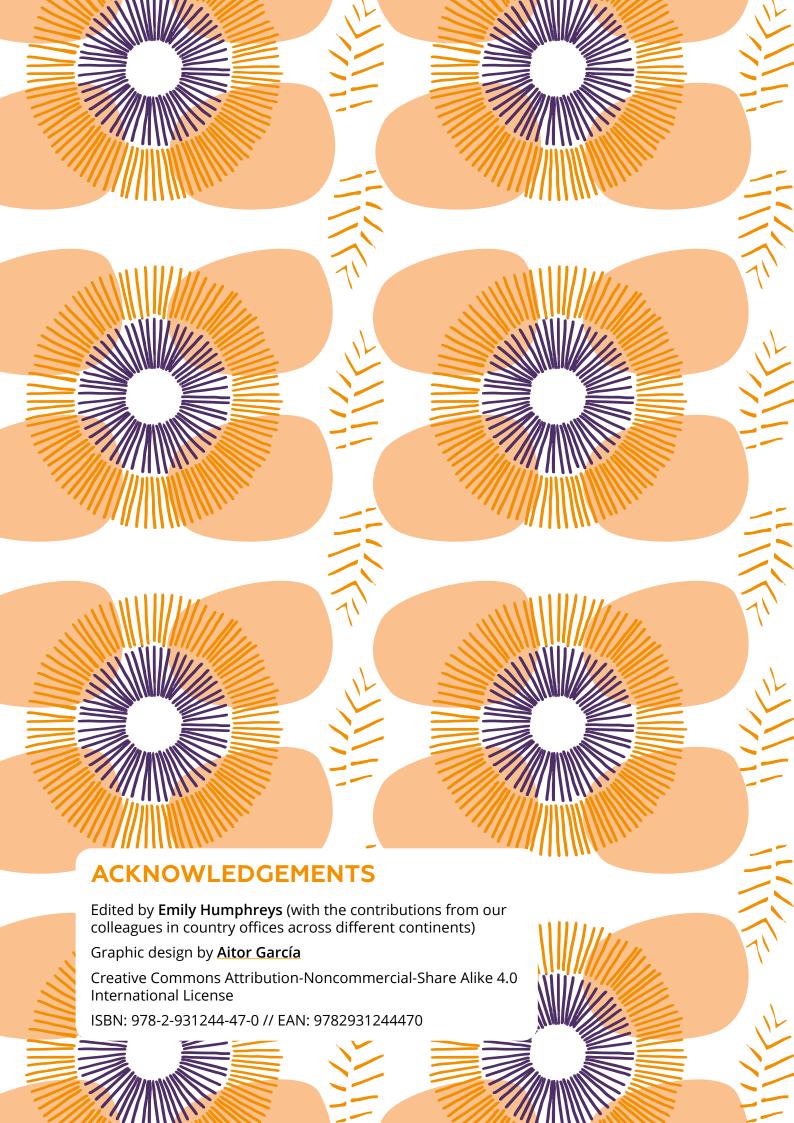
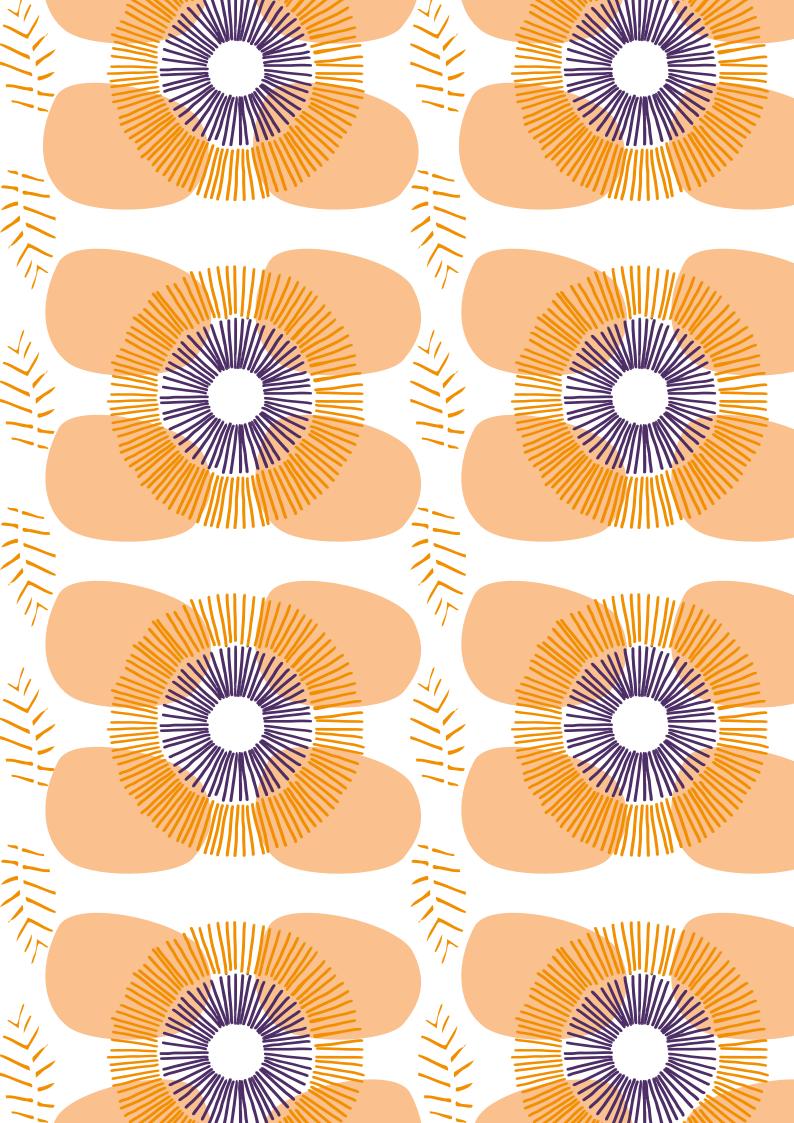
# Annual Deport 2024











### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Foreword from the Chair of the Board	5	Narratives as a Tool for Protection: Countering Stigmatisation and Threats			
Where We Work: Permanent Presence /		to Human Rights Defenders			
Non-Permanent Presence	6	Unshrinking Civic Space: Protection			
Protection International's Global Strategic		International in the EU SEE Programme			
Framework 2024-2028: "An Enabling Environment		· ·			
for the Right to Defend Human Rights"	8	Our Advocacy and Outreach in 2024			
		Advocacy at the European Union			
Strategic Objective 1: Human Rights Defenders		Advocacy at the United Nations			
and their collectives have the agency to		Regional Advocacy Actions			
defend human rights safely	10	Advocacy Across Borders: Elevating			
Protection International in South America	10	Congolese Defenders' Voices in Kinshasa, Berlin and Brussels			
Nurturing Relationships of Solidarity for the		Collective Protection for Environmental			
Right to Defend Human Rights: Women Defenders in Brazil	10	Defenders: Protection International at			
Supporting Marginalized Defenders:	10	New York Climate Week 2024			
An Intersectional Approach in Colombia	11	Networks			
• •		<ul><li>Outreach</li></ul>			
Protection International Mesoamerica	12	Public Policies: Towards an Enabling			
Official Visit of the Inter-American		Environment for the Right to Defend			
Development Bank (IDB) to the Territory	12	Human Rights			
of Yich K'isis, Guatemala	12				
Protection International Southeast Asia	13	Strategic Objective 3: Protection International			
From Threats to Triumph: The Legal Struggles		is a resilient, sustainable, responsive and			
of Thailand's Environmental Women Defenders	13	transparent organisation			
ReSisters Dialogue - Women Defenders of	40	Internal Resilience and Care: Protection			
Southeast Asia Unite in Solidarity	13	International's commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion			
Resisting Destruction: Empowering					
Environmental Defenders Against Nickel Mining in Indonesia	14	Taking Stock and Growing: Lessons Learned from 2024			
Weker William Briting on Esta					
Protection International Africa	15	Protection International's Publications 2024			
The Democratic Republic of Congo:		Protection International's Services 2024			
Defending the Environment, in the	1 -				
Face of Conflict and Extractivism	15	Financial report			
Human Rights Defenders with Disabilities	16	A Special Thanks to Our Donors			
A Psychosocial Approach Applied to the		Rest in power, Romel ("Mel") de Vera			
Protection of Human Rights Defenders:	4=	(1971- 2024). Padayon!			
Updated Online Course	17				
Our Work with ProtectDefenders.eu in 2024	18				
Strategic Objective 2: Power-holders take all					
necessary actions to create and uphold					
enabling environments for the RDHR	19				
The Manaus Declaration: Protecting HRDs	10				
of the Americas in the Face of Climate Change	19				
#HumanRightsByWomen: Amplifying the					
Voices of Women Human Rights Defenders across Africa	20				
<ul><li>2024: A Year of Defiance – HRDs Take</li></ul>	20				
Legal Action and Resist Threats to Civic					
Space in Thailand	21				



### FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

As I write this message, I find myself reflecting on a decade of profound growth, transformation, and learning. I have had the pleasure of serving on the Board of Directors of Protection International for over ten years (eight years as Chair). Over this time, Protection International has grown significantly, learning many lessons along the way. We are grateful for the trust that human rights defenders have placed in us in many places around the world. We have been able to journey with indigenous defenders, defenders in rural areas, women defenders, LGBTIQA+ defenders, defenders with disabilities, and youth defenders, amongst others. They have shared with us their homes, food, cultures, and dreams. They have shown us what it means to face risks and to navigate challenges as they strive to create a just and equal world. They have shown us how to be creative, to persevere in the face of suffering, to savour friendships, to love deeply, and to nurture hope.

Because of their generosity in sharing with us about their tactics and strategies, we have been able to distil practices for self- and collective protection and share them with likeminded human rights defenders in other places. We have been able to bring their concerns and messages to public officials and government bodies at the national, regional and international levels, advocating for their right to defend human rights. We have been able to facilitate cross-regional and cross-sectoral learning amongst defenders, building networks and nurturing younger generations. This work has been challenging. The current global context is marked by rising repression, shrinking civic space, severe funding constraints, declining commitment to multilateralism, and greater instability. The courage and resilience of human rights defenders continues to be met with heightened risks. Protection International's mission has never been more urgent.

It is precisely in such times that leadership matters. I am confident that our incoming Chair, Sandra Petersen, brings fresh insights, wisdom, and energy that this moment demands. She is supported by a committed Board and General Assembly and by dedicated staff with passion for Protection International's vision and mission. To all of you – our partners, staff, supporters, and defenders – I extend my deepest appreciation.

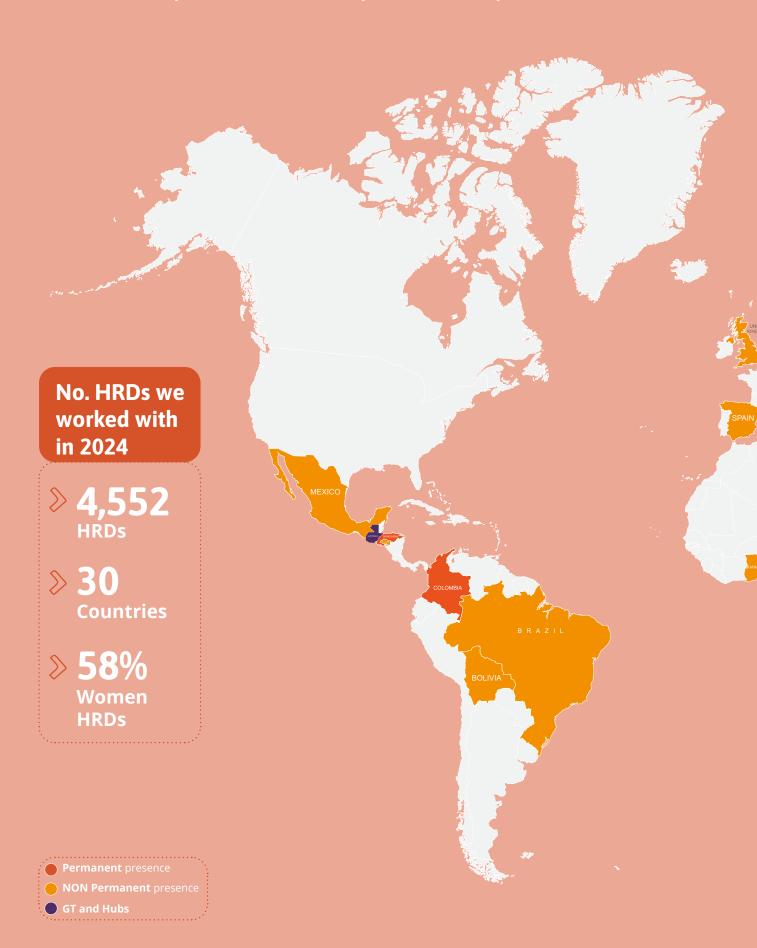
Thank you for the opportunity to serve and to learn with you.

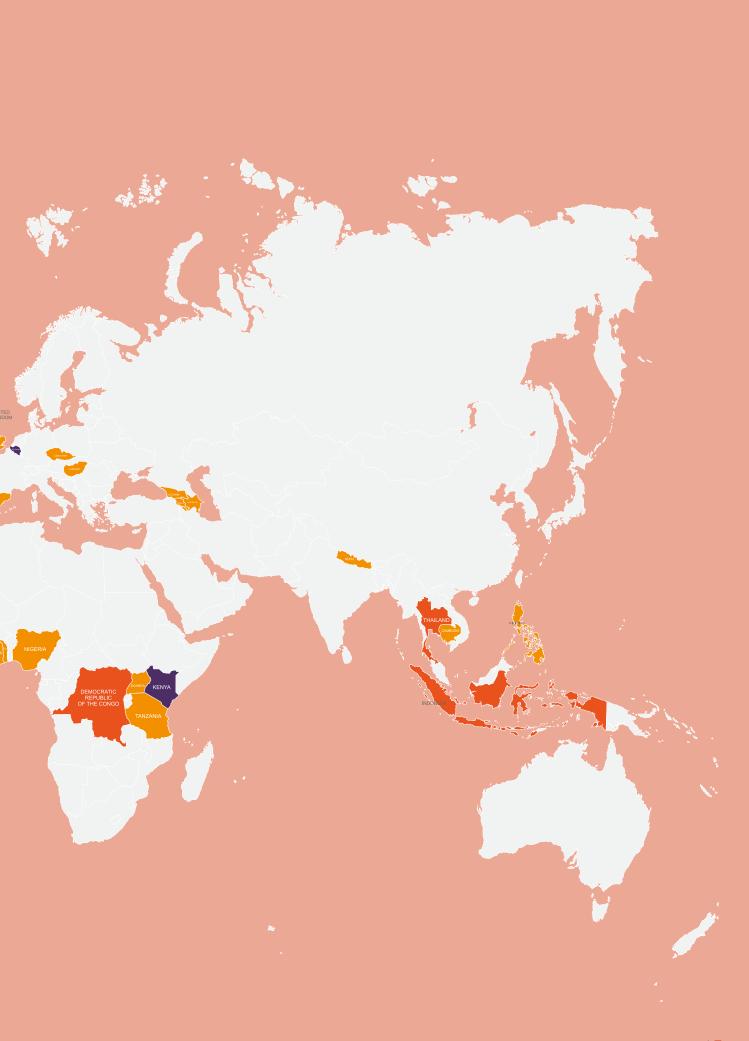
In solidarity and with hope,

Alice Nah Board of Directors (2014 - January 2025)

### WHERE WE WORK:

## Permanent presence / non-permanent presence





# PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL'S GLOBAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2024-2028:

# An Enabling Environment for the Right to Defend Human Rights

### A Renewed Strategy for the Right to Defend Human Rights

After extensive consultations with human rights defenders (HRDs), partners, and teams, in 2024 Protection International (PI) launched its new Strategic Plan for 2024–2028. This strategy reflects our renewed commitment to supporting HRDs and their collectives to make informed protection decisions and defend rights safely—online and offline.

We will continue working alongside partners and allies to urge those in power to dismantle the barriers to the right to defend human rights (RDHR) and to create enabling environments for rights defence.

