

A photograph of two women standing in a rural village. The woman on the left is wearing a colorful, patterned headwrap and a long, flowing dress with a blue and green base and orange and yellow wavy patterns. The woman on the right is wearing a striped headwrap and a long, flowing dress with a red and yellow floral pattern. They are both holding wooden staffs. The background shows a village with small houses and hills under a cloudy sky. A vertical orange bar is overlaid on the right side of the image.

PROTECTION
INTERNATIONAL
ANNUAL REPORT
2021

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An introduction to the new Executive Director, Mae Ocampo



Brussels, 3rd November 2021,

It is with great pleasure that we inform you of Ms Mae Ocampo joining Protection International AISBL as its new Executive Director.

Ms Ocampo brings a number of key strengths to this role. Ms Ocampo is a feminist woman human rights defender who began her activism from a young age, resisting land-grabbing and powerful institutions in the face of threats and risks with her local community in the Philippines. Over the past three decades, she has focused on collective work, building relationship and forging alliances and movements, strengthening national and regional capacities, as well as bringing the voices of local communities from Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia and Eurasia into national, regional and international areas. She has over 20 years of experience in senior leadership and management positions in international NGOs based in Southeast Asia and Europe.

Ms Ocampo's style of leadership complements PI's organizational culture, values and ways of working. She is inclusive, consultative, participatory and consensus-based, and is strongly driven by feminist values. During the rigorous, competitive selection process, the Board was impressed by her experience in strategic leadership, change management (particularly in decentralization), cross-cultural communication across geographical regions, commitment to an inter-sectional, inclusive and diverse way of working, resource mobilization skills, nurturing and care for individual and collective well-being, and focus on impact in human rights. She has an impressive track-record of effective advocacy, communications, and networking with diverse

stakeholders. We find her to be an approachable and humble leader, with the ability to listen and relate to people from all backgrounds. She brings resilience, wisdom and good judgment in the face of challenges.

We are confident in Ms Ocampo's leadership and expertise in this new phase of growth and development for our organisation. For this reason, please join me in congratulating her as she embarks with us on this new and exciting phase for Protection International.



Dr Alice Nah

*On behalf of the Board of
Protection International AISBL*

A letter from the new Executive Director



“We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant.”

– **Elie Wiesel**

D

Dear Readers,

I start this introductory letter with a quote from Elie Wiesel's acceptance speech for the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize award. Elie Wiesel was a Romanian-American writer and holocaust survivor who spent his life fighting for human rights. The sentiments expressed by Elie Wiesel capture Protection International's past year as we continued to stand alongside human rights defenders and fought for the right to defend human rights defenders.

So here we are - another year passed for Protection International with flying colours! This alone calls for celebration and pride over what we collectively achieved across our offices, with our partnered HRDs and their communities. This is especially significant when the world calls for the strength and gravitas from human rights defenders organisations to face a changed world where the challenging contexts and the circumstances people face were even more exacerbated thus exposing HRDs further into vulnerable and often violent situations.

Let us recall that in 2021, the pandemic hit us harder with more people plummeting to poverty level with the loss of income brought about by restricted movements and continued lockdowns. As this was happening, the weaknesses in the system broke global and local economies, furthering exposing and affecting the most vulnerable of people and communities. The resurgence of authoritarianism and dictatorship in many countries around the world added to the milieu, placing democracies around the world at risk and in more fragile states. This can be seen with the continued narrowing of civic spaces that alarmingly kept intensifying with laws being passed to limit the rights of HRDs. Worst, the failures of the past, the fragile state of democracies, and the continuing failure of many governments around the world resulted to harder howling extreme weather as climate change knocked on our doors. Not to mention the impact all these has on people's physical and mental wellbeing. A deadly mixture of cocktails - it was a lot!

These are only but a few of the challenges we faced in 2021. The beauty of this all is that Protection International, our partnered HRDs, our donors and partners, rallied together and stood behind our mission. We banked on our collective strength as we pushed for transformational change to achieve our vision for a better world. We advocated and worked alongside HRDs and partners. Protection International is firmly positioned to continue to push for preventive solutions and for the passing of national policies that would recognise how foundational the right to defend human rights is. This is core to PI's operations and in our collective protection for the HRDs that are doing all of the heavy lifting in pushing forward transformational change, even given the extraordinary risks and devastating setbacks.

Therefore, as we take stock of our work in 2021, it is important for us to take a step back, reflect and capture what we have done so far; celebrate what we have achieved, own the immense impacts we have on the ground, and learn from our experiences so we can mirror areas where we have been effective and improve where we need to improve.

PI facilitated the launch of the **Risk Analysis and Protection Plan Principles**, which provide guidance for governments about protection work. We launched the online **Focus Observatory on Public Policies for Defenders**, which is a tool for duty bearers, policymakers, civil society and other actors who have a stake in HRDs' protection to compare and contrast the varying approaches, as well as levels of progress, that



states are making in their commitments. **We re-vamped our e-learning programme for Human Rights Defenders**, including updated content and new, interactive materials to make some of these complex topics more engaging and tangible. And we took the decision of translating our main protection tools into Russian, so Human Rights Defenders in Eurasia can have access to them and we can start assessing our potential contribution to the defence of the right to defend human rights in this part of the world. To name a few in-country successes: in **DRC**, 44 women HRDs created a network to join their efforts towards greater protection and improving the safety of their work environment. In **Kenya**, continued to support the Missing Voices campaign against extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances of human rights. In **Thailand**, our teams supported the Santi Pattana Community on the path to justice, when a Thai Provincial Court ruled against the man who attempted to assassinate land rights defender Dam Onmuang. In **Indonesia**, together with the Institute for Women Empowerment (IWE), Women's Day was celebrated by organising a video contest to raise awareness about the challenges women defenders face as well as discuss the need for combatting negative, stereotypical or sexist stigmas. Our **Mesoamerica** office celebrated the ruling of the high court in **Honduras** where one of the co-collaborators who orchestrated the assassination of Berta Cáceres was found guilty. While impunity for crimes committed against human rights defenders still happens all too often, we had many judicial victories this year. For communities of defenders in Ixquis, Guatemala, 2021 brought long awaited vindication after years of struggle to protect their water and livelihoods from private interests. IDB investment is finally withdrawing its investment into two hydroelectric dam projects on sacred rivers of the local indigenous Mayan communities. PI has been present alongside the defenders throughout these years, and this positive outcome is a cause for celebration. And last summer, we also celebrated the long-overdue release of our colleague and friend, human rights defender **Germain Rukuki**, who was unjustly detained and imprisoned for his affiliation with the human rights organisation ACAT-Burundi.

I am humbled and proud of PI's collective strength and power, as we play our role in the global human rights movement and in achieving our vision of the world. Our teams have accomplished a great deal this past year, and we have a lot of work in the pipeline. **I am excited what more we can achieve together as a global organization together with our partners and allies for their dedication, commitment and work! All of our work was made possible with the support and trust of our funding partners and donors – thank you!**

In sisterhood and in power,



Mae Ocampo
Executive Director
Protection International

Meet the members of the board

Board of Directors

Alice Nah

Chairperson

Besides her role as chair of Protection International, Alice Nah is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York, UK. In this role, she conducts research on the security and protection of human rights defenders at risk, and on asylum and migration in Asia.

Alice has conducted consultancies with organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Labour Organisation, and Forum Asia. She has also published in peer-reviewed journals including the Journal of Human Rights Practice, the Australian Journal of Human Rights, and the Asian Journal of Social Science.

Jacco Smit

Treasurer

Jacco Smit is a Dutch resident, living in Amsterdam. After gaining a master's degree in economics at the University of Amsterdam, he worked for over twenty years in private sector finance in various countries. He is currently an independent advisor to the maritime industry with a focus on strategy, finance and restructuring.

Jacco lived for about eight years in Brazil where he actively supported a local human rights organisation in the communities of Rio de Janeiro, supported the set up of the local presence of Amnesty International, and published several books and articles on Brazil.

Mahmoud AbuRahma

Secretary

Mahmoud AbuRahma is a human rights activist from Gaza, Palestine. He holds an MA degree in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights from the University of Essex, UK. He was a research Fellow at the Center for Applied Human Rights and the University of York, UK.

He was a member of the Gaza-based Al Mezan Center for Human Rights between 2001 and 2019 where he managed the International advocacy and litigation programs. His role focused on international advocacy with the UN, EU and EU, including on human rights defenders and shrinking space issues in the Middle East region and globally.

Pauline Alvarez

Member

A British and Irish national currently living in Oxford, UK. She is a graduate in Spanish and has a Masters degree in Human Rights and Education from London University. She has over 35 years professional experience working on human rights, refugee and social development issues with a number of international NGOs including Oxfam, Action Aid and Just Associates (JASS) and she lived in Latin America for 15 years. She has played a number of senior leadership and management roles at international level specialising in organisational development and working to strengthen women's agency and leadership.

Belén Páez

Member

Master in Ecology, specialist in Climate Change and Forests. Leads implementation programs based on clean energy, ecotourism, bioeconomy, protection and conservation of tropical forests, legal actions to defend collective rights and the rights of nature, and maternal and child health.

Belén has contributed to the victories for the protection of tropical forests and indigenous territorial rights in the Amazon of Ecuador and Peru. She is passionate about a just, post-extractive transition that leads to a transition for life.

Vital Nshimirimana

Member

Vital is a Burundian human rights lawyer. In 2002, he became a member of the human rights League Iteka. In 2004, he created the Réseau des Citoyens Probes (RCP), a local NGO engaged in the fight against corruption. That same year he joined the judiciary and became an active member of the Union of Magistrates (SYMABU) and became the chair in 2009.

He registered with the Burundi Bar Association in May 2013. He has prosecuted high profile cases as lawyer who is recorded in the East African Court of Justice. He was elected to chair the main Burundi civil society umbrella organization FORSC in 2013.



Where we work

Maps & figures



Total Number of HRDs involved

PI Southeast Asia
3119



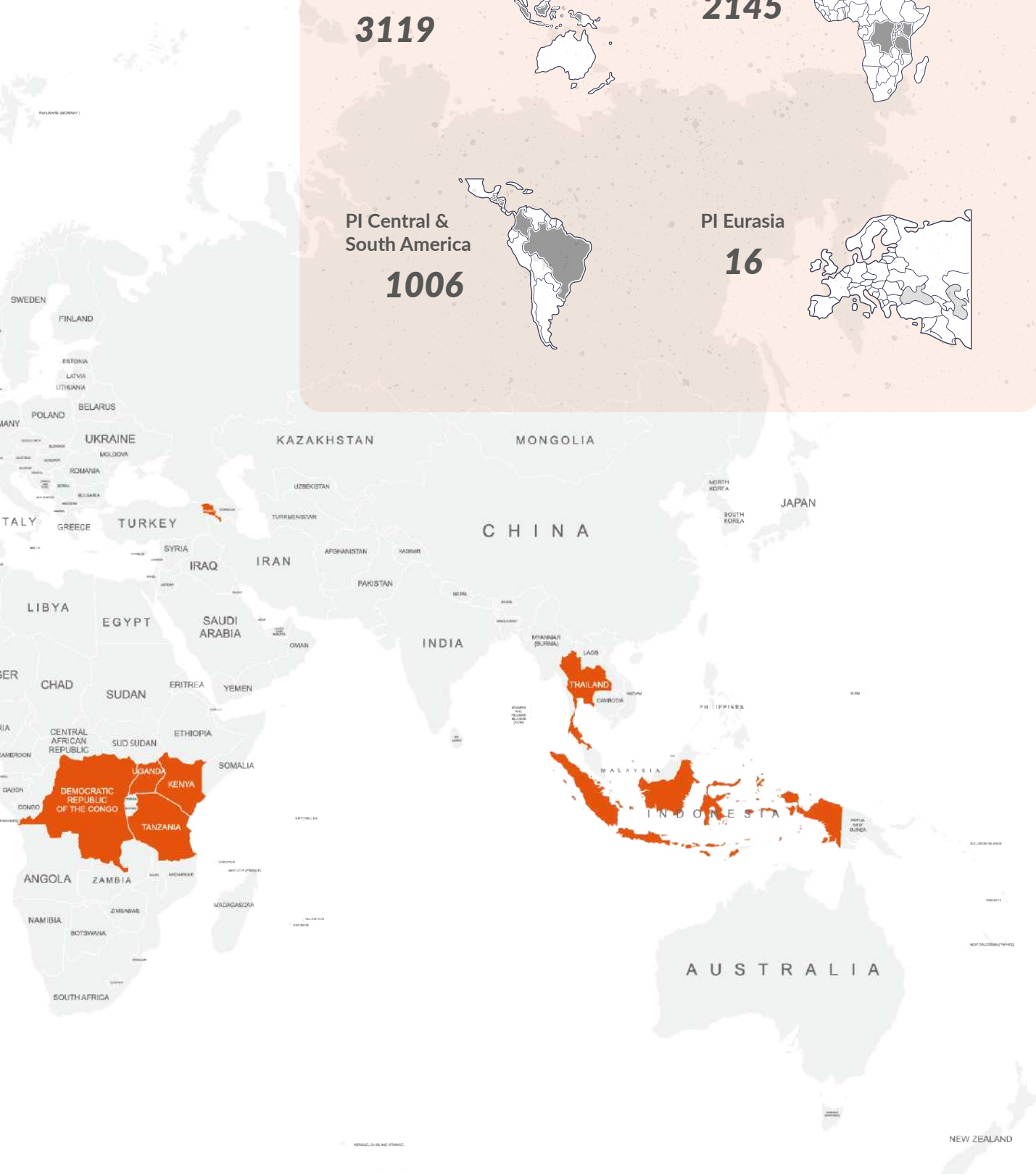
PI Africa
2145



PI Central & South America
1006



PI Eurasia
16



Main strategies

of intervention





06 NETWORK AND ALLIANCE BUILDING



⋮

05 FUNDING



⋮



⋮

07 RISK MANAGEMENT



Chapter 1

**HRDs and their collectives
(organisations and communities)
are empowered leaders of their
protection and sustainability**



Pathway 1



Protection Internatoinal visited **La Vichada** to carry out risk analyses with the communities on La Pascua indigenous reservation.

Photo credit: OMAR MUÑOZ

1.1 HRDs and their collectives adopt adaptable security practices and strategies to mitigate risks and reduce the opportunities of aggression by perpetrators



Providing Ad-Hoc Services for Human Rights Organisations and Defenders at Risk

Outside of Protection International's (PI) core programmatic work, PI also provides support to civil society organisations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) at risk who contact us requesting trainings on physical and digital security, accompaniment for conducting risk assessments and support in crafting contextualised security plans.

In 2021 alone, PI provided support and consultancy services to 262 HRDs in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Colombia, Nicaragua, Honduras, the United States of America, Armenia, The Netherlands and Mexico. Of the HRDs that we worked with, nearly half of them identify as women. PI teamed up with 12 organisations and assisted them through blended methodologies that were specifically tailored to their needs.

From now on, our working method will change. The necessary tools for basic security will be put in place. When PI returns for the follow-up, you will notice our determination to change our practices. Thank you to PI for awakening our conscience and equipping us with strategies to analyse the context, the risk and, above all, to better understand that risk is all around us. We must therefore take this into account in all our work as human rights defenders.

Dakala, an HRD from Guinea



Françoise Timbiri, Gender Officer at Protection International, explains the specific risks for women human rights defenders.





Protection International Africa staff pose with CECIDE after a workshop in December 2021.

Notably, PI's protection experts were engaged in supporting HRDs in Ethiopia. The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and Project Expedite Justice (PEJ) Ethiopia asked PI to assist their teams in managing their security given the ongoing conflict in the region of Tigray. PI facilitated a series of webinars addressed to the PEJ team, and we personalised an e-learning course for the NIMD staff in Addis Ababa to help ensure they were taking the necessary precautionary measures.

In line with PI's strengthening of its services on the ground, we reached a much larger number of HRDs with the direct engagement of PI protection experts based in our offices in the Global South. PI teams in Colombia and Mesoamerica collaborated with Fundación Acceso, Ambiente y Sociedad, PAX Colombia and the OAK Foundation to support their local partners in Nicaragua, Honduras and Mexico. PI's Regional Hub in Africa continued the accompaniment, which initiated in 2020, of local organisations in DR Congo, Cameroon, Gabon and Guinea—within the framework of a pre-set agreement with the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA) and the Schmidt Foundation. In particular the accompaniment also highlighted the safety needs of women human rights defenders, understanding the context of being a woman human rights defender and protection protocols that can be employed.

“Talking about the safety of women defenders is a taboo subject in our context. But thanks to this training, I am convinced that the male colleagues have understood the need to put in place protocols that take into account the particular needs of women defenders.”

Mariama, a woman human rights defender from Guinea



Defending the Communities of HRDs Protecting the Pardo River

Agribusiness companies continue to irresponsibly capitalise on the Pardo River and have negatively impacted water resources in Bahia, Brazil. Companies continue polluting the river with pesticides, monopolising access to it and destroying nature along the riverbed. The communities around the river are collectively organising to defend the river and its surrounding areas, which they highly depend on for their daily needs and livelihoods. According to [Global Witness](#), Brazil is one of the deadliest countries in the world for land and environmental defenders, especially for Indigenous communities.

Throughout the pandemic, and especially in 2021, Protection International (PI) worked in partnership with the Centro de Estudos e Ação Social (CEAS), to support the Formosa community (in the municipality of Itambé), the Cachoeira community (in the municipality of Ribeirão do Largo) and the Indigenous Minga community in safely protecting four springs of the Pardo River.

Physically protecting the water sources, in addition to advocating for water as a common good and a human right, contributed to the strengthening of community ties during a complex context. Not only were the HRDs and the communities still working through the difficulties brought on by the pandemic, they also had to address the alarming increase of violence against environmental justice defenders in Brazil. To support the HRDs and the communities in their risk mitigation and in their defence for their lives and livelihoods, PI provided trainings on key elements of risk management and protection. Twenty-five people participated in these trainings, which included members of organisations that work on territorial and environmental rights, and defenders who work to combat racism and state violence.

According to CEAS, the communities are now more aware of elements that may increase their exposure to risks, they are more attentive to potential security incidents and they are more confident in their abilities to analyse and react to them. In partnership with CEAS, PI will continue to contribute to strengthening our relationship with these communities into 2022.



Protection International hosts a workshop with CEAS in Brazil.

1.2 HRDs and their collectives reach out to and mobilise new allies and partners to create or strengthen their protection networks

New Protection Network of Women Human Rights Defenders Created in the DR Congo

In 2021, six human rights defenders (HRDs) were killed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo). The government imposed a 'State of Siege' in May, making it increasingly hard for HRDs to operate in the eastern part of the country. Two HRDs were killed by security forces in North Kivu, and many were arbitrarily detained. In 2021, Protection International (PI) recorded nine incidents of threats and arbitrary arrests against women human rights defenders (WHRDs) who are affiliated with our partner organisations in the DR Congo. This figure is artificially low, however, on the basis that existing alert management mechanisms are ineffective and problematically gender-blind. For fear of being ostracised and the backlash of reporting abuses and violations, many women prefer to remain silent rather than denounce the violations they experienced. WRHDs and local civil society organisations are working to better ensure that women do not feel alone, that their rights are recognised and that protection protocols are in place.

