

Speech by PBI Kenya Board Chairperson, Naomi Barasa, at the PBI-Kenya's 10th Anniversary

Distinguished guests, comrades and friends, as the PBI Kenya family, it makes us really proud and happy that you agreed to share with us this day. And to all of you that have been part of this journey, thank you so much for finding time today to join us, to make our day memorable.

PBI Kenya is 10. We are so happy. It's been a long journey, figuratively and literally, 10 years. If there is a baby who was born 10 years ago, today that baby is in class 5. So, it's been a journey and a journey of courage. Where did we begin? At one point, it was just a dream. But remember, dreams are valid. So, this dream has brought us here today.

We look at PBI in three major phases. The first phase is the dream phase. The time when PBI did not exist in Kenya. The time when comrades and friends who worked at Nonviolent Peace Force wrote to PBI International and said, "It is time that we got a PBI Kenya in Kenya."

And before that was responded to, 2007 post-election violence happened. And that sent PBI thinking. In 2009, just like you've seen in the documentary, a team was sent to Kenya to come and investigate human rights violations.

Fast forward to 2011, an exploration mission of establishing PBI Kenya was sent to Kenya, which was supported by a lot of human rights defenders. And then after the report went back, 2013, PBI Kenya office was established. Initially by one volunteer. She's not appeared in the documentary, but she appears in many conversations. Anne Wright, an elderly, very energetic lady from Britain, who came and set up the PBI office and three months later, four volunteers joined her.

Our approach then, was working through foreign volunteers and doing physical accompaniment. That was our dream face. Then we got to 2016 when we got into our second phase, which I call, the redefining moment. In the redefining moment. We had quite a number of experiences. We had low moments. Almost not sure if we were able to continue. We had financial challenges. We legally were very uncertain and if we were going to survive in this country, mandate-wise, it was a reflection moment because physical accompaniment was not our thing here. Also, it is that very time that a beacon of hope emerged and this beacon is the TO project in 2016. It's the same time that the PBI Kenya consolidated its governance structure. We registered around that period as a local NGO in 2018. And at that same period of redefining, we localized the PBI mandate for local relevance.

Then we got to our third phase, I call this phase, the take-off phase which was from 2020 to date. This is the time that we were able to embrace new approaches, from volunteer and accompaniment to empowerment and capacity building. We diversified and expanded our funding base, we expanded our team at the Secretariat, expanded our governance body programming wise, we expanded qualitatively and quantitatively and you will attest to this just by looking at our team but also looking at the kind of work they do on the ground. It's also at around this takeoff period, that we're able to move beyond Nairobi to Kilifi and our friends and comrades from Kilifi are here.

It's within this period also that we're able to adopt a beautiful five-year strategic plan that ran from 2021 to 2025, that has two overarching strategies for capacity building and linking and influencing HRD's through other spaces of influence. Our strategic plan looked at very critical areas of strategic focus, which is safety

and security of HRDS, wellbeing of HRDs, networking and movement building. And from Alberto's speech, clearly, you've heard we are members of we are members of four networks which include Missing voices, the HRD Protection Network, *Mulika Wabakaji*, and Police Reforms Working Group. It's still within this networking groups that we have been able to support HRDs and WHRDS in 11 communities namely, Mathare, Kibera, Mukuru, Lang'ata, Kawangware, Kayole, kibarani, Mnarani, Shela, Ganda and Tezo.

We have continued to link and expose each of these to relevant individuals and institutional institutions locally and internationally, mainly through our popular activity known as speaker tours. We have also institutionalized and enhanced our internal effectiveness, efficiency and resilience. So, in our 10 years of existence, we have made definitely mistakes, enough of them. But with humility, we have drawn very valuable lessons. We have made friends who have become our strongest pillar throughout this journey, pillars of strength and as we continue to navigate through the familiar and unfamiliar terrains. We wish to recognize and thank all of you friends who have journeyed with us in the 10 years, and namely, I would want to recognize these friends under the category of donors and development partners. We have Misereor, zivik (the German Federal Foreign Office and ifa), and CPS, Spanish State (the Basque Agency) Fribourg Solidaire, Ford Foundation, the German Embassy, and the Swiss Embassy for believing in us and supporting our work. We are here because of that trust and belief you put in us.

Then we have this other category of friends called networks, the HRD Protection Network, police reform Working Group, Missing Voices, *Mulika Wabakaji*, thank you so much. Because you have taught us what it means to work with others. And you've taught us that we might be international, but that does not mean that we know everything. It also doesn't mean that we can do everything on our own. We are so humbled that you are part of us.

We also have our esteemed community partners and I say this with nostalgia. I am from Korogosho, so, every time I talk about community partners, I think about me. You have been amazing. You have been on the front line. You've put your lives on the line. We cannot celebrate you enough. Thank you so much for agreeing to teach PBI, what it means to work with community partners in all the 11 communities. And we are hoping that we will go beyond our PBI sister offices beyond Kenya, especially PPI UK, Brussels, Spain, France, Germany, Swizerland. We are so grateful because they we are the youngest, PBI in the movement, we are the baby in the block. And so, these other sisters have taught us what it means to be a PBI family. We are so grateful.

We are so grateful. Before I finish, I would like to recognize my board team, an amazing group of courageous HRDs.

Being among the youngest PBI office and the only one in Africa, we feel we have been tried and tested. We have passed the threshold. At 10, we are confident and determined. as we march into the next decade, we hope that all of you will be part of our next bold journey of courage and perhaps, exploring beyond the Kenyan borders, maybe to just expand the African territory as PBI Kenya. Happy 10th birthday PBI Kenya.

Note: This anniversary was supported by the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation

