# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

# SEMUA WARGA NEGARA SAMA, HANGUR KAN DISKRMANASI

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PROTECTION international

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# A Letter from **Protection International**

## Dear Readers,

2019 was a tumultuous year for women and men human rights defenders (<u>W/HRDs</u>) around the world. In the contexts where Protection International works – from Guatemala to Indonesia – we have witnessed how the rise of right-wing populism, conflicts, deepening inequalities, and greater restrictions on civil society shaped the risks faced by human rights defenders.

Threats and attacks against defenders, both physical and digital, continue to affect their security and effectiveness in advocating for change. Impunity persists.

In this report, we highlight some of the work that Protection International has done in 2019 to promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders at risk. We supported defenders through joint advocacy, at national and international levels, security training, network building, and the development of tailored guides in local languages. We advocated with state authorities for the development of public policies that protect the rights of defenders. We released reports and statements highlighting key trends on security and protection. We continued to work together with defenders and fellow civil society organisations through networks and movements, connecting those working in remote areas with stakeholders and supportive networks in capitals.

In 2019, after substantial deliberation and consultation with defenders and partners, we launched a five-year Global Strategy, covering 2019-2023. This Global Strategy reaffirms our grassroots ethos – we remain deeply committed to acting from the perspectives of defenders and with defenders where they are. It restates our approach of comprehensive, collective-driven, locally embedded and long-term protection work in partnership with defenders.

Our Global Strategy presents important changes. Firstly, PI will be implementing a subtle but important shift in approach – that is, to broaden our focus from protecting human rights defenders to protecting the right to defend human rights (RDHR). This means the deepening of our work to create enabling environments for the defense of human rights, as defenders ourselves alongside other defenders. We will also broaden our range of protection interventions to include psychosocial support, access to legal support, organisational capacity strengthening, and sub-granting.

Secondly, we are undertaking a transformation of PI's structure into a Network of Regional Hubs to ensure a greater level of management and governance will take place at the regional level, driven by local contexts and priorities. In December 2019, we proudly launched PI Africa as a first step in this direction.

We hope you enjoy reading this 2019 Annual Report, which highlights new initiatives we have tried in Nigeria and Guatemala, the first celebration of International Women Human Rights Defenders Day in Indonesia, and our support to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE) Rights organisations in Tanzania – to mention a few examples.

All that we achieved could not have been possible without the constellation of trusted partners we work with and the support of many who believe, like we do, that by protecting defenders we create societies that are more equal, open, secure, and just.

#### Alice Nah

Chairperson of the Board

#### Liliana De Marco Coenen Executive Director



#### Alice Nah, Chair

Alice Nah is a lecturer at the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York, UK. Alice conducts research on the security and protection of human rights defenders at risk, and on asylum and migration in Asia. She leads an international research project that examines how human rights defenders navigate risks, manage security, and receive protection support in different countries.

#### Patrick Decoodt, Treasurer

Patrick Decoodt has developed a long career in international business within Belgium and overseas, through which he gained expertise in transition management. In the past, he has been an independent consultant for various SMEs, including cultural organisations, social enterprises and not-for-profit organisations.

#### Marusia López, Member

Marusia López is a Mexican feminist with nearly two decades of experience in local, national, and international human rights organisations. She is currently Knowledge Generation and Systematization Coordinator with *Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Defensoras*, after serving as Senior Associate on issues of holistic protection of women human rights defenders at JASS on the global level.

#### Gitahi Githuku, Member

Gitahi Githuku is a human rights defender from Kenya who has worked with various national and regional human rights organisations over many years. Since 2014, he works with the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) based in Nairobi, focusing on natural resources and sexual health rights programmes.

#### Mahmoud AbuRahma, Member (since June 2019)

Mahmoud AbuRahma is a human rights activist from Gaza, Palestine. He is currently a member of the European Network Against Racism in Brussels, where he is working on promoting equality and anti-racism in Europe and working on mitigating the risks and threats faced by HRDs in the anti-racism movement.

#### Liliana De Marco Coenen, Executive Director

Liliana joined Protection International in 2014 and became its Executive Director in 2016. Together with the global management team, she is responsible for strategic direction and implementation of PI's mandate across different regions. Liliana is passionate about social justice and brings to her leadership vast experience in human rights policy and advocacy. She holds an LL.M in international human rights law from the University of Essex, UK.

# Where we work





#### Africa

A lack of accountability for human rights violations by security forces, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and blatant impunity remains a major concern in Kenya. In Tanzania, the enjoyment of human rights further deteriorated. The government continued to restrict media and critics of the government, de-register civil society groups, arrest journalists, restrict civic space, stigmatize LGBTI groups and undermine the rights of women and of children. In the DRC, following elections of the President there have been hopeful signs. However, in the east of the DRC, armed conflict is ongoing, and contributed to an increase of sexual violence. W/HRDs who document cases of sexual violence are at high risk. Non-State armed groups, using sexual violence to enforce control over illicit economic activities, including the exploitation of natural resources, were responsible for most cases.

#### Southeast Asia

In Thailand and Indonesia (or Southeast Asia more in general) criminalization, violence and land grabbing still occur, and have even resulted in death. The shrinking of democracy, the government's priority on investment, a bigger military and police role in the criminalization of defenders, and the limited role of national human rights institutions (NHRI) contributed to the violence faced by W/HRDs in South East Asia.



W/HRDs' local organisations and communities



Trained community activists and W/HRDs

60%

Women HRDs

Permanent presence

Non-permanent presence

#### Central and South America

In 2019, violence against defenders was further exacerbated in Latin America. From the 304 murders of defenders in 2019, 208 took place in Latin America. Both in Colombia and Guatemala, there were tense and divisive national (Guatemala) and local (Colombia) elections that were fraught with violence and accusations of corruption. In both countries, repressive legal frameworks aiming to reduce civil space for social movements were discussed at legislative level. In Honduras, W/HRDs continue to operate in an environment where violent crime, poverty and insecurity are rampant.

