

A woman in a white polka-dot blouse is speaking at a meeting. In the background, several people are seated at a table, listening attentively. The scene is set in a room with yellow walls and a window. The image is overlaid with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of green and grey.

# CAPITALISING LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPLICATION

**Inclusive protection of  
environmental defenders  
in the Peruvian Amazon**

Photo: Diego Perez - SPDA



# Capitalising lessons learnt and recommendations for replication

## Inclusive protection of environmental defenders in the Peruvian Amazon

### About the report

This report was commissioned by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in the Netherlands (IUCN NL). It reflects the capitalisation of lessons learnt and recommendations arising from the collaboration between IUCN NL and the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA by its Spanish acronym), which began in 2016 in Madre de Dios region of Peru. This partnership emerged in response to socio-environmental conflicts in the Amazon region and the limited protection available to those who defend the environment and their territory. Since its establishment, the joint initiative has focused on strengthening the protection of environmental defenders amid the expansion of illegal activities that threaten livelihoods and biodiversity. By strengthening environmental defenders, nature, and the communities that depend on it are safeguarded. The current phase of collaboration is being carried out through the project 'Inclusive Protection of Environmental Defenders in the Amazon' (PIDDA), which is funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) and running from 2023 to 2025. The PIDDA project strengthens protection for environmental defenders through gender and intersectional sensitive strategies, producing practical tools, and proposals that align with the local realities. Its approach offers a replicable model adaptable to other regions facing similar socio-environmental challenges.

The lessons learnt, recommendations, and conclusions expressed in this document are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the institutional opinions or views of IUCN NL. This report does not represent the full institutional position of IUCN NL.



**IUCN NL** is part of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), recognised as the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. Its mission is to safeguard nature as the basis for all life on Earth. Driven by its strategic partners in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, IUCN NL has been strengthening its commitment to biodiversity, environmental justice, and inclusive conservation policies. Its multidisciplinary team of specialists advises civil society organisations, governments, the business sector, and financial institutions on issues of nature conservation, human rights, and environmental rights.



**SPDA** is a civil association with educational and scientific objectives related to environmental care and protection. SPDA conducts research on public policy and environmental legislation, capacity building in the public sector, civil society and especially vulnerable populations, promoting dialogue and creating spaces for citizen participation, education, information, and scientific research. SPDA works to foster a culture of defending citizens' interests, to disseminate and guarantee the right to a healthy environment.



**AFD** is the institution responsible for implementing France's policy on development and international solidarity. It carries out this mandate through activities such as financing the public sector and non-governmental organisations, developing research, and specialised publications (AFD Editions), providing training in sustainable development (AFD Campus), and raising public awareness in France. AFD also finances, supports and accelerates transitions towards a more just and resilient world.



**NOT A BLUEPRINT - BUT WITH POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION IN OTHER REGIONS**

## Environmental defenders face growing threats in the Peruvian Amazon and elsewhere



### 4 interconnected strategies to improve the protection of environmental defenders



Figure 1: Strategies and lessons to strengthen environmental defenders in the Peruvian Amazon and beyond © IUCN NL

## Executive summary

Behind every territory defended, there is a life at risk. Across the Peruvian Amazon, environmental defenders face growing threats from illegal mining, deforestation, and land grabbing. Women, Indigenous peoples, and local communities are disproportionately affected — standing on the frontlines with little protection and constant exposure to violence.

This report captures nearly a decade of collaboration between IUCN NL and SPDA in Madre de Dios, Peru. Together, they have strengthened the safety, visibility, and agency of those defending the environment. Their latest initiative, the Inclusive Protection of Environmental Defenders in the Amazon (PIDDA for its Spanish acronym) — supported by the French Development Agency (AFD) — builds on this experience through a gender- and intersectional-sensitive approach that combines evidence, training, institutional strengthening, and advocacy.

