



# **Annual Report 2018**

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# Foreword

It is often dangerous to act as a human rights defender. Instead of governments supporting organisations defending vulnerable groups, many countries have introduced new laws and regulations that restrict their operation. Members of many human rights organisations were arrested during 2018, and attacks on offices were either made directly by the police or through intermediaries. Representatives of gender and sexual minorities and their defenders in East Africa are under particular pressure. In many countries, all activities considered somehow political are dangerous, especially before the elections.

The year 2018 was the 20th anniversary of KIOS' activities, and it was celebrated with hard work. In 2018, KIOS made the largest open call in its history, with almost 400 applications. The large number of applications reflects the great need for funding by human rights organisations, and the narrowing of the civil society space in many countries.

The KIOS Foundation moved to more programmatic activities at the beginning of the year.

All of our funding will be reviewed reflecting the program to ensure that our projects are mutually supportive. We continue to have a strong focus on the rights of vulnerable groups. In South Asia, women's rights are in the centre of our partners' work. In East Africa, emphasis is placed on the rights of sexual and gender minorities and corporate accountability.

In 2018, we supported a total of 42 projects in our focus countries Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Nepal, Sri Lanka, among Tibetan refugees and regionally. Some projects were also supported in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Burundi. We are proud to be able to support the courageous human rights defenders of these countries, who put themselves in the position of helping the weaker and more vulnerable, even though they themselves are being harassed and arrested.

Defending human rights is becoming increasingly dangerous and need the support of all of us. We in KIOS believe that human rights are an essential part of social development.



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**–Kim Remitz**  
Executive Director, KIOS

# What is the KIOS Foundation?

**K**IOS is an independent, non-political, non-religious and non-governmental foundation. KIOS funds the work of human rights defenders in Asia and Africa. Together with local organisations, we are building a world where human rights belong to everyone.

KIOS funding is channelled mainly to six countries in East Africa and South Asia: Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Nepal and Sri Lanka and to Tibetan civil society organisations in exile. KIOS also supports some long-term partner organisations in Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia and Pakistan.

KIOS identifies reliable and relevant human rights organisations by open calls for proposals and by field trips. The starting point for KIOS' work is local need and local expertise. The support is directed to human rights projects planned and implemented by local civil society organisations.

Women's rights, the rights of marginalised groups and access to justice are themes regularly in the centre of our partners' work. Supported projects include human rights education, awareness raising, campaigning, monitoring and

documentation of the human rights situation, advocacy work and legal aid, among other activities. In addition to funding, KIOS supports the organisations by strengthening their capacity, networks and security.

KIOS was founded in 1998 by 11 Finnish human rights and development NGOs. KIOS receives financial support for its activities from the development cooperation funds of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

During its' 20 years of existence, KIOS has funded over 450 projects in almost 60 countries. The funding has made a difference at the individual, local, national, and international level. Some KIOS partners have changed individual lives by giving legal aid to the most marginalised. Some partners have pushed through improvements on national legislation and others have given statements at UN Human Rights Council sessions, influencing the international community.

Together with our partners, we work for a world where dignity and human rights are recognized for all human beings, and states are committed to ensure them.





# How we work

## **We identify:**

We identify reliable and relevant human rights organisations in the South.

## **We fund:**

We give direct financial support to local, national and regional human rights actors.

## **We guide and mentor our grantees:**

We give guidance and mentoring to our partners (on financial and project management, networking, reporting etc.)

## **We communicate:**

We share news of our partners' work, participate in campaigns and organize human rights seminars and trainings in Helsinki.

## **We advocate:**

We discuss human rights issues with the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and other relevant actors in Finland and abroad.