Amidst a very volatile situation, only a few months before the 'State of Siege' was imposed, PI assisted the creation of a WHRDs network in Kivu region. "We used to work in a scattered way and, therefore, our appeals did not get the expected results that we desired. For example, WHRDs in Beni, a city in the north of North Kivu, face several difficulties, such as arbitrary arrests,

abductions, murders and other forms of abuse," explains Ms Isabelle Namwezi, a legal consultant at the *Organisation Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral (SOFEPADI)*, "When we report these incidents individually, often our alerts fail to be heard and rarely reach further than the local level. With this network, we think we will be able to raise alerts to higher-level authorities and receive more appropriate responses."

The network was established in Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province, and intends to extend its reach to cover the whole of the DR Congo, requiring the support of national, regional and international partners. "These women are now able to accumulate their capacities. What we are setting up is a small group, but, little by little, other provinces will join. There will surely be a multiplier effect. We are not excluding men from joining us either. There is no man without a woman and vice versa," said Ms. Charlotte Kashamura, a consultant who helped guide the WHRDs in setting up the protection network called the Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders of Kivu.

Throughout the year, the network has grown. At the close of 2021, the network consisted of 42 Congolese civil society organisations, with approximately 42 participating WHRDs.



On 12 March 2021, **44 women human rights defenders** (WHRDs) who operate in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), a region was shaken by conflict and violence from armed forces, created a network to join their efforts towards greater protection and improving the safety of their work environment.

Photo credit: **MARTIN LUKONGO**

1.3 HRDs and their collectives have successfully implemented a strategy to influence authorities on protection agendas

Indigenous Women Defenders are Reclaiming their Rights


The Indigenous women human rights defenders (WHRDs) of the El Trompillo settlement and La Pascua reservation in Vichada, Colombia have taken firm steps to strengthen collective protection efforts for defending their communities. They are members of the Sikuni, Kuiba and Piapoco ethnic groups, which are historically semi-nomadic peoples in the Orinoquía region who have experienced centuries of persecution and dispossession. In the 1980s, they were forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyles due to territorial conflict. Not only has conflict continued in spite of the peace accords, but their options for land continue to dwindle due to the increasing presence of agribusiness companies.

The territory where they currently live is insufficient for each family to have their own *conuco* (a small plot of land destined for cultivation) and a guarantee of food sovereignty. For this reason, many were forced to move to urban centres or neighbouring farms in search of precarious jobs that only offer minimal earnings. This further exposed these indigenous women to vulnerable situations including limiting their ability and opportunities to have decent livelihoods to support their families, alienating them from political and economic life and limiting their ability to manage social and productive projects that enhance their skills. These were highlighted and presented to Colombian government officials, however, mayors, ministries and the Ombudsperson's office in Colombia had not been responsive to their complaints.

These Indigenous women have experienced compounding systemic social, political and economic barriers, and they were very keen to learn more about community organizing, advocacy and collective protection work to address these systemic issues. With the support of PI, 15 women from these communities

successfully organized advocacy meetings with the Ombudsperson, the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, the German and Swedish Embassies, the Delegation of the European Union in Colombia, and representatives from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders' team.

Not only have the Indigenous WHRDs been more actively influencing authorities by raising awareness on the importance of their protection, they also continued to own their spaces and their agency within their respective communities. In La Pascua, the Indigenous WHRDs came together to form the *la Asociación de Mujeres Emprendedoras Indígenas de La Pascua* (the Association of Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs of La Pascua), and they continue to form connections with like-minded national and international human rights organizations to expand their protection network. They also began analysing their *Plan de Vida del Resguardo* (community plans) to apply a gendered lens to the long-term protection of their reservation. The new coordinator of the Indigenous guard, the group that physically defends the periphery of the El Trompillo territory, is a 20-year-old woman. Not only does she coordinate protection related decisions for the guard, she also established a safe meeting place for the group to improve coordination on security and protection related actions.

 *We started with 15 people attending the workshops and now more than 40 people are attending. We have identified women leaders who are working to strengthen their knowledge of human rights, self-government and protection.*

A community leader from La Pascua reservation



Photograph taken in the framework of the visit of the PI team in Colombia to the La Pascua indigenous reservation, in La Primavera, Vichada, in November 2021.

Photo credit: **OMAR MUÑOZ**

1.4 HRDs and their collectives have adapted their protection practices as a result of PI's research findings

PI Launches a Re-Vamped E-Learning Programme

Given the complexity of the situations in which human rights defenders (HRDs) find themselves—be it due to heightened violence in the midst of ongoing elections, new technological surveillance tools being deployed by authoritarian governments, abuse of restrictions related to the COVID19 pandemic or building tensions leading to the outbreak of conflict—protection is hardly realized through simple, ‘copy and paste’ solutions. Protection International (PI) has been offering an online course for human rights organisations and defenders for the past ten years, providing additional tools and resources to over 600 HRDs who are confronting the interests of powerful actors. As the years go on, we are continually learning from the experiences of HRDs and our research endeavours in order to improve our overall understanding of effective context assessments, risk analyses and protection plans.

In May 2021, we launched a newly re-vamped version of the online course, Security and Protection Management for Human Rights Defenders and Social Organisations, which integrates many of these lessons learned and research findings. With practical exercises and games, the course was designed to ensure a clear, effective and applicable learning experience. The lessons were based on concrete risk situations and from the practices of defenders themselves, to best ensure that participants understand concepts, relate them to their daily situations and exchange with other defenders.

In 2021, PI provided two course sessions (in English, Spanish and French) from May to August and from September to November, reaching a total of 82 HRDs from Peru, Congo-Brazzaville, Mexico, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Venezuela, China, The Netherlands and other countries.



Testimonials from participants

I realized that it is necessary to emphasize the importance of registering security incidents because many times the defenders I accompany do not get to the point of creating the security protocol because the other stages of the security cycle are weak. The notion and differentiation between an attack, a threat and a security incident has also been key to risk perception and prevention strategies.

WHRD from Mexico



“Excellent methodology. I have been impressed by PI’s ability to synthesize such complex content for a course with such a short duration. It has been an excellent exercise.

HRD from the **United Kingdom**

“The content of the course is very relevant for protection work and there are very interesting methodologies. We have learned about many new tools.

HRD from **Nigeria**

“The session equipped me with further knowledge on how to assess risk, identify the protection and support networks, as well as to prepare for info management and security for our office or homes. I was able to apply some part of the trainings and materials provided in the course such as the facilitator’s manual in my office’s risk assessment workshop where we regularly conduct internally with our staff.

HRD from **Cambodia**

1.5 HRDs and their collectives have increased their ability to organise themselves sustainably

Snapshots of Injustice: Inspiring Action through Art

In 2021, there were at least 187 extrajudicial killings and 32 cases of enforced disappearances in Kenya, and the vast majority of the victims are young men coming from Nairobi's slums. The mothers of these victims are not staying silent; they began using art as a way to raise awareness for the impunity that continues to perpetuate violence.

As part of the KAMWE Project, The Mothers of Victims and Survivors Network and the Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC) joined forces to organise a photo exhibition about policy brutality that was held from 28 July to 10 August 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya. The exhibition, entitled "As we Lose Our Fear", documents and displays the acts of violence by national security officials, forcing viewers to absorb the harsh reality that many young human rights defenders continue to be forcibly disappeared at the hands of law enforcement. The exhibition also featured portraits of survivors of police brutality and catalogued accounts from residents of Mathare, an informal settlement in Nairobi, who have had family members killed by police officers.

As stated by Al Jazeera, the mothers of these victims are "building a rich tradition of local organising...But their self-organising tactics, which are growing into a formidable social movement, make them unique in Kenya's political landscape." As the years go on, these women are increasing their capacities, confidence, creativity and strength.

In highlighting these acts of intimidation and state violence, The Mothers of Victims and Survivors Network and MSJC hoped that the photography exhibition would inspire additional people from all different backgrounds in Kenya to stand up for equality and join the movement towards justice. The project has been featured on multiple news outlets and webpages, which has helped their calls for justice reach even further.



The Mathare Social Justice Centre mounts a photography exhibition on police brutality and extrajudicial killings in Kenya's capital.

By WANGUI KIMARI



KAMWE PROJECT

Background information

Protection International Kenya, in partnership with Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC), the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), The Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) are jointly implementing a project funded by the European Union titled "KAMWE: Supporting Women HRDs and Their Grassroots Organisations to Document and Prevent Extrajudicial Executions (EJEs) in the Republic of Kenya". The objective of the project is to contribute to the protection of WHRDs and the promotion of their right to defend human rights in Kenya.

The project has two specific objectives: WHRDs and their grassroots organisations in Nairobi City County are empowered agents in their human rights work including advocating against EJES; and NHRIs and national authorities in Kenya support WHRDs' work against EJES, promote their right to defend human rights and national human rights institutions have operationalised the Marrakesh Declaration.

Chapter 2

**State authorities respect,
protect and fulfil the right to
defend human rights (RDHR)**



Pathway 2



Human rights defenders that are members of the local committee for collective protection in **Kabasha, Democratic Republic of the Congo**.

2.1 Local and national state authorities take effective action to protect HRDs and their right to defend human rights (RDHR)






PI Launches a New Database on Public Policies for the Protection of HRDs

On 23 June 2021, [Protection International \(PI\)](#) officially launched “Focus: The Observatory on Public Policies for Defenders”. Born from our previous publication series “[Focus Report](#)”, this new platform is a database of existing public policies concerning the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs). This platform can serve as a reference point for all those involved in the protection of HRDs, with the aim to facilitate access to public policy texts, analyses, recommendations and best practices at the local, national, regional and international levels.