#### **Protection International Navarra** (PI Navarra)

Since October 2016, PI Navarra, an independent local NGO established in Pamplona, is our official representative in Spain. PI Navarra adheres to our mandate, vision and mission and is bound by our policies and procedures. Its mandate is mainly to:

- Organise outreach and dissemination activities in Spain on the work carried out by PI and on issues related to W/HRDs.
- Participate in **coordination and advocacy** related meetings in Spain related to the work carried out by PI on W/HRDs, including discussions concerning public policies for W/ HRD protection.
- Raise funds from Spanish donors (public and private) for the costs of PI Navarra and the operations of PI in Latin America and Africa.



24

W/HRDs' local organisations and communities



#### 1583

Trained community activists and W/HRDs



#### 41%

Women HRDs

**PI Global Team** 



#### **1. Expert Services**

Our tailored onsite and online capacity building trainings support communities, organisations and individual W/HRDs on security management and protection.

Our work alongside communities of women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs) does not stop in the countries where we have a permanent presence. With our consultancy services, we are able to accompany and support W/HRDs around the globe in providing expertise on security and protection management strategies to continue exercising their right to defend human rights. In 2019 alone, we collaborated with 15 different partners to reach more than 100 W/HRDs in 20 different countries representing even a larger number of nationalities.

In collaboration with Open Society Foundation's (OSF) Economic Justice program, we began supporting civil society organisations (CSOs) working in the field of fiscal governance to enhance transparency and good governance in Brazil, Italy, Nigeria and Ukraine. In January 2019, we started a 15-month intervention to support CSOs in building resilience and strengthening their protection strategies through a comprehensive protection and security approach. Participating CSOs received training seminars on physical and digital security with an inclusive psychosocial approach, including aspects of wellbeing and organisational management.

While our consultancy services focus mostly on preventive measures, support mechanisms are important for W/HRDs living in exile or as a last resort option for W/HRDs who are facing life-threatening

risks. In 2019, we offered our expertise to help Amnesty International Spain and the Goldman Environmental Foundation programmes support individual W/HRDs living in exile. We did so by undertaking risk and context analyses to assess the possibility of a safe return to their home countries.

We were also involved in the Human Rights Monitoring on Safety and Security workshop organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Montenegro. The workshop built capacities of W/HRDs when carrying out human rights work on three specific areas: Roma and Sinti issues, people of African descent, and environmental issues. The W/HRDs that took part in the workshop looked at how to address security for defenders, especially those working in hostile environments, and incorporating a focus on psychological safety.

While in Brussels, we shared our expertise on online security and safety at the annual meeting of Youth Sexual Awareness for Europe (YSAFE). During the session, participants looked at the importance of understanding privacy settings; we provided advice on the usage of multiple social media accounts, we suggested secure messaging services (safe spaces) and offered strategies on how to deal with trolling and online abuse.





16 Number of countries where services were implemented



**15** Number of partners



**135** Number of W/HRDs supported via services



37% were women

#### Online Training Security and Protection Management for Human Rights Defenders and Social Organisations

Across 2019, we also ran eight sessions of our online training Security and Protection Management for Human Rights Defenders and Social Organisations. Organised three times throughout the year and available in English, French and Spanish, the course aims for W/HRDs to develop various skills, capacities and strategies to allow them to improve the level of security and protection, both for themselves and also for the people they work with. Those who complete the course and pass the final evaluation obtain a certificate. Compared to previous editions of this online training, 2019's editions aimed at increasing the satisfaction of participants and a high number of participants successfully finalising the course. In 2018, 73 participants registered to the online training, but only 49 among them successfully completed it. Instead, while only 69 participants enrolled to the training in 2019, 57 of them obtained the certificate.













#### 2. Network Memberships

#### Working in alliance with coalitions and networks

"Strength in numbers" is the strategy we envision alongside communities of W/HRDs. Such a vision helps to steer our mandate of W/HRD protection and reinforcing the Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR). Such numbers and strength stem notably from the human rights networks that we all engage in.

The global, national and local human rights coalitions that we and communities of W/HRDs are members of form the basis for our work and have demonstrated their efficiency in influencing agendas. Indeed, alliances leverage support for W/HRD movements, amplify our collective voice and can result in the advancement of the protection of defenders and their Right to Defend Human Rights.

They connect us with organisations and movements at the global level (mainly at the UN and EU level) as well as at the regional and national levels across Latin America, Central Africa and Southeast Asia. Here is a snapshot of the vast landscape of coalitions we are actively engaging with across the globe:

#### **Global networks**

The Brussels-based Global Team leads our engagement in global networks. In 2019, we continued our membership in the Coalition for Human Rights in Development and its Defenders in Development campaign, advocating and campaigning to change how development financiers, international financial institutions, governments and companies operate. Additionally, linking to our work on business and human rights, we joined the Zero Tolerance Initiative (ZTI), a global coalition of indigenous peoples, W/HRD collectives and international NGOs advocating for the end of abuses against W/HRDs in global supply chains.

Our participation in regional networks is key for advocating for the Right to Defend Human Rights closer to defenders

Moreover, in 2019 we joined the Global Legal Empowerment Network gathering national and international NGOs to advance justice by building a movement of W/HRDs who know, use, and shape the laws that affect them.



#### **Regional networks**

Our participation in regional networks is key for advocating for the Right to Defend Human Rights closer to defenders. In 2019, we have been actively involved in several European networks, such as the European-Latin American Network (EU-LAT), the European Network for Central Africa (EurAc) and the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN). We did so by contributing to key EU policies and processes addressing the protection of W/ HRDs, such as the 2020-2024 EU Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan.

We have also been an active member of the ProtectDefenders.eu Consortium, a comprehensive EU mechanism established to advocate for W/ HRDs worldwide. The mechanism offers a protection support fund to W/HRDs, links international NGOs with local W/HRD movements and communicates widely on W/HRD realities.











