

E. FORESTS & ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS

IUCN NL supports Indigenous Peoples' & local communities' governance in forest landscapes where nature is under threat. This can only be achieved in a context where civil society organisations and communities can speak out freely and act safely. However, many environmental defenders are threatened, intimidated, arrested or physically attacked. We support environmental defenders, CSOs and communities in a variety of ways to protect themselves against threats and in dealing with repression.



BAN
OPEN PIT MINING

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In many countries civic space is shrinking, and rated as either closed, repressed or obstructed (Civicus monitor 2023). Civil society organisations and communities experience threatening situations, that may range from physical attacks to political repression. Pressing problems include restrictive legislation (e.g. on foreign funding), criminalisation, red-tagging, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), negative framing, misinformation/fake news, cyber bullying and various forms of violence (including gender-based violence). In order to protect forests, organisations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities need to be able to stand up against vested interests. Through structural abuses of power, corporates and government elites are often responsible for human rights violations and displacement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities from their lands.

OUR COMMITMENT

IUCN NL

- furthers environmental justice - equitable distribution of benefits and burdens, inclusive participation, recognition of roles and histories, and links to nature -, whereby civic space and environmental human rights are crucial
- supports environmental human rights defenders in their conservation drive
- amplifies the rights, voices, positions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities
- builds strong networks (regional, national and international)
- builds solidarity
- supports access to justice
- facilitates trainings on safety and security and access to safe spaces
- provides emergency funds
- advocates for policies that respect and secure civic space

USPs

- 20+ year track record in supporting environmental defenders and working to secure civic space in Asia, Africa and Latin America
- knowledge of mechanisms such as Escazu, and ASEAN framework on environmental human rights
- experience in organization of international, regional and national exchanges
- emergency funds to support (women) environmental human rights defenders
- knowledge of addressing environmental conflict and environmental peace building
- connected to specialised organisations such as Protection International

FORESTS & ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS: SOME EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK



The project [Inclusive Protection of Environmental Defenders in the Amazon](#) aims to improve the national protection system for environmental defenders. Together with our Peruvian partner Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA), we shed light on the situation of women environmental defenders to promote their and their communities' effective participation in the development of public policy.

With the project [Amazon rights in focus: peoples and forest protection](#) IUCN NL, together with Colombian nature organisations FCDS and Ambiente y Sociedad and news platform Mongabay, is committed to tackling forest crime in the Amazon forests of Colombia, and to improve the territorial rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Because these people are the forest's best guardians.



In five countries - [Colombia, Peru, DR Congo, Indonesia and the Philippines](#) - we worked on concrete interventions that improve the safety of threatened environmental defenders, their organisations and their communities. Together with local partner organizations, we worked on a registration system to gain better insight into the problems and to be able to report an incident quickly. We also worked on safety trainings, standard operating procedures and measures, documenting evidence for criminal cases, legal assistance and getting environmental defenders to safety in the event of acute danger.

JOIN US IN PROTECTING FORESTS AND THE PEOPLE THAT DEFEND THEM



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