Our three strategic objectives are:

- 1. HRDs and their collectives have the agency to defend rights safely Protection International will strengthen the capacity, safety, and influence of HRDs, helping dismantle power imbalances and fostering leadership.
- 2. **Power holders uphold enabling environments** Protection International will push state and non-state actors to fulfill their obligations to protect and promote the RDHR.
- 3. Protection International is a resilient, sustainable, and responsive organisation We will invest in our people, decentralise operations, and strengthen our institutional foundations.



These objectives build on our achievements from 2019–2023 and reflect a vision of shared power and protection. Alongside this strategy, we have also renewed our visual identity introducing a new logo that symbolises our evolving, collective approach to human rights protection.





Protection International contributes to a future where HRDs and their collectives are increasingly able to lead initiatives that increase their protection and shape their environment.

(**SO1**: HRDs and their collectives have the agency to defend human rights safely)



Protection International sees a future where the courage of HRDs and their collectives is matched by the support of diverse state and non-state actors as well as institutions at multiple levels that can propel HRDs' mission forward.

(SO2: Power holders take all necessary actions to create and uphold enabling environments for the RDHR)



Protection International foresees an enabling environment for the exercise of the RDHR so that all HRDs and their collectives can carry out their work safely, an environment in which power-holders understand and acknowledge existing barriers that prevent HRDs from exercising their RDHR. (**SO1 & SO2**)

Our Global Strategic Framework 2024 - 2028 is available in English, with executive summaries in Spanish and French.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.

# Human Rights Defenders and their Collectives have the Agency to Defend Human Rights Safely

### Protection International in South America

# Nurturing Relationships of Solidarity for the Right to Defend Human Rights: Women Defenders in Brazil

For Protection International in South America, **2024 was a year of working closely alongside communities of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Brazil**, particularly through an intersectional, community-based approach.

A key example of this work is the collaboration with the Promotoras Legales Populares (PLPs)—a group of women community leaders trained in human and women's rights— whose work supports survivors of gender-based violence, and whose mandate combats structural racism in Brazilian society. Protection International in South America worked closely with these women and the Instituto de las Mujeres Negras – GELEDÉS, facilitating five strategic gatherings between 2023 and 2024 in São Paulo's city outskirts. These sessions focused on co-developing a protection strategy that integrates both gender and racial perspectives, recognising the intersectional challenges these women defenders face.

In Bahia, from 8-10 November 2024, **Protection International in South America facilitated a gathering of 59 rural WHRDs from across northern Bahia**. The regional assembly provided a rare space for these women to unite, share experiences, and strategise on land rights, environmental protection, and gender justice. Through this event, **Protection International in South America strengthened a network of women committed to collective self-care and advocacy, fostering solidarity as an essential tool for self-protection and resistance**. These activities nurtured a relationship of solidarity not only between the WHRDs who participated, but also between the WHRDs and Protection International in South America, growing Protection International's protection impact in Brazil.



### Supporting Marginalized Defenders: An Intersectional Approach in Colombia

In 2024, Protection International in South America deepened its work with marginalised human rights defenders in Colombia, particularly Indigenous, racialised, and rural women. Through projects such as Mujeres Amazónicas and Voz y Liderazgo de las Mujeres, Protection International has focused on providing tailored support to these defenders, ensuring they have the agency to safely advocate for human rights.

The Mujeres Amazónicas project was an opportunity to work with Indigenous women defenders in Vichada, Caquetá, and Bogotá. The project, supported by Bread for the World, included training on political advocacy and psychosocial tools for collective protection, recognising the specific risks these women face due to their identities and territories. Collaborating with local women's organisations, Protection International emphasised both political advocacy and collective care, helping defenders assert their rights and influence public discourse.

Similarly, through the Voz y Liderazgo de las Mujeres project, Protection International partnered with Oxfam Colombia to strengthen the agency of Black, Indigenous, and campesina women defenders in the departments of Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Nariño, and Putumayo. The focus on intersectionality in training sessions allowed women to navigate threats while fostering collective action rooted in cultural identity and local knowledge.

These projects reflect Protection International's **holistic**, **community-driven approach to protection**—ensuring that defenders are not only protected but empowered to lead with resilience, transforming their communities with dignity and strength.



### Protection International Mesoamerica

## Official Visit of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to the Territory of Yich K'isis, Guatemala

In November 2024, a historic visit to the territory of Yich K'isis (previously known as Ixquisís), Guatemala, reinforced a victory for Indigenous environmental and territorial defence in the face of relentless corporate interests. A delegation from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) arrived after years of resistance from local communities, determined to halt the IDB financed hydroelectric dams that threatened their lands, right to water and way of life.

Since 2009, the people of Yich K'isis—backed by the Plurinational Ancestral Government, Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA), Protection International Mesoamerica, and others—have protested the project's impacts and a lack of meaningful participation in decision-making processes as per the ILO Convention 169, where their indigenous status was not recognised resulting in the failure to apply necessary safeguards and escalating attacks to the peaceful resistance. Their efforts culminated in an official complaint filed in 2018, igniting an unprecedented investigation by the IDB's Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism (MICI), which ultimately led to a ground-breaking decision in 2022: the IDB withdrew its funding, the first time in its history.

Protection International Mesoamerica has played a vital role in supporting the 59 villages and seven communities of the Pacific Resistance of the Microregion of Yich 'isis, providing risk and security management training, organising national and international advocacy campaigns, and offering physical accompaniment to the community of HRDs. This support fortified the communities' resilience in the face of intense threats, creating a protection network that has continually mobilised to challenge the project.

During the November 2024 visit, 30 HRDs from the communities, along with national and international organisations including UNHCR Guatemala, met with MICI (which addresses the environmental and social grievances of communities) and the technical team of the IDB. The visit, a culmination of years of struggle, highlighted the resilient organisational capacity of the local communities, who reshaped the agenda to ensure a thorough technical verification of the risks posed by the project. Their unity and knowledge of their land were crucial in influencing the IDB's decision to formally proceed with a "responsible withdrawal" of the project's financing.



### Protection International Southeast Asia

# From Threats to Triumph: The Legal Struggles of Thailand's Environmental Women Defenders

One of Protection International Thailand's biggest areas of work is in supporting environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs), particularly women and marginalised groups, in their battle against powerful forces attempting to silence their activism. In two landmark cases, Protection International's strategic support helped secure significant legal victories, setting precedents for the right to defend human rights in Thailand.

The Community Forest Conservation Group of Khao Lao Yai–Pha Chan Dai, which has fought for over three decades to protect its land from quarry mining, faced repeated legal and violent attacks. In the 1990s, four members were killed, and more recently, the Dong Mafai mining company filed a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) against three of the group's women defenders. With Protection International's support, including risk assessments, security workshops, and legal aid, the court ruled in favor of the defenders, affirming their peaceful assembly was lawful. This victory not only protected the women but also set a legal precedent for the defence of the environment.



"I felt confident about the outcome because our fight to protect the mountains of our homeland was never for ourselves alone — it was for the greater good. We protested lawfully and peacefully. It is the company that violated the law. The Administrative Court already ruled against them, and now we've won again. I'm overjoyed by this victory." – Woman HRD defendant in the SLAPP case.

Parallel to this, five women EHRDs in Chiang Rai opposing the Pa Hung Waste-to-Energy Plant faced harassment, defamation lawsuits, and physical threats. Despite international recognition of their concerns, they became targets of SLAPPs. Protection International, in collaboration with EnLAW Foundation and the Center for Protection and Revival of Local Community Rights (CPCR), provided legal accompaniment, risk analysis, and direct protection measures. This collective effort led to the withdrawal of the SLAPP cases and the eventual revocation of the controversial waste plant.

These cases highlight the critical need for sustained accompaniment and international collaboration to safeguard the rights of women defenders and advance environmental justice.



### ReSisters Dialogue - Women Defenders of Southeast Asia Unite in Solidarity

In April 2024, 13 Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) from Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines gathered in Siem Reap, Cambodia, for the **ReSisters Dialogue**. Facilitated by Protection International Thailand and supported by the Foundation for a Just Society, the meeting focused on strengthening solidarity and collective protection. Participants shared strategies, experiences, and practical security insights, leading to the creation of a regional emergency response mechanism and improved protection strategies. **This gathering reignited the spirit of feminist solidarity across Southeast Asia**, while also providing tangible support, including emergency funds and enhanced security tools for defenders facing escalating threats.