For our colleagues in Protection International Africa, based in Kenya, The EU HRD network was chosen as a group where the protection of W/HRDs in Eastern Africa could be championed. This network is a forum for European and Canadian foreign missions, regional civil society and W/HRD groups to engage on matters of protection and the right to defend human rights in Eastern Africa. This network is led by the Kenya Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, and a highlight each year are the W/ HRDs awards held in Kenya every November.

In Southeast Asia, Forum-Asia and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) have been central allies to our work in Indonesia and Thailand, promoting the right to defend human rights, protecting minority W/HRDs (such as indigenous, women and peasant) and collaborating on regional and national events, such as the International Day for Woman Human Rights defenders.









## National networks

In 2019, our colleagues based in Central America continued to collaborate actively with the 27-member network Foro de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales Internacionales en Guatemala (FONGI). This network, gathering key INGOs working in Guatemala, works toward the creation of a public policy for the protection of W/HRDs in the country, which could have a potentially huge impact on the right to defend across the Mesoamerican region.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), our colleagues in Goma and Bukavu engaged in the 100-member Forum national des ONGI-RDC, gathering the main international humanitarian organisations operating in the country. This body advocates primarily for ensuring and maintaining humanitarian access for INGOs, and promotes respect for humanitarian and human rights principles.

Moreover, we have been collaborating on an ad hoc basis with several local and national Civil Society Organisations networks, notably advocating for the development of national comprehensive and protective public policies and protection mechanisms. A milestone moment in 2019 was the adoption of a Provincial Edit to Protect Women and Men Human Rights Defenders and Journalists Adopted in North Kivu, a result of a long process and collaboration alongside the local network Synergy Ukingo Wetu (SUWE) and local W/HRDs.

Our participation to networks in Thailand gave particular focus to holistic and collective protection of women and indigenous HRDs, with engagement in The Community Women Human Rights Defenders Collective. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, we advocated against violence towards women HRDs in collaboration with the grassroots network Persaudarian Perempuan Pembela Hak Asasi Manusia (Sisterhood of Women Human Rights Defenders).



#### 3. Advocacy - Colombian and Guatemalan Defenders of Land, Territory and the **Environment in Europe**

Colombian and Guatemalan defenders of land, territory and the environment in Europe, urging citizens and decision makers for greater support, action and attention

In 2019, Protection International, jointly with partners, organised two European advocacy tours with men and women human rights defenders (W/HRDs) of land, territory and the environment from Guatemala and Colombia. The aim? For W/HRDs to raise awareness and present cases of human rights violations to European citizens and decision makers. The W/HRDs denounced the threats, defamations and murders that vulnerable communities in these countries - women in particular - suffer as a direct consequence of peacefully defending their land and environmental rights.

#### Guatemala

Organised jointly by the NGOs Farmamundi, Bread For the World and CAREA, in October 2019 representatives from the Guatemalan Peaceful Resistance of the Microregion of Ixquisis and from the Peaceful Resistance of Santa Rosa, Jalapa and Jutiapa, a movement representing the Xinka indigenous people affected by extractive projects, visited several European cities (Barcelona, Berlin and Brussels) for a 3-week advocacy tour. They raised awareness about their cases and the overall situation of defenders in Guatemala to both European civil society and key decision-makers, including members of the European Parliament, as well as the European External Action Service, European Commission and some EU Member States representatives.

Guatemalan defenders live in an ever-growing state of threat due to the installation of extractive mega-projects such as hydroelectric dams, mining, agro-industry and monocultures which privatise and extract their resources. These extractive activities are carried out without open, prior and informed consent of the communities, and are financed by international development banks. Many Guatemalan defenders have been killed in recent years for defending their land and environmental rights, and parallel to these assassinations, campaigns of defamation, disinformation, stigmatization and discrediting of defenders are a daily occurrence in Guatemala.

#### Colombia

In addition, it is a sobering fact worldwide that Colombian W/HRDs face the greatest risks for standing to defend their rights, notably their land and territory. For many years, Protection International has worked in Colombia with communities of W/HRDs from some of the most isolated and dangerous regions of the country. Despite the signing of the peace agreement in 2016 and the hopes of a safer and more protected landscape to defend rights, W/HRDs in a post-peace agreement setting continue to be threatened, criminalized and killed.

This difficult and complex situation for defenders in Colombia requires both national and international attention and actions. Recognising this, in December 2019, Protection International and the Colombian organisation Pensamiento y Acción Social (PAS), organized an advocacy tour in Brussels with two participants: Rogeres Higuita Ferraro, a defender of land, territory and peasants rights from the Córdoba department of Colombia, alongside Betty Pedraza, a researcher with PAS.

The advocacy tour was an opportunity for Rogeres and Betty to meet and engage with multi-level political and diplomatic authorities of the EU and international NGOs to highlight the challenging landscape W/HRDs face in the regions where PI and PAS work: Vichada, Córdoba, Santander, Cauca and Antioquia. The advocacy tour was also a moment to present to a European audience PAS and PI's 2018 publication "Los Riesgos de los Defensores del Derecho a la Tierra y el Territorio en el escenario del post-acuerdo de paz en Colombia. Una Mirada desde la Región".

Over a number of days, links of solidarity were made, key advocacy relationships were established and the voices of countless communities of rural Guatemalan and Colombian W/HRDs were heard, all with the aim of achieving an enabling environment for defenders to exercise their right to defend human rights.



# Spotlight on... Global Strategy 2019-2023

#### 1. A Global Response to a Changing Landscape for the Right to Defend Human Rights

As we embark on a five-year long journey, our compass will show us the way through changing and challenging landscapes that lead us to our desired destination: a world with more space for W/HRDs to defend their right to defend human rights

In recent years, we have witnessed a rise of powerful revisionist agendas on international human rights standards and a progressive erosion of democratic values worldwide.

