Every week, three people are killed because they stand up for nature. In Africa, South America and Asia, people who fight for the protection and fair distribution of natural resources are increasingly facing threats, violence and intimidation. The project ‘Defending environmental defenders’ helped improve the safety of environmental defenders, so they can continue to fight on the front line for a just world that values and conserves nature.

It is without a doubt that violence against environmental defenders is increasing. A total of 164 environmental defenders were killed in 2018, most of them fighting against mining, logging or agribusiness. The majority of victims come from Central and South America.

The growing world population creates an increasing demand for raw materials, such as minerals, timber and palm oil, which are often extracted in an unsustainable way. In countries that are rich in natural resources, there is an increasing demand for land. Environmental defenders are at risk because they speak out against these destructive impacts. Because they try to protect their land, forest and water against the intruding industry, they literally find themselves in the fire line.

### Our Approach

**Local & practical**

In five countries – Colombia, Peru, DR Congo, Indonesia and the Philippines – we worked on specific interventions which improve the safety of environmental defenders. Together with local partners, we implemented a digital reporting system to better register incidents, helped organize safety trainings and measures, and assisted in providing legal support. An emergency fund was put in place to bring people to safety in case of emergency. The interventions are tailored to the local situations and needs.

**Structural improvement**

To structurally improve the protection of environmental defenders, we advocate for the international recognition of the right to defend the environment with authoritative bodies such as the United Nations. Recognition at an international level will contribute to the development of international legal mechanisms to better protect environmental defenders. An important step promises to be the UN Binding Treaty, which should contain obligations to respect environmental defenders. An important step promises to be the UN Binding Treaty, which should contain obligations to respect environmental defenders.

**Prevention**

In the future, the coalition of NGOs will focus more heavily on revealing and analysing the causes of violence.

### Types of Violence

- Violence and harassment during protests
- Arbitrary detentions and arrests
- Killings, attempted killings, and forced disappearances
- Criminalisation

- Violent confrontations in territories
- Intimidation & threats
- Killings, attempted killings, and forced disappearances
- Hydrodams

- Logging and agro-expansion
- Land rights
- Mining
- Poaching

### Main Drivers of Conflict

- Land rights
- Mining
- Logging and agro-expansion
- Poaching
- Hydrodams
- Criminalisation
- Land rights
- Mining
- Logging and agro-expansion
- Poaching
- Hydrodams
- Criminalisation

### Most Important Results

- There is better registration of incidents, as well as the development of local security networks and technological innovation.
- Meaningful steps have been taken to ensure institutional recognition of the right to a healthy and biodiverse environment as a human right. However, this is a process that requires our constant attention and pressure.
- Environmental defenders and nature organizations are starting to gain a foothold in spaces where human rights are discussed. In these forums, IUCN NL has positioned itself as an important ally.

### Lessons Learned

**Context**

Knowing the context of the violence against environmental defenders is crucial when taking action against it.

**Intelligence**

In areas with lots of violence, like Colombia and the Philippines, offenders are very hard to find and catch. Because civil society organizations have to work in the public sphere, we are unable to fully grasp this issue. We need intelligence capacities to truly tackle the problem.

**Intersectionality**

There are many different types of environmental defenders: men, women, indigenous and not indigenous. Being an indigenous woman, for example, makes it twice as hard to pursue environmental activism. Future actions to protect defenders should be aware of this intersectionality.

**Protection**

Every time a defender is killed, a large part of the collective movement dies with them. Instead of focusing on individual offenders, many local voices stress the importance of collective protection.

**Registration**

We worked on better registration of incidents in all of our project countries. This is crucial for legal action, public awareness and lobbying. We do not only need information about murders, but also about how deadly violence can be avoided.

### Contact

Liliana Jauregui
liliana.jauregui@iucn.nl

---

**DEFENDING environmental defenders**

---

**Values and conserves nature.**

---

**Every week, three people are killed because they stand up for nature. In Africa, South America and Asia, people who fight for the protection and fair distribution of natural resources are increasingly facing threats, violence and intimidation. The project ‘Defending environmental defenders’ helped improve the safety of environmental defenders, so they can continue to fight on the front line for a just world that values and conserves nature.**

---

**Our Approach**

**Local & practical**

In five countries – Colombia, Peru, DR Congo, Indonesia and the Philippines – we worked on specific interventions which improve the safety of environmental defenders. Together with local partners, we implemented a digital reporting system to better register incidents, helped organize safety trainings and measures, and assisted in providing legal support. An emergency fund was put in place to bring people to safety in case of emergency. The interventions are tailored to the local situations and needs.

**Structural improvement**

To structurally improve the protection of environmental defenders, we advocate for the international recognition of the right to defend the environment with authoritative bodies such as the United Nations. Recognition at an international level will contribute to the development of international legal mechanisms to better protect environmental defenders. An important step promises to be the UN Binding Treaty, which should contain obligations to respect environmental defenders. An important step promises to be the UN Binding Treaty, which should contain obligations to respect environmental defenders.

**Prevention**

In the future, the coalition of NGOs will focus more heavily on revealing and analysing the causes of violence.

---

**Types of Violence**

- Violence and harassment during protests
- Arbitrary detentions and arrests
- Killings, attempted killings, and forced disappearances
- Criminalisation

- Violent confrontations in territories
- Intimidation & threats
- Killings, attempted killings, and forced disappearances
- Hydrodams

- Logging and agro-expansion
- Land rights
- Mining
- Poaching

---

**Main Drivers of Conflict**

- Land rights
- Mining
- Logging and agro-expansion
- Poaching
- Hydrodams
- Criminalisation

---

**Most Important Results**

- There is better registration of incidents, as well as the development of local security networks and technological innovation.
- Meaningful steps have been taken to ensure institutional recognition of the right to a healthy and biodiverse environment as a human right. However, this is a process that requires our constant attention and pressure.
- Environmental defenders and nature organizations are starting to gain a foothold in spaces where human rights are discussed. In these forums, IUCN NL has positioned itself as an important ally.

---

**Lessons Learned**

**Context**

Knowing the context of the violence against environmental defenders is crucial when taking action against it.

**Intelligence**

In areas with lots of violence, like Colombia and the Philippines, offenders are very hard to find and catch. Because civil society organizations have to work in the public sphere, we are unable to fully grasp this issue. We need intelligence capacities to truly tackle the problem.

**Intersectionality**

There are many different types of environmental defenders: men, women, indigenous and not indigenous. Being an indigenous woman, for example, makes it twice as hard to pursue environmental activism. Future actions to protect defenders should be aware of this intersectionality.

**Protection**

Every time a defender is killed, a large part of the collective movement dies with them. Instead of focusing on individual offenders, many local voices stress the importance of collective protection.

**Registration**

We worked on better registration of incidents in all of our project countries. This is crucial for legal action, public awareness and lobbying. We do not only need information about murders, but also about how deadly violence can be avoided.

---

**Contact**

Liliana Jauregui
liliana.jauregui@iucn.nl