

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022



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# Foreward from the Executive Director

**Mae Ocampo**

Dear reader,

Another year has passed and I am once again delighted to share with you Protection International's (PI) Annual Report that highlights our collective work around the world.

**The year 2022 was a special year for us as we reached another milestone and celebrated our 15th year anniversary!** It has been an amazing 15 years and each year we learn, get better, and achieve much more as grow, expand, and mature on all levels. We went through the joys and pains of a growing and maturing organisation, and are inspired and humbled with what we have achieved thus far.

Our 2022 report features 438 poems and inspiring stories from our human rights defenders (HRDs) partners and their collectives as they fought for their right to defend human rights. These stories go hand-in-hand with the support, hard work, dedication, and commitment of PI staff based in our **Regional Hubs** in MesoAmerica and in Africa, in our **Country Offices** in Colombia/Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, and Thailand, and in our **Global Team** in Brussels.

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**“ Stay with the defenders who in heart and in deed speak truth to power. Brave hearts defying powers, pandemic and pestilence to be a bastion defense for those whom powers seek to devour great unsung heroes standing up for victims of circumstance.”**

*From the poem **Awake**, by Yewande Akinse (The Netherlands). PI Poetry challenge 2022*

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I'd like to share a quote taken from the collection of poems from PI's **Poetry Challenge** in 2022 called **AWAKE which was written by Yewande Akinse from Nigeria**. This quote resonates how in the face of diversity and challenges, we must continue to stay with the defenders. The full poem poignantly expresses that the world is more bearable simply knowing we are not alone. This is the essence of collective power and strength.

PI faced a critical moment that necessitated a deeper culling of our collective power and strength within the organisation in order to steer us to calmer waters. At the beginning of 2022, we were still in recovery mode from the pandemic, then the invasion of Ukraine by Russia happened. This war prompted a political shift in the European Union's priorities, a crisis in electricity and gas that reverberated across the world, the redirection of funding and investments from development aid and from key foundations and agencies. This was just in Europe. PI was also confronted with a conflict in the DRC, the toppling of the monarchy in Thailand, an intense election in Kenya and in Colombia, to name a few.

The net for austerity measures was cast even further which impacted many HRDs networks and organisations globally of which, PI was not able to escape which resulted to a budget gap of half a million euros at the closing of the year. This could not have come at the worst

moment as PI was entering into various internal evaluation processes and as we were on the crucial fourth year of our five year Global Strategy.

We aimed to achieve the key commitments and objectives set forth in our Global Strategy 2019 – 2023 as we addressed the external fights we needed to fight, advocated for policy changes, supported the HRDs and their communities in their grassroots work, and at the same time reflected deeply and dialogued openly about our top priorities for our internal institutional strengthening that would feed into our new five year Global Strategy 2024 - 2028.

Like many organisations, 2022 ushered in deeper reflection on our way of working both for our external priorities and for our internal strengthening. We were confronted with the reality that as PI grows and expands in breadth and in scope, our envisioned decentralisation that we embarked on in last 2019 – year 1 of our current Global Strategy - would need to be assessed, consolidated and streamlined in order to ensure our sustainability and resilience for the upcoming years. This was even more crucial as we were faced with the risk of closing our year with the start of a snowball effect of staff turn-over that would impact our mission in 2022 and in 2023, as workload will continue to increase given the continuing narrowing space across the world, the threats faced by HRDs, and the demands on PI.

The world shifted in many ways and on so many levels – ‘business’ was - is no longer usual. We also needed to ensure that as we looked into our systems and procedures for organisational development, that we were also deepening our understanding of what our ‘brains’ know as wellbeing and psycho-social support into a deeper and stronger structural change and commitment towards people care. We had longer conversations on how to engage with our supporters and funders to increase core and flexible funding, with the emphasis that supporting our mission means supporting our people to enable them to do what they need to do on the ground. This has to be one of the priorities at this moment in time as we fight the barriers and the narrowing space for HRDs around the world, and as rights are massively violated and people are harmed.

Our story is not unique in this sense, and certainly, the challenges PI faced sounds familiar and resonate with many. It has not been easy. Not for the world. Not for many organisations. Not for Protection International. And most importantly, not for the HRDs and their collectives.

Amazingly so, despite of - or perhaps even because of – the war and the conflicts we faced and the intense strife around the world and in PI, we delivered on our commitments (and more) and had powerful impacts on the ground. Much more than we give ourselves credit for or are able to measure through more formal tools. This annual report will give a few examples of what we did and what we achieved across the world. As a teaser for example, **thousands of poets from around the world shared their poetry in our Poetry Challenge** as we celebrated human rights defenders and our rights through poetry. We also launched our **women human**



**rights defenders school of thought**, jointly supported and released the **documentary *The Illusion of Abundance***, supported and integrated disability’s rights movements, and reinforced our e-learning course for human rights defenders and organisations by incorporating the lessons we have learned through the past decade. **We took action across 25 countries in 4 continents and provided direct support and accompaniment to 148 communities and organisations.**

We achieved a lot and learnt from our past. I stand proud and have deep admiration and respect for the dedication and commitment of all PI people – staff and the global and regional Board members – who helped steer us towards recovery and have made us stronger and more resilient. We faced 2022 with such a collective strength that it was a herculean effort to deliver on our 2022 commitments and achieve what we achieved with deep respect towards each other and the recognition that we were united and one Protection International across the world.

The future that lies ahead for PI will still not be easy, however, we have been tried and tested, and have learned. We will face our future together with a strong team with our heads held high, and with the assurance and greater confidence towards our collective strength and power.

Thank you to all our HRD partners and their communities, our supporters and funders, our allies in the human rights defenders network and other organisations working on justice, peace, and rights.

Happy 15th year anniversary to Protection International!! Thank you for the work and all the achievements. The work done and achieved in 2022 is testament to the past 15 years’ growth of PI and I look forward for what else we can do and achieve in the upcoming years. In sisterhood and collective power,

Mae Ocampo

“ *These defenders will pave the way  
Bring changes which are here to stay  
“We’re equal”, they will proudly say  
Worlds like beacons brandishing* ”

From the poem **Fearless Fish Out of Water**,  
by Asiem Sanyal (India). PI Poetry challenge 2022



# Meet the Board

## 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 in the United Kingdom. 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 worked as a consultant for 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 SMITH – TREASURER

Jacco Smit is a Dutch resident living in Amsterdam. After obtaining a Master's degree in Economics at the University of Amsterdam, he has worked for over twenty years in the private finance sector and has been based in many countries over the world. He is currently an independent advisor to the maritime industry with a focus on strategy, finance and restructuring.

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

## MAHMOUD ABURAHMA – SECRETARY

Mahmoud AbuRahma is a human rights activist from Gaza, Palestine. He holds a Master's degree in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights from the University of Essex. He has worked as a research Fellow at the Center for Applied Human Rights and the University of York.

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. In this role, he 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 MARIN – MEMBER

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

## BELÉN PAEZ – MEMBER

Belén Paez has a Master's in Ecology, specialist in Climate Change and Forests. She 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 several 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 Nshimirimana 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), where he became chair in 2009.