Inequality and discrimination have also spread, together with the legitimisation of oppression against those most vulnerable in society. By allowing exploitation, hatred, sexism and racism to grow rife, state authorities are failing in their obligation to protect women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs), who are also targeted by powerful non-state actors.

As a result, civil society space has deteriorated and exercising the Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR) free from fear and attacks has become more challenging. The numbers of human rights defenders and communities at risk continue to increase, in the midst of higher levels of repression, judicial harassment and criminalisation. Parallel to this, current approaches to W/HRDs protection are not sufficient nor reflect the challenges W/HRDs are facing day to day. However, the resilience of W/HRDs and their capacity to sustain peaceful resistance over long periods send clear messages: **there is hope for the** 

#### W/HRDs

Throughout our annual report, you will regularly come across the acronym W/ HRDs. W/HRDs refers to both women and men human rights defenders. The term W/HRDs is understood as encompassing many different identities and therefore inclusive of LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex) and indigenous people.

global human rights movement; we must all do our part to support W/HRDs and their movements. For this reason, we launched our new Global Strategy 2019-2023, a stepping-stone to set a new way forward for us as an organisation, as well as to provide a better response for the support and protection of W/HRDs. Our new strategy presents a shifted perspective, moving from solely the protection of W/HRDs towards increasing their agency to exercise the Right to Defend Human Rights. Our ambition, by 2023, is for both women and men Human Rights Defenders to have an increased capacity to enjoy their Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR) in countries where we operate.

Two key elements underpin this transition: a revised Theory of Change (ToC) and a reviewed protection approach. Our strategy also entails an important organisational shift, as our governance structure is expanding to better reach W/HRDs and bring our decision-making closer to them, where it matters the most.

**GLOBAL** 

**STRATEGY** 

PROTECTION international

Download PDF

2019-2023

#### Agency (Sociology):

is the sum of interactions of a) what one individual does, b) the opportunity to act, and c) the freedom of defenders to choose. The concept of agency is not only about defenders themselves but considering the broader context around them (social, cultural, economic and political structures which prevent defenders to act as they wish).

<image>

#### 2. Our Revised Theory of Change and Protection Approach

#### Placing W/HRDs and their identities at the centre of our interventions

Since the very beginning, Protection International's focus as an organisation has always been to act from the territories' perspective and for the defenders' benefit, from the local to the international level, through a bottom-up approach.

#### Our new five-year Global Strategy builds upon and reiterates our grassroots-driven DNA.

Our protection approach for the next 5 years will be based on four key elements.

Placing W/HRDs and their identities at the centre of our interventions. We are building all activities with and for them, in a way to ensure that their interests come first and to support organic change

Our aim is to tackle power imbalances and ensure W/HRDs gain agency through evidence-based interventions targeting State authorities, ultimately playing their role as duty-bearers and holding perpetrators to account. We will strive to increase our advocacy and network activities, to better reinforce protection strategies for W/HRDs

Repositioning our perspective: moving from one of ensuring W/HRDs protection towards one of supporting W/HRDs in gaining agency to exercise their Right to Defend Human Riahts

Last but not least, our revised definition and approach to protection! It covers:

- A broader scope of intervention for our activities and puts
- A greater emphasis on strengthening organisational and the collective capacity of W/HRDs.
- Incorporating a psychosocial and gender approach
- Foster cooperation with organisations specialised in psychosocial support, legal aid and areas that reinforce W/HRDs capacity to defend their rights.

#### Pl's objectives for the coming five years

Primary Goal: By 2023, the agency of W/HRDs to enjoy the Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR) will have increased in countries where PI operates

#### How?

- The communities and defenders we accompany are empowered leaders of their protection and sustainability
- State authorities respect, protect and fulfil the Right to Defend Human Rights
- Influential stakeholders support W/HRDs leadership on the Right to Defend Human Rights

#### THEORY OF CHANGE

GOAL: By 2023, the agency of W/HRDs to enjoy the Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR) will have increased in countries where PI operates



# international

the International Board of Directors and staff, berience and respond to the needs on the ground. Our shared goal is to build a more horizontal organisation and bring our decision-making to where it matters the most: close to defenders.

with and knowledge from defenders. Decentralisawanted to make sure that our interventions are more

The result of much work and determination, Protec-

#### 3. Our new governance structure - Closer to **Defenders**

A new Regional Hub for Africa, the first of our network of Protection Hubs

tion Hub, was established in Nairobi, Kenya. Protection International Africa is our first regional and governance structures. It can independent-

with representatives of diplomatic missions, W/HRDs

nternatio

AFRICA

also celebrated our friend and colleague



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Manuel pratique de protection pour les Défenseur es des Droits Humains en République Démocratique du Congo

A toolbox publication addressing the security context and protection needs of Human Rights Defenders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo)

In August 2019, we published the "Manuel pratique de des droits humains en République démocratique du Congo" (Manual on Applied Protection for Human Rights Defenders in the Democratic Republic of Congo). It is a toolbox publication meant to facilitate our training activities and extend the understanding of Human Rights Defenders protection to all provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo).

Concretely, it is a revised version of the third edition of our New Protection Manual (2009). The core content of our New Protection Manual is still relevant, even 10 years after its publication. However, while working alongside W/HRDs for the last 9 years in DR Congo, we recognized the contextual nuances which impact applying the concepts and methods proposed to local W/HRD organisations and movements.

This is particularly true for the perilous reality of women and men human rights defenders (W/ HRDs) in the DR Congo. 30 years of armed conflict in the eastern part of the country have resulted in countless abuses, committed by both state security

UAL

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CARAS

## 2019 publications at a glance

forces and many non-governmental armed groups. These actors commit countless cruelties against civilians, including murder and rape, and go largely unpunished. Widespread poverty, local customs and discrimination add to the obstacles arising from the political and security context. Women face even more difficulties because of their identity, such as sexual harassment and rape, lack of resources to



carry out their work, customary discrimination, stigmatization and stereotyping.

