcomes.

Through the Maskani Safe Spaces and community forums, residents have demonstrated a stronger willingness to organize, articulate their concerns and demand action from duty bearers. Issues such as sewage systems, infrastructure failures and policing practices are no longer endured silently but are being collectively challenged.



A poster done by community members calling for the release of VOCAL Africa's Coast Coordinator after he was arrested for questioning police on why they were harassing community members

This shift toward collective action represents a critical outcome: safety is increasingly being understood as a shared responsibility between communities and institutions.

6.3 Strengthened Culture of Accountability and Justice-Seeking

The project has contributed to a growing culture where violations are reported, pursued and challenged rather than normalized.

Victims and their families are now more supported and empowered to seek justice, while communities are increasingly aware of legal pathways available to them. Strategic litigation and case follow ups have reinforced the message that impunity is not inevitable.

This has begun to shift public perception from resignation to injustice toward expectation of accountability which is an essential pillar for sustainable security.

6.4 Improved Awareness of Safety Risks and Preventive Practices

There is a noticeable increase in community awareness around safety risks and preventive measures, particularly in relation to environmental hazards, child protection and public health concerns.

Communities are now more vocal about unsafe conditions such as poor drainage, sewage systems and neglected infrastructure and are actively pushing for solutions. Similarly, conversations around child safety, gender based violence and inclusion of vulnerable groups have gained prominence.

This growing awareness is contributing to a preventive approach to safety, where risks are identified and addressed before they escalate into harm.

6.5 Greater Inclusion of Marginalized Voices in Safety and Security Processes

The project has contributed to a more inclusive approach to safety by deliberately creating spaces for groups that are often excluded from such conversations.

Women, persons with disabilities and youth from marginalized communities are increasingly participating in dialogue forums, articulating their specific safety concerns and influencing

local solutions. This inclusion is helping to reshape safety interventions to be more responsive, equitable and grounded in lived realities.

As a result, safety is no longer framed in generic terms, but as a concept that must address the unique vulnerabilities of different groups.

6.6 Emerging Shift in Youth Engagement: From Vulnerability to Leadership

A notable outcome of the project is the gradual shift in how young people engage with issues of safety and security.

Rather than being viewed solely as potential perpetrators or victims of crime, youth are increasingly positioning themselves as problem solvers and leaders. Their participation in dialogue forums, civic engagement initiatives and proposal of innovative solutions, such as environmental based income generation, reflects a growing sense of ownership and responsibility.



VOCAL Africa's Nahida leading a women's day activity in Lamu

This shift is critical in breaking the cycle of recruitment into criminal networks and building a generation that is actively invested in peace and stability.

6.7 Early Signs of Institutional Responsiveness to Community Concerns

There are emerging indications that duty bearers are becoming more responsive to community concerns raised through the project.

The participation of government officials in community barazas, engagement with infrastructure related issues and public clarification by security leadership on controversial statements demonstrate a growing recognition of the need for accountability.

While systemic change will take time, these early responses signal a positive trajectory toward more responsive and people-centered governance.

6.8 Strengthened Link Between Safety, Environment and Livelihoods

The project has helped reframe safety beyond crime and policing, linking it to environmental conditions, infrastructure and economic opportunities.

Communities are increasingly recognizing that issues such as environmental degradation, poor urban planning and lack of livelihoods directly contribute to insecurity. The emergence of ideas such as carbon credit initiatives reflects a growing understanding that sustainable safety must address both environmental and economic realities.

7.0 Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

The implementation of the Safety and Security Project during the reporting period was anchored on strong partnerships and continuous engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Recognizing that safety and security cannot be achieved in isolation, VOCAL Africa adopted a collaborative approach that brought together state and non-state actors to co-create solutions, strengthen accountability and enhance sustainability of interventions.

7.1 Engagement with the National Police Service

A key pillar of the project was strategic engagement with the National Police Service (NPS), aimed at fostering collaboration and promoting human rights based policing.

High level engagement with the Inspector General of Police resulted in formal endorsement of the project and a directive for Coast Region police to work closely with VOCAL Africa. This marked a significant breakthrough in institutional collaboration, opening pathways for structured engagement, including planned human rights trainings for police officers.

At the regional level, engagement with the Coast Regional Police Commander further

strengthened coordination and laid the groundwork for operational collaboration with sub-county police leadership. These engagements are critical in bridging the gap between communities and law enforcement, and in promoting accountability within policing systems.



The Coast Regional Police Commander addressing the media at a past event

7.2 Collaboration with National Government Administration Officers (NGAO)

VOCAL Africa worked closely with National Government Administration Officers, including chiefs and assistant chiefs, who play a central role in community governance and local security coordination.

These administrators actively participated in community barazas and dialogue forums, helping to convene communities, mediate discussions and channel concerns to relevant government structures. Their involvement strengthened the legitimacy of the forums and ensured that community concerns were formally recognized within government systems.

7.3 Engagement with County Government Officials

The project facilitated direct engagement between communities and county government officials, particularly on issues related to infrastructure, environmental safety and service delivery.

Notably, participation of county officials, including representatives from urban planning, in community forums created a platform for accountability and responsiveness. These

engagements enabled communities to directly present their concerns and demands, particularly around sewage systems, drainage and public safety infrastructure.

7.4 Partnerships with Civil Society and Community Based Organizations

VOCAL Africa collaborated with civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and social justice centres across Mombasa County to deepen grassroots reach and strengthen community mobilization.

Partnership with organizations such as Alpha and Omega CBO and Social Justice Centres enabled targeted engagement with high-risk communities, including informal settlements and youth groups. These partnerships were instrumental in facilitating dialogue forums, mobilizing participants and ensuring that interventions were locally grounded and responsive.

7.5 Engagement with Community Leadership Structures

Community elders, religious leaders and local opinion leaders played a critical role in facilitating dialogue, building trust and promoting community ownership of the project.

Their involvement helped bridge generational and social divides, particularly in engagements involving youth and security actors. By leveraging these trusted figures, the project was able to foster more inclusive and constructive conversations around safety, security and human rights.

7.6 Engagement with Human Rights Defenders and Activists



VOCAL Africa leading in a training of human rights defenders

VOCAL Africa convened and worked closely with human rights defenders and activists across Mombasa County, creating a network of actors committed to advancing safety, justice and accountability.

These engagements strengthened coordination among rights actors, enhanced information sharing and contributed to collective advocacy on emerging issues, including disaster preparedness, policing practices and infrastructure challenges.

7.7 Community as Central Stakeholders

At the heart of the project were the communities themselves—particularly youth, women and marginalized groups—who were not treated as passive beneficiaries, but as active stakeholders and co-creators of solutions.

Through forums, dialogues and joint actions, communities played a central role in identifying challenges, proposing solutions and holding duty bearers accountable. This approach ensured that interventions were grounded in lived realities and strengthened the sustainability of project outcomes.

8.0 Challenges Encountered

Despite the significant progress made during the reporting period, the implementation of the Safety and Security Project faced a number of structural, institutional and operational challenges. These challenges reflect the complex environment within which the project operates and underscore the need for sustained engagement, adaptive strategies and long-term investment in community-centered safety initiatives.

8.1 Delays in Institutional Engagement and Bureaucratic Processes

One of the key challenges encountered was delays in securing high level institutional engagement, particularly with the National Police Service.

Efforts to engage the Office of the Inspector General required multiple follow-ups and extended timelines before a formal meeting could be secured. This delayed the rollout of critical components of the project, including the planned human rights training for police officers.

While eventual approval and support were secured, the experience highlighted the impact of bureaucratic processes on timely implementation of interventions, especially those requiring national-level authorization.

8.2 Deep Rooted Mistrust Between Communities and Security Agencies

The longstanding mistrust between communities, especially youth and law enforcement agencies posed a significant challenge to engagement efforts.

In several instances, initial interactions were characterized by skepticism, resistance and reluctance from both sides. Youth participants expressed fear of victimization, while some security actors were hesitant to engage openly in community forums.



Community members passing by the Central Police Station in Mombasa

Although the project has begun to bridge this gap, overcoming years of mistrust remains a gradual process that requires sustained and consistent engagement beyond the reporting period.

8.3 Limited Responsiveness to Structural Safety Concerns

While community members actively raised concerns related to environmental safety, such as poor drainage, sewage systems and unsafe infrastructure, response from relevant county authorities was at times slow or insufficient.

This created frustration among community members, particularly where urgent issues affecting daily safety remained unaddressed. The gap between community demands and institutional response highlights ongoing challenges in service delivery and accountability at the county level.

8.4 Resource Constraints and Expanding Demand

The project experienced growing demand for expansion beyond the initial target areas of Kisauni and Likoni, as communities across Mombasa expressed interest in similar interventions.

While this reflects the relevance and impact of the project, it also posed a challenge in terms of limited resources, both financial and human, to meet the increasing demand. Balancing depth of engagement in targeted areas with pressure for expansion required careful prioritization.

8.5 Sensitivity of Human Rights and Accountability Work

Engagement on issues such as police conduct, extrajudicial killings and human rights violations proved to be highly sensitive.

In some instances, discussions around accountability created tension, particularly where security actors felt scrutinized or communities expressed strong grievances. Managing these engagements required careful facilitation to ensure that dialogue remained constructive while still addressing critical issues of justice and accountability.



VOCAL Africa and partner organisations protested the grabbing of public land

8.6 Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities of Target Communities

High levels of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion among youth continued to pose a structural challenge to the sustainability of safety interventions.

While the project created platforms for dialogue and engagement, the underlying economic realities that drive vulnerability to crime and gang recruitment remain largely unresolved. This underscores the need for complementary interventions that address livelihoods and economic empowerment alongside safety and security efforts.

8.7 Environmental and Climate Related Risks

The anticipated heavy rains during the reporting period exposed underlying infrastructural weaknesses, including poor drainage systems and inadequate urban planning.

These environmental risks not only threatened safety but also placed additional pressure on communities already dealing with insecurity. Addressing such challenges requires coordinated action beyond the scope of a single project, involving multiple government agencies and long-term planning.

9.0 Lessons Learned

The implementation of the Safety and Security Project during the reporting period has provided critical insights into the dynamics of community safety, institutional engagement and sustainable peacebuilding. These lessons have not only informed ongoing implementation but also shaped the strategic direction of future interventions.

9.1 Safety and Security Must Be Addressed Holistically

One of the most significant lessons from the project is that safety and security cannot be addressed in isolation or through fragmented approaches.

The realities on the ground demonstrate that crime, environmental risks, socio-economic vulnerabilities and institutional mistrust are deeply interconnected. Interventions that focus solely on enforcement or isolated aspects of insecurity are insufficient. Instead, there is a need for integrated approaches that combine community engagement, justice mechanisms, infrastructure advocacy and economic empowerment.

This reinforces the importance of adopting a human rights–centered and community-driven model that addresses both the symptoms and root causes of insecurity.

9.2 Trust Building is a Continuous and Deliberate Process

Rebuilding trust between communities and security agencies is not an event but a sustained process.

The project revealed that historical mistrust cannot be reversed through one-off engagements. It requires consistent dialogue, transparency, accountability and demonstrated commitment from both sides. Even small shifts, such as open dialogue, public clarifications by security leadership and joint forums, play a critical role in gradually restoring confidence.

This underscores the need for long-term investment in trust-building as a foundation for effective safety and security interventions.

9.3 Community Ownership is Central to Sustainable Safety

The project has demonstrated that communities are not merely beneficiaries of safety interventions but central actors in creating and sustaining safe environments.

When provided with platforms and support, communities are able to organize, articulate their concerns and demand accountability from duty bearers. The emergence of collective action around infrastructure issues and safety concerns highlights the power of community ownership.

Sustainable change, therefore, depends on empowering communities to take an active role in shaping their safety outcomes.

9.4 Inclusion Strengthens Effectiveness of Safety Interventions

Another key lesson is the importance of inclusive approaches that deliberately bring in voices that are often excluded from safety and security processes.

Engagements with women, persons with disabilities and marginalized youth revealed unique and often overlooked safety challenges. Incorporating these perspectives leads to more responsive, equitable and effective interventions.

Safety cannot be universal if it does not account for the lived realities of all groups—particularly those most vulnerable.