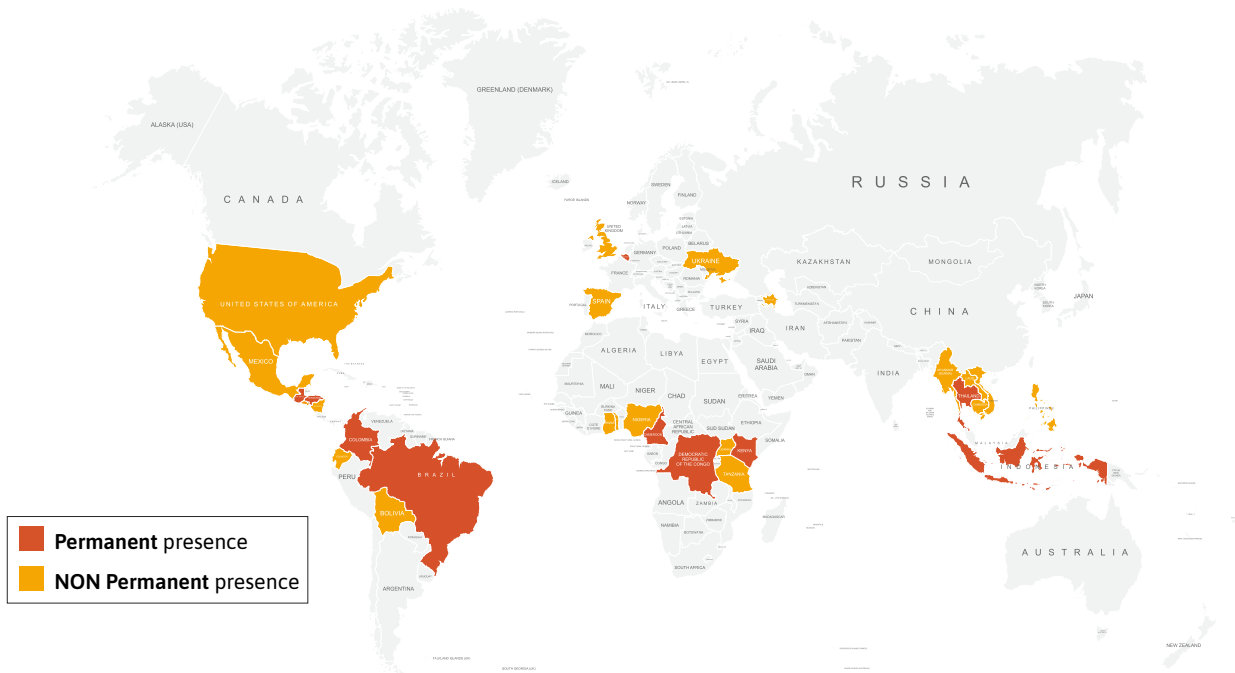
Vital registered with the Burundi Bar Association in May 2013 and has prosecuted high profile cases as a recorded lawyer in the East African Court of Justice. He was elected to chair the main Burundi civil society umbrella organisation FORSC in 2013.

# Where we Work

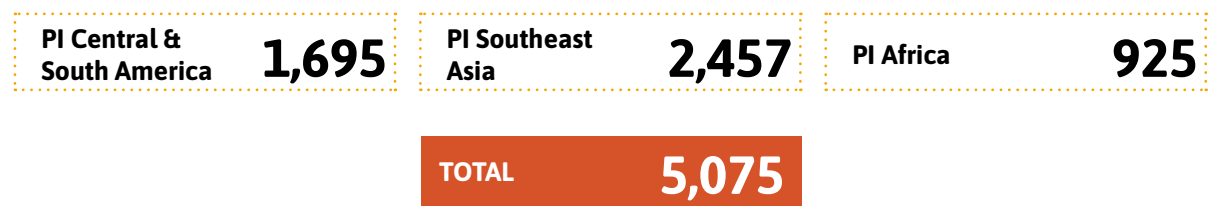
## Protection International in 2022: Making a Difference for Human Rights Defenders Worldwide

In 2022, Protection International (PI) took action **across 25 countries in 4 continents and provided direct support and accompaniment to 148 communities and organisations.** Our mission? To facilitate essential tools for human rights defenders (HRDs), as well as for their communities and organisations, to use for their safety and well-being. We supported analysis of threats and the assessment of risks to HRDs, we tailored protection plans, we engaged with local and national authorities, and international and multilateral stakeholders.

Recognising the increased mental toll, the threats and violence faced by HRDs, we integrated a psychosocial approach into our protection strategies. We also took a deeper look into intersectionality, into how similar threats might affect individuals and collectives defending rights in different ways: people with or without disabilities; people with more or less economic resources; people from rural or urban settings; elderly or youth; men, women, trans-sexual and non-binary defenders... they all need individualised risk assessments and protection plans.



### Number of HRDs involved





Here is a snapshot of our impact:  
 In **Honduras**, we stood by the Lenca indigenous community of Reitoca. They face daily persecution, harassment and violence while defending their territory against the Rio Petacón Hydroelectric Project. Our support was instrumental in equipping the women of this community, often the most targeted, with additional tools and skills to protect themselves and their peers.

In **Indonesia**, we launched a protection and security traineeship with a focus on well-being. This initiative strengthened grassroots communities and local NGOs' capacities for protection, fortified their protection networks and bolstered their fight for justice.

In **Colombia**, our collaboration with semi-nomadic indigenous communities in remote areas of the Orinoquia region, such as the community of El Trompillo, La Pascua, and La Llanura was enriching and transformative. We amplified the voices of indigenous women human rights defenders, facilitating exchanges with their peers across the country. This fostered collective learning, sharing of best practices, and leadership development.

Our collective power is enriched with the diverse contexts and unique challenges faced within the regions; from the power of collaboration between local communities, national, regional and international networks, and allied stakeholders, authorities and policy experts. By working together, we addressed pressing environmental and social issues. In 2022, PI provided training to +5,075 human rights defenders in 29 countries, so they can defend human rights more safely.

» **Other interesting figures**



**5,075**

HRDs trained in 29 countries



**148**

Communities and civil society organisation supported and assisted



**117**

Participants enrolled in our e-learning course



**128,730**

People reached through our website



**20,000**

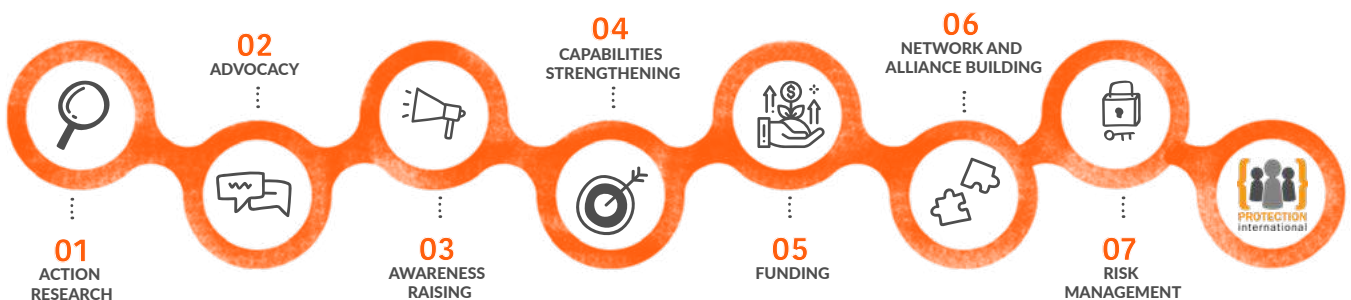
Followers engaged on our social media



**438**

HRDs from 58 countries submitted their poems

» **Main strategies of intervention**



# PATHWAYS

The structure of this report is based on [Protection International's Global Strategy](#).

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“ I am  
the hands that give and caress,  
the lips that kiss and denounce,  
the eyes that never look away,  
the cheek unwilling to suffer another blow.

The arms that sustain the wind,  
the sex that brings forth hope,  
the womb that shelters life,  
the legs that flee from fear,  
the feet that run toward freedom.”

From the poem **I have the right to be here**,  
by Marisa López Diz (Spain). PI Poetry challenge 2022

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# PI celebrates 15 years

## In 2022 PI celebrated its 15th Anniversary.

In this last 15 years, we celebrated our strengthened partnerships with HRDs and their collectives and communities in ensuring their own security. We evolved and significantly grew over the years, starting from just a few inspired activists with a vision, to now a global organisation of nearly 100 staff.

Fifteen years ago, we started with individual 'Protection Desks' in countries that needed particular support, and then we expanded into a larger collection of offices around the globe which reported to a centralised headquarters in Brussels. With the decentralisation process we set forth in our current Global Strategy 2019 – 2023, we successfully established regional hubs and country offices that are able to make context-oriented and strategic direction for their teams.