This practical manual, developed in close cooperation with W/HRD organisations and our colleagues in Goma and Bukavu, is a revised collective effort to better support Congolese W/HRDs

If we want to continue defending human rights despite threats and pressures, it is necessary to know how to act and react in order to continue this essentia work without endangering our lives.

Dr. Denis Mukwege

in applying the theories and concepts to their everyday work. Originally drafted in French, the manual was thereafter translated into DR Congo's four national languages (Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kiswahili) to reach a greater number of W/HRDs.

Furthermore, the "Manuel pratique de Protection" highlights new issues, such as the impact of gender diversity and psychological well-being on W/ HRDs and their work. These factors are ever more prominent among those who are acting to promote and defend human rights and the organisations devoted to their protection.

#### 2. Política pública de protección para defensores colectivos de la tierra y el territorio

An analysis on the possible impacts of the new regulatory framework in Colombia concerning matters of collective protection

In May 2019, we published our fourth research study on the situation for women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs) in Colombia, entitled: "*Política pública de protección para defensores colectivos de la tierra y el territorio – Límites y posibilidades en el posacuerdo*" (Public Policies on the protection of land and territory defender collectives: Limits and possibilities in a post-peace agreement context).

Developed in collaboration with <u>Pensamiento y Ac-</u> <u>ción Social (PAS)</u>, this new study looks into the **limits and possibilities of Colombia's Peace Agreement** as a normative framework to address the risks faced by human rights defenders of land and territory.

It is certain that the signing of the **peace agreement in 2016 raised many expectations among W/HRDs**. It meant not only the possibility of ending over half a century of armed conflict; it also generated favourable conditions for the protection of rights – to the extent that agreements on security and protection guarantees were introduced to both communities and organisations that defend the rights of land and territory.



However, although these advancements are encouraging, the **peace agreement also undoubtedly brought to the surface new political tensions between defenders and detractors of peace**; highlighting the persistence and emergence of armed actors; and unleashing new land disputes across the country.

This latest publication is a continuation of our previous research, which incorporates analysis on the possible impacts of the new regulatory framework in Colombia concerning matters of collective protection.

Our research ultimately aims to contribute to the public debate and provide elements for the definition of effective strategies in order to guarantee the right to defend the human rights, particularly the rights of land and territory.

## The research is composed of five key sections

2.

The conceptual and methodological assumptions from which the analysis of the norms unfolds

The ways in which international standards on the right to defend rights are transferred to the national regulatory framework

Norms concerning security guarantees for defenders from the perspective of public policies

The courses of action defined in the regulatory framework and the conditions of possibility for their effective implementation in local contexts

The limits and possibilities of implementing the new regulatory framework

3. Recommendations to the FU and its Member States for the **Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Latin America** (within the EU-LAT Network)

A policy brief developed within EU-LAT's working group on defenders offering solutions that contribute to a safer environment for the Right to Defend Human Rights

It is a sad and sobering fact that Latin America is amongst the most dangerous regions in the world for women and men human rights defenders (W/ HRDs). The trends experienced by W/HRDs in the region are the reduction of a safe civic space, a normalization of criminalizing W/HRDs and the ever-worsening violence entrenched by impunity.

To find solutions that create a safe environment for communities of W/HRDs to carry out their work, political and civic efforts must be mobilised. Understanding this, in 2019 the European-Latin American Network (EU-LAT) working group on human rights defenders, of which we are a member, released the policy brief <u>Recommendations to the EU and its</u> Member States for the protection of human rights defenders in Latin America. This combination of key messages and recommendations are in line with the global roadmap traced by civil society organisations and W/HRDs during the Paris Summit (October 2018) and its subsequent Action Plan.



#### Four Key Action Strategies to the EU and its Member States:

Guarantee a secure environment by recognising and legitimising the work of W/HRDs

Guarantee a legal framework that respects the full exercise of the right to defend human rights without fear of facing reprisals and criminalisation

Reduce threats and attacks against defenders of land, territory and the environment

Guarantee that women defenders can defend human rights, including women's reproductive rights, without fear of suffering stigmatisation and gender-based violence

# Africa

1. Laws for W/HRDs – New Provincial Edit to Protect Women and Men Human Rights Defenders and Journalists Adopted in North Kivu

The joint effort by local civil society towards a new legal instrument furthering the Right to Defend Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) does not yet have an effective national legal framework able to effectively protect women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs). Perpetrators go unpunished and no mechanism is in place to compensate the harm W/ HRDs suffer. In the last two Universal Periodic Reviews (in <u>2014</u> and <u>2019</u>), several recommendations were made to the DR Congo for the creation and establishment of a legal framework for the protection of W/HRDs. However, on a national level nothing concrete is yet to be achieved.

Still, progress has been possible at the provincial level. On 11th November 2019, four years of tireless efforts by North Kivu's civil society finally paid off, as North Kivu's provincial assembly adopted a new law protecting human rights defenders and journalists of North Kivu.

This 4-year long process was led by Protection International, the Synergie Ukingo Wetu (SUWE) local NGO coalition and communities of W/HRDs in North Kivu. Key activities which contributed to the law's successful adoption were three workshops and conventions which introduced to the provincial assembly the importance of public policies in the defence of human rights.

Additionally, collectively we provided a legal template and examples of public policies from other jurisdictions to convince both W/HRDs and deputies that change is possible in the DR Congo. We also elaborated an argumentation paper in favour of a special protection mechanism for women human rights defenders, which was eventually included within the text of the voted and issued law.

It is true that the Congolese authorities are responsible for the effective implementation of this

# Advocacy and outreach activities which contributed to the provincial law

Workshops on public rights defenders

Advocacy meetings with provincial deputies

Exchange sessions between experts and administrative members of North Kivu's provincial assembly

law, something that may not happen immediately, but this is a step in the right direction. This new legal tool for the protection of W/HRDs – issued by the governor of North Kivu on 30th November 2019 – is crucial to enhance recognition and support for W/HRDs in North Kivu, as well as being an effective and significant improvement for their protection.