The Focus Observatory aims to be the go-to resource that helps transform the United Nations Declaration on HRDs into concrete state action, while taking into account the obstacles that other countries have faced in the development of effective public policies. PI has been involved in the development of public policies for the protection of HRDs in multiple countries, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico and Thailand, with plans to further develop this work in 2022 and in other countries.



The Focus Observatory is a useful tool for duty bearers, policymakers, civil society organisations and other actors with a stake in HRDs' protection. Researchers can easily access relevant information, stay up to date with policy developments, and seek guidance or references on best practices from other countries. In 2021, the following developments took place at the national level:

-  **Mongolia** adopted a new human rights defenders law. (Read our [interview with WHRD Sukhgerel Dugersuren](#), who was involved in the process)
-  **Nepal** adopted the Order on Security and Protection of Human Rights Activists.
-  **Peru** adopted a Supreme Decree that creates the inter-sectoral mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders.
-  **The Philippines** passes the House Bill 10576, the Human Rights Defenders Act.
-  **Rwanda** accepted the Universal Periodic Review recommendations in 2021 concerning human rights defenders.

For more information and updates, refer to the [Focus Observatory website](#).



Sukhgerel Dugersuren, Human Rights Defender & Director of OT Watch Mongolia



TRAINING DUTY BEARERS ON THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT AND RESPECT HRDS

Protection International Africa (PIA), in partnership with Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), held a training session for 40 state officers in Kenya in February of 2021. Officers held a variety of positions within the National Police Service, the Independent Police Oversight Authority, the judiciary, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Kenyan Internal Affairs Unit, among others.

In 2020, the Kenyan government conducted a needs assessment and determined that the officers required additional training on the [Marrakech Declaration](#). PIA's training focused on how to interpret the definition of a human rights defender, the international, regional and national legal frameworks on the right to defend human rights, the role of each institution in supporting human rights defenders (HRDs) and areas of collaboration between HRDs and state agencies.

2.2 Spaces for discussions on a public policy to protect the right to defend human rights have been opened by national authorities

Using Experiential Knowledge to Improve Public Policies in Africa

Protection International (PI) is one of the leading organisations supporting Congolese civil society in the development of a national public policy for the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo). This work includes the collection of best practices from neighbouring countries and presenting them to Congolese authorities and duty bearers.

As part of this research, in partnership the SOS-Information Juridique Multisectorielle (SOS-IJM), PI organized a week-long visit to Abidjan to discuss public policies for the protection of HRDs in Côte d'Ivoire. The delegation composed of 18 HRDs from the Ivorian Coalition of Human Rights Defenders (CIDDH) and 2 protection policy experts from the DR Congo. Côte d'Ivoire is the first country in Africa to have implemented a public policy protecting HRDs, and the knowledge acquired from implementing Côte d'Ivoire's protection mechanisms for HRDs has greatly inspired human rights defenders in DR Congo. Between 2016 and 2019, Congolese civil society organisations in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu multiplied advocacy actions for the adoption of laws protecting HRDs. The first success dates back to February 2016, when the governor of South Kivu adopted a provincial law protecting HRDs and journalists. Three years later, HRDs in the neighbouring province of North Kivu also saw their efforts rewarded with the adoption of a provincial law protecting HRDs and journalists.

PI contributed to the adoption of both laws by guiding the processes together with local NGO coalitions and communities of HRDs. PI organised workshops and meetings to persuade the provincial assemblies of the importance of public policies in the defence of human rights, as well as provided legal templates and examples of public policies from other jurisdictions to convince both HRDs and deputies that change is possible in the DR Congo.

The DR Congo does not yet have a national legal framework that can effectively protect HRDs across the country, but discussions are moving in a positive direction. In 2021, an informal network including Protection International and other civil society actors, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) and the National Commission for Human Rights in the DR Congo (CNDH-RDC) re-launched the process of adopting a law to protect HRDs in response to the deteriorating situation of civil society in the DR Congo.



Mr Mukulu a human right defender from the newly established local committee focused on collective protection in Musienene, a small town nearby **Butembo city**.



SPOTLIGHT: PI INDONESIA PUSHES FOR ANTI-SEXUAL VIOLENCE LAW IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN HRDS

For the past ten years, civil society has been advocating for a law to tackle sexual violence, an issue which has been deemed a national emergency by the Indonesian National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan). Komnas Perempuan reported a total of 340,000 cases of gender-based violence in 2021, which is an increase of 50% from 2020. Sexual violence constitutes a large percentage of the cases of violence against women and children, yet prosecuting sex crimes has been complicated due to the lack of a clear legal framework for prosecuting a long list of sexual offenses, an overly narrow definition of rape and ambiguous stipulations concerning remediation and counselling for victims.

Protection International (PI) Indonesia has long been advocating for the Anti-Sexual Violence Law. In 2021, at the request of the Komnas Perempuan Commissioner, PI Indonesia organized a meeting with Indonesian Parliament members in order to discuss the contents of the anti-sexual violence draft law under discussion and ensure that women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are effectively considered and included in the law. PI advocated for the inclusion of specific terminology to protect the ‘companions’ of sexual violence survivors, who are often WHRDs, to broaden the scope of protection for women who are supporting other women. Specifically, PI Indonesia has advocated to include the following:

- Witnesses and/or victims with disabilities may be accompanied by their parents, guardians who have been appointed by the court, and/or companions.
- Companions have the right to obtain legal protection while accompanying the victim and witness at every level of examination.
- Those who are supporting the victim cannot be prosecuted by law, either criminal or civil for his assistance or service, unless the assistance or service is not provided in good faith.

NOTE: The bill was further deliberated and passed in April 2022, including the terminology of Protection International in articles 27, 28 and 29 to ensure additional protections for the companions of sexual violence survivors.



In Yogyakarta. Women Human Rights Defenders painted a mural addressed to the Indonesian Parliament advocating for representatives to pass the Anti-Sexual Violence Law (January 2022).

2.3 PI's best practices and/or research findings on protection are taken into account by national authorities when developing their protection agenda and public policies



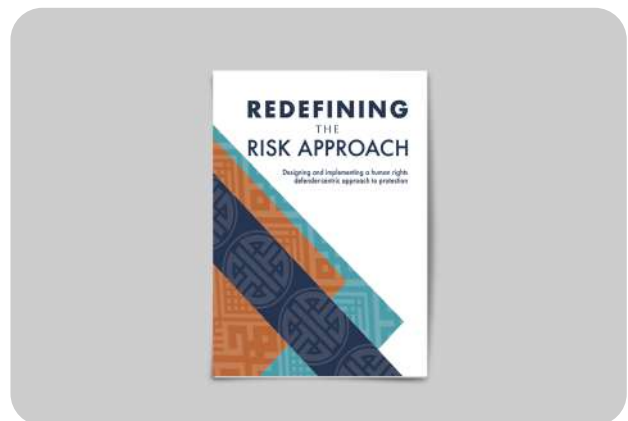
Providing Technical Support to the Oaxaca Human Rights Ombudsman's Office

On 12 November 2020, an inter-institutional agreement for the recognition and protection of human rights defenders (HRDs) was signed in Oaxaca, Mexico. The specific objective of this agreement is to promote public policies for the protection of HRDs and journalists in the State of Oaxaca and to create a space for inter-institutional dialogue at the state level, with the will to ensure compliance and effective protection of HRDs.

The *Comité de Defensa Integral de Derechos Humanos Gobixha AC* (Código DH), one of Protection International's (PI) long-lasting partners, co-signed the agreement. They asked for our support in developing and applying the risk approach for the protection of HRDs by developing an improved and contextualized methodology for conducting risk assessments and designing protection plans for HRDs and journalists. We worked together with Código DH and the Ombudsman's office to review the existing risk analysis and reporting formats to ensure that they were updated in consideration of a gender sensitive, intersectional and psychosocial approach. PI proposed new Risk Report and

Interview templates, each with a corresponding implementation manual.

By conceiving different contexts, formats and methodologies, we offered the Ombudsman's Office a more inclusive, reasoned, and human-centred approach to assessing risks and designing protection plans, using the Risk Analysis and Protection Plan Principles as a key point of reference. The Ombudsman's Office has included our feedback and the new materials are currently in place for pilot testing.



REDEFINING THE RISK APPROACH

Designing and implementing a human rights defender-centric approach to protection

In 2020, over 65 human rights defenders (HRDs) and specialists from the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia came together to craft the Risk Analysis and Protection Plan Principles. This document is a list of principles for implementing the risk approach for the protection of HRDs. Protection International spearheaded this process but the results are thanks to a widespread collective effort amongst HRDs and practitioners alike.

Presented at the beginning of 2021, this set of principles is a reference and a benchmark for HRDs, state authorities and government officials, civil society actors and all other key stakeholders contributing to the protection process

The Risk Analysis and Protection Plan Principles are currently available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Portuguese](#), and [Arabic](#).

2.4 PI has advocated at the international level for comprehensive public policies protecting the right to defend human rights to be adopted by national authorities

Activating International Advocacy Mechanisms for the Protection of HRDs in Thailand

May 2021 marked seven years since the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) staged a coup and seized power in Thailand. During the past seven years, under the leadership of Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, judicial harassment, violence and threats of violence were rampant to repress and intimidate human rights defenders (HRDs). Community-based rural, Indigenous, and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face great risks in defending land and caring for the country's natural resources. For example, Protection International's (PI) project "For Those Who Died Trying" documented at least 72 cases of killings and enforced disappearances of community-based human rights defenders in Thailand.

