



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2022**

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# Supporting Brave Actions: Our Work in 2022

**T**he year 2022 was challenging in many ways. Just when the world was recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, in February 2022, Russia invaded and occupied parts of Ukraine in a major escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War, which had already begun in 2014. This has had substantial effects on our grantees in the Global South, too, for example, in terms of food security or funding. When the eyes of the entire global north are fixed on Ukraine, other crises receive less attention. This does not mean the other crises are non-existent or less relevant.

As the state of human rights has clearly deteriorated in many countries, civil society actors are needed more than ever. We have been proud to see our grantees working relentlessly in very difficult situations. For example, our Ugandan grantee ISER succeeded in bringing forth the socio-economic challenges triggered by Covid-19 and amplifying advocacy on the state's role to deliver quality public services in the country. Needless to say, we also appreciated our grantees' work in monitoring and ensuring peaceful elections in Kenya in August 2022.

Sri Lanka was one of the countries where tourism suffered from the shutdowns during the pandemic. But it was not the only reason that led the country to one of its worst financial crises. The crisis was partially caused by the country's poor economic fiscal policy and exacerbated by it. In times of political instability and curfews imposed by the government, civil society is needed to remind those in charge that the right to peacefully demonstrate is, in fact, a human right.

In Nepal, we were thrilled to find new grantees doing critical human rights work with Dalit LGBTIQ persons, youth, and the stateless. We hope to have an interesting and successful cooperation during the years to come!

We are here to support our grantees in times of turbulent circumstances. We keep reminding our government that the crises go hand in hand and cannot be isolated from one another. We also look to expand our funding so that we can ensure the continuity of our work no matter the political circumstances in Finland. We took a major leap towards that at the end of 2022 when we were granted EU funding focusing on supporting civil society organizations in Kenya.



**Kim Remitz**  
Executive Director, KIOS

The year 2022 was also the first year we were able to see people face-to-face after the world-wide pandemic. We were happy to see some familiar and new faces at the events organized by KIOS. Thank you for being there to support human rights with us!



# What is the KIOS Foundation

**K**IOS is an independent, non-political, non-religious, and non-governmental foundation. We fund the work of human rights defenders in South Asia and East Africa. Together with local civil society organizations, we are building a world where human rights belong to everyone.

At the heart of our work is the realization of the rights of marginalized and excluded groups and persons in vulnerable positions.

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

Our grantees work in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. We also support Tibetan civil society in exile, as well as regional initiatives in East Africa and South Asia.

We identify our grantees through open calls for proposals and field trips. The starting point for our funding is local needs and local expertise. The support is provided for human rights work planned and implemented by local civil society organizations.

During our 25 years of existence, we have provided more than 520 grants in almost 60 countries. Many activists we support work at the grassroots level in local communities, but some of our grantees also play a role at the pinnacle of

human rights politics, such as at the UN Human Rights Council. Our grantees have gathered information about severe human rights violations and brought them to the attention of the international community. They have helped marginalized groups participate in society and defend their rights, and provided legal aid to thousands of people whose rights have been trampled upon. Some of our grantees have succeeded in changing legislation in their countries to take better account of human rights.

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



Photo: Vuokko Saino

# How We Work

**We identify:** We identify and select reliable and relevant human rights organizations and movements in South Asia and East Africa.

**We fund:** We give direct financial support to human rights activist groups at local, national and regional level.

**We strengthen:** We strengthen our grantees and their networks, including giving financial support to trainings, networking and improving safety.

**We guide and mentor:** We give guidance and mentoring to our grantees on project planning, management and reporting.

**We communicate:** We share news of our grantees' work and the human rights situation in their countries, participate in campaigns and organise human rights seminars and trainings in Helsinki and online.

**We advocate:** We discuss human rights issues with decision-makers, officials and other relevant actors in Finland and abroad.

# The Year 2022 in Numbers

**44**

grants were  
on-going

**28**

in East Africa

**16**

in South Asia

Some results from 26 grants that ended in 2022

**62 627** PEOPLE BENEFITTED DIRECTLY FROM  
KIOS-FUNDED HUMAN RIGHTS WORK.

**10 549**

people learnt about their rights  
and how to defend them.

**1 223**

authorities learnt about human  
rights and their duties.

**21 626**

people received legal aid  
or counselling.

**16**

strategic  
litigation cases\*

**16**

16 women-led  
organizations\*\*

**12**

human rights reports  
were published.

\* Strategic litigation involves selecting and bringing a case to the courtroom with the goal of creating broader changes in society. This means that strategic litigation cases are as much concerned with the effects that they will have on larger populations and governments as they are with the end result of the cases themselves. When it is successfully used, strategic litigation can bring ground-breaking results. It can spring a government into action to provide basic care for its citizens, guarantee the equal rights of minorities, or halt an environmentally damaging activity.

\*\* This also counts for transgender women.

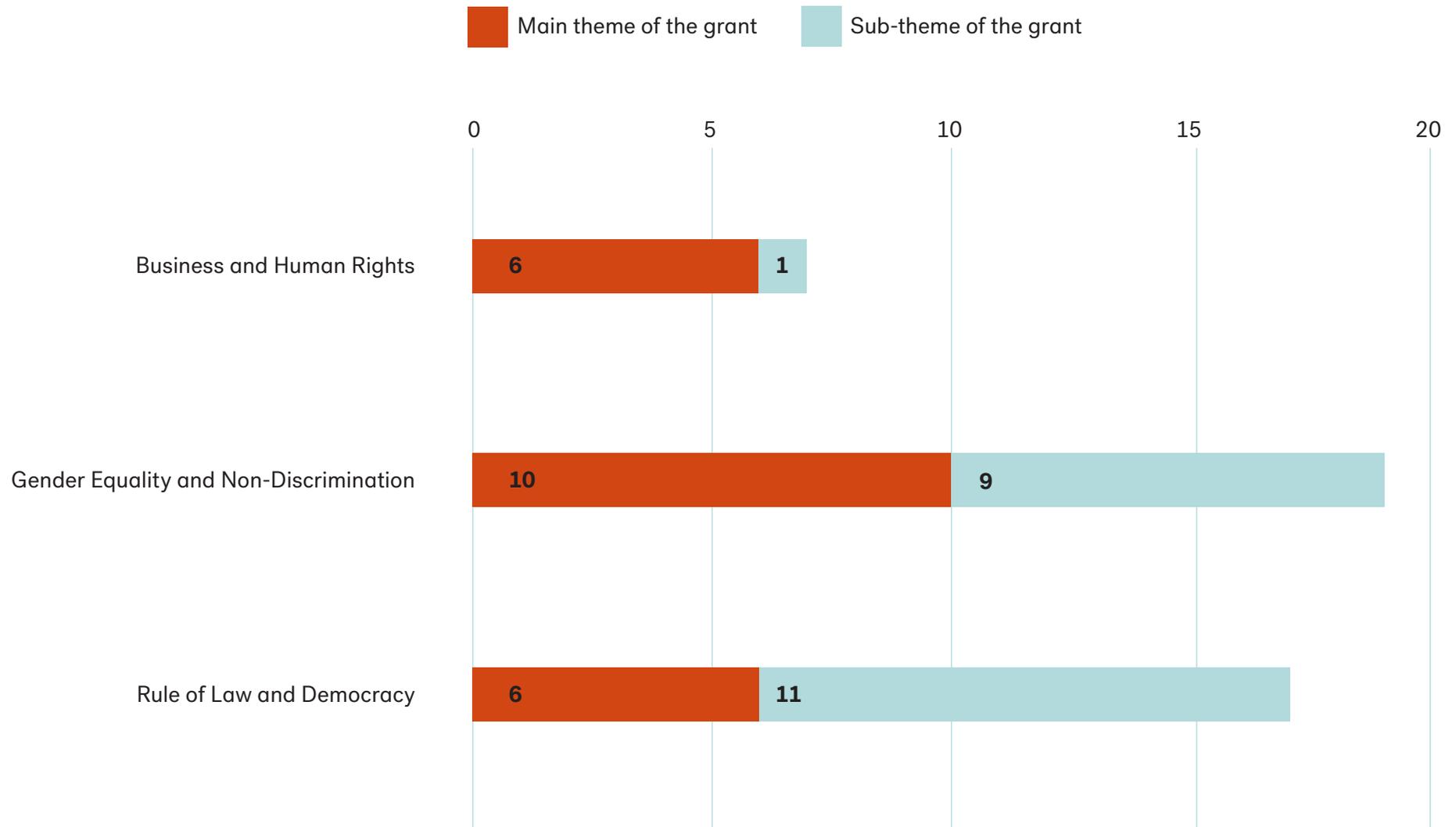
# KIOS Funding in 2022

KIOS grants in total: 999 375 €



\*The distribution of funds in 2022 does not directly relate to the scope of operations in a specific country.

# The Main Themes of New KIOS Grants in 2022



There were 22 new grants in 2022. 26 grants closed during 2022. Three grants were ongoing over year 2022.

**ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS**

**GENDER** **ETHNIC MINORITIES**  
**EQUALITY** **HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**DEFENDERS**

**RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

**LGBTQA+ RIGHTS** **CHILD**  
**RIGHTS**

**CONFLICTS AND CRISES**

**ECONOMIC, SOCIAL**  
**AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

# Examples of Our Grantees' Work



# Advancing Economic and Social Justice

KIOS grantee ISER (Initiative for Social and Cultural Rights) aims to ensure the full recognition and realisation of social and economic rights, primarily in Uganda but also within the African region.

In the year 2022, ISER has been instrumental in several positive changes in the implementation of economic and social rights in Uganda. For example, the Ugandan government has finally purchased more ambulances and is building up Uganda's National Ambulance Service following ISER's budget analysis and advocacy.

ISER also registered a ground-breaking judgement in a case relating to financing public education. The judgement ruled that the Ugandan government must take the leading role in regulating Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the delivery of Universal Secondary Education and ensuring that they meet minimum standards. ISER's determined advocacy contributed to this ruling.

ISER has played a pivotal role in advocating for the accessibility of education. ISER's community advocates are spread out across different districts, and they have been engaging in discussions about education infrastructure across different districts. They have reported continuous improvements resulting from their engagements with duty bearers at various levels of local government, with technical support from ISER. Additionally, ISER's advocacy during school closure to make continued learning inclusive yielded results, especially for blind children who gained access to learning materials in braille format.

KIOS has been supporting ISER since the year 2014.



Photo: ISER

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**Education is a human right, it should not be treated as a commodity or a means for generating financial returns on investment in private provision of education. All children deserve to benefit from a good quality education.**

**– Salima Namusoby, Executive Director, ISER**

# Driving Corporate Accountability and Land Rights

The Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability UCCA is a consortium that brings together civil society actors, especially those working on various corporate responsibility issues. UCCA members have been able to engage in human rights work despite very challenging situations.

**U**CCA was formed in 2015 and currently has 23 members working on Business and Human Rights issues in different parts of Uganda. KIOS's other Ugandan grantee, Initiative for Socio-Economic Rights (ISER), acts as UCCA's secretariat. UCCA's local members are responsible for a large part of UCCA's activities and their implementation.

UCCA member BIRUDO was able to engage in human rights work in a challenging context of Covid-19 pandemic and land rights-related issues. These topics are often sensitive for civil society actors. BIRUDO conducted its work in the rather remote areas of Buliisa and Pakwach in Western Uganda, where the need for human rights work is great, but the number of human rights actors is low.

The construction company Coil Company Limited is behind an irrigation project that will

contribute to increased food security and poverty reduction among farmers in Uganda. Disagreements with the Paten clan began when the authorities sought to expand the land for the project, which originally started in the Nebbi district of northern Uganda. According to members of the Paten clan, who have lived in the area for generations, the authorities demanded an area of 365 acres – something they were allowed to use for the project. Later, the authorities stated that it was a question of 365 hectares, which is more than twice as large of an area.

BIRUDO's lawyer supported the Paten clan in filing a case of strategic litigation, a civil suit against Pakwach district local government, Coil Company, and Uganda Government Attorney General in the High Court of Uganda at Arua. BIRUDO and UCCA also successfully supported the Paten Clan members in making an official claim to the Independent Review Mechanism



Photo Sofi Lundin

(IRM) of the African Development Bank. The African Development Bank is one of the instances financing the project.

KIOS has been supporting ISER since December 2013, BIRUDO since 2019 and UCCA since 2017.

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**We cannot build an economic paradise for a few on the social and environmental graveyard of the many.**

**– Joseph Byomuhangyi,  
Project Coordinator, UCCA**

# Promoting Just Peace After the Civil War

The Social Architects (TSA) is a Sri Lankan non-governmental organization founded in 2012 by a diverse group of writers, activists, scholars and working professionals. The aim of the organization is to promote just peace and reconciliation and to improve citizens' participation in promoting their rights and demanding state accountability.

**S**ri Lanka is a multi-ethnic country that has suffered from ethnic conflicts and tension throughout its history, the latest major one being the civil conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for almost thirty years. After the civil war ended in 2009, the Sri Lankan economy grew, and many people rose to the middle class. Tourists and remittances brought large sums to the country, but the Covid-19 pandemic put an end to that.