Overall, within the last 15 years, PI contributed to the implementation of tools and strategies for the protection of HRDs, by:

- led and launched the discourse around comprehensive collective protection where HRDs and their collectives and/or communities are protected as an alternative to only individual protection;
- piloting new methodologies, including by releasing the first manual on the protection of HRDs, the first manual to support the LGBTQI+ community in their protection, the launching of a psychosocial approach for HRDs;
- supporting defenders at risk in developing their own security and protection strategies from and for their territories;
- exploring innovative approaches for the self-protection of organisations and grassroots communities;
- monitoring and advocating for public policies initiatives for the protection of HRDs worldwide; and contributing to the recognition of human rights defenders as actors of positive social change

← Post

 **Protection International**  
@ProtectionInt

🎉 Happy anniversary to PI! 🎉 Thank you to all of our partners, donors and staff for helping PI to evolve into all that we have become. And thank you to all of the human rights defenders who have guided and inspired us for the past 15 years. #StayWithDefenders #HRDs #Celebrate  
[Traducir post](#)



7:01 p. m. · 26 jul. 2022

## ➤ Where we were 10 years ago

Protection International Hosted Roundtable on National Public Policies for the Protection of Defenders at the 15th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights  
16 December 2013



# CHAPTER 1

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



## || Providing Ad-Hoc Services: PI's Responsive Approach in a Dynamic Landscape

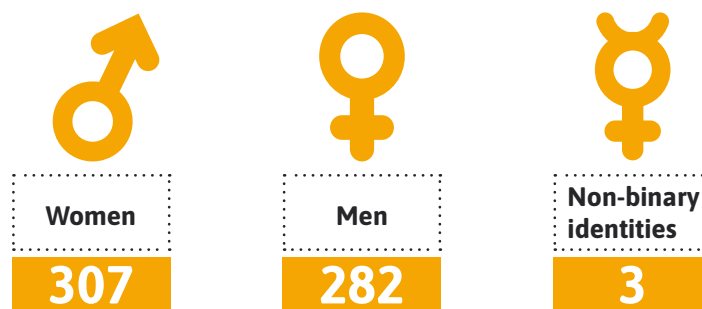
PI's primary strategy is based on prevention, aiming to bring about structural changes to strengthen the protection of the right to defend human rights. At the same time, we provide ad-hoc services to meet immediate needs, responding to direct requests for training, risk assessments and tailor-made security plans for both civil society organisations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) at risk.

In 2022, **PI's ad-hoc services supported 589 HRDs** from 19 countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Tanzania, The Philippines, Spain, Uganda, Ukraine, the United States of America (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and Vietnam. This support included a diverse demographic: 307 women, 282 men, and 3 persons with non-

binary identities. Additionally, we entered into 23 partnerships with donors, which benefited 117 CSOs.

Our regional protection experts were instrumental in enhancing our service delivery.

- In **Mesoamerica we collaborated with 27 partners** from [Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres](#) developing and overseeing the design and elaboration of protection plans.
- In **Africa**, we provided security and protection management trainings to organisations such as [Dynamic Mondiale de Jeunes](#) in Cameroon, [La Voix des Sans Voix](#) and the [Young Women's Christian Association](#) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. PI also helped them to develop protection plans tailored to the needs of each organisation.



An important milestone in 2022 was the launch of our partnership agreement with the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN). Over three years, this partnership will enable us to strengthen the protection management strategies of several of IUCN's member organisations in five countries in South East Asia, Africa and Latin America. This partnership agreement is already resulting to key collaboration not only between IUCN and PI but also more importantly with environmental justice defenders and activists on the ground.

In Europe, the emergency context arising from the invasion of Ukraine by Russia put many at risk and triggered an emergency response. PI stepped up to assist affected HRDs: with the support of the Economic Justice Program of the [Open Society Foundation](#), we supported Ukrainian organisations to set up digital secure communications.

## || Strength in Solidarity: PI Mesoamerica's Commitment to the Maya Q'eqchi' Population of El Estor

El Estor, Guatemala, is a town surrounded by an incredibly rich landscape. Alongside Lake Izabal, two mountain ranges converge: Sierra de Santa Cruz and Sierra de las Minas. The latter is particularly important since it contains 60% of Guatemala's remaining cloud forest. However, the region is threatened by agro-industrial activities and open-pit metal mining in the Sierra de Santa Cruz. These activities resulted in land grabbing, displacement of people, and worsening living conditions for indigenous people. One of these indigenous populations are the Maya Q'eqchi', who have been fighting for years against the violation of their territorial rights by major landowners and mining companies.

Since 2018, PI Mesoamerica has been active in this region. We fostered capacity-strengthening efforts with local defenders' groups, collaborated with ActionAID and COGCOOP, facilitated engagements with diplomatic entities about the effects of extractive industries on communities, and advocated for their rights before national authorities. In 2022, PI Mesoamerica continued to carry out actions and accompaniment to support the defenders of El Estor in their resistance. Here are some examples:

- In March **we organised a monitoring visit to the Q'eqchi' territories**, where we met key actors such as "Defensoría Q'eqchi'" and the "Gremial de Pescadores Artesanales". During these meetings, we addressed the criminalisation and attacks against HRDs in the context of the militarisation of the municipality as a monitoring action to their long-term accompaniment.
- Since the Fénix mining was reactivated, PI Mesoamerica, together with Bufete Jurídico de Pueblos Indígenas (BJPI) and Fundación Guillermo Toriello (FGT), coordinated meetings to keep up to date the information on the criminalisation cases. These meetings **resulted in a petition for protection of criminalised HRDs that was presented in June 2022 before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights**, addressing violations of the right to consultation of the Maya Q'eqchi' people and the criminalisation of their social protest.
- At the end of the year, in cooperation with the El Estor External Network, **we organised an Accompaniment Mission to El Estor** with the Swiss Ambassador in Guatemala.





## II Defending an Enabling Environment for the Right to Defend Human Rights: PI Thailand’s Stand Against the NPO Law

In 2022, the government of Thailand introduced the draft NPO (Not-for-Profit Organizations) Law, which civil society organisations denounced as a barrier to freedom of association. In response to this development, PI Thailand took a proactive stance by facilitating activities in collaboration with the People’s Movement against the Draft Laws that Undermine Freedom of Association, including over 75 people’s movements. **This coalition successfully mobilised thousands of people** and garnered substantial public support to prevent the draft bill from being tabled or proposed to the Thai Parliament.

**PI Thailand played a crucial role in supporting and facilitating the building of the movement.** Together with partners, we provided training sessions and seminars for civil society groups, grassroots human

rights defenders and the general public on the importance of civil society in Thailand’s democratic governance, as well as on the impact of the NPO bill on curtailing civil society and freedom of association.

The movement’s success is a **powerful example of how collective action and solidarity can contribute to an enabling environment and promote people’s civil and political rights** in the face of repressive government measures. The movement’s governance structures were built on the feminist principles of inclusivity, collective decision-making, accountability, and collective well-being, to which a broad coalition of civil society organisations, women, human rights defenders, academics, and concerned citizens committed, in order to collectively campaign against the draft laws.



## || Bridging the Gap: PI's Role in Integrating Disability Rights Advocacy with Mainstream HRD Movements

There is a gap between disability rights advocates and mainstream human rights defenders, with the former often not (self-) identifying as HRDs. For that and other reasons, despite the differential risks, many disability rights advocates do not access security and protection. Similarly, mainstream human rights organisations, due to a lack of expertise, often exclude disability activists.

Addressing this, Protection International Africa (PIA) aims to bridge the connection between disability rights advocates and the broader human rights movement. In 2022, PI engaged extensively, conducting

over **45 consultations in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, revealing several insights:** firstly, the intersection of activism and disability is not mainstreamed. Activists might live with pre-existing disabilities or acquire them due to their work's inherent risks. In social circles, disability is often overshadowed, with basic tasks presenting challenges. People with disabilities might face judgments regarding their capabilities. The fight for disability rights is strenuous, marked by frustrations over ableism and tokenistic inclusion. Lastly, defenders with disabilities, understanding the elevated risks, are often cautious, trying to sidestep potentially dangerous situations.





## || The Right to Defend Human Rights in Times of Conflict: PI's Role in Eurasia

Protection International (PI) is following with great concern the global decline and erosion of democratic values and human rights. We and our partners have witnessed how state and non-state actors promote “anti-rights” narratives, including via large-scale social media campaigns.

**Eurasia also reflects this trend.** The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), reported in 2019 shrinking civic space as one of the major human rights trends across the region, with “*increasingly restrictive laws and regulations for their registration, access to funding and participation in public affairs. Human rights defenders receive threats and attacks in both online and offline space for their legitimate actions, often without accountability of their perpetrators. Those who voice the rights of women, ethnic minorities, the LGBTQI community, migrants and refugees, and those who work on anti-corruption, environmental rights and investigative journalists are especially under attack.*”

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia just amplified these challenges: Ukrainian Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), along with Russian and Belarusian face heightened threats, with Russia spearheading the negative trend. Moreover, the region is also suffering the impacts of the ethnic and territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia

over Nagorno-Karabakh, particularly after tensions intensified in September 2022.

Amidst all these challenges, in 2022 PI continued its support to HRDs in Eurasia, with the objective to strengthen their (preventive) protection skills and knowledge. Despite the turbulent context, PI successfully managed to reinforce its strategic partnerships in the region and to timely implement all planned activities.