On 23 February 2021, the Thai Cabinet proposed legislation known as the "Operation of Non-profit Organizations Act" to regulate and curtail the operation of NGOs within the country's borders, which is meant to further complicate the work of human rights defenders. If passed, it would give the Ministry of Interior the power to direct civil society's work and to preclude not only registered NGOs but any civil society group from undertaking activities not approved by the Ministry. The draft law carries heavy criminal penalties for breaches of the Act. Thai NGOs claim the Cabinet's proposal is "without any legitimacy and contradicts sections 25, 26, 34, 40, and 42 of the Thai Constitution."

It is also now six years since the United Nations Committee for the International Convention on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) released its concluding comments concerning Thailand's implementation of the Convention. The ICESCR, ratified by Thailand in 1999, is legally binding; therefore, the state is obliged to comply with the recommendations made by the Committee in June 2015. Unfortunately, the government has been largely unsuccessful in implementing the recommendations related to the protection of HRDs.

Within the report submitted to the ICESCR, PI urged that Thai authorities repeal problematic laws and implement new ones that support the right to defend human rights. This includes suspending the NGO law, the Forestry Reclamation Act, The National Park Act, and The Mining Act. Considering the impact that these repressive laws have on HRDs and their movements, the PI Thailand team has been actively engaging with regional coalitions, international mechanisms and influential stakeholders to advocate for improved public policies on the protection of HRDs, and will continue to monitor the situation closely into 2022.

PI's ICESCR report has been widely circulated for its valuable insights concerning the perspective of women human rights defenders, in particular. The team continues to advocate for the Thai government to publicly recognize and support the role and legitimacy of HRDs, especially women HRDs, in achieving the ICESCR, and acknowledge that HRDs have a vital role in promoting, monitoring, and protecting human rights for all.





SUMMARY OF KEY GLOBAL ADVOCACY ACTIONS IN 2021

Engaging with the United Nations (UN)

Protection International (PI) engaged in discussions related to human rights defenders (HRDs) within the UN System and completed its application to obtain the consultative status with ECOSOC.

We provided inputs to several reports drafted by UN Special Mechanisms and submitted expert opinions to the 76th UN General Assembly Resolution on Human Rights Defenders (A/Res/76/174). PI's inputs focused on the needs for UN Member States to protect fundamental freedoms in the context of the global pandemic, as well as the need for more and better public policies for the protection of HRDs.

PI exchanged information with several UN Special Rapporteurs and their teams, including via virtual advocacy tours with Indigenous communities from Colombia and Central America.

PI provided inputs to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Thailand and Tanzania, the ICESCR report on Thailand and we published a reflection paper with the recommendations we submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs in late 2020: Understanding death threats against human rights defenders.

Influencing European Union (EU) key stakeholders

PI brought urgent cases and recommendations to several political groups within the European Parliament and to the geographic working groups of the Council of the EU for Latin America (COLAC), Africa (COAFR) and Asia (COASI); as well as to the working groups on Human Rights (COHOM in the Council and DROI, which is the parliamentary subcommittee on human rights).

PI provided inputs to, and participated in, among others, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy; the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy, which is drafted by the European Parliament; the Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and Indonesia, Colombia and the African Union; and the EU Peace and Security Strategy for the Great Lakes region.

PI also played an active role in the organisation of the EU-NGO Forum, which was celebrated online from 7-8 December, where we led thematic interventions concerning fundamental freedoms and the right to defend human rights.

Collaborating with international human rights networks

Our networks:

- EU-Latin America Network (EU-LAT)
- European Network for Central Africa (EurAc)
- Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN)
- Zero Tolerance Initiative (ZTI)
- Oficina Internacional de los Derechos Humanos Acción Colombia (OIDHACO)
- Vuka! Coalition

Within EU-LAT, PI engaged in support of several emblematic cases and an enabling environment for the defence of HRDs in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

By way of the ZTI network, PI supported several cases of civil society movements and collectives put at risk by business' operations.

Through EU-LAT and ZTI, PI actively supported advocacy and outreach efforts for the ratification and implementation of the Escazú Agreement in Latin-American countries.

Through EurAc, we engaged principally on issues related to HRDs in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as on the liberation of, and asylum in Europe for HRD, Germain Rukuki.

PI also supported several actions calling for strong human rights due diligence legislation to regulate EU-based companies operating in third countries. For example, PI contributed to the production of a documentary film on the work of three outstanding women environmental HRDs in Latin America. The film will be presented in 2022 through a series of advocacy events in Brussels and across Europe.

PI joined the EU network on advocacy around Colombia, ODHACO, and the Vuka! Coalition, with the objective of supporting collective actions for an enabling environment for civil society and HRDs in at the national, regional and global levels.



EU-LAT
Advocacy Network
Red de Incidencia

eurAC

European network
for central africa



**ZERO
TOLERANCE
INITIATIVE**

Oidhaco
Oficina Internacional
de Derechos Humanos -
Acción Colombia

VUKA!
COALITION FOR CIVIC ACTION

2.5 PI has advocated for at least 20 perpetrators of human rights violations against HRDs to be held accountable for their actions

Seeking Justice for HRDs Around the World

■ GUATEMALA

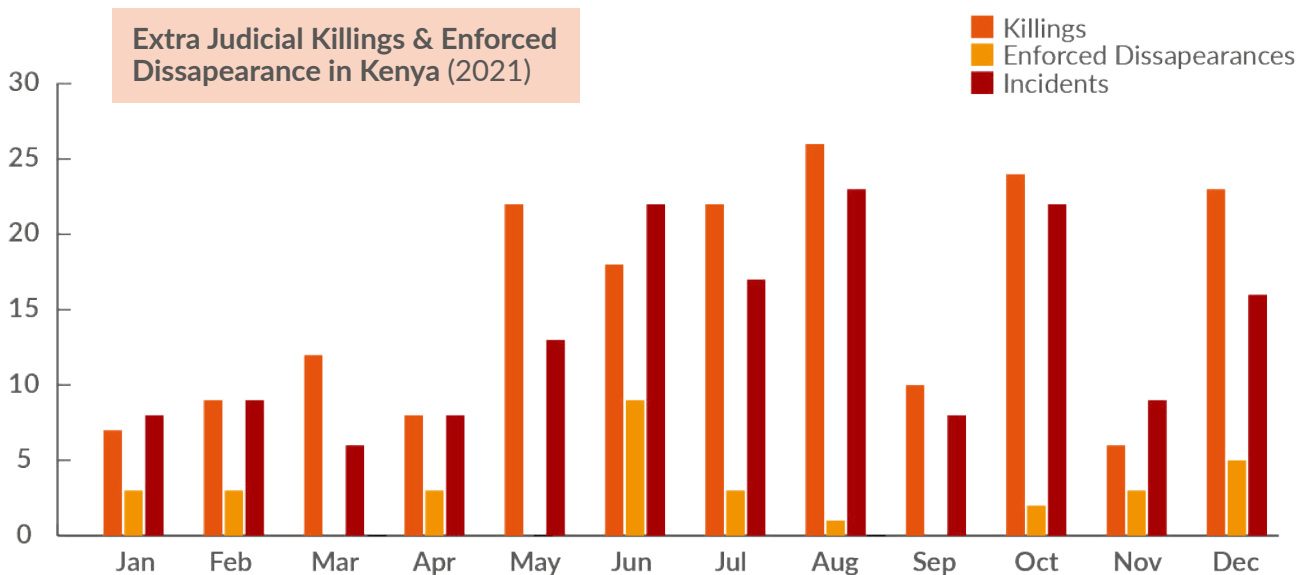
In November, Farmamundi and Protection International organised a virtual advocacy tour where 10 women human rights defenders from Guatemala addressed the need for international support and visibility in their struggles for environmental and territorial rights. Their lands were greatly affected by transnational extractive companies and the privatisation of natural resources, an issue that is directly linked to a series of agreements by Catalan and European entities. During the tour, the defenders held meetings with the heads of public entities such as the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation of the Generalitat Catalana (ACCD), the Directorate of International Relations, the Directorate of Global Justice and International Cooperation of the Barcelona City Council; as well as with the secretariat of the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and special rapporteurs.

■ THAILAND

After eight years of waiting, the land rights defenders of the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) finally received a positive outcome after the prolonged court case against The United Palm Oil Industry, PLC. On 19 March 2021, the Thai Administrative Court ordered the Department of Land and its affiliated authorities to revoke title deeds for 23 plots that were unlawfully issued to palm oil plantations, effectively returning the land to the villagers of Santi Pattana Community. "Until now, the judicial system has been used by the state or businesses as a tool for harassment and it has significantly hampered the work of human rights defenders in Thailand. But this case should serve as their minimal redemption for the mistake that they have been profiting from for years," says Ms Pranom Somwong, the country representative of Protection International Thailand. Protection International has been accompanying and advocating for the SPFT defenders throughout this process.



The Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) celebrates after their legal victory against The United Palm Oil Industry, PLC.



i Source: Missing Voices

BELARUS

In September 2021, Protection International joined 22 other national and international human rights organisations in the #FreeViasna campaign, demanding the release of seven detained human rights defenders and members of Viasna. Founded in 1996, Viasna is a leading human rights organisation in Belarus and has been actively monitoring and documenting human rights violations following the disputed 2020 presidential elections. The reprisals against Viasna are just a part of a broader crackdown on civil society in Belarus. On 22 July 2021, the Ministry of Justice ordered the closure of 53 non-governmental organisations. To date, more than 200 civil society organisations were closed or are in the process of being closed. The Viasna defenders are still in prison.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Over the course of 2021, Protection International recorded the arrests of over 20 human rights defenders from the youth movement Struggle for Change (Lutte pour le Changement, otherwise known as Lucha) and has long been advocating against their criminalisation. In September 2021, a 21-year-old Lucha activist had his right leg amputated after being shot by a policeman during a peaceful protest. In November 2021, 13 human rights defenders from Lucha were arrested during a peaceful protest and accused of “provocation to disobey the laws”, coupled with a twelve month prison charge, and they still remain arbitrarily detained. PI continues to work with local, regional and international networks in order to push for their immediate and unconditional release. Protection International

has primarily been coordinating advocacy actions with the Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, as well as its 42 member organisations.¹

KENYA

Protection International Africa (PIA) continued to support the Missing Voices campaign against extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances of human rights defenders. In 2021, PIA conducted workshops to train 44 human rights defenders on how to monitor, document and report extra judicial killings in coordination with Missing Voices. According to Missing Voices, 219 people were killed by the police or forcibly disappeared in 2021. Out of that total, 187 of the murders were executed by police and 32 people disappeared while in police custody. One of the paralegals who was trained later reported a case that resulted in the Independent Policing and Oversight Authority (IPOA) recommending the prosecution of the officer involved. The IPOA reported that, in 2021, six police officers were sentenced for their crimes, including one who was sentenced to prison for 20 years. Notably, in 2021, after five years of prolonged delays with the investigation of HRD Nura Molu Malicha’s death, who was killed on 21 February 2015 in Kiamaiiko market, Chief Magistrate Honourable Francis Andayi recommended that constable David Rono be charged with murder. This is one of the first cases that the Mathare Social Justice Centre successfully documented and reported to Independent Police Oversight Authority.

¹ Since the drafting of this report, the Beni military court annulled the sentence for the 13 LUCHA human rights defenders, referring their case to a civil court.



Women expressing their right to protest in Colombia (March 2021).
Photo credit: VALENTINA LOAIZA

■ HONDURAS

After years of threats, the Indigenous leader and environmental defender Berta Cáceres was assassinated in her home in Honduras on 6 March 2016. Five years later, on 5 July 2021, a Honduran court found David Castillo, a former top business executive, guilty of being a co-collaborator in her murder. Castillo was an executive at the Desarrollos Energeticos Sociedad Anonima (DESA), which was responsible for the construction of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam in Indigenous Lenca territory in northwestern Honduras. Protection International has been supporting Berta's community and their fight for environmental rights and justice, and we celebrated this important moment when intellectual authors are held accountable for their crimes.

■ MYANMAR

In 2021, many human rights defenders took to the streets of Myanmar in peaceful protest of the coup d'etat on 1 February. In response, the military dictatorship deployed pro-military protesters and instigators, began using violent force, imposed a social media blackout and started arresting and criminally charging human rights defenders. Around 800 women, including young LGBTQ+ and civil disobedience activists were arrested. Those arrested were beaten, abused, sexually harassed and denied healthcare while detained. Protection International joined over 90 other human rights organisations in the #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar campaign demanding an end to the violence against women human rights defenders. Justice groups

in Myanmar have documented that at least 94 women have been killed as of 30 April 2021.

■ GUATEMALA

For fifteen years, the Indigenous communities of El Estor, Guatemala have been protesting the presence of Compañía Guatemalteca del Níquel, a subsidiary of the Swiss company Solway Investment Group. The company has been the source of repeated violence and human rights violations against the Mayan Q'eqchi' people and journalists. This includes the murder of human rights defender Adolfo Ich Chaman, the murders of biology students who carried out field work in the vicinity of their facilities and sexual violence against women in the community by the company's security forces. Protection International, along with 70 other local and international civil society organisations, has been advocating for the European Union to take more action in relation to investigating these crimes and ensuring access to remedy for the communities of El Estor.

■ COLOMBIA

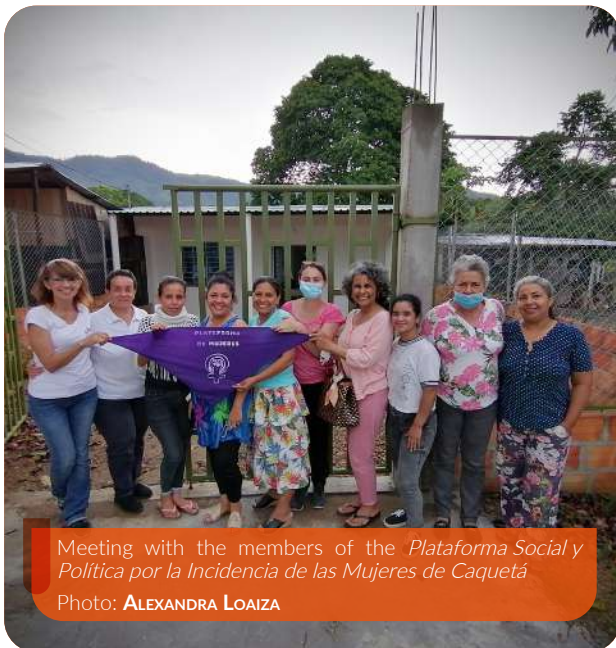
On 18 April 2021, a series of protests began in Colombia to demonstrate against the imposition of increased taxes and the rampant corruption of the sitting administration. Colombian citizens peacefully marched in many cities and municipalities of the country, and they were met with excessive violence from the police. Protection International (PI) joined civil society in denouncing the violence and calling for the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights

to conduct investigations of the human rights violations that took place. In particular, PI called on the state to guarantee that members of the Minga and the Indigenous peoples can safely exercise their right to defend human rights, which includes their right to participate in social protests and public dialogues.

HONDURAS

In 2019, eight environmental defenders (otherwise known as the Guapinol defenders) were arbitrarily arrested for opposing the concession of an iron oxide mine inside a protected national park. They have been held in pre-trial detention for the past two years, and their trial date had been continually postponed until December 2021. Protection International, in coordination with the EU-LAT network and the ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism, have been advocating for the release of the defenders and their right to a fair trial.²

² Since the drafting of this report, the Guapinol defenders were freed after the February 2022 ruling of the Supreme Court of Honduras, where the court dismissed the case against them and ordered their immediate release.



GUATEMALA

The human rights defenders group The Peaceful Resistance of the Microregion of Ixquisis has been working to combat, and receive justice for, the grave human rights violations that are taking place in Guatemala. The government approved hydroelectric megaprojects without prior consultation or informed consent of the communities, and the projects have been causing

negative environmental impacts and degrading the livelihoods of the community members. These projects, Pojom I, Pojom II and San Andrés, are largely financed by multilateral and international development banks. Protection International's Global Advocacy Team supported the outreach efforts of the Ixquisis coalition, by assisting with their utilisation of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) complaint mechanism, MICI-IDB. In 2021, the long awaited MICI-IDB final report was published. The report concluded that IDB Invest had violated numerous operational policies and recommended the bank to withdraw its investment in the dams.



Chapter 3

**Influential stakeholders support
HRD's leadership on the right to
defend human rights**



Pathway 3



Human rights defender **Germain Rukuki**

3.1 PI's advocacy actions lead to positive action in favour of HRDs and their collectives



Burundian HRD Germain Rukuki Freed at Last

A four-year collective effort to release Burundi's imprisoned defenders Germain Rukuki, the Burundian HRD who was wrongfully detained in 2017 and sentenced to 32 years in prison, became a free man on 30 June 2021. The news of his release brought joy and relief to many people; it took a community of defenders and international actors four years of tireless work to get to this moment, many of whom thought this moment might never arrive.

In July 2017, Germain was arrested in his home and charged with "rebellion", "threatening state security", "attacking the authority of the State" and "participation in an insurrectionist movement", although no conclusive evidence was ever presented to validate these accusations. Ultimately, Germain's case became emblematic of the unjust threats and retaliation that many Burundian human rights defenders face, and with one of the harshest and longest sentences ever imposed on any HRD in the country's history, the previous Burundian Government used Germain's case to dissuade others from carrying out human rights work.

After a series of drawn-out court proceedings, on 21 June 2021 the Appeal Court reduced the sentence from 32 years to 1 year. Germain was acquitted of the charges of "participation in an insurrectionist movement", "threatening state security" and "attacking the authority of the State". Only the charge of "rebellion" was upheld. Nine days later, Germain walked out of the Ngozi prison a free man.

Germain's release sends a powerful reminder to all defenders in Burundi and across the African continent. Your work has legitimacy. Your work has value. And you have the right to defend human rights.