The Sri Lankan government has, for some years, pursued poor economic policies, including accumulating a lot of external debt. In addition, taxes of many imported goods and raw materials were significantly reduced, leading to a situation where domestic production and farming were no longer profitable. All of this

resulted in an economic crisis in 2022 when the country could no longer import basic necessities, and no one could afford them regardless.

A curfew and emergency regulations were imposed, but still, there were large demonstrations. After weeks of protests, the president and his cabinet decided to resign. The new president and his government have not shown any indications of changing their approach to human rights, democracy, rule of law, and transitional justice, making the work of organizations such as TSA no easier or less relevant.

The Social Architects contributed to a more independent and pluralistic human rights movement by engaging people belonging to ethnic and religious minorities to be active on human rights work in Sri Lanka. Despite the very difficult working context, TSA succeeded in form-

ing Social Justice Cooperatives in 54 villages. These cooperatives gathered 378 active members, mainly from minority communities, who participated in decision-making at the local and district levels.

TSA has been a KIOS grantee since 2019.

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**The Social Justice Cooperatives are an indicator of a holistic approach to human rights, encompassing civil and political rights with economic, social, and cultural rights.**

– Sherine Xavier, Executive Director, TSA



Photo Shutterstock



## More Results Working for Dignity and Equality

**The Ara Trust (ARA)** was established in 2013 with the mission of expanding the protection space for refugees in India, a country which is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention and does not have domestic asylum law. ARA is India's first and only refugee law centre. KIOS has been partnering with ARA nearly since its founding days.

In 2022, ARA raised the question of vaccinations for the refugee population in India, who traditionally do not have access to government documentation. Through continued advocacy, the government issued guidelines for undocumented migrants on how to access vaccination procedures. With the assistance of UNHCR (United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), they have been able to gain access to vaccinations.

ARA created and disseminated a handbook about refugee rights and law to legal practitioners and human rights defenders, making it as accessible as possible in several languages, also attempting to overcome the barrier of illiteracy. ARA engaged with various refugee groups, communities, and legal practitioners, creating a network of human rights defenders and stakeholders focusing on refugee rights.

**PEaCE (Protecting Environment and Children Everywhere)** is a Sri Lankan organization that is part of ECPAT International, a global network of

civil society organizations that work to end the sexual exploitation of children. They have been receiving KIOS funding since 2019.

In 2022, thanks to the work done by PEaCE, 1,618 children received information about the rights of the child and online child abuse and sexual exploitation during 17 training sessions. Of the 1,618 children, 580 were boys and 1,038 were girls. At least 90 % clearly understood how exploitation and abuse can occur, its dangers, and they now know how to protect themselves.

39 victims (32 girls and 7 boys) were represented in 59 hearings in court by PEaCE's lawyers, improving their access to justice.

# Snapshots from KIOS Activities





Photo: Stemenpuu

## The challenges and possibilities of environmental activism

KIOS took part in the World Village Festival in Helsinki by organising a discussion between two environmental activists, Phyllis Omido from our grantee organization Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action (CJGEA) in Kenya and Iiris Laisi from Extinction Rebellion Finland. Phyllis Omido and Iiris Laisi discussed the challenges of environmental activists around

the world and the possibilities that activism can achieve. It was the first time the event could be organised on-site after the Covid-19 pandemic. The event could also be followed online.

## Environmental rights as human rights

KIOS organised an expert seminar about human rights and the environment a couple days after

the World Village Festival. The aim of the seminar was to raise awareness of the link between human rights and the environment and the importance of land rights to the realisation of numerous human rights. Phyllis Omido and Tom Bicko Ooko from KIOS grantee CJGEA in Kenya, and Shankar Limbu from KIOS grantee LAHURNIP in Nepal, spoke at the seminar, alongside various experts and activists from Finland.

## Campaigning for sexual rights

During Helsinki Pride Week, KIOS published a back-to-back story on social media about two activists in Kenya and Finland and what they have had to endure in their efforts to decriminalise consensual same-sex relationships. In Kenya, a maximum of 14 years in prison can be sentenced for same-sex conduct, and KIOS grantee National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) is involved in the struggle to decriminalise homosexuality. KIOS also took part in Helsinki Pride by joining the parade on the 2nd of June.

