

Our Journey– WILLHEART KENYA

WILLHEART KENYA was founded on the strength of friendship, shared purpose, and a deep commitment to service. Our journey began on **22nd February 2023**. Our core mission is to empower marginalized communities by fostering active participation through advocacy initiatives and capacity building programs that promote equality, inclusivity, co-existence and justice.

When a group of Researchers—connected by years of working together not just as colleagues but as a family. The team comprised of **Warda Maulana, Irene Zena Auma, Swafiya Abdulatif, Anne Ongere, Paul Kinoti, Gregory Eloge, Stephen Ruwa, Rose Ndanu, Javan Alukutsa, Issa Otome, Kennedy Mbithi, Carren Ogol and Zulekha Abdallah Bates**. We organized a surprise appreciation for one of our own, **Jane Monthe**, whom we felt had consistently supported the team whenever opportunities arose. That heartfelt gesture sparked a bigger vision: to sustain the unity we shared and channel it towards a positive impact in our communities. This led to the idea of forming an NGO—a step we took with no prior experience, but with unwavering optimism.

We quickly set up a simple structure to guide us forward. **Javan Alukutsa** was appointed as the Chairperson, **Stephen Ruwa** as the Secretary, **Paul Kinoti** and **Gregory Eloge** jointly assumed roles as the Finance team. Our initial meetings were hosted in members' homes on a voluntary basis. Later, we shifted to virtual meetings to accommodate members working in different parts of the country.

As the group evolved, we chose a name that embodied our spirit and mission: **WILLHEART Kenya**—inspired by the phrase "*Willing Heart*." It reflects our identity as researchers who are always ready to support and uplift the communities we meet during our fieldwork across Kenya.

Throughout 2023, we dedicated time to drafting our constitution and assembling all necessary documents for formal registration. In 2024, we officially began the registration process, and on **27th March 2025**, we received our NGO Certificate of Registration. Another milestone we made is through organizing a school visit (**Magombani Primary School**) in **Kwale County** that was a success irrespective of having limited funding and logistical setbacks.

Today, **WILLHEART KENYA** is focused on building a strong operational foundation. We are working on developing proposals for community-based projects hence an impact within the Coastal communities, together let's build a future grounded in equity, powered by justice and sustained by the collective strength of communities. From a moment of appreciation grew a movement—rooted in friendship, driven by compassion, and committed to impact.