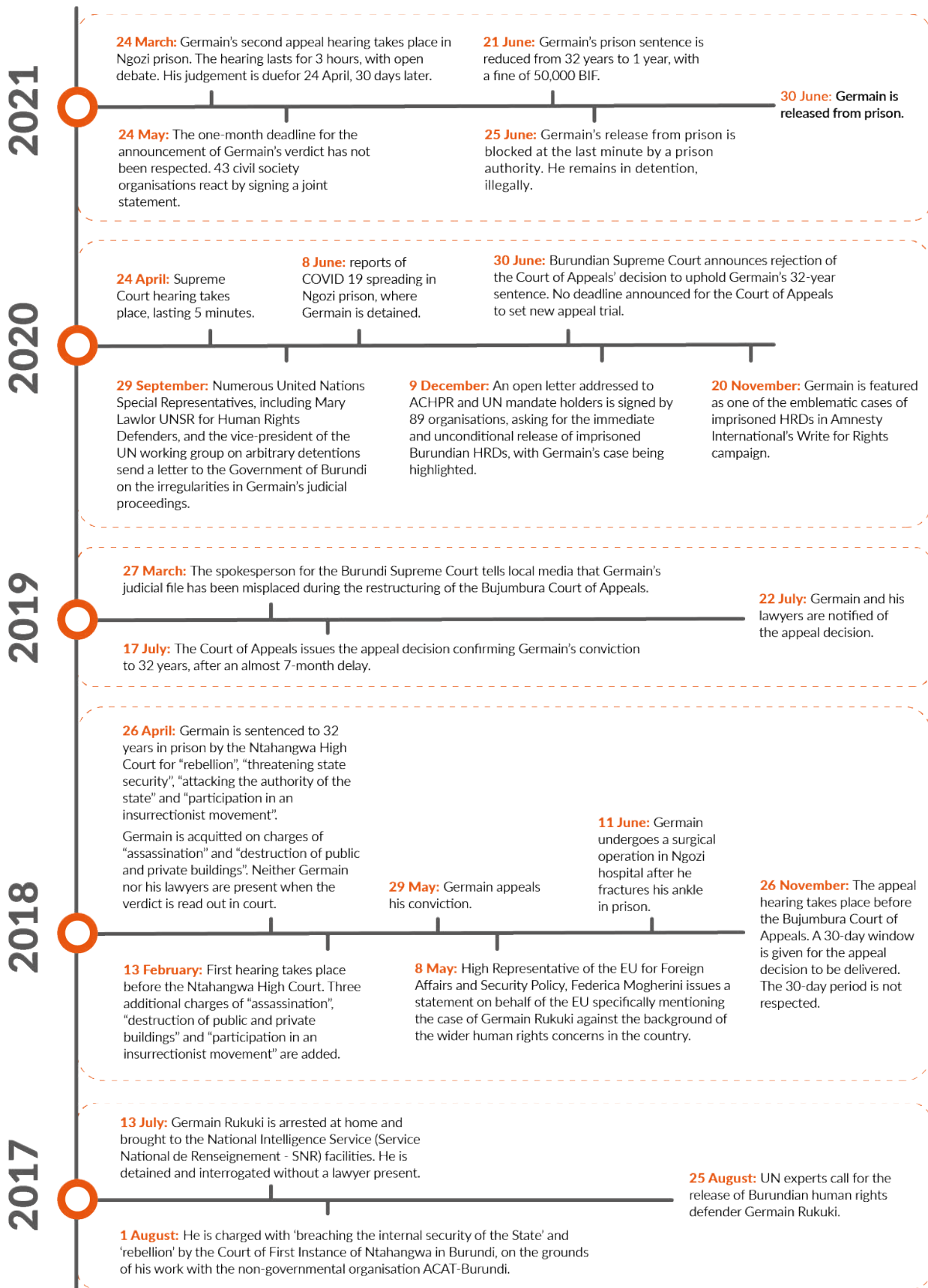
Susan Muriungi, Director of Protection International Africa

Over the four-year period, the international community carried out countless advocacy actions calling for the release of Germain and other Burundian human rights defenders wrongfully imprisoned for defending human rights and civic space in Burundi. For example, five United Nations Special Procedure mandate holders sent a [letter](#) to President Ndayishimiye, Germain was featured in Amnesty International's [Write for Rights](#) campaign; and 89 organisations signed an [open letter](#) addressed to ACHPR and UN mandate holders, asking for the immediate and unconditional release of Germain and other imprisoned Burundian HRDs. All of these actions fed the growing international call for Germain to be freed and for a new chapter to begin for the people of Burundi. Had it not been for these collective efforts, Germain may not be the free man that he is today.

Germain's story illustrates how the hard work of releasing imprisoned defenders must be done collectively, with coordination across state borders, institutional mandates and organisational workplans. The success of Germain's release is part of an impressive and indispensable effort to protect human rights defenders on a broader scale, proving that criminalised HRDs will be supported by the international human rights community with all of our might. We extend our deepest gratitude to all individuals and organisations who supported Germain Rukuki's liberation. Now, as a free man, Germain is reunited with his family after more than four years apart. This reunification has always been a priority for Protection International, and we are so pleased that his freedom is one again his.

Germain Rukuki

Timeline of the Case



3.4 The public discourse and media narrative on HRDs protection include reference to the right to defend human rights

Changing the Narrative about WHRDs in Indonesia

Ever since the military dictator, General Suharto, fell from power in 1998, the women's movement in Indonesia is slowly being revitalised; however, progress is not moving fast enough. Women remain largely underrepresented in the Indonesian government, approximately 16% of women are married off before turning 18, women continue to be excluded from certain sectors of work and many are exposed to vulnerable situations including gender-based violence. Women are rarely celebrated and accredited for their work in improving human rights for all, and women human rights defenders face particular challenges while operating within a largely patriarchal, conservative, religious society. Protection International (PI) has been working to ensure that the term 'women human rights defender' (WHRD) becomes more common amongst public discourse and that stigmas about women are diluted by more accurate stories of WHRDs' determination and strength.



INDONESIAN WHRDS NEED GREATER PROTECTION AND SUPPORT

In 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights defenders called on the Indonesian government to stop threats, intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders (WHRDs). Notably, the special rapporteur cited the case of Veronica Koman, a human rights lawyer who has been working on cases related to human rights in West Papua. Koman has since fled the country after receiving death threats. On 7 November 2021, unidentified individuals threw two small explosive boxes inside the garage of her parents' home in West Jakarta. Another box, addressed to Koman, was delivered to the home of a family member and it contained a dead chicken with a message saying that anyone hiding her "will end up like this."

In order to counter negative narratives and build solidarity amongst women human rights defenders, Protection International worked with the Institute for Women Empowerment (IWE) to launch a film competition, asking artists to create short documentaries about WHRDs and the positive changes they are cultivating within their communities. The winning videos were compiled and distributed to media outlets in

order to perpetuate more constructive narratives about the work of WHRDs in Indonesia, actively working in contrast to gender-based smear campaigns and stereotypes that have been hindering progress for the realisation of women's rights. The video testimonials of the WHRDs were featured in over 5 different media outlets—including Kompas, Kabardamai, Olewopost, Tungkumenyala, and Sinarharapan—and their



FIRST PRIZE WINNER: GINA NURROHMAN

The first prize winner of the WHRD Film Competition, Gina Nurrohman, screened the film “Alexa the chairperson of Trans Voice – the organisation of transgender from Bogor”. Nurrohman stated that:

“In fact, the change that is felt is the recognition from women’s groups of human rights defenders about the existence of transgender groups, which so far have rarely been raised. The mention of the word ‘transgender’ or ‘waria’ has not yet emerged from key stakeholders and government representatives. The hope is that there are more concrete events, actions or joint movements to reduce acts of discrimination or overcome threats to human rights defenders.”

The winner of the contest was announced during an online event on 19 March 2021, after screening all contributions from participants and WHRDs. Approximately 110 people were in attendance for the event.

stories feature a diversity of issues, including women’s and LGBTQI+ rights, strengthening labour and farmer’s unions, domestic workers’ rights and migrant workers’ rights.

Through the public contest and its related activities, PI created a space for networking, mutual learning, awareness raising and inspiration for further women’s rights movement building. Many of the women who were featured in the short films had previously not identified themselves as human rights defenders and now they are being featured in articles that praise their efforts for raising societal standards. The promotion of women as changemakers and the importance of the right to defend human rights are critical for enhancing public support for their activism, work and protection of WHRDs, as well as to facilitate the mobilisation of civil society when attacks occur.

I Gusti Ayu Bintang Darmawati, Indonesia’s Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, participated in the event, and in her keynote speech she stressed the important role of the government and the media in shaping public opinion and creating a more enabling environment for WHRDs to work. The minister also expressed her commitment to continue raising awareness for WHRDs’ work moving forward. As explained by Damai Pakpahan, the country director of PI Indonesia:

This project raised awareness about the term ‘women human rights defender’ amongst the public at large and within the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection. We held powerful discussions on how gender impacts WHRDs’ work, and ultimately how important WHRDs are for positive social change. For many of the WHRDs who participated, this was the first time they have spoken out publicly about their personal struggles, achievements, challenges. This is also the first time they are fully celebrating what they have achieved as WHRDs towards the fulfilment of human rights. It is often the case that many of these women were first victimised by perpetrators, then they transform into survivors, then they transform into defenders and feminist leaders.

Damai Pakpahan, Country Representative of Protection International Indonesia





SPOTLIGHT: PI AFRICA

Protection International Africa's (PIA) Regional Director, Susan Muriungi, had the opportunity to discuss the importance of supporting human rights defenders (HRDs) in an interview on the African Leadership Centre (ALC)'s Talking Africa radio talk show. The interview provided insights into PIA's focus on the right to defend human rights in the continent and the challenges that lie ahead for the human rights movement.

“The term human rights defender is broad and can include anyone who is advancing human rights on behalf of an individual or a group of people. It doesn't matter if you've done this once, or if you do this as your main occupation in life. Protection International respects your activism.”

Susan Muriungi,
Director of Protection International Africa



Chapter 4

2021 Publications at a glance



2021 PUBLICATIONS

The PI Approach to the Protection of HRDs

• Understanding the Right to Defend Human Rights

<https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/defender-tools/right-defend-human-rights-critical-approach>

“This publication explains PI’s rights-based approach to the protection of HRDs, seeing them as subjects of rights, rather than objects of protection.”

• The Psychosocial Approach Applied to the Protection of HRDs

<https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/defender-tools/psychosocial-approach-applied-protection-human-rights-defenders>

“Protection International understands that care and protection are indivisible. This means that protection strategies should address the individual and collective emotional impacts that HRDs experience as part of their struggles and processes, as well as integrate strategies for individual and collective well-being as a part of protection.”