PIDDA's four interconnected strategies form a practical and replicable model for other high-risk areas:

- 1. Understanding the real situation of environmental defenders:** Participatory territorial analyses identified key risks, gaps, and needs of environmental defenders, generating gender- and intersectional-sensitive evidence to guide protection measures. This evidence also informed tailored capacity-building programmes.
- 2. Strengthening the capacities of environmental defenders:** Through itinerant training and protection programmes, defenders strengthened their knowledge, leadership, and security practices. This allowed them to engage more effectively with protection mechanisms and suggest concrete ways to make these systems work better.
- 3. Collaborative proposal development for stronger protection:** Environmental defenders and civil society organisations jointly developed proposals to strengthen Peru's national protection system, ensuring inclusion, legitimacy, and sustainability. This process empowered defenders to take part in policy dialogue and shape advocacy efforts.
- 4. Advocacy to support environmental defenders:** National and international advocacy efforts raised awareness, mobilised public support and brought defenders' protection onto policy agendas.

The collaboration between IUCN NL and SPDA culminating in PIDDA shows that inclusive protection works when it grows from local realities. Key lessons include the need for gender and intersectional perspectives, participatory, and context-sensitive design, tailored training and the coordination of local efforts with national and international advocacy. Systematising these experiences enables replication and adaptation elsewhere.

While no single model can fully address the complex challenges faced by environmental defenders, the insights and tools presented here offer a clear, practical pathway. As violence and restrictions on civic space intensify in Peru and beyond, these lessons provide a way forward for protecting those who safeguard the Amazon as well as other vital ecosystems.

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## Table of abbreviations

<b>AFD</b>	French Development Agency
<b>FENAMAD</b>	Native Federation of Madre de Dios River and its Affluents
<b>IDEHPUCP</b>	Institute for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>IUCN NL</b>	National Committee of the Netherlands of the International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>MIMP</b>	Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations
<b>MINJUSDH</b>	Ministry of Justice and Human Rights of Peru
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PIDDA</b>	Project focused on the 'Inclusive Protection of Environmental Defenders in the Amazon
<b>RNTAM</b>	Tambopata National Reserve
<b>SPDA</b>	Peruvian Society for Environmental Law
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

# 1. Introduction

Deforestation and the growing threats to the environment posed by illegal activities are among the greatest challenges of our time.<sup>1</sup> This environmental crisis is alarmingly increasing the risks faced by environmental defenders, who stand on the front line of action to protect ecosystems, territories, and the communities that depend on them. Their work is essential for the survival of these vital spaces, while exposing them to situations of extreme vulnerability that too often culminate in violence.<sup>2</sup>

The figures on shrinking civic space and ongoing attacks on environmental defenders worldwide are devastating.<sup>3</sup> This trend highlights the need for urgent, inclusive, and context-sensitive protection strategies that are not only reactive but also preventive and sustained over time. According to a recent Global Witness report, at least 146 environmental defenders were killed in 2024,<sup>4</sup> bringing the total number of recorded deaths since 2012 to 2,253.<sup>5</sup> Latin America remains the hardest hit region, accounting for 82% of cases with Colombia (48 deaths), Guatemala (20 deaths), Mexico (19 deaths), and Brazil (12 deaths) among the most affected countries. The year 2024 was also particularly lethal for environmental defenders in Peru, ranking as the ninth most dangerous country worldwide.<sup>6</sup>

Indigenous communities face a disproportionate level of aggression, representing 33% of victims worldwide. This highlights that the recognition and protection of Indigenous peoples' rights is an urgent need shared by many countries.<sup>7</sup> Particularly concerning is that 10% of victims were women, who experienced violence not only because of their activism but also due to their gender-based discrimination. This situation often forces them to remain silent or report incidents anonymously.<sup>8</sup> The growing number of threats in Amazonian territories underscores the urgency of prioritising this region for protection efforts.<sup>9</sup>

The Inclusive Protection of Environmental Defenders in the Amazon (PIDDA) project, supported by the French Development Agency (AFD), was developed to respond to these persistent threats and strengthen protection mechanisms for environmental defenders' rights to information, participation and justice. PIDDA builds on a precursor collaborative work of IUCN NL and SPDA between 2016 and 2019, which laid the groundwork for the project's gender and intersectional approach. Earlier efforts included incident reporting systems, emergency funds, and legal assistance, while testing innovative technologies and visibility strategies.

These efforts fostered trust in the territories and produced valuable lessons that directly informed PIDDA design. Its inclusive methodology recognises the distinct risks faced by women – particularly Indigenous women – and promotes locally owned and culturally relevant protection strategies. In the Madre de Dios region, located in southeastern Peru, this approach has translated into training, policy proposals, and practical tools that enhance defenders' visibility and resilience, while informing broader national and international protection efforts.

<sup>