In fact, North Kivu is not the first province to see the passing of such a law; in 2015 a similar edict was unanimously passed in South Kivu. For W/HRDs across DR Congo and the Great Lakes Region these results show that their efforts are recognised. Now what is needed is effective implementation.

Workshops on public policies for the protection of human

33

#### 2. A Story-based Approach to Digital Security Training Tested in Nigeria

Staff from the HEDA Resources Centre gain tools and learn skills to face new digital challenges with funny anecdotes, comparisons and story telling

Nowadays, having a good foundation of cybersecurity is important for women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs), who are frequently exposed to powerful, well-resourced and tech-savvy opponents. Yet, understanding and managing digital security can be a challenge for people not trained in this field, if not an impossible mission altogether.

Nevertheless, with some common sense and a bit of guidance, it is possible to make this issue less remote and more relatable to non-tech experts. For this reason, we decided not only to include more digital security activities in our trainings, but also to develop new, more intuitive ways to explain cybersecurity to W/HRDs.

In November 2019, we tested this new approach during a training we delivered for <u>Human and Envi-</u> <u>ronmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resources</u> <u>Centre)</u> in Lagos, Nigeria.

The training covered sessions devoted to the organisation's IT support, developing in-depth digi-

### tal security measures and improving their general skills and awareness on cybersecurity.

Two groups of trainees were established. First, the IT support team and then the entire staff body of HEDA Resources Centre. The first group received a more in-depth training, setting priorities, timelines and goals. In short, a more traditional training. For the second group the training looked more closely at the rise of new digital challenges in the day-today workings of an NGO. For this reason the training covered the essentials, but in a manageable and fun way.

When it comes to cyber security, there are many simple-to-use tools in one's reach. Take for example Proton Mail, as well as using the Firefox browser that offers a built-in password manager and anti-tracking settings.

Even more importantly, we explained some core principles of digital security like encryption, passwords or anonymity with funny stories, comparisons and storytelling, so that participants could quickly grasp what is at stake and how to make the best decisions when it comes to cybersecurity.

Before the end of the training, the 12 staff members of HEDA could easily and immediately send encrypted emails, using unique and strong passwords, as well as easily bypass internet blockages.



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#### 3. New Beginnings with Organisations Defending Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE) Rights in Tanzania

Strengthening the protection and security capacity of Tanzania's SOGIE coalition

In March 2019, we met with members of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LG-BTIQ+) movements from both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar archipelago. This momentous meeting led to the creation of the Tanzania SOGIE Coalition in Nairobi, which has the ambitious aim of countering the longstanding internal discriminations against LGBTIQ+ rights movement in Tanzania.

Tanzanian LGBTIQ+ people are targets of daily persecution and stigmatisation by state authorities, religious leaders and other members of society. In some dire cases, they have been victims of discrimination, abandonment and betrayal by their own family members.

In mid-2016, the situation for LGBTIQ+ rights defenders worsened, as the Tanzanian government initiated a brutal crackdown on the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and their supporters. Senior government officials threatened to arrest people who identify as LGTBIQ+, as well as their social media followers as a strategy to close down organisations reportedly promoting homosexuality.

These blatant attacks did not stop here, with the Tanzanian government breaching the offices of W/ HRDs organisations, taking laptops, phones and other devices. These events showed the gaps in security management among SOGIE organisations and their staff, and the need for them to be able to manage their own security, both physically and digitally.

For this reason, we worked - with the support of our partners in Kenya - towards equipping the SOGIE Coalition and other Tanzanian LGBTIQ+ rights defenders with comprehensive security management skills through three comprehensive physical and digital security management trainings.

Overall, more than 55 human rights defenders of SOGIE and LGTBIQ+ rights, as well as defenders from Sex Workers' Rights Organizations, from both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar took part in our training activities in 2019.

We also established an Emergency Response fund that supports Tanzanian W/HRDs at risk to access emergency medical care, legal aid and relocation.

Transgender and sex workers' organisations developed elaborate efforts to integrate their knowledge; for example

One organisation reported that they had digitalised and protected files, and afterwards destroyed all physical/hard copies.

Most participants, and some organisations, have incorporated risk assessment in their work and this has boosted their confidence in their ability to manage their own security

Most importantly is the realisation among the SOGIE community that their security is mostly dependent on their personal conduct and behaviour

Coalition members reported an improved understanding on the need to take charge of their security. They acknowledge that they bear the responsibility to safeguard their security

# newly acquired security management skills and



Another organisation decided to change office after they carried out a risk assessment of their previous premises.

The training on human rights changed the way I look at and relate with police officers. Before the training, I feared them; they would force me to have unprotected sex with them as well as to bribe them to avoid arrest. Now I know better, they cannot do that to me. I am able to state my rights and ask them to draw up charges against me. I feel empowered.

**Rehema** (fictional name) a sex worker from Dar es-Salaam.



## Southeast Asia

#### 1. A First Time for Everything – International Women Human Rights Defenders Day in Indonesia

A two-day event to celebrate Women Human Rights Defenders, highlighting their unique work and challenges, while presenting their need for recognition and protection.

On the 28th and 29th November 2019, we celebrated International Women Human Rights Defenders Day in Jakarta. Among other activities, the commemoration included a press conference, a debate on women human rights defenders protection, a theatrical performance on the situation of women human rights defenders and a photo exhibition. We organised these activities jointly with local groups of W/HRDs, Indonesia's National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan) and members of the Civil Society Coalition for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

In Indonesia, celebrations for the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day had never taken place before, a fact that can be explained by a lack of awareness of women HRDs from the general public, but also from women HRDs themselves. It shows that women HRDs are not recognised as a vulnerable group by the Indonesian Government and are not granted special security and protection measures.

For this reason, we worked hard to contribute to this day in Indonesia. It was an opportunity to draw the Indonesian public's attention to women HRDs, their work but also their challenges, such as gender-based violence and stereotyping.