"This space reminded me that I'm not alone. When we learn from each other, we become stronger—and when we act together, we are unstoppable."



## Resisting Destruction: Empowering Environmental Defenders Against Nickel Mining in Indonesia

In Indonesia, environmental defenders are on the frontlines against the destructive impacts of nickel mining. As operations intensify across Eastern provinces, defenders—often rural communities—face escalating threats from military, police, and private security forces, including violence, intimidation, and digital harassment by mining companies.

Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia, WALHI (Indonesian Forum for the Environment), the country's largest environmental organisation and member of Friends of the Earth International, supports communities advocating for sustainable alternatives and defending human rights. Its provincial offices in South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, and North Maluku support communities affected by nickel mining, advocating for sustainable alternatives and defending human rights.

Protection International (Protection International) has been a key ally to these environmental defenders and to WALHI, providing tailored security training to help defenders assess risks, develop plans, and address threats. Protection International's approach encouraged participants to replicate training in their communities, creating self-reliant networks.

Protection International also addressed challenges faced by women defenders, developing their capacity to advocate for sustainable, community-led alternatives and resist environmental harm. Our goal is to amplify the voices of these defenders and strengthen their fight for environmental justice and human rights against state and corporate pressures in Indonesia.



### **Protection International Africa**

The Democratic Republic of Congo: Defending the Environment, in the Face of Conflict and Extractivism



In the conflict-ridden eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), environmental defenders face escalating dangers as they strive to protect the planet amidst active conflict, illegal mining, and widespread deforestation. Among the most at-risk, these environmental defenders tirelessly fight to preserve the unique biodiversity of the region, including the world renowned Virunga National Park. In this context, Protection International is providing critical support to these defenders, helping them navigate an increasingly hostile environment.

In 2024 Protection International DRC held a three-day training session in Goma, hosted by the Dutch Embassy. 17 environmental HRDs took part in the training, including 15 men and two women from nine organisations such as the Centre d'Éducation pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le Développement Durable (CEPED), Centre de Recherche sur l'Environnement, la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme (CREDDHO), Congolese Alert for Environment and Human Rights (ACEDH), and Programme Intégré pour le Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu (PIDP).

These defenders are central to protecting local ecosystems, yet they face immense risks—from threats of violence to constant surveillance. Protection International addressed these vulnerabilities through a multifaceted approach, delivering risk training, advocacy insights, and protection tips, with a particular focus on those at the intersection of environmental, gender, and indigenous rights.

The participants learned how to assess risks, improve security at home and in the office, and use encryption tools for safe communication. Workshops on well-being and stress management were integral, as these defenders frequently confront mental and emotional strain. An emphasis on security for women and Pygmy defenders highlighted their unique challenges in this challenging environment.

The training concluded with the creation of individualised security plans to safeguard their lives and work, reinforcing the urgent need to protect these defenders as they continue to safeguard the environment, biodiversity, and communities in war-torn eastern DRC.

### **Human Rights Defenders with Disabilities**

Since 2021, Protection International with the University of York and Durham University, has been leading actions on increasing the visibility and leadership of defenders with disabilities. In 2024, we continued our commitment to supporting HRDs with disabilities and raising much needed awareness on their differentiated needs.

The year began strongly as we launched the long-awaited guide 'Strengthening the Inclusion, Protection and Wellbeing of Human Rights Defenders with Disabilities', with forewords from both Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame, Chair of UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs.



"[...] all of us must act together to ensure that our human rights movements are inclusive and diverse. We all need to recognise how ableism shapes our interactions, expectations, and participation in society." (Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs)



This guide, available in English, Spanish, French, Russian and Swahili, was designed to enable access for persons with colour blindness or visual impairments and is a **result of engagement with 70 defenders with disabilities and protection actors**. We collected the challenges and risks faced by human rights defenders with disabilities, and analysed practices that strengthen their security, protection, and wellbeing. To guarantee the right to defend human rights for HRDs with disabilities, **ableism must be challenged, their inclusion and representation must be taken seriously, and HRD protection mechanisms must factor in their specific needs**.

In 2024, Protection International shared its insights on HRD protection for activists with disabilities at two major events hosted by the Ford Foundation. At the "Disability Rights in a Time of Crisis" event in New York, Protection International facilitated a session, sharing findings from its 2024 guide and promoting inclusive protection practices, engaging over 60 key actors. Protection International also participated in a high-level webinar with Media Justice, presenting to over 125 participants on embedding disability inclusion in programming and emphasising the need for donor commitment to sustained, disability-inclusive funding strategies. Both events raised awareness and fostered global engagement on disability rights.

A key outcome of our commitment to HRDs with disabilities was Protection International's strengthened internal **commitment to accessibility as a cross-cutting principle in our 2024–2028 strategy**, ensuring that disability justice is no longer treated as an add-on, but rather as integral to all protection initiatives.

### A Psychosocial Approach Applied to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: Updated Online Course

In 2024, we implemented a significant update to our online course Security and Protection Management for Human Rights Defenders and Social Organisations, ensuring that our training remains relevant and of high quality in a constantly evolving global context. This update incorporates a new module titled "A Psychosocial Approach Applied to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: Emotional First Aid." This module delves into the emotional and psychological dimensions of human rights work, offering participants practical tools to enhance self-awareness, resilience, and emotional self-protection.

By incorporating psychosocial wellbeing, we reinforce our commitment to a holistic, sustainable approach to HRD protection. Acknowledging the emotional toll on HRDs, this update equips defenders with tools not just for physical risks but also for maintaining mental and emotional health, ensuring they can continue their vital work. Our research The Psychosocial Approach, Applied to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders strongly informed the design of this new module.

To reach even more human rights defenders globally, we updated and delivered our E-learning course in **English**, **Spanish**, **French**, **and Russian**, **reaching 66 participants from 28 countries and 19 civil society organisations**. Additionally, we enhanced the Russian-language version of the course to improve accuracy and clarity, removing linguistic barriers for Russian-speaking learners.

(Sign up to our newsletter to be the first to know of inscriptions for our online course, which run throughout the year!



### Our Work with ProtectDefenders.eu in 2024



The Protect Defenders Consortium, created in 2015 by the European Union (EU), coordinates actions to protect HRDs. Protection International is one of its 12 partners, focusing on preventative protection through accompaniment, training and re-granting. Protection International works to build local protection capacities, promote knowledge sharing, and ensure the sustainability of grassroots human rights movements.

In 2024, Protection International built the capacity of more than 4,500 HRDs, of which more than 50% were women. The HRDs included (but were not limited to) women defenders, peacebuilders, journalists, justice actors, climate justice and environmental defenders, LGBTQI+ defenders, defenders with disabilities, and youth defenders.

In total, 11 applications were received and Protection International accepted that all 11 applicants met the eligibility requirements set out for the call. Funding for partners will start in 2025, with activities focused on areas such as the wellbeing of LGBTQI+ HRDs, building digital resilience and strategies within at-risk organisations, better preparing HRD organisations to manage invasive government administrative requirements, fact checking public narratives, and enhancing HRD collectives.

In 2024, Protection International continued activities with the eight organizations selected in 2023 for funding. The partners, from 7 different countries (Togo, Nigeria, Kenya, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Georgia) completed and reported on their activities. In 2024, Protection International opened its annual restricted call for applications to the Protection Support Fund. The call was open from 16 September to 4 October, and 19 organisations were invited to apply from Uganda, Kenya, Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, and the Philippines.



organizations partner selected

countries

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.

# Power-holders take all necessary actions to create and uphold enabling environments for the RDHR

## The Manaus Declaration: Protecting HRDs of the Americas in the Face of Climate Change

On 20 August 2024, more than 400 Indigenous communities, civil society organizations, and collectives presented the Manaus Declaration on Human Rights in the Climate Emergency to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). This landmark document is a direct response to the intensifying climate crisis, aiming to reinforce climate justice and protect human rights, particularly for vulnerable communities affected by climate change across the American continent.