9.5 Access to Justice is a Critical Pillar of Security

The project reaffirmed that safety is inseparable from justice.



VOCAL Africa CEO and Coast Coordinator following proceedings in court

Where communities lack access to justice, insecurity thrives. Legal aid, strategic litigation and victim support not only address individual cases but also send a broader message that violations will not go unchallenged.

Strengthening access to justice is therefore essential in breaking cycles of impunity and reinforcing a culture of accountability.

9.6 Geographical Scope of Insecurity is Interconnected

A critical operational lesson emerging from the project relates to geographical coverage.

While the project was initially designed to focus on Kisauni and Likoni sub-counties, implementation has clearly demonstrated that insecurity cannot be effectively addressed within isolated geographical boundaries. The challenges experienced in these sub-counties are deeply interconnected with dynamics across the entire Mombasa County—and indeed the wider Coastal region.

Patterns of crime, youth vulnerability, environmental risks and even security responses often cut across sub-county and county lines. As such, limiting interventions to specific areas risks addressing symptoms rather than the broader system driving insecurity.

To achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes, there is a clear need to expand the scope of interventions beyond Kisauni and Likoni to cover the whole of Mombasa County and progressively adopt a regional approach that includes the broader Coast region. This would allow for more coordinated, comprehensive and impactful responses to safety and security challenges.

9.7 Institutional Engagement Requires Patience and Strategic Persistence

Engaging state institutions, particularly at national level, requires time, persistence and strategic navigation of bureaucratic processes.

While eventual collaboration with the National Police Service was achieved, the delays experienced highlight the importance of early engagement, continuous follow up and relationship building in driving institutional buy in.



Kenya's Inspector General of Police who approved VOCAL Africa's partnership with the police

This lesson reinforces the need for patience and sustained advocacy in influencing systemic change.

9.8 Addressing Root Causes Requires Multi-Sectoral Approaches

The project highlighted that insecurity is closely linked to broader socio-economic realities, including unemployment, poverty and lack of opportunities for youth.

While safety and security interventions are essential, they must be complemented by initiatives that address livelihoods, education and economic empowerment. Without tackling these root causes, efforts to reduce insecurity may have limited long-term impact.

10.0 Conclusion

The Safety and Security Project implemented by VOCAL Africa between December 2025 and March 2026 has demonstrated that meaningful change is possible when communities are empowered, institutions are engaged and justice is pursued with consistency and courage.

The findings of this report make one reality unmistakably clear: insecurity in Mombasa is not merely a policing challenge. It is a complex, interconnected issue shaped by socio-economic inequalities, environmental neglect, institutional mistrust and limited access to justice. Addressing it therefore requires more than reactive responses. It demands a deliberate shift toward inclusive, preventive and community driven approaches that place people, dignity and rights at the center of security.



Residents of Mombasa protesting against frequent power outage claiming it contributes to insecurity

Throughout this reporting period, the project has laid a strong foundation for such a shift. Communities have begun to organize and speak out, no longer accepting unsafe conditions as

normal. Young people are increasingly stepping forward not as subjects of suspicion, but as agents of change. Institutions, while still evolving, have shown early signs of responsiveness and willingness to engage. Most importantly, the idea of safety itself is being redefined from a narrow focus on enforcement to a broader vision that encompasses environment, inclusion, justice and shared responsibility.

However, the journey toward lasting safety and security is far from complete. The challenges encountered highlight the depth of systemic issues that must be addressed, while the lessons learned point to the need for broader, more coordinated and sustained interventions. Expanding the scope of efforts beyond individual sub counties, to the entire Mombasa County and ultimately the wider Coastal region, will be critical in achieving meaningful and lasting impact.

VOCAL Africa remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing human rights, promoting accountability and empowering communities to take charge of their safety and future. The organization will continue to work alongside communities, government institutions and partners to deepen these gains and drive transformative change.



Youths protesting in the streets of Mombasa for improved security

Ultimately, the path to a safer and more secure Mombasa lies not in isolated actions, but in collective resolve. When communities are heard, institutions are accountable and justice is upheld, safety ceases to be a privilege and becomes a right enjoyed by all.