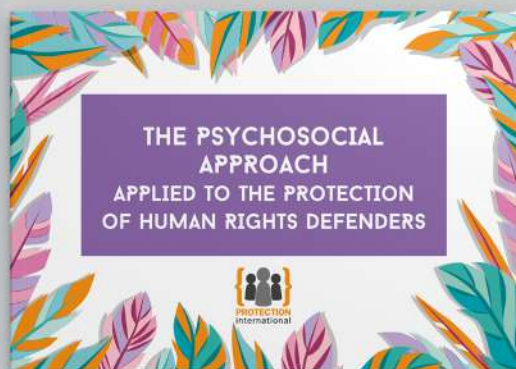
Collective Protection (Russian translation)

<https://nc.protectioninternational.org/index.php/s/dnmccgJxokKbtFo/download/Collective%20Protection%20Russian%20Translation.pdf>

[Original]

<https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/our-work/what/collective-protection>

“PI promotes collective strategies that strengthen the group and allow for more sustainable protection practices that go beyond individual security measures. In 2021, we translated this publication into Russian in order to its reach and apply its contents in new contexts.”



Collective Protection Networks for Remote Rural Communities in Latin America

<https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/publications/collective-protection-networks-remote-rural-communities-case-study-role-social-networks>

“This research paper presents recent research findings, highlights under-explored issues, and sets out theoretical or methodological approaches relevant to the protection of defenders in the Latin American context.”

Three Tools for the Evaluability of Public Policies for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

<https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/policy-maker-tools/three-tools-evaluability-public-policies-protection-human-rights-defenders>

“Framed by the research that is carried out in different countries, Protection International has been designing conceptual and practical tools to better monitor, analyse and promote best practices for public policies that protect the right to defend the human rights and human rights defenders.”



Chapter 5

Financial Report



PI AISBL PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT EVOLUTION

2017-
2021
(€)

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| INCOME | | | | | |
| Revenue - Core | | | | | |
| Governmental Agencies | 540,091 | 727,535 | 641,977 | 835,871 | 893,015 |
| Trust and Foundations | 730,900 | 759,099 | 858,680 | 1,436,632 | 1,980,205 |
| Individual Donors | 15,363 | - | - | - | - |
| Other Revenue | 31,925 | 34,257 | 97,590 | 26,778 | 59,826 |
| Total core Revenue | 1,318,278 | 1,520,890 | 1,598,247 | 2,299,281 | 2,933,047 |
| Revenue - Earmarked | | | | | |
| Governmental Agencies | 925,495 | 981,233 | 1,255,754 | 1,271,830 | 1,400,034 |
| Trust and Foundations | 222,185 | 382,667 | 373,011 | 253,893 | 264,532 |
| Total Earmarked Revenue | 1,147,680 | 1,363,900 | 1,628,764 | 1,525,723 | 1,664,566 |
| Total Income | 2,465,958 | 2,884,790 | 3,227,011 | 3,825,004 | 4,597,613 |
| COSTS | | | | | |
| Revenue - Core | | | | | |
| Personnel & Related Costs | 1,459,315 | 1,588,579 | 1,740,584 | 2,335,761 | 2,687,965 |
| Programme Costs | 567,628 | 727,910 | 839,908 | 648,412 | 935,725 |
| Operating, Administrative & Finance Costs | 250,806 | 328,610 | 366,830 | 342,558 | 561,809 |
| Governance & Strategy Costs | 101,209 | 145,376 | 247,082 | 242,605 | 208,162 |
| Total Costs | 2,378,958 | 2,790,474 | 3,194,403 | 3,569,336 | 4,393,662 |
| Income (Deficit) For The Year | 87,000 | 94,316 | 32,608 | 255,668 | 203,951 |

PI AISBL BALANCE SHEET EVOLUTION

2017-
2021
(€)

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ASSETS | | | | | |
| Fixed Assets | 9,906 | 16,957 | 18,936 | 35,829 | 24,123 |
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | 950,244 | 1,229,155 | 871,357 | 1,351,297 | 2,280,647 |
| Debtors | 73,520 | 109,558 | 97,287 | 98,594 | 95,277 |
| Deferred Expenses | - | - | 5,472 | 585 | 30,907 |
| Grants Receivable - Governmental | 30,212 | 141,392 | 110,692 | 71,800 | 77,669 |
| Grants Receivable- Non-Governmental | 52,734 | 42,711 | 23,273 | 1,000 | 7,011 |
| Total Assets | 1,116,615 | 1,539,773 | 1,127,016 | 1,559,105 | 2,515,634 |
| LIABILITIES & RESERVES | | | | | |
| Liabilities | | | | | |
| Current Liabilities | 925,495 | 981,233 | 1,255,754 | 1,271,830 | 1,400,034 |
| Provisions | 222,185 | 382,667 | 373,011 | 253,893 | 264,532 |
| Deferred Grants | 1,147,680 | 1,363,900 | 1,628,764 | 1,525,723 | 1,664,566 |
| Total Liabilities | 2,465,958 | 2,884,790 | 3,227,011 | 3,825,004 | 4,597,613 |
| Reserves | | | | | |
| Social Liability Funds | 32,867 | 87,262 | 97,044 | 113,744 | 114,930 |
| Reserve Funds | 451,223 | 491,145 | 513,969 | 752,937 | 955,703 |
| Total Reserves | 484,090 | 578,406 | 611,013 | 866,681 | 1,070,632 |

Chapter 6

Our donors and partners



We would like to thank all of our donors and supporters for their important role in the protection of human rights defenders, the right to defend human rights and the preservation of civic space. As we move forward, we are still working within a challenging context of proliferating inequalities, racial discrimination, populist and authoritarian agendas and rampant disinformation about human rights defenders and their work. Amidst this background, we would like to encourage donors to adapt to the needs of HRDs and their supporting civil society organisations by:

- Granting more flexible core funding that can meet the evolving, and sometimes rapidly changing, needs of human rights organisations;
- Considering human rights defenders as key stakeholders in grant making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are effectively considered;
- Adopting a risk-based and defender-centric approach to engagement with human rights actors, including by using more secure communications channels when interacting with human rights defenders; and
- Reducing the burden on reporting to allow for more resources to be dedicated to the essential human rights work at hand.

We sincerely thank all of our contributors and partners for their dedication to this important work, and the prioritisation of security as a key factor in ensuring that human rights are respected and protected across the world.

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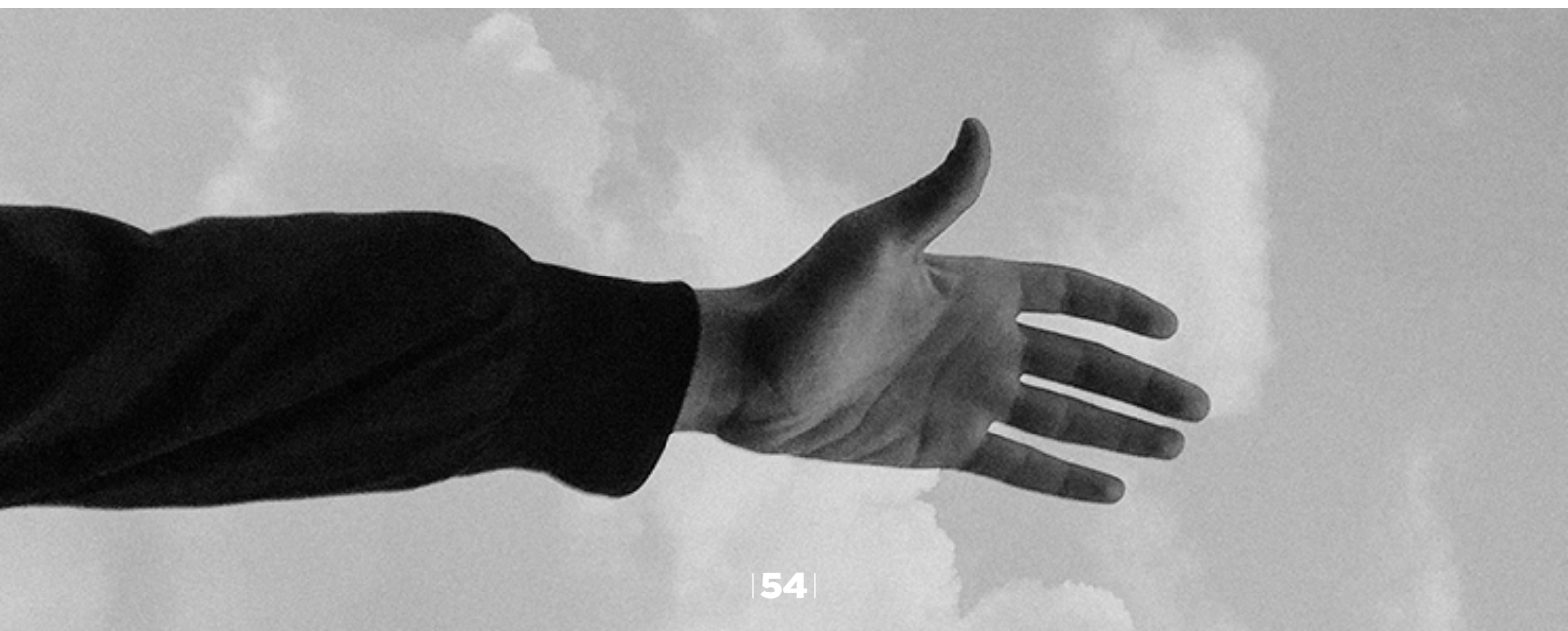


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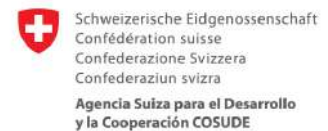
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OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS



Many thanks to all!





**WE STAND WITH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS.
WE SUPPORT YOUR RIGHT TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS.**



 **PROTECTION**
international