In particular, PI provided training to 35 young activists and HRDs, covering collective, preventive, and comprehensive security and protection. A significant 80% of these participants expressed increased confidence in preventive security measures and awareness of threats. Feedback from the attendees was overwhelmingly positive, praising the content and the opportunity for face-to-face networking.

Expanding its reach, PI also supported other 24 HRDs in exile within the EU space. We organised an in presence meeting in a secure location, which participants found invaluable, especially after years of separation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The gathering strengthened their sense of community, reducing feelings of isolation, reigniting motivation, and reaffirming their dedication to human rights advocacy.

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“**Hospitality is our morality  
Yet we expel refugees  
seeking humanity  
Sending them back  
to see their hopes sink in the sea  
A modern odyssey,  
hijrah of broken dreams.**”

**Justice Today**, by Wietske Merison  
(The Netherlands)

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## || A Decade of Evolution: PI's Training for Human Rights Defenders Worldwide

Given the complexity of the situations in which human rights defenders find themselves, protection is hardly realised through simple, 'one-size-fits-all' or 'copy and paste' solutions. Protection plans need to be contextualised, situated, and tailored according to the needs and environment of each HRD, taking into account their specific realities.

**The PI e-learning course for human rights defenders and organisations** is based on this principle. The course Security and Protection Management for Human Rights Defenders and Social Organisations includes individualised feedback, interactive exercises and games, and reflections on concrete risk situations and on the practices of defenders themselves. The aim is to best ensure that participants understand concepts, relate them to their daily situations and exchange with other defenders.

We have been offering this training for the last decade and over the years we

have updated and adapted its content to incorporate the new approaches and methodologies that the PI team has developed over time. The last update was this 2022, with the support of the communications team, new animated videos were also developed and integrated.

**In 2022, PI provided eight course editions** (in English, Spanish and French) from February to May, May to July and September to December, **reaching a total of 117 participants, comprising 56 women and 61 men.** The participants were from Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Palestine, Peru, South Sudan, Spain, Thailand, Togo, Uganda and Uruguay. Their active engagement and commitment exemplify the global reach and influence of our capacity-building efforts.

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“ **This course helped me gain a valuable experience in safeguarding, not only for myself but also to protect my community. I work to defend the LGBTQIA+ community and this has been an opportunity to be effective in all levels of advocacy and activism, prevent further security problems and to gain effectiveness in my passion for queer rights and asylum rights in South Africa.** ”

Anonymous

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## || Empowering Change: PIA’s Initiatives for Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa

Since June 2022, through a newly-formed partnership, Protection International Africa (PIA) started hosting the **Women HRDs Hub** - the first network dedicated to support WHRDs in Kenya, aiming to enhance the abilities of WHRDs and their associated organisations. PIA has been supporting the strengthening of the Hub’s operational capacity, guiding it through administrative tasks and the legal registration process. The Hub now operates with an independent bank account and recently secured its initial core funding. Currently, we are assisting the Hub in establishing their financial and human resources systems as they grow, with the goal to eventually operate independently.

Additionally, starting in September 2022, PI initiated capacity-building trainings for WHRDs in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Kongo-Central, Kasai-Central and Kinshasa provinces. We provided training on physical and digital security and overall protection to 60 women HRDs active in Congolese civil society organisations. These women HRDs who are agents of change, are now better prepared to safeguard themselves and their communities, contributing to the continuation of their vital work.



## || Strengthening Roots: PI's Impact in Colombia's Vichada Region

Vichada, located in Colombia's eastern Orinoquía region, is the country's second-largest department. It is home to the semi-nomadic indigenous communities of Sikuni, Kuiba, and Piapoco. Historically, these communities have faced land grabbing from agribusiness, which results to communities being dispossessed.

In 2019, with funding from the German NGO *Brot für die Welt* (Bread for the World), PI began its mission in Vichada. We aimed to bolster the indigenous communities of El Trompillo, La Pascua, and La Llanura. Our support tapped into their knowledge, enhanced their skills, and helped in amplifying their voices for the recognition of their ethnic and territorial rights. Virginia, from the Kuiba community, shared how PI's training transformed their approach, particularly empowering women to speak up and defend their rights.

During our engagement, we identified several needs of the indigenous women, including training in human rights, risk analysis, and climate change. In 2022, in collaboration with the International Center For Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL), we embarked on a co-research journey with these women. This initiative allowed them to pinpoint barriers and policy recommendations, enhancing

their participation in territorial and environmental rights decisions.

Today, after years of accompaniment in Vichada, PI's efforts contributed to amplifying the voices of indigenous women in community participation spaces. The indigenous women of Vichada connected with women from other Colombian territories, fostering collective learning and leadership. While challenges remain, such as gaining recognition from public institutions, these indigenous communities are determined to continue their advocacy.

Virginia emphasised two primary challenges: the remote nature of their communities and the need for public institutions to recognise the vital role of Vichada's indigenous women. In her opinion, indigenous women have a pivotal role in preserving cultural identity and education.

PI remains committed to supporting these women, enhancing their skills, and helping them build protective networks for the defence of their rights, land, and culture. As we move into 2023, PI continue to stand alongside Vichada's indigenous women.



## || Addressing Brazil’s Deep-Rooted Racism: PI’s Strategic Involvement

Protection International (PI) in Brazil has been steadfast in supporting organisations and communities that combat police violence, structural racism, and gender discrimination from both rural and urban perspectives. Since 2019, we have been collaborating and have allied with *Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra* (Institute of Black Women) which champions the rights of black women and the broader black community, exposing the societal challenges they face due to the prevailing racism and sexism in the Brazilian society.

Tatiana Zito, a legal popular promoter, remarks, *“Being surrounded by like-minded individuals spurs me on.”*

We also partnered with ‘Popular Legal Promoters’ (PLPs), an initiative that comprises community leaders who guide and assist other women in accessing justice and services when their rights

are violated. *“They are ‘multipliers of citizenship’. Beyond their guiding role, PLPs disseminate information and advocate for the practical application of the law in everyday life, ensuring rights for both black and non-black women,”* asserts Maria Sylvia de Oliveira, a black woman, lawyer, and coordinator of PLPs’ training project at Geledés.

PI contributed to the collective protection component of this project. We delved deep into the challenges faced by PLP women in their human rights advocacy, offering them training, collective protection advice, and digital security guidance.

Maria Sylvia emphasises, *“We address racial and gender issues, their implications on human rights, education, health, communication, employment, academic research, and public policies.”*



# CHAPTER 2

## State authorities respect, protect and fulfil the Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR)

Throughout 2022, PI actively engaged with multiple state authorities and national human rights institutions and collaborated with human rights mechanisms providing recommendations to governments, at both regional and international levels. Some examples of our actions include:





## II PI's Workshops Forge Stronger Ties in North and South Kivu between WHRDs and Judicial Authorities

Protection International (PI) hosted workshops in Goma and Bukavu, where we convened 50 judicial authorities and HRDs. During these sessions, PI outlined the details of the two provincial edicts aimed at protecting WHRDs in North and South Kivu. Participants debated and discussed the implementation of these policies. The judicial authorities acknowledged the critical importance

of upholding the right to defend human rights and the need to put these policies into action. The workshops also fostered dialogue on strategies to strengthen ties between WHRDs and duty bearers. Since these sessions, we have observed a significant improvement in cooperation between local WHRDs and judicial authorities in the region.

## II Setting the Standard: How PI Influences Public Policies for the Protection of HRDs

Since 2005, **PI has been actively involved in the development, monitoring of, and support to the shaping and development of public policies across various countries.** While the adoption of national public policies is a crucial first step, it is essential to scrutinize their impacts and efficacy in building a safe and enabling environment for HRDs. In this report, **we want to highlight 4 countries where we had an impact in 2022.**

### MEXICO

Protection International (PI) trained new officials recruited by the Mexican government's Federal Protection Mechanism, focusing on risk analysis and protection plans for HRDs. We also provided advise to the *Espacio de Organizaciones de Sociedad Civil*, a consortium monitoring Mexico's existing protection mechanisms for defenders and journalists at risk. In the state of Oaxaca, we collaborated with the Government, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and organisations like the People's Ombudsman's Office and *Código-DH* to provide risk analysis training for HRDs.