This event brought together a broad spectrum of civil society organisations, to highlight their movements and create synergies, all the while amplifying the voices of women HRDs to the Indonesian government. Feminist movements, LGBTIQ+ groups and impoverished women from urban communities met with Komnas Perempuan, Indonesia's National Commission on Violence against Women, and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry Ministries. These authorities are key for those who work for the protection and promotion of Human Rights in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the women HRDs participated in a Komnas Perempuan press conference, granting them wider media attention. In addition, various exchanges on reflection and learning took place, con-

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Indonesia Women HRDs

necting the women HRDs with Indonesian NGOs. In this way, a space for women HRDs, civil society and the Indonesian government to exchange, learn and listen was enabled.

The two-day celebrations gave the recognition that women HRDs deserve, raised awareness about the difficult situations they face daily and has put their need for security and protection on the Government's agenda.



# 2. Kamisan Protest – a Decade Long Resistance in the Name of Indonesian W/HRDs

*"Tidak ada rekonsiliasi tanpa keadilan"* No reconciliation without justice for W/HRDs in Indonesia

Every Thursday, in the heart of Jakarta, you can stumble across an interesting sight. A silent gathering of people, all wearing black, holding signs and photos of Indonesian citizens. This action, named the Kamisan Protest, is a gathering of people who demand justice for the unresolved cases of human rights abuses of Indonesian women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs). Their crime? Defending human rights, for the good of their families, communities and country.

In 2007, family members of W/HRD victims began the Kamisan protest, born out of a frustration with the Government and its lack of response to human rights violations. This weekly gathering is a household name in Jakarta, and attracts wide media attention, but the Government's response has been near non-existent. One meeting took place between the protestors and the President in June 2018, with no follow up or action since.

On 28th November 2019, the 615th Kamisan Protest took place. What marked this particular Thursday as different, however, was our participation and the participation of a number of our partner HRDs collectives. These collectives represented rural HRDs, women HRDs, environmental HRDs and cultural HRDs from all across Indonesia.



This meeting and collaboration between the Kamisan protestors and the diverse collectives of W/ HRDs forged a learning exchange of advocacy, campaigning and aware-raising for the numerous causes and cases that took part. This day of protest was part of our two-day celebration of International Women Human Rights Defenders Day from the the 28th to 29th of November. Once again, the response from the Government was silence, but the collectives of W/HRDs that participated found the experience inspiring and creatively enriching for their respective causes.

This exchange of solidarity between Indonesia's diverse groups of W/HRDs is a strong reminder to the Indonesian government of its obligation to uphold rights, protect its citizens and provide justice for victims of human rights abuses.

# 3. "We won't leave!" – Thai Land Rights Defenders, Forced Eviction and Land Titling

For the 171 inhabitants of the Baw Kaew village in North East Thailand, 2019 was a memorable year for the right to defend rights.

The Baw Kaew community first settled on their home some 80 years ago, but in 2004 regional authorities imposed the Khon Son Forest Plantation on their territory without prior consent. The **Baw Kaew community took action and advocated for legal ownership of their land**, and in 2011, the government revoked the Khon Son Forest Plantation license, promising to redistribute the land among the affected villagers. However, to this day, the land has not been re-distributed, and the Baw Kaew women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs) continue to wait for their land titling from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

Parallel to the Baw Kaew community's struggle, the Thai Forest Industry Organisation (FIO) kept their eyes and interest on the Khon Son Forest Plantation for corporate purposes, despite the right of the community to claim legal titling over the territory. The Government's delay in granting the land titling gave the FIO opportunity to push ahead with its plans, and in July 2016, an eviction order arrived to the W/HRDs of Baw Kaew.

This turn of events was a direct threat to the 12 years of advocacy and campaigning work carried out by the Baw Kaew W/HRDs and their partner

<u>Isaan Land Reform Network</u>. With so much to lose, the community stopped at nothing to reverse this forced eviction order.

Immediately, the Baw Kaew W/HRDs launched once more into campaigning and advocacy, which 3 years later culminated in a month of actions throughout August 2019. The voice of the community and of their struggle had spread across Thailand, resulting in fellow W/HRDs, the general public and ally organisations from across Thailand, including the Southern Peasants Federation of Thailand (SPFT) and Protection International, joining forces to support the Baw Kaew W/HRDs in their final push to claim their land titling.

Freedom and

Equality We

Will Not Back

Down

The national response of support was tremendous, reinforcing the right of the Bae Kaew community to remain on their land and earn legal titling. Thanks to these many efforts, the voices of the Baw Kaew W/HRDs were heard, and on 27th August, the eviction order was suspended.

That same day, the Baw Kaew W/ HRDs gathered in the heart of their village to celebrate the suspension of the eviction order and the victory of their three-year long battle. Through a ceremony of symbolically

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claiming the land, the Baw Kaew W/HRDs painted red pillars in the ground and formed a circle around the messages "Baw Kaew and Organic Agriculture", "Isaan Land Reform Network" and "Freedom and Equality We Will Not Back Down".

Although this is a battle won, the struggle continues until the Baw Kaew W/HRDs claim legal titling of their land. Baw Kaew is one of many Thai communities that

have faced

forced evic-

tion orders

by the Gov-

ernment, in

the name

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of

Collectively we will protect the community as a home for landless farmers, one committed to creating food security through organic agriculture, bringing sustainability to the community, all made possible through the strong support of human rights defenders.

*W/HRD of the Baw Kaew community* 

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rate interests. Since 2016, together with communities of W/HRDs like Baw Kaew and the Isaan Land Reform Network, we have worked to stop such forced eviction orders, which are a gross violation of human rights and destroy the livelihoods of landless

# **Central and South America**

#### 1. Changing the narrative together – Guatemalan W/HRDs Harness the Power of Communication

#### Empowering Community Communicators in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala

Communication is a powerful protection tool that can be used to speak truth to decision-makers, inspire communities to mobilise, notify the public about critical information, and document changes (both positive and negative) about the accessibility of human rights for different communities.