Protection International Mesoamerica played a crucial role in the development and submission of the Declaration, aligning with two clear demands:

- 1. Enforceable standards, requiring States to respect and protect human rights in the face of the climate emergency.
- 2. The urgent need for the protection of environmental and human rights defenders across the American continent, who face escalating threats due to their work.

The Manaus Declaration calls for the IACHR to establish robust legal standards obligating member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) to protect human rights amid the climate crisis. It demands that States mitigate climate impacts, provide reparations for victims, and ensure their policies align with the Paris Agreement and the Escazu Agreement. Importantly, the Declaration calls for the protection of environmental defenders, who often face violence and persecution, by ensuring safe working environments, preventing attacks, and holding perpetrators accountable.

The Declaration is a critical step in creating a legal and policy framework that safeguards human rights defenders working on the front lines of climate change, ensuring they can continue their vital work without fear of reprisal. For Protection International Mesoamerica, it marks a significant victory in our ongoing mission to defend the rights of those at the intersection of environmental and human rights struggles.

Read the full declaration here:

https://www.protectioninternational.org/news/manaus-declaration/



### #HumanRightsByWomen:

### Amplifying the Voices of Women Human Rights Defenders across Africa



To mark the International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, Protection International Africa hosted a powerful webinar focused on the intersection of gender, peacebuilding, and human rights. The event brought together women human rights defenders from Kenya and Nigeria, moderated by Phanice Odhacha, Director of Protection International Africa. It was a moment of reflection and solidarity, highlighting the unique risks women defenders face and the urgent need for comprehensive protection measures.

### The webinar was part of a larger campaign, #HumanRightsByWomen

(#DroitsHumainsParLesFemmes in French), which shone a light on the invaluable work of women HRDs in challenging oppressive systems. This campaign **resonated strongly in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, where women defenders are at the forefront of promoting human rights and peace, despite the dangers posed by an active conflict and widespread exploitation of resources.

This campaign's aim was to elevate the voices of women defenders, many of whom have been targeted for their activism, yet continue their work to challenge human rights violations. **The campaign featured a series of videos and five podcasts** showcasing interviews with women HRDs and experts, sharing their stories and insights on protection and support for defenders.

These digital spaces emphasised the importance of a collective approach, where women defenders from different countries and backgrounds come together to build solidarity networks, share best practices, and advocate for stronger protections. The call to action of these women is for governments and organisations to better safeguard them, recognising their crucial role in fostering peace, democracy, and justice in their communities.

## 2024: A Year of Defiance – HRDs Take Legal Action and Resist Threats to Civic Space in Thailand

In 2024, Thailand's land and EHRDs took bold action to safeguard the environment and their fundamental freedoms. In one pivotal move, over a dozen HRDs from 13 regions across the country filed a landmark lawsuit against the government's second National Mineral Management Master Plan. Supported by Protection International Thailand, EnLAW Foundation, and local networks, the HRDs challenged the plan, arguing that it violated legal and human rights standards by designating legally protected areas for mining and failing to incorporate meaningful community participation. They also criticised the outdated data that ignored the ecological, cultural, and spiritual significance of the lands targeted for exploitation.

The lawsuit highlighted the devastating environmental impact of mining activities in regions like Nakhon Ratchasima and Chaiyaphum, where potash, limestone, and coal mining have destroyed fertile farmlands, leaving local communities without the ability to grow food. The defenders, many of whom are from farming communities, underscored that these areas are not "empty" lands—they are the lifeblood of local people, sustaining their culture, livelihoods, and ecosystems. The HRDs argued that "national development" should not come at the expense of sustainable, community-driven alternatives.

Simultaneously, Protection International Thailand continued its advocacy efforts against the **controversial NPO law**, a revived threat to civic space that began in 2022. The draft law, which **seeks to criminalise HRDs and restrict freedom of association**, was met with fierce resistance from civil society, including Protection International. Together with national and international allies, we worked to prevent the law from passing, ensuring that HRDs could continue their crucial work in Thailand without fear of repression. Both of these actions in 2024 marked critical moments in the ongoing struggle for environmental justice and the protection of civil freedoms in Thailand.



# Narratives as a Tool for Protection: Countering Stigmatisation and Threats to Human Rights Defenders

Stigmatisation of HRDs is a significant threat to their safety, often leading to attacks, criminalisation, and diminished public support. Protection International uses positive narratives to counter this, viewing them not just as stories, but as a strategic tool for protection. By reshaping public discourse, Protection International aims to transform harmful perceptions and safeguard defenders, particularly those facing intersectional risks, such as women, Indigenous, and land rights defenders.

In Colombia, Protection International's Nuevas Narrativas (New Narratives) project—funded by the European Union—focuses on countering disinformation and harmful narratives that undermine HRDs. Collaborating with Verdad Abierta, Protection International conducted research to map out the sources of damaging narratives and their impact on defenders' safety. In response, Protection International supported organisations in six departments to develop strategic, rights-based communication that reframed HRDs as key actors in peacebuilding and justice, rather than as threats. This initiative amplified the voices of marginalised groups, particularly Indigenous, campesino, and women defenders, helping them reclaim their stories and strengthen their legitimacy.





Protection International also created the <u>Verifico platform</u>, in partnership with Verdad Abierta, to monitor and counter disinformation across media and social platforms. By tracking harmful discourse from politicians, security forces, and armed groups, Verifico exposed efforts to delegitimise HRDs, providing verified information to counter false narratives. This work contributed to a safer environment for defenders and bolstered public understanding of their role in society.

Under the Nuevas Narrativas project, Protection International organised capacitybuilding sessions with the Colombian Ombudsman's Office, the National Victims Unit, and other agencies, training 50 officials on stigmatisation and disinformation on HRDs. Additionally, four local roundtables in Norte de Santander, Putumayo, and Bolívar brought together public officials and HRDs to discuss research findings and the need to prevent discrediting discourse. Despite some officials' lack of awareness, they acknowledged stigmatisation as a persistent issue, emphasizing the need for greater institutional commitment to creating a safe environment for HRDs.

The power of narratives to protect HRDs and their right to defend was also embraced in Thailand. In 2024, The Dong Mafai community of environmental defenders, also known as the Khao Laoyai-Pha Chandai Community Forest Conservation Group, celebrated a hardfought victory: the expiry of a quarry plant's license that had scarred their ancestral lands for decades. The community celebrated the closure of the quarry in a powerful story-telling event called "The Quarry is Closed! Dongmafai Rising in Joy." Local defenders framed themselves not as threats, but as ordinary people fighting for their land and community, sharing their stories of resistance, loss, and triumph. This celebration has come after years of communitydriven actions, like planting 10,000 trees and launching a 'Dark Tourism' programme, revealing to tourists through guided tours the devastating impact of corporate greed on the local ecosystem and communities.

The Dong Mafai community's story is not only a community's triumph—it is a living example of how reframing public perception can protect defenders and strengthen movements. When communities tell their own stories, they shift the narrative—from fear to pride, from marginalisation to recognition.





# Unshrinking Civic Space: Protection International in the EU SEE Programme

In 2024, the launch of the EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society (EU SEE) marked a critical milestone in global efforts to protect HRDs and civil society organisations (CSOs) in countries where civic space is rapidly shrinking. This innovative programme consists of an Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) and Flexible Support Mechanism (FSM), providing timely support to HRDs facing increasing repression through both financial resources and solidarity networks.

As an implementing member, Protection International will be active in the Flexible Support Mechanism, leveraging vital funds to support HRDs in contexts where the right to defend human rights is under severe threat. By providing funding for urgent campaigns, strengthening organisational resilience, and advocating for policy changes, EU SEE enables Protection International to support HRDs at risk in places where oppressive laws and practices threaten their activism.

The EU SEE programme highlights the EU's dedication to enabling CSOs and HRDs worldwide to keep building fairer and more inclusive societies, despite the shrinking space for the right to defend human rights.



### Our Advocacy and Outreach in 2024

### Advocacy at the European Union

In 2024, Protection International maintained its role as a global advocate for human rights defenders (HRDs) through strategic engagement with international, regional and national bodies. At the EU level, Protection International played a pivotal role in high-level discussions, particularly in the organisation of a joint event for **Human Rights Day** "A spotlight on strengthening EU response to human rights defender protection – Addressing critical protection gaps and advancing commitment to HRDs in the new EU term". Co-hosted by HRDN, the EU, OHCHR's Regional Office in Europe, and ProtectDefenders.eu, the event, held at the **European Parliament**, focused on strengthening the EU's response to HRD protection gaps. Protection International contributed to the concept note and co-moderated a session on the criminalisation of HRDs, highlighting the risks defenders face in increasingly hostile environments for the right to defend human rights.