In addition to the above, through the structured annual **EU – Mexico High Level Dialogue on Human Rights**, PI provided recommendations related to the *Iniciativa de Ley General de Prevención y Protección a Personas Defensoras de DDHH y Periodistas* (Initiative of a general law to respect, protect, guarantee and promote the rights of human rights defenders and journalists). In a nutshell, PI recommended that the Government of Mexico enhances the consultation with CSOs and integrates them in its governance structure, for *meaningful* participation; builds a comprehensive protection system and addresses the challenges related with the elaboration of situated risk assessments, the implementation gaps, accountability and the fight against impunity and the evaluation of results.

### HONDURAS

In partnership with the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country, we trained staff of the National Protection Mechanism, and engaged in dialogues with officials and civil society on its implementation-

## **BRAZIL**

Invited by Brazil's Federal Protection Mechanism, PI contributed to their annual meeting in Fortaleza. PI's protection expert addressed state protection mechanism representatives, which included government and members from civil society movements.

## **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

After a long hiatus, discussions on the national draft law on the protection of HRDs resumed in the National Assembly. From March 2022, PI's office in DRC and PI's Global joined forces to provide technical analysis of the draft law in consultations organised by civil society partners and national authorities. The bill advanced through the lower house and awaits Senate review in 2023. Our main challenge was remote monitoring of discussions in Kinshasa and other cities, ensuring comprehensive support despite limited information and tight schedules.

## **FOCUS Observatory of National Public Policies**

In 2022 we kept up our work in updating and consolidating PI's [FOCUS Observatory](#), a dedicated platform for monitoring national public policies aimed at the protection of HRDs.

Our recently published report "[The Worldwide Growth of National Policies for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: A Current Overview and the Challenges Ahead](#)," reveals that since 2012, there has been a significant increase in countries adopting national public policies for HRD protection. As of the report's publication, 15 countries have such policies in place. However, the effectiveness of these policies remains a critical area for reflection. **Are HRDs truly prioritised for protection in these countries? Are the mechanisms working as intended?**

## **|| Dialogue to Action: PI's Influence on Colombia's New Mining Code**

Protection International is an active member of the [MESA por los derechos humanos frente al poder empresarial](#) (Colombia's National Roundtable of Civil Society Organisations on Businesses and Human Rights). This autonomous platform comprised of environmental, social, and human rights civil society organisations, aims to foster dialogue, deliberation, and shared learning. Its goal is to develop collective proposals addressing the critical behaviours of companies in Colombia, particularly the adverse effects of extractive industries on environmental human rights defenders.

In 2022, PI Colombia facilitated two spaces for dialogue to consult and discuss Colombia's new mining code. Collaboratively, the Roundtable and grassroots organisations proposed

adjustments to the code. It was observed that the new draft mining code ignored the detrimental effects of mining companies on the rights of environmental leaders and defenders. Consequently, PI urged for the inclusion of mechanisms to safeguard the rights of these defenders – a recommendation adopted by the Roundtable.

Given Colombia's concerning [statistics on threats and killings of environmental leaders](#) – ranking second globally – our participation in this Roundtable is crucial. We believe that broadening the discussion on the protection of human rights defenders is imperative. Addressing the criminalisation, threats and associated risks they face requires a nuanced, intersectional approach, which considers gender and ethnic perspectives, among others.



## II A Year of Action: How PI Advocated for Human Rights and State Accountability in 2022

Each year, PI spearheads, collaborates, or offers targeted support for various initiatives aimed at increasing awareness about infringements on the right to defend human rights, and we call on States to take prompt corrective actions against these infringements.

Some examples from 2022: **PI's statement about the need for States to reinforce the protection of HRDs during election periods**; this [joint letter](#) calling for attention to the spike of violence ahead of Colombian elections; or this [joint open letter](#) to the New President and Vice President of Colombia to guarantee an environment free of violence for HRDs.

In South East Asia, we actively supported **Thailand's** movements **against the Abusive Draft Law on Not-For-Profit Organisations** and partnered civil society organisations to fight against the abusive draft law. The draft would systematically violate the rights to freedom of association and

freedom of expression of not for profit groups. We also supported the [women HRDs'](#) collective campaign for Care Income, and **called on the ASEAN Prime Ministers** to address the social, political and human rights crisis in **Myanmar**. We strongly positioned ourselves and called on the Prime Ministers to cease inviting all political and non-political representatives of the Myanmar military junta to all summits and meetings, revise the mandate of the Special Envoy to Myanmar and to move beyond the failed [Five-Point Consensus](#) ('5PC'), enable effective humanitarian assistance, and publicly recognise the National Unity Government. Also in Thailand, PI [accompanied a civil case](#) against Thai authorities for overly repressive use of pandemic-control regulations and a [case that two women HRDs](#) filed against Thailand's Office of the Prime Minister and the Royal Army who had been perpetuating a disinformation, smear campaign against them.



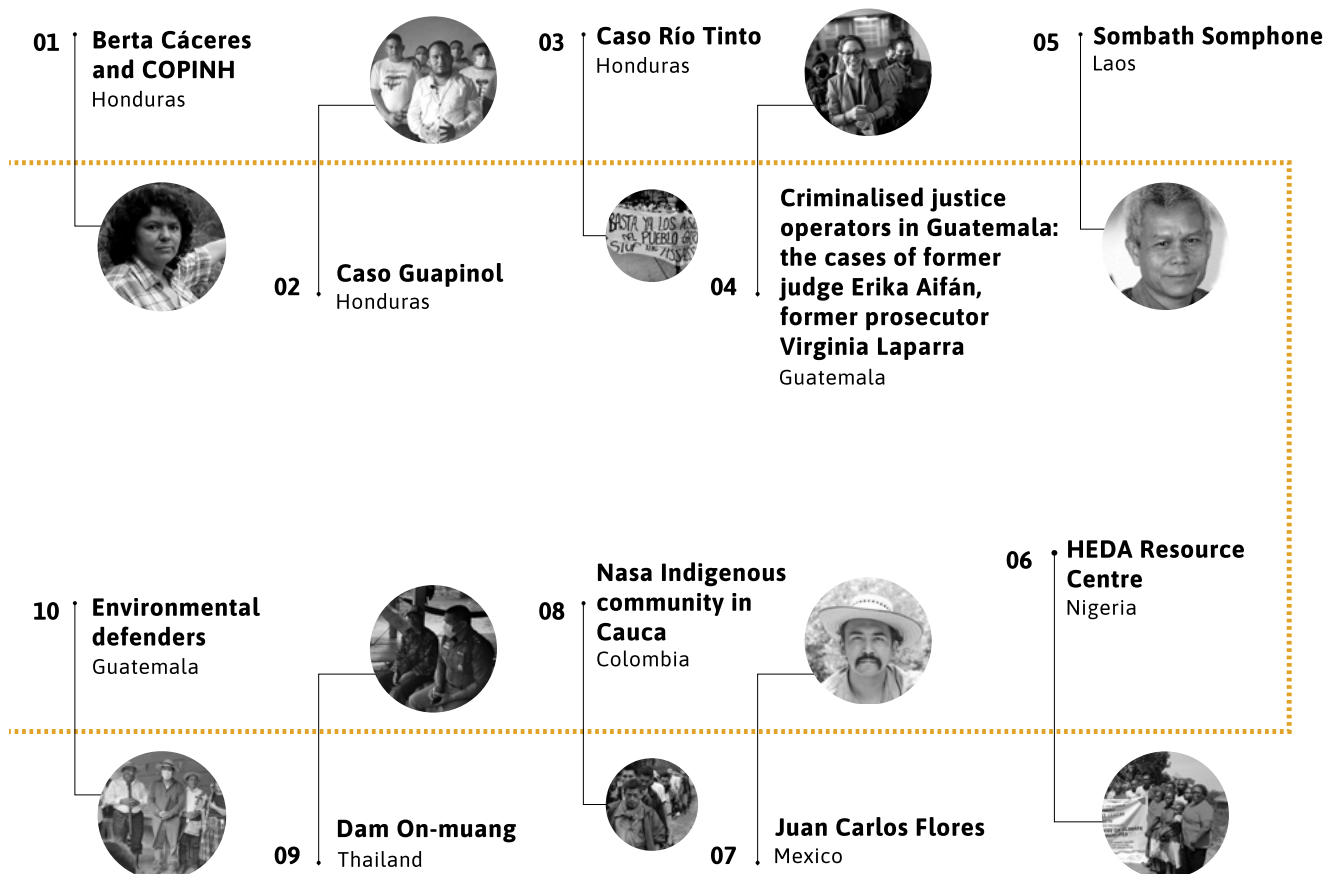
In DRC, PI addressed specific cases of violations against HRDs and their collectives, either individually or collectively through our networks and alliances. For instance, PI stood by the youth movement LUCHA after the unjust condemnation of 13 of its members. The “13 of Beni” were criminalised and condemned by a military court with a disproportionate penalty of 12 months for organizing a peaceful demonstration in the town of Beni, denouncing the killings of civilians in this part of the Province of North Kivu. PI advocated for their case

before regional and international HR mechanisms, mobilised a wide range of stakeholders on their case, including the EU Delegation, several Member States’ Embassies and the UNSR on HRDs. We also joined other national and international NGOs in the public campaign for their liberation. A military court then annulled their sentence in June 2022, a decision that represents one of the successful stories of the year. The group was finally released after nine months in prison.



## PI Advocates for Justice in Cases of Violence Against HRDs

In 2022, PI intervened in over 10 cases of violence against human rights defenders, demanding that the authorities hold the perpetrators accountable.



### 01. Berta Cáceres and COPINH, Honduras

It has been 6 years since Berta Cáceres murder. PI stands in solidarity with her cause and with the struggle of the COPINH. We marked David Castillo's 22.5-year prison sentence. However, we still underline the importance of holding accountable FMO - a Dutch entrepreneurial development bank, for financing DESA - the company managed by Castillo.

### 02. Caso Guapinol, Honduras

For over three years, PI and the EU-LAT network have denounced the unjust imprisonment of the Río Guapinol's human rights defenders, and we continue to demand their release. In 2022, this took the form - for instance - of requesting the EU Delegation to Honduras, and the French, German and Spanish ambassadors to Honduras to attend the eight human rights defenders' concluding trial on 28 January 2022 to help ensure that it was fair, impartial and in line with fair trial guarantees.

### **03. Caso Río Tinto, Honduras**

In Honduras, the Garifuna community in Río Tinto faces ongoing threats. An attack on two of their defenders resulted in one death and another injury. PI urges the Honduran State to ensure that these crimes do not remain in impunity.

### **04. Criminalised justice operators in Guatemala: the cases of former judge Erika Aifán, former prosecutor Virginia Laparra. Guatemala**

In Guatemala, PI individually but also as part of the EULAT Network, denounced the drastic deterioration of the rule of law, as well as the criminalisation and attacks against justice operators. PI denounced the unjust detention of Virginia Laparra, a former prosecutor, and demanded her release after she accused Esther Castellanos of disclosing confidential case information. PI also stood by Erika Aifán, a former Guatemalan judge, who fled the country due to death threats. We condemn her forced exile and the lack of safety guarantees for her.



### **05. Sombath Somphone, Laos**

Approaching the 10-year mark of Lao civil society leader Sombath Somphone's enforced disappearance, PI urged the Lao government to disclose his fate and provide justice and reparation to his family.

### **06. HEDA Resource Centre, Nigeria**

PI expressed solidarity and concern over the recent attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs) on members of the Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resource Centre).

### **07. Juan Carlos Flores, Mexico**

PI condemned the harassment, surveillance, and suspected assassination attempt on Juan Carlos Flores, a lawyer and advocate of the Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra y el Agua (Peoples' Front in Defense of Land and Water).

### **08. Nasa Indigenous community in Cauca, Colombia**

PI supported the Nasa Indigenous community's alert and pressed the national government to take efficient and effective measures to protect the indigenous communities.

### **09. Dam On-muang, Thailand**

PI supported Mr. Dam On-muang in his Supreme Court appeal, ensuring that human rights defenders get justice and offenders face consequences.



### **10. Environmental defenders in Guatemala**

PI mobilized actors around two emblematic cases where HRDs collectively defending the environment were victims of repression, stigmatisation and a strong criminalisation by the State of Guatemala.

The peaceful protestors against mining activities in El Estor (municipality of Izabal), led by traditional Q'eqchi' authorities, were violent repressed in late 2021. The government of Guatemala declared a state of siege for one month and those participating in the protests, as well as local journalists, activists, and organizations denounced harassment and their homes being raided by the military. As a follow up to the support actions that PI Mesoamerica carried out at the end of 2021 and as one of the actions within PI's long-term accompaniment, in 2022 the team organised a stakeholders monitoring visit with members of several diplomatic missions and agencies in the country. The delegation met with community leaders and community members affected by the repression. PI Mesoamerica supported other similar emblematic cases of repressed collective environmental defence, such as Ixquis and the peaceful resistance of La Puya territory.

# CHAPTER 3

Influential stakeholders support  
HRDs' leadership on the RDHR



## II PI's Involvement and Engagement in Networks

PI is part of multiple networks in which we are very active. We are members of networks that have a geographic mandate, such as [ProtectDefenders.eu](#), the [European Network for Central Africa](#) (EurAc), the [EU-LAT Advocacy Network](#) (which focuses on Latin America), the [Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum](#), and [Team Europe Democracy](#); and even global networks focusing on one country, such as [International Human Rights Office - Action Colombia](#) (OIDHACO).

We also belong to networks that have a thematic mandate. These include the [Zero Tolerance Initiative](#) (ZTI) network, which works to address the root causes of killings and violence against human rights defenders linked to global supply chains. We are also part of the [Human Rights & Democracy Network](#) (HRDN) which is an informal grouping of NGOs operating at the EU level in the broader areas of human rights, democracy and peace. We

are likewise part of the [Alliance for Land, Indigenous and Environmental Defenders ALLIED](#), the [Indigenous People's Rights International](#), the [Defenders in Development Campaign](#), the [Vuka! Coalition](#).

We also collaborate with strategic allies as ENAR Network, PBI, ISHR, ILC, Open Global Rights, CEJIL, Defend Defenders, among many others, and this include institutional allies such as [the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Business](#) or the [Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations](#), as well as more academic allies as the [University of York](#), [Durham University](#), or the [Universal Rights Group](#). When taking part in meetings with these networks or contributing to joint actions, the Global Team makes sure to mention and include language about human rights defenders and their specific protection needs, focusing on [PI's approaches to protection](#).

## II PI's Positive Influence and Engagement with Decision-Makers and Policy-Makers

### European Union

During 2022 PI engaged with the European Union and its Member States in different occasions and platforms, with the objective to share information from the ground and contribute to policy making and EU positions in the defence of the right to defend human rights and of specific cases of violations of HRDs' rights.

Some examples are:

- ⦿ Offered valuable insights to the [European Parliament's 2021 Annual report on global human rights and democracy](#), emphasising the European Union's stance on the subject of Human Rights Defenders' protection.

- ⦿ Participated in various meetings with the [Council working group on Latinamerica and the Caribbean \(COLAC\)](#) and the [Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly \(EuroLat\)](#), where we [presented regional analyses](#) related to the regression of democratic governance and shrinking civic space in Central American region.

- ⦿ [Campaigned on EU-visas for HRDs at high risk](#), As part of the [ProtectDefenders.eu Consortium's](#). We took an active role in the discourse, culminating in a [joint statement](#) advocating for a robust and facilitative EU Visa framework to aid at-risk human rights defenders. This initiative extended into 2023.



- ⊙ **Organised a virtual encounter** between human rights defenders and their collectives from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador and representatives of the European Commission, the External Action Service and members of the European Parliament. The HRDs exposed their cases and asked for EU support in their fights for justice, accountability and against impunity.
- ⊙ **Facilitated an encounter** between justice operators who had to flee Guatemala due to prosecution related to their work on human rights, transitional justice and the fight against corruption. They had a meeting with the EP Delegation on Central America and high-level representatives of the External Action Service, the European Commission, civil society groups and the academia.
- ⊙ **Interviewed Sukhgerel Dugersuren**, a Mongolian woman human rights defender, and released a briefing paper regarding the threats she faced. This briefing paper was sent to the EU and the EU delegation to Mongolia, calling on them to support her protection scheme, and for the EU to call on the Mongolian government to end their criminalisation and smear campaigns against Sukhgerel.
- ⊙ **Offered insights to different High Level Dialogues on Human Rights** held between the EU and partner countries and regional institutions such as Mexico or the African Union.
- ⊙ Participated in the **10th African Union – European Union CSO seminar on human rights and democratic governance**, a seminar that focused on drafting recommendations in the run up to the EU-AU human rights dialogue.
- ⊙ Participated in the **24th EU-NGO forum**, which we co-organised, on “The road to accountability and justice”. PI’s Executive Director Mae Ocampo moderated a panel on “Protection of human rights defenders: fighting impunity in conflicts and crises”.
- ⊙ Co-organised together with the International Land Coalition an **Info Point at the European Commission – DG for International Partnerships (INTPA)** on the occasion of the **Women Human Rights Defenders Day**. The event was forecasted live at the EC’s website and social media.
- ⊙ **Protection International** also takes part of the campaign “Justice is Everybody’s Business”, calling for a strong **EU Directive on corporate sustainability**

**due diligence.** Apart from this specific campaign, we supported and amplified efforts through other networks, such as EU-Lat (see an example [here](#)).