# The year 2018 in numbers

**42**

KIOS funded projects  
were ongoing in 2018

**11**

projects ended  
in 2018

## Some results from 11 projects, which ended in 2018

**4808**

people received received  
legal aid or counselling

**116 865**

direct  
beneficiaries

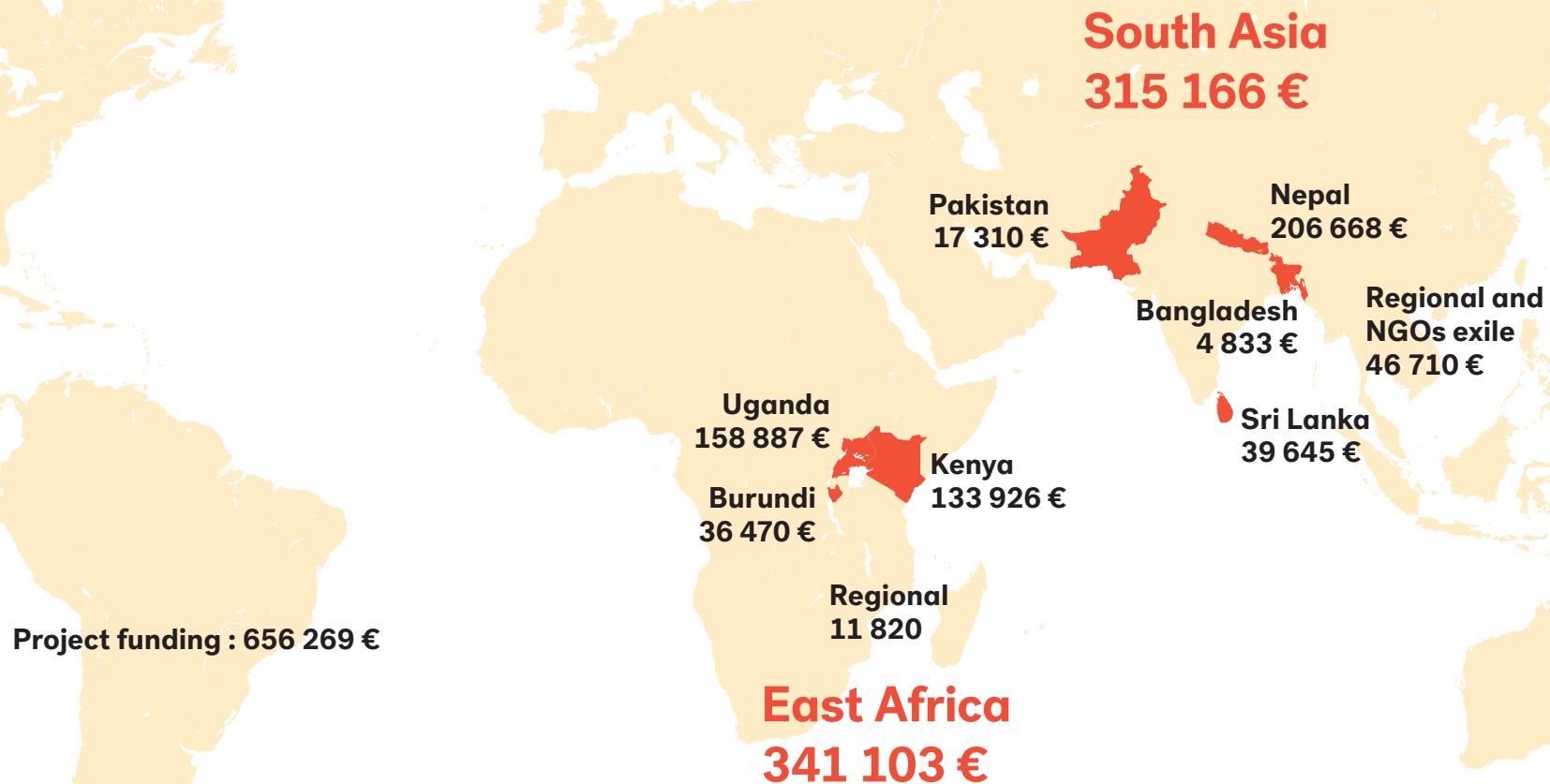
**13**

strategic  
litigation cases

**3 565 700**

indirect  
beneficiaries

# KIOS Funding in 2018



The distribution of funds in 2018 does not directly relate to the scope of operations in a specific country. For example, Sri Lanka has a major program, but the funding to the program was mainly allocated in 2017. There were also no instalments to Rwanda in 2018.





**Rwanda:** Legal aid for women  
struggling for their land



# Rwanda: Legal aid for women struggling for their land

In 1999, Rwandan women were given the right to own and inherit land, but few women are aware of the law. KIOS partner Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA) offers free legal assistance to women in rural Rwanda. The organization has helped thousands of women to acquire land rights.

“ The Rwandan genocide in 1994 left behind countless widows and orphans, who lost their land. Land rights traditionally belong to the male-heir, meaning that widows and daughters of the victims did not inherit the lands they had been farming.

In 1999, Rwandan women were given the right to own and inherit land, but not many are aware of these rights.

KIOS partner Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA) offers free legal assistance to women in rural Rwanda. One of the women was Godiberta Mugandahiro who finally got ownership to her land. Now she supports her whole family by growing banana.

“I sustain 14 people with my lands: my children, my grandchildren and the children of the

relatives who died in 1994. All of the kids are studying. It's quite an achievement from one woman, right?”

On top of that, Mugandahiro helps other widows to acquire their land rights by volunteering as a paralegal at HRFRA.

“There are still lot of war widows who do not know their rights.”

In Rwanda, land disputes are solved in the so-called abunzi arbitration committees. The members of the committees are part of the local communities, but they also work as part of Rwanda's legal system. HRFRA has trained abunzi members on human rights, rule of law and the constitution.

In addition to Mugandahiro, thousands of other women in Rwanda have received legal ownership to their land with the help of HRFRA.



“ I sustain 14 people with my lands: my children, my grandchildren and the children of the relatives who died in 1994.

- Godiberta Mugandahiro

A photograph showing two individuals, likely transgender, walking away from the camera on a paved path. They are wearing head coverings and shawls. The path leads towards a body of water, with a city skyline visible in the background under a hazy, sunset sky. A large power line tower is on the right, and trees are on the left. The text 'Bangladesh: Supporting the rights of transgender people' is overlaid at the bottom.

# **Bangladesh:** Supporting the rights of transgender people



# Bangladesh: Supporting the rights of transgender people

Hijras are a group of transgender people in South Asia. They should have the same human rights as all of us, but they often face discrimination because of the way they look. KIOS partner LOSAUK is an organisations that promotes the rights of hijras in Bangladesh.

“Here in Bangladesh, no gentleman wants to sit beside us”, tells a young hijra leader named Bindu. Hijras are discriminated in society because of their physical appearance. They are discriminated in the employment market, education, and health care.

Together with the hijra community, LOSAUK demands the government to promote and protect the rights of hijras in Bangladesh.

In 2013, the hijra community movement achieved a victory: the state of Bangladesh recognized hijras as a third gender. The state also promised them access to services and other support.

“Although discrimination still exists, now we

are increasingly accepted and considered as full members of society, and we have a voice that is heard. I can sit beside the deputy commissioner of the district, and I can talk to him. I can now speak on human rights issues. I render my thanks to all concerned initiators of our movement”, says Hijra leader Panna.

Still, the struggle of the transgender community in Bangladesh has not ended. The major problem lies in the attitudes and behavior of the people towards hijras. LOSAUK continues advocating and working for the rights of transgender people, until hijras have reached their goal – a full realization of their rights.



“Although discrimination still exists, now we are increasingly accepted and considered as full members of society, and we have a voice that is heard.

- Hijra leader Panna



**DIGNITY** **NON-**  
**DISCRIMINATION**  
**CHILD** **DEMOCRACY**  
**RIGHTS**  
**FREEDOM OF SPEECH**  
**EQUALITY** **WOMEN'S**  
**RIGHTS**  
**FREEDOM** **JUSTICE**  
**FROM TORTURE**  
**PEACE** **LGBTIQ+**  
**RIGHTS**



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