Over the course of 2019, we collaborated with the Guatemalan Federation of Radio Schools (FGER) to train diligent community communicators in San Pedro Carchá, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala. The main objective was to bring visibility to what is happening within their respective territories, acting as a more direct link to allied actors and human rights advocates at the local and national levels.

Women and men human rights defenders (W/ HRDs) from various communities participated in four



workshops and multiple seminars at the FGER, where trainings covered: the basic definitions communiof cation, how to carry out interviews, film and edit from mobile phones, how to conduct voice-overs, digital project management, and community journalism. The W/HRDs also put their training to the test by working with 12 local radio stations across the Mayan Radio Network.

This activity forms part of our sustained efforts to develop a wide network of W/HRD communicators across the region, strengthening the collective protection capacity of W/HRDs in Guatemala and beyond. In San Pedro Carchá, six community members took on roles as local communicators, earning new qualifications and applying their training to raise awareness on the collective rights work of the community. These community leaders recognised the importance of having their own people shape the narrative formed about their rights, their needs, and their demands towards the authorities.

#### Who's a community communicator?

A community communicator is the person who activates communications channels, based on local needs, in order to effectively relay important messages, both internally and externally of their community.

#### 2. I protect myself, you protect yourself, we protect ourselves" – Inspiring reflections towards collective protection in Brazil

Accompanying INESC to face Brazil's closing civil society spaces and to develop a protection strategy

mission.

In the Bolsonaro era, civil society is being further restricted, the death toll perpetrated by state security forces and police is on the rise, and the frequency of threats and attacks against human rights defenders has <u>intensified</u>. Human rights organisations, such as the <u>Institute of Socioeconomic Studies (INESC)</u>, have experienced harsh stigmatisation as the current administration is not keen on watchdog organisations that monitor or critique public policies. In June 2019, we began working with INESC to accompany their confrontation with closing civil society spaces and to develop a protection strategy that will help to overcome this adverse context.

Our accompaniment process comprised of multiple phases: first, to identify the main needs in protection and security through a comprehensive approach; second, carrying out two face-to-face workshops. We also carried out a risk analysis that allowed for the identification of both the institutional and team risk scenarios, utilising a situated and differential approach. The suggested protective measures strongly encouraged partaking in self-care, collective care, and having an overall psychosocial approach to defending human rights, considering the particularly personal and emotional challenges that coincide with the work.

The phrase "Eu me protejo, você se protege, nós nos protegemos" (I protect myself, you protect yourself, we protect ourselves) draws on the importance of introspection as well as community support in order to better ensure the protection of everyone involved. The workshops created open, inclusive spaces to discuss a diversity of challenges, contributing to the process of healing, sensibility and commitment to the team's collective human rights 3. A Renewed Start in Honor to Defend Human Rights

Starting anew with a permanent presence to strengthen capacities of human rights defenders in one of Latin America's most dangerous countries

Since 2011, when we first opened our Protection Desk in Honduras, in partnership with *Asociación para una ciudadanía participativa* (ACI-PARTICIPA), we have been accompanying Honduran women and men human rights defenders (W/HRDs) in their movements and organisations.

Although our Protection Desk lasted a little over a year, our work in the country continued. In 2014, we carried out a joint mission in Honduras with the <u>Centre for Justice and International Law</u> (CEJIL) to support their concerns about and recommendations to the proposed draft Law to protect human rights defenders, journalists, social communicators and legal practitioners (Decree No. 34-2015). Thereafter, in 2018, we began a new programme with W/HRDs to strengthen grassroots organisations and collectives defending human rights.

> However, high levels of violence and impunity persist in Honduras, despite the creation of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office to Protect Human

#### 3. A Renewed Start in Honduras to Support the Right

Rights Defenders and the state's pledge to continue strengthening the National Protection Mechanism. In 2018 Michel Forst, the then UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders called Honduras one of the most dangerous countries in Latin America for human rights defenders, especially for environmental and indigenous rights activists.

For this reason, in July 2019 we decided to once again establish a Protection Desk in Tegucigalpa, in partnership with <u>The National Association for</u> <u>the Promotion of Organic Agriculture</u> (ANAFAE).

Thanks to our newly established and experienced team based in Honduras, we are carefully monitoring the situation on the ground and strengthening networks for W/HRDs with the aim of implementing a more holistic approach to preventative protection and security.

Thus far, we have been building and strengthening relationships by supporting *Guancascos*, – meetings to exchange knowledge and goods, as well as with other territorial groups, peasant women,

indigenous and Afro-descendant communities - and contributing to the methodological construction of the "Collective Protection Process" we promote in the Mesoamerican region.

The process seeks to strengthen the capacities of W/HRDs in the analysis of threats, understanding the social practices of the collective, strengthening protection networks, using communication as a protection tool, and more.

#### Our Team in Honduras remains committed to:

Developing actions in favour of human rights defenders, specifically in rural areas

Promoting training processes, advocacy actions and accompanying communities of W/HRDs

Weaving national and international networks to raise the demands and protection needs of the territories to authorities

# **Financial Report 2019**

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PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

		2019€
Income		
Revenue Core	9	
	Govermental Agencies	641,977
	Trust and Foundations	858,680
	Individual Donors	
	Other Revenue	97,590
Total Core Re	venue	1,598,247

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	Govermental Agencies	1,255,754
	Trust and Foundations	373,011
	Total Earmarked Revenue	1,628,764
otal Income		3,227,011

Costs		
	Personnel and Related Costs	1,740,584
	Programme Costs	839,908
	Operating, Administrative & Finance Costs	366,830
	Governance & Strategy Costs	247,082
Total Costs		3,194,403
Income (Defic	it) For The Year	32,608



#### **BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2019**



To our friends and supporters, thank you for being next to us, next to W/HRDs!







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