

The Interprovincial Network of Lawyers for the Protection of Environmental Human Rights Defenders adopts its internal governance instruments

1 Makoki International Hub and Haki Zangu Inclusive Aid for Humanity organised, on 17 July 2026, a consultative workshop for lawyers who are members of the [Interprovincial Network of Lawyers for the Protection of Environmental Human Rights Defenders](#) from three provinces. The Network forms part of the integrated protection mechanisms for environmental human rights defenders established under the implementation of the [RENFORCE project](#). Comprising 15 lawyers drawn from the provinces and Bar Associations of Maniema, Ituri and Tshopo, the Network serves as a structure responsible for providing legal assistance to environmental human rights defenders who are victims of human rights violations. The purpose of the workshop was to establish the governance and operational rules of the Network.

I. Ensuring judicial protection for environmental human rights defenders

The discussions highlighted the vision and mandates assigned to the Network. These include providing legal assistance to environmental human rights defenders, representing defenders before judicial bodies, referring victims to the appropriate services, collaborating with university legal clinics and partner organisations, and contributing to advocacy initiatives aimed at promoting respect for the rights of environmental human rights defenders. These mandates directly reflect the principal vision of the RENFORCE project: to contribute to the consolidation of the rule of law and the sustainable protection of environmental human rights defenders in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), particularly in the provinces of Maniema, Ituri and Tshopo, by guaranteeing their effective access to justice, security and reparative mechanisms.

To establish an effective structure founded upon the principles of transparency and accountability, the 15 lawyers who are members of the Network, including nine men and six women, examined, amended and adopted both the Charter and the Internal Rules of Procedure. These two documents constitute the principal reference instruments governing the organisation and functioning of the Network. The Network members further approved and established their Coordination Committee, which is responsible for overseeing the Network's activities and ensuring coordination among the different provinces. The Committee is composed of five members, namely the Focal Point, the Rapporteur and three additional members. Its composition duly reflects the representation of the three provinces as well as gender considerations.

II. Close collaboration with university legal clinics

The RENFORCE project seeks to establish integrated legal protection and judicial mechanisms for environmental human rights defenders in the DRC. These mechanisms include an interprovincial network of lawyers and three university legal clinics, with one legal clinic established within each participating university. While the university legal clinics focus on rigorous research and documentation to collect evidence of human rights violations suffered by environmental human rights defenders, as well as the development of practical tools and referral resources to support them, the Network is responsible for providing legal assistance and representation before judicial bodies. In this regard, the formulation of the mechanisms for collaboration between these two structures was undertaken with particular care.

These mechanisms relate to the following areas of cooperation: case referrals, coordinated legal and judicial assistance, the exchange of information and experience, mutual capacity strengthening, and the monitoring of cases involving environmental human rights defenders. By creating a platform for dialogue and consultation between lawyers and university legal clinics, the project contributes to the establishment of a coordinated framework capable of responding effectively to legal protection needs within the targeted provinces.

III. A collaborative and multidimensional approach

This activity fully reflects the overall vision of the RENFORCE project. By creating a platform for dialogue and consultation among lawyers, university legal clinics and other actors engaged in environmental protection, the project contributes to the establishment of a coordinated framework capable of responding effectively to legal protection needs in the targeted provinces. The originality of this initiative lies primarily in its collaborative and multidimensional approach. Unlike conventional legal assistance models, which are often limited to isolated and *ad hoc* interventions, the RENFORCE project prioritises the establishment of a permanent interprovincial network bringing together complementary legal expertise around a common objective. This approach promotes not only the sharing of experience and expertise, but also the development of referral, follow-up and support mechanisms tailored to the specific realities faced by environmental human rights defenders. Furthermore, the simultaneous participation of lawyers from the provinces and Bar Associations of Maniema, Ituri and Tshopo demonstrates the project's commitment to promoting an integrated territorial approach based on the exchange of experience, mutual learning and coordinated interventions. In this regard, the signing of the Charter represented far more than a mere administrative formality; it embodied the collective commitment of the members to work sustainably towards the protection of environmental rights and access to justice.

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