- PI supported the organisation of a screening session and discussion for the premiere of **the documentary film “The Illusion of Abundance”** at the European Parliament. This film, which was co-financed by PI, focuses on the contemporary stories of resistance of three women human rights defenders in Latin America: Maxima Acuña (Peru), Berta Cáceres (Honduras) and Carolina de Moura (Brazil). [A panel discussion with MEPs and civil society followed the screening of the movie.](#)
- Finally, PI also engaged with some EU Member States’ representations throughout 2022.** Our team in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, for instance, organised a large public event at the Embassy of Belgium to celebrate the International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders. This event served as a platform to spotlight the tireless efforts of women HRDs. Through an inspiring exhibition showcasing portrait photos of some of these exceptional women,

we honored their exemplary work, PI bestowed certificates of achievement, symbolising our unwavering support for these women defenders.

- Another example comes from our team in **Brazil**, that held a regular dialogue **Embassy of the Netherlands** in their country. They exchanged information and analysis on the situation of HRDs, as well as inputs for the Universal Periodic Review.

### United Nations

- Prior to its adoption in April 2022, PI also provided inputs to the **Human Rights Council’s resolution A/HRC/49/L.9** on “Recognising the contribution of human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, in conflict and post-conflict situation, to the enjoyment and realisation of human rights”. **The impact of our inputs was profound, as many of PI’s recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the resolution.**
- PI provided key expert inputs for the **Recommendations on the Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders at Risk in Migration Contexts.** PI’s key inputs





on creating an enabling environment for the defence of human rights in migration contexts, in ending all forms of violence and harassment against migrant women and girls, protecting survivors, and in general with the preamble were widely accepted and included in the final version released in November 2022.

- ⦿ Through the year and in collaboration with different national networks, we contributed to the drafting of the 4th cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reports of Guatemala and Brazil. Our contribution primarily centered on defenders' rights and, more in general, on the right to defend human rights. We also incorporated perspectives on risk, collective protection, and the limitations public policy faced in assimilating and executing this viewpoint.
- ⦿ Provided input to **Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor's** report to the Human Rights Council on the positive change achieved by human rights defenders. We also happily received Mary Lawlor in our office!
- ⦿ Attended the **UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva**. You can see our tweets [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

We also co-organised with the ISHR the only official side-event in the Palais des Nations, where we screened the documentary "The Illusion of Abundance", of which PI is a co-producer and technical advisor. We did it on the occasion of the Women HRDs Day.

- ⦿ Provided insights for the **UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** report titled "The Militarization of indigenous land: a human rights focus".
- ⦿ During the **Stockholm +50 Conference**, organised by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, PI called on states to prioritise and protect environmental and climate justice human rights defenders (HRDs) at the forefront of environmental discussions. See our tweets [here](#), [here](#) and here and read our [statement](#) on that occasion.
- ⦿ Finally, as reported in Pathway 2, PI collaborated with the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** in their support to different state mechanisms for HRDs protection, as well as in their civic space research. **PI country offices also had regular contact with key UN agencies**. In **Brazil**, for instance, PI expanded the dialogue



and approach with the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** (UNHCHR). We held several consultations and dialogues with the director of the regional office for South America and responsible for the office in Brazil. Subsequently we were contacted on several occasions, for instance to support risk analyses. This collaboration also opens for PI the possibility to report cases at risk with this key actor for HRDs protection.

**Finally, Protection International Mesoamerica** co-authored two key reports in the area of human rights due diligence by both private business and development banks:

- **Pathway to A Feminist International Corporate Accountability Framework** – published by ActionAid, ACCA, ACT Alliance, AWID, FIDA Uganda, Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad, Protection International, ISHR, IWRAP Asia Pacific, and ZELA. Based on four case studies from Uganda, Zimbabwe, Guatemala and Kenya,

the report offers specific examples of women’s lived experiences in relation to large-scale agribusiness and mining activities in the Global South. Systemic gender impacts connected to corporate activities are particularly felt by women in the Global South. The authors call upon states to engage constructively in the process towards a **feminist UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights**.

- **Wearing Blinders**, led by the Coalition for Human Rights Defenders In Development. The report exposes how **development banks** are often failing to identify, assess, and mitigate reprisal risks. Through five case studies, analysing projects in Armenia, Guatemala, the Philippines, Turkmenistan and Uganda, the report shows how banks tend to shirk responsibility and ignore reprisal risks, and provides a list of recommendations to prevent and address reprisals.

## || Strengthening Voices in Conflict Zones: PI’s Commitment to West African HRDs

In November 2022, Protection International Africa (PIA) collaborated and partnered with the West Africa Network of Human Rights Defenders (WAHRN), which, while based in Togo, has an expansive reach across West Africa, and the Partnership for Justice in Nigeria (PJ).

Our project aims to foster a peaceful, secure, and supportive environment for HRDs, particularly women defenders in West Africa. We placed a special emphasis on Nigeria and Togo, where defenders face severe challenges amidst the prevailing conflict. The HRDs and their organisations we are supporting primarily focus on three critical areas:

1. addressing sexual violence, promoting gender equity, and seeking justice;
2. combating corruption, advocating for better governance, and challenging impunity; and
3. promoting human rights and pushing for public policy reforms.

These issues are particularly sensitive in Nigeria and Togo. HRDs, by exposing abuses and demanding greater accountability, often find themselves under threat from both state authorities and non-state actors.

## II Echoes of Resilience: Celebrating Defenders with PI's Poetry Challenge

Last year, amidst the shadows of the COVID-19 pandemic, PI launched the "Poetry Challenge" as the grand finale to our "Stay With Defenders" campaign. Our aim? To pay tribute to the unwavering spirit of HRDs worldwide.

We opened our doors to **original poems in six languages, each echoing the resolute spirit of defending rights**. A panel of esteemed poets (Henry Raby, Thalie Envolée, Maria Amália Souza, Rosa Chávez, Guillaume Bisimwa, and Ida Aroonwong) who volunteered their expertise to select the most moving pieces. The highlight? Are the poets, artists, and human right defenders alike who use art as a form of resistance and the celebration – where art is used to express their fight for justice and in the defence of human rights.

Together with our Executive Director, Mae Ocampo, we were graced by the presence of Mary Lawlor (UNSR) and Chiara Adamo (European Commission - INTPA - Head of

HR Unit) who lent their voices to recite some masterpieces during the special online awards ceremony.

To ensure these poetic gems live on, we crafted a poetry booklet, **featuring 30 original poems, all translated into English**. And for a touch of authenticity, each poem is accompanied by a QR code, leading to **videos of the poets reciting in their mother tongues**. This poignant anthology, a testament to our dedication and the resilience of HRDs, is available both in print and [online](#).

“Stay with the defenders who in heart and in deed speak truth to power brave hearts defying powers.”

Awake, by Yewande Akinse (Nigeria)

[Click here](#)

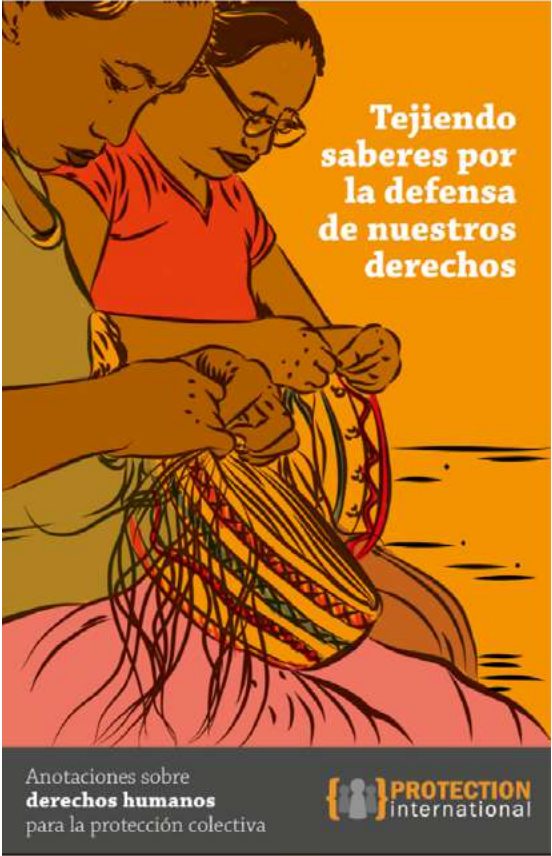


# CHAPTER 4

## PI's Publications at a Glance

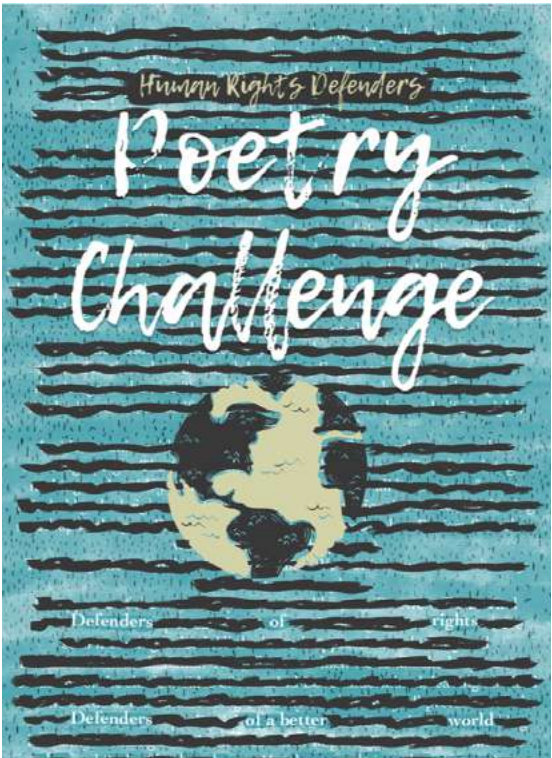


In 2022, Protection International (PI) published several materials aimed to educate, inspire, and engage our audience. We present a concise overview of our impactful publications from the past year, showcasing our commitment to support human rights defenders:



**Tejiendo saberes por la defensa de nuestros derechos: Anotaciones sobre derechos humanos para la protección colectiva**

We crafted this booklet to share knowledge with indigenous communities about their rights. Our goal? To bolster their risk analysis capabilities, enhance collective protection, and fortify their fight for life, culture, land and territories.



**Human Rights Defenders Poetry Challenge Book**

From our #StayWithDefenders campaign, we celebrated the Poetry Challenge, inviting HRDs to share their stories. This anthology showcases 30 poems out of 438 submissions from 58 countries, presented in their native languages and translated into English. Each poem is accompanied by the author's voice, immersing readers in the emotions and expressions.



### The Worldwide Growth of National Policies for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the inaugural national policy to protect HRDs, our publication delves into the growth of such policies globally. By mid-2022, 45 countries engaged in policy discussions, highlighting the significance for defenders.



### The Psychosocial Approach, Applied to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

With the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, we translated this pivotal publication into Arabic, emphasizing the psychosocial aspects of protection



### The Illusion of Abundance

In collaboration with other organisations, we co-produced and host the screening of the documentary film “The Illusion of Abundance” at the European Parliament (October 2022). This film illuminates the challenges faced by three Latin American women human rights defenders, followed by an enlightening panel discussion.



### Defendemos Podcast

Our podcast’s second season delves into the world that defenders and their communities shape daily. The episodes touch on diverse topics, such as the world that women and girls dream of, the right to political participation in electoral contexts, public protection policies in the Americas, and climate action from the environmental and territorial defence of communities and organisations.

# CHAPTER 5

## Financial Report





## PI AISBL PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT EVOLUTION 2018-2022 (€)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Income</b>					
<b>Revenue - Core</b>					
Governmental Agencies	727,535	641,977	835,871	893,015	1,292,548
Trust and Foundations	759,099	858,680	1,436,632	1,980,205	1,291,590
Individual Donors	-	-	-	-	-
Other Revenue	34,257	97,590	26,778	59,826	283,621
<b>Total core Revenue</b>	<b>1,520,890</b>	<b>1,598,247</b>	<b>2,299,281</b>	<b>2,933,047</b>	<b>2,867,759</b>
<b>Revenue - Earmarked</b>					
Governmental Agencies	981,233	1,255,754	1,271,830	1,400,034	655,307
Trust and Foundations	382,667	373,011	253,893	264,532	568,684
<b>Total Earmarked Revenue</b>	<b>1,363,900</b>	<b>1,628,764</b>	<b>1,525,723</b>	<b>1,664,566</b>	<b>1,223,991</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2,884,790</b>	<b>3,227,011</b>	<b>3,825,004</b>	<b>4,597,613</b>	<b>4,091,749</b>
<b>Costs</b>					
Personnel & Related Costs	1,588,579	1,740,584	2,335,761	2,687,965	3,006,247
Programme Costs	727,910	839,908	648,412	935,725	805,530
Operating, Administrative & Finance Costs	328,610	366,830	342,558	561,809	540,062
Governance & Strategy Costs	145,376	247,082	242,605	208,162	263,558
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>2,790,474</b>	<b>3,194,403</b>	<b>3,569,336</b>	<b>4,393,662</b>	<b>4,615,397</b>
<b>Income (Deficit) For The Year</b>	<b>94,316</b>	<b>32,608</b>	<b>255,668</b>	<b>203,951</b>	<b>-523,648</b>





## PI AISBL BALANCE SHEET EVOLUTION 2018-2022 (€)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Assets</b>					
Fixed Assets	16,957	18,936	35,829	24,123	18,881
Cash & Cash Equivalents	1,229,155	871,357	1,351,297	2,280,647	1,224,766
Debtors	109,558	97,287	98,594	95,277	-
Deferred Expenses	-	5,472	585	30,907	15,452
Grants Receivable - Governmental	141,392	110,692	71,800	77,669	573,194
Grants Receivable - Non-Governmental	42,711	23,273	1,000	7,011	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,539,773</b>	<b>1,127,016</b>	<b>1,559,105</b>	<b>2,515,634</b>	<b>1,832,294</b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Reserves</b>					
<b>Liabilities</b>					
Current Liabilities	174,788	155,791	149,737	299,369	380,173
Provisions	-	-	-	16,500	60,000
Deferred Grants	786,579	360,211	542,686	1,129,133	845,137
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>961,368</b>	<b>516,003</b>	<b>692,423</b>	<b>1,445,002</b>	<b>1,285,309</b>
<b>Reserves</b>					
Social Liability Funds	87,262	97,044	113,744	114,930	114,930
Reserve Funds	491,145	513,969	752,937	955,703	432,055
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>578,406</b>	<b>611,013</b>	<b>866,681</b>	<b>1,070,632</b>	<b>546,984</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Reserves</b>	<b>1,539,773</b>	<b>1,127,016</b>	<b>1,559,105</b>	<b>2,515,634</b>	<b>1,832,294</b>

# CHAPTER 6

Our donors and partners



We express our gratitude to all the individuals and organisations who have generously supported our efforts in protecting human rights defenders, upholding the right to defend human rights, and preserving civic space. As we continue our work, we acknowledge the ever-increasing challenges in a world marked by rising inequalities, racial discrimination, populist and authoritarian agendas, conflicts, insecurity, and the spread of misinformation about human rights defenders and their work. In light of these circumstances, we urge our donors to adopt flexible strategies that can effectively address the evolving and sometimes rapidly changing needs and priorities of human rights defenders and their collectives. Specifically, we emphasize the utmost importance of:

- Granting more flexible core funding that can adapt to the dynamic context and requirements of human rights organisations.
- Recognising human rights defenders as crucial stakeholders in the grant-making process, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are genuinely considered.
- Adopting a risk-based and defender-centric approach when engaging with human rights actors, including the utilisation of secure communication channels to interact with them.
- Minimising the reporting burden on human rights defenders, allowing them to allocate more resources to their essential work in promoting and protecting human rights.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all our donors and partners for their unwavering commitment to this vital cause and for prioritising preventive holistic security as a fundamental element in the promotion, respect, and protection of human rights worldwide.

We are grateful for the generous support provided by:





# ANNUAL REPORT 2022