Protection International also contributed to **EU human rights dialogues with third countries**. For the **EU-African Union dialogue**, Protection International emphasised the need for HRD protection mechanisms, and for the **EU-Indonesia dialogue**, it highlighted challenges for environmental defenders. In the **EU-Colombia dialogue**, Protection International advocated for stronger enforcement of Decree 660 and co-signed a statement highlighting the many NGO contributions to the pre-dialogue consultations. While in the **EU-Brazil dialogue**, it pushed for improved HRD protection through the country's national protection programme.

Our regional director for Protection International Mesoamerica, Anabella Sibrian, participated as a speaker in an **exchange of views for the European Parliament's subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI)**, focusing on the situation of HRDs in Central America. You can watch her intervention on the EU Parliament website here.

Following the **2023 elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, Protection International co-organised a **roundtable event with EurAc and Cordaid** in Brussels to discuss post-electoral risks for HRDs. The discussion highlighted the need for ongoing international support to protect defenders in volatile regions like the DRC. Having worked with HRDs in the DRC for over 15 years, Protection International connected grassroots activism with international policy.

## <u>Realising Protection for Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Organisations in Europe</u>

At the European level, Protection International co-sponsored and contributed to a landmark paper advocating for a continental HRD protection mechanism. Led by Civil Society Europe and the European Civic Forum, this collaborative effort saw Protection International play a key role in sharing the content and participating in roundtable discussions in Brussels. The publication outlines key elements for a European protection framework, including a mapping study of existing mechanisms, gaps, and areas for improvement. These research products significantly contribute to the European conversation on HRD protection, promoting a proactive, rights-affirming narrative.

### Advocacy at the United Nations

At the UN level, Protection International continued to be involved in the **Declaration +25 process**, an authoritative, civil society-led document that supplements the UN Declaration on HRDs. In 2024 **Protection International significantly contributed to the final text of the Declaration +25**, focusing on our key areas of expertise, namely the **collective nature of human rights work and the importance of preventive protection of HRDs**. This collective work, spanning nearly two years of efforts, culminated in The Declaration +25 officially being launched in June 2024.

In November 2024, as part of the Zero Tolerance Initiative (ZTI), **Protection International co-organised a side-event at the UN's 13th Business & Human Rights Forum in Geneva titled** "Have Smart Mix measures worked for (W)HRDs, Indigenous Peoples, and Afro-descendant communities?". The event explored the effectiveness of global and regional policies in protecting at-risk defender groups, where there are gaps, and what needs to be done to ensure preventative and collective protection of HRDs.

In **Nigeria**, the PI Africa team lent its expertise in HRD protection for **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** processes, participating in a 4th UPR cycle review of Nigeria, hosted by Partnership for Justice Nigeria. Our colleagues contributed to the recommendations sent to the UPR review cycle, emphasizing the need to foster an enabling environment for the Right to Defend Human Rights in the country.

Protection International also ensured that HRD voices were included in the annual reports of UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs, Mary Lawlor. In 2024, Protection International submitted two contributions for her report on HRDs' role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—one focusing on Thai HRDs and the other on Colombian HRDs. Protection International also provided input for the UNSR's report on HRDs living in remote, rural, or isolated areas, based on an interview with a Colombian WHRD. These contributions highlighted the critical work of HRDs in challenging contexts, amplifying their perspectives at the international level.





### **Regional Advocacy Actions**

At the regional level, **Protection International actively engaged with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)**, providing valuable input to the Commission's **Declaration on the Promotion of the Role of Human Rights Defenders and their Protection in Africa**. Along with suggested edits to the text, Protection International submitted an explanatory note outlining the importance of these revisions, emphasising why they were vital for strengthening HRD protection on the continent.



PI Africa, from it's hub office in Nairobi, is a long-time partner of the **Missing Voices collective**, who every year publish an annual report on the cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in Kenya. The 2023 report was launched on the 24th of April 2024, with PIA's director <u>Phanice Odhacha reading the recommendations</u> of the report to the national, regional and international actors present, including the National Police Service of Kenya, the National Assembly of Kenya, and the Kenyan Judiciary body.

Protection International also held advocacy dialogues with Brazil's Minister for Indigenous Peoples, Sônia Guajajara, and the National Unity Government NUG of Burma representative, Toe Thet Paing. Protection International and ProtectDefenders.eu met with Guajajara to discuss protecting Indigenous peoples' territories in Brazil, while in the meeting with Paing, Protection International explored how the (NUG) could better support youth groups, CSOs, and exiled Burmese HRDs.



## Advocacy Across Borders: Elevating Congolese Defenders' Voices in Kinshasa, Berlin and Brussels



In 2024, Protection International organised an **advocacy tour in the Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRC) to highlight the escalating risks faced by Congolese human rights defenders (HRDs). In a context of ongoing conflict, illegal mining, and deforestation, Protection International met with local HRDs, civil society organisations, and government officials, urging stronger protection mechanisms. The tour emphasised the intersectional vulnerabilities of women and indigenous defenders, who face heightened threats while fighting for environmental and social justice.

The advocacy tour also reached Brussels and Berlin, where Protection International engaged with European Union and German officials to advocate for more robust international support for HRDs in the DRC. In Brussels, Protection International emphasized the need for stronger EU policies to protect HRDs globally, while in Berlin, meetings with German policymakers helped raise awareness about the critical role of Congolese HRDs in the fight for justice.

This cross-border advocacy tour helped **amplify the voices of DRC's defenders**, foster global solidarity, and highlight the urgent need for both local and international actions to ensure their safety and enable their work to continue.



## Collective Protection for Environmental Defenders: Protection International at New York Climate Week 2024

In 2024, Protection International (Protection International) brought its **expertise in collective protection and risk management for environmental defenders to New York Climate Week**, co-facilitating a breakout session with Rights and Resources International. This session gathered around **40 defenders from diverse regions**, including Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, to explore key issues in advancing collective protection.

Participants discussed research gaps, legal support, funding, and advocacy needs for collective protection measures, especially in the context of climate change and biodiversity loss. With growing recognition of the failures of state-based protection mechanisms, collective protection is increasingly seen as vital for safeguarding Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local communities under threat from extractive industries and armed groups.

Key takeaways included the need for more information on effective collective protection measures, especially given the growing threats faced by frontline communities protecting forests and biodiversity. Participants highlighted the importance of integrating collective protection into global strategies, including funding for climate and biodiversity initiatives, with a focus on key climate events in 2025 like COP16 and COP30.

As a next step, a working group on collective protection within the Alliance for Land, Indigenous and Environmental Defenders (ALLIED) Coalition was proposed, and Protection International, alongside Rights and Resources, committed to furthering research on this critical issue. Protection International's participation in New York Climate Week was an opportunity to strengthen international alliances and increase awareness of collective protection as a tool to protect environmental defenders.



### **Metworks**

In 2024, Protection International continued to strengthen its influence and reach through active participation in a range of networks and strategic alliances. Protection International is an engaged member of several geographic networks, including:

- The European Network for Central Africa (EurAc)
- The EU-Latin America Network (EU-LAT)
- The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
- The International Office for Human Rights Action on Colombia (OIDHACO)

We also contribute to key thematic networks, such as:

- The Zero Tolerance Initiative (ZTI), addressing violence against HRDs linked to global supply chains
- The Human Rights & Democracy Network (HRDN)
- The Alliance for Land, Indigenous and Environmental Defenders (ALLIED)
- Coalition for Human Rights in Development

In addition, Protection International maintains strong relationships with strategic allies, including civil society partners like <u>European Network Against Racism</u> (ENAR), <u>ProtectDefenders.eu</u>, <u>EU SEE consortium</u>, <u>Peace Brigades International</u> (PBI), and <u>Center for Justice and International Law</u> (CEJIL). We also collaborate with academic partners like the University of York (Centre for Applied Human Rights) and the University of Durham.



















### **#** Outreach

In 2024, we used our communication channels to **highlight the work and challenges faced by HRDs globally**. Some of our notable actions included amplifying the story of Guatemalan journalist Carlos Choc's environmental reporting against extractivism. We marked International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia by interviewing two HRDs from East Africa who shared their experiences defending LGBTIQ+ rights in Kenya. The work of Ugandan environmental activist William Amanzuru and the Friends of Zoka collective was highlighted on our social media channels, as well as the Sakharov Prize Ceremony where we drew attention to democracy defenders in Venezuela.

Our commitment to digital outreach yielded strong results:

- Across Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (Twitter), we published over **1,000 posts**, **reaching 115,760 accounts** with an **average engagement rate of 5%**, and welcomed **3,208 new followers**.
- Our website recorded **687,776 visits** from 376,952 unique users, mainly engaging with our e-learning content, job opportunities, and key publications.
- The most downloaded resources in 2024 were 'The Psychosocial Approach Applied to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders' and 'The New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders'.

Protection International was also featured in several prominent media outlets, with our Thailand office quoted in <a href="https://doi.org/10.21/2016/nd.2016/">The Bangkok Post</a>, and the Mesoamerican team quoted in the Deutsche Welle.

These outreach efforts contributed significantly to raising public awareness on the legitimacy of the right to defend human rights and to countering harmful narratives that fuel attacks against HRDs.

Across Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter **≥ 1,000** posts

> 115,760 reached accounts

> 1,000 posts

⇒ 3,208

new followers

Our website

**≫** 376,952 unique users

Most downloaded

> The New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders

The Psychosocial Approach Applied to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

# Public Policies: Towards an Enabling Environment for the Right to Defend Human Rights

Protection International considers public policies to be the keystone of enabling environments for the right to defend human rights, an area we research and communicate on through our FOCUS: observatory website. Across several countries in 2024, Protection International engaged in strategic advocacy and multilevel dialogue with national authorities on the importance of public policies for the protection of HRDs.

In Guatemala, Protection International organised two workshops on a national public policy, bringing together legal experts and HRDs from Indigenous and rural regions like Olopa and Yich K'isis. These workshops were a response to the Arevalo government's commitment to revive the creation of a Public Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, ten years after the Inter-American Court ruling. This improved political context is giving space and priority to the voice of Guatemalan HRDs and civil society, an opportunity to protect the right to defend human rights, and ensure access to justice.

Protection International actively participated in the **public consultation led by Brazil's Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship** on the long-awaited National Plan for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. Protection International **submitted detailed recommendations**, contributing to a process that marked the first significant step in over two decades toward building a formal, state-backed protection system for HRDs.

In **Thailand**, Protection International submitted formal policy recommendations to the Ministry of Justice, reinforcing the need for institutional mechanisms to protect HRDs. In **Nigeria**, Protection International collaborated with Partnership for Justice, providing inputs to the first bill on HRD protection submitted to the Nigerian parliament. Meanwhile in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, Protection International conducted targeted advocacy in Beni and Lubumbashi, engaging over 40 local authorities in discussions about integrating the protection of women HRDs into both the national and local public policies on HRD protection.

In **Honduras**, Protection International worked alongside the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and its local team to launch a cooperation process with the National Protection Mechanism, which will include a training cycle on risk analysis and protection starting in 2025.

These efforts reflect Protection International's ongoing dedication to strengthening public policy frameworks that secure the safety and rights of HRDs, ensuring that they can carry out their work in an enabling environment.



### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.

# Protection International is a resilient, sustainable, responsive and transparent organisation

# Internal Resilience and Care: Protection International's commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In 2024, Protection International made significant progress toward its Global Strategic Objective 3 of fostering "An Enabling Environment for the Right to Defend Human Rights," **focusing on institutional resilience**, **sustainability**, **and justice**, **equity**, **diversity**, **and inclusion** (JEDI).

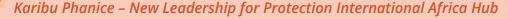
A major achievement was the **rollout of the People Care and Staff Wellbeing Framework**. Recognising the importance of mental health and resilience for both HRDs and staff, Protection International conducted well-being sessions in English, French, and Spanish, alongside **new online training on the Code of Conduct, Anti-Corruption Policy, and Conflict of Interest**. This effort strengthened Protection International's internal culture of care, mutual support, and accountability. Protection International's commitment to staff wellbeing was further reflected in the launch of the Child Safeguarding Policy, made accessible in multiple languages.



Protection International also **advanced equitable compensation practices**, conducting a cross-country analysis of staff benefits to ensure living wage standards and fairness across offices. Additionally, **22 new staff members were recruited**, strengthening Protection International's capacity to execute its 2024-2028 global strategy.

2024 was also the year that we decided to undergo a governance reform, representing a strategic evolution aimed at enhancing decentralisation, transparency, and accountability. The logic is to ensure that human rights defenders actively shape the organisation's direction, embedding participatory principles and strengthening regional representation. The reform also streamlines governance structures to improve resource efficiency while maintaining flexibility across jurisdictions. Aligned with a forthcoming Decision-Making Matrix, it clarifies roles and responsibilities, addressing past coordination gaps and reinforcing Protection International's legitimacy, relevance, and operational coherence in a rapidly evolving global context.

All of these efforts demonstrate our commitment to a resilient, responsive, and inclusive organization that prioritises both human rights defenders and the well-being of its global team.



We celebrated our dear colleague Phanice Odhacha becoming regional director of PI Africa Hub in 2024. This role transformation came after only three years working in the Nairobi office, but her determination and commitment to an enabling environment for all HRDs in Africa carried her into this leadership position. She follows on from the guidance of outgoing regional director Susan Muriungi, whose contribution to PI Africa Hub made it what it is today. Asante sana Susan, and karibu Phanice!



"I believe that local activists change the power dynamics in their communities, and that is what creates change over time, thus I look forward to working closely with human rights defenders in the region"

### Taking Stock and Growing: Lessons Learned from 2024

As an organisation, Protection International has spent 2024 taking stock of how we are growing and adapting to a rapidly changing international context. In reflecting on both our successes and challenges, we've come to some important realisations that will help us meet our strategic objective of being a resilient, sustainable, responsive, and transparent organisation.

We've recognised the need to strengthen internal systems, such as clarifying roles and improving governance between management and the Board. We also saw the importance of flexibility in programming, ensuring that our protection strategies stay relevant by maintaining constant dialogue with communities.

Our **commitment to feminist and participatory approaches was reinforced**, particularly in **ensuring that Women HRDs shape protection strategies**. **Collective care** emerged as a cornerstone of sustaining activism and movement-building.

Lastly, we learned that **better visibility and stronger communication are critical to advocacy, motivation, and fundraising**. These reflections will guide us in growing and adapting to meet the challenges ahead, ensuring we remain responsive and effective in our work.



### PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL'S PUBLICATIONS 2024

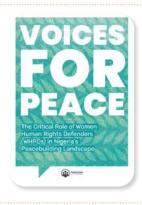
Towards a Safe and Enabling Environment for the Right to Defend Human Rights is a groundbreaking publication that highlights the systemic conditions necessary for HRDs to thrive. Drawing on nearly 20 years of expertise in holistic HRD protection, Protection International is leading research into this emerging field, bridging the gap between HRD protection policies and broader civic space safeguards. The report identifies key barriers and disabling factors HRDs face, from restrictive laws to online and offline repression, and offers actionable steps for states, international actors, and civil society to create safer environments for the Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR). Available in English, Spanish, and French.



Strengthening the Inclusion, Protection and Wellbeing of Human Rights Defenders with Disabilities, was developed in collaboration with the University of York and Durham University. The guide, available in English, Spanish, French, Russian and Swahili, was designed to enable access for persons with colour blindness or visual impairments and is a result of interactions with 70 defenders with disabilities and protection actors. It identifies systemic barriers and offers strategies to make protection mechanisms more inclusive, as well as addressing ableism in decision-making spaces. It calls for tailored, inclusive approaches that recognise the unique risks faced by defenders with disabilities, especially women and those in high-risk contexts.



Voices for Peace – The Critical Role of Women Human Rights
Defenders in Nigeria's Peacebuilding Landscape is Protection
International's first research exclusively on defenders in Nigeria.
It highlights the indispensable contributions of women HRDs
to peace and justice in conflict affected areas of Nigeria. Based
on interviews with nine frontline women defenders, the report
explores their challenges, resilience and safety strategies. It
provides insights into their role in peacebuilding, offers good
practices, and includes recommendations for HRDs, protection
actors, donors, and civil society. Available in English and French.



A Critical Approach to Collective Protection: Taking Stock of Protection International's Experience introduces a collective protection model, drawing on nearly 20 years of Protection International's expertise working alongside HRD communities. The paper challenges individual-focused protection strategies, emphasising the importance of addressing contextual factors and group dynamics. It defines collective protection, shares practical examples from Protection International's work, and offers recommendations for HRDs, authorities, and stakeholders. This publication aims to shift the focus to the structural roots of violence against HRDs and their collectives. Available in English, Spanish, French, and Russian.



Women's Movements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

is a result of Protection International's many years of working alongside women HRDs in the DRC, exploring how women's rights movements engage with the UN's Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Focusing on five key provinces, it maps 54 movements and provides insights from 36 interviews. Key recommendations emphasise strengthening existing networks, supporting intergenerational leadership, and prioritising marginalised groups, including LGBTIQ+ defenders. The report offers a unique look at a vibrant, resilient network of women's rights movements in the DRC. Available in French, with an executive summary in English.



Guidelines for the Security of Women Human Rights Defenders outlines vital protective measures for WHRDs in the DRC, focusing on enhancing their physical, digital, and psychological security. These guidelines empower defenders to assess risks and create self-protection strategies to continue their vital work safely. This research is available in French.



*organizations*. Developed by Protection International in South America, supported by Bread for the World, this is a training program for the collective protection of social organizations, inspired by Protection International's work with Amazonian women human rights defenders (WHRDs). The program consists of five training modules, elaborated through the principles of Popular Education, including a guide for the facilitation of learning, psychosocial protection of HRDs, communications for the protection of HRDs, legal norms for the right to defend human rights, and advocacy for protection. This program is available in Spanish.











### PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL'S SERVICES 2024

# Protection International Services: Comprehensive, Holistic Protection Strategies for HRDs

In 2024, Protection International expertise on risk and security management, and collective protection for HRDs was once again requested through the delivery of services. These services provided integrated support to human rights defenders and civil society organisations in areas where Protection International does not have a permanent presence, combining digital, physical, and psychosocial protection tools to address complex and interconnected risks.

One of the biggest needs from the HRDs and organisations we worked with was on **digital risks and online security**. We conducted digital risk assessments and cybersecurity training with organisations such as Forest Peoples Programme staff and 27 HRDs in the RARE programme, in partnership with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the Hertie School and Oxfam Novib.

We trained civil society organisations and HRDs from **Georgia** facing repression under the 2024 'Foreign Agents' Law, and supported groups of young HRDs in **the Caucasus**, by delivering training in security, well-being and emotional resilience, as well as digital safety practices.

### Support for High-Risk Contexts and Land & Environmental Defenders

We trained civil society organisations in **Nepal**, **Indonesia**, **Brazil**, **Nigeria**, **and Zambia** to address risks linked to large-scale development, corruption, and weak institutional oversight. In **North Kivu**, **DRC**, we worked with local HRDs working on environmental defense and conservation in updating security protocols amid escalating violence. Protection International also supported defenders in **El Salvador**, **Guatemala**, and **Spain**.

These efforts reflect Protection International's commitment to building HRDs' safety and agency—especially for women, youth, and land defenders—so they can continue their essential work in increasingly challenging environments.



"The training I received provided a comprehensive framework for identifying and mitigating physical and digital risks. It helped me to highlight critical vulnerabilities, improved my preparedness, and enhanced my understanding of proactive measures. I now approach security more effectively, integrating it into my work with greater confidence and awareness. I am very grateful to Protection International – thank you!" [Quote from a HRD who received risk and security management training from Protection International, as part of a service in 2024]

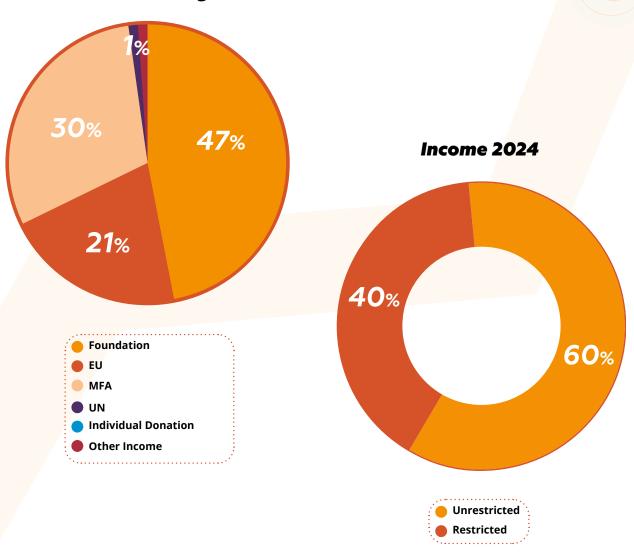


### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

### PI AISBL PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT EVOLUTION 2018-2024 (€)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Income	2,884,791	3,227,012	3,825,004	4,597,612	4,091,750	4,124,866	3,820,991
Total costs	2,790,475	3,194,404	3,569,336	4,393,661	4,615,397	4,133,326	3,787,109
Surplus/ (Deficit) For the Year	94,316	32,608	255,668	203,951	(523,647)	(8,460)	33,882
Total Assets & Liabilities	1,539,773	1,127,017	1,559,105	2,515,634	1,832,294	2,306,398	5,265,090
Reserve	491,145	513,969	752,937	955,703	432,055	423,595	457,477

### **Source of Funding 2024**



38 Annual Report 2024 Protection International 38

### A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DONORS

We deeply appreciate our donors and partners whose generous support has been instrumental in our mission to support HRDs, uphold the right to defend human rights, and safeguard civic space. Our supporters' unwavering commitment enables us to confront the growing challenges in a world increasingly shaped by inequalities, racial discrimination, authoritarianism, conflicts, insecurity, and the proliferation of misinformation about the critical work of HRDs.

Amid these complexities, we call on our donors to embrace adaptable and forward-thinking strategies that address the dynamic and often urgent needs of HRDs and their collectives. To this end, we highlight the importance of:

- Providing flexible core funding that allows human rights organisations to respond effectively to shifting contexts and priorities.
- Recognising defenders as key partners in the grant-making process, ensuring their voices and lived experiences guide funding strategies.
- Implementing defender-centric and risk-based approaches, including secure and confidential communication channels when engaging with human rights actors.
- Reducing administrative burdens on defenders, enabling them to dedicate more time and resources to advancing human rights rather than meeting excessive reporting requirements.

Your support continues to play a vital role in ensuring holistic support for HRD protection and strengthening global efforts to promote, respect, and protect the right to defend human rights.

### **European Union**



Wellspring Advisory Group

W/FII SPDINC

Open Society
Foundation (OSF)



MFA Belgium



Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)



Foundation for Just Society



Bread for the World



TARA Climate Ltd



Oak Foundation



MFA Germany



German Federal Foreign Office Fund's by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen),



Heinrich Böll Foundation



# REST IN POWER, ROMEL ("MEL") DE VERA (1971- 2024). PADAYON!

For this annual report, we wish to remember and honour our dear colleague, Romel (Mel) De Vera, who passed away in 2024. Mel's unwavering dedication to the work of Protection International in the Philippines and Southeast Asia touched countless lives. His commitment to defending human rights and protecting those who stand on the frontlines was truly inspiring.

Mel was not only a dedicated professional but also a friend and mentor to many. His tireless efforts to amplify the voices of human rights defenders in the Philippines and his profound understanding of the challenges they face made a lasting impact on the organisation and the communities we serve.

As we reflect on his legacy, we find comfort in knowing that Mel's spirit and passion continue to guide us. Our 2024 Annual Report is dedicated to him, a tribute to his tireless work, his kindness, and the unwavering belief he held in the power of collective action for justice and change. Mel, you will be deeply missed, but your legacy will forever remain a part of Protection International and the fight for the protection of human rights defenders. Rest in power.