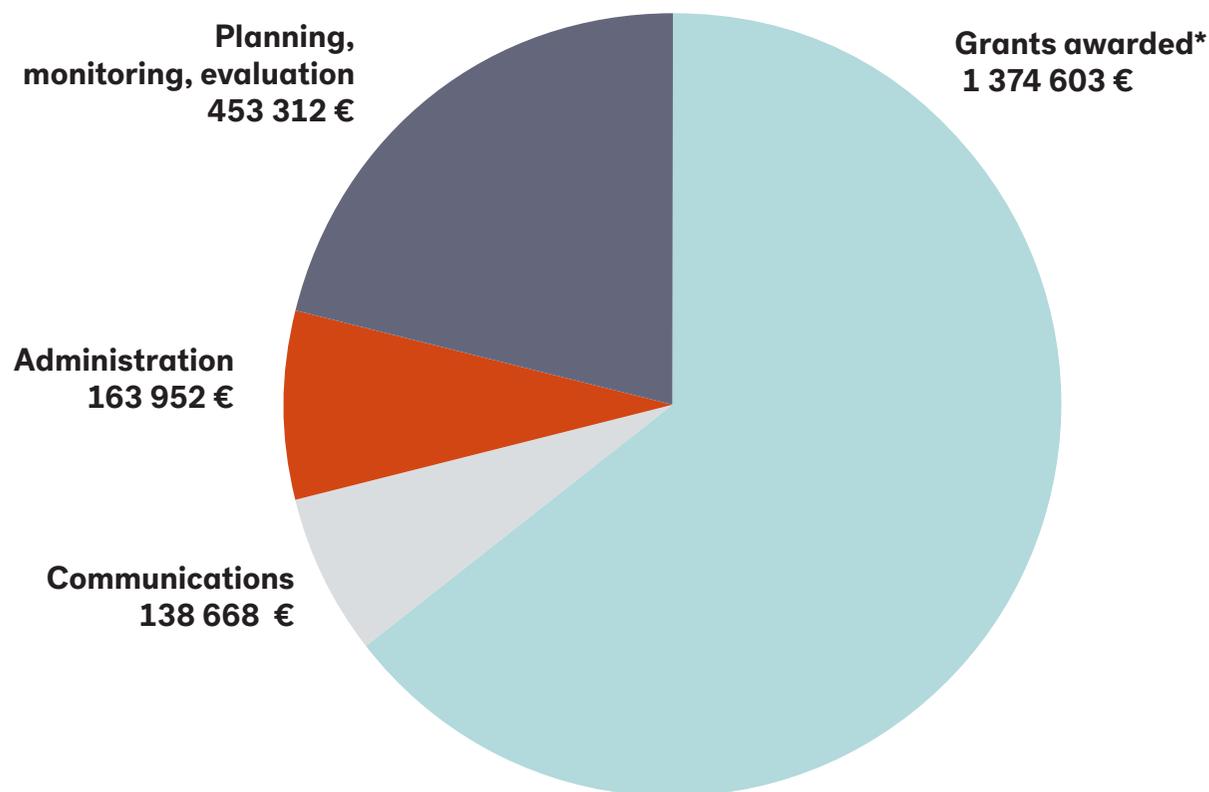
Journalist Liselott Lindström and documentarist Hanna Nordenswan made a documentary “Kenian sateenkaaren alla” (Under the Kenyan Rainbow), which told the stories of LGBTIQ+ activists connected to KIOS grantee PEMA Kenya. The documentary was published in March 2022 by Yle, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, and can still be found on Yle Arena. So far, the documentary has had 42,244 views on Yle Arena.

In June 2022, the largest Swedish-speaking newspaper in Finland, Hufvudstadsbladet, also interviewed Imani Kimiri, an LGBTIQ+ activist working for KIOS grantee NGLHRC in Kenya. Kimiri was interviewed about the fight to decriminalise same-sex relationships in Kenya.



# Finances and Administration

## Financial Year Breakdown



\* The grants awarded include the self-financing shares of the grantees

## A New Team Structure within KIOS

The international programme team was formed as a new way to steer the implementation of the MFA programme. This had mixed results as the new model was tested for the first time. The team structure allowed for more autonomy in prioritising and coordinating the implementation and enhanced long-term and budgetary planning as well as strengthened cooperation with the finance officer.

## Good Teamwork with the Board

The board was recognised as having worked effectively, responsibly and with good understanding of timely issues. The convening of the founding organizations can be further developed in the future.

## New Kind of Funding for KIOS from the European Union

KIOS participated in a call by the Delegation of the European Union to Kenya called “Strengthening Kenyan civil society organizations as actors of good governance and development”. This application, with two Kenyan partners, InformAction and the Civil Society Organization Network, was successful and allows KIOS to continue funding the Kenyan civil society with additional resources for the next four years. This is the first EU funding for KIOS and the first time it has another major donor in addition to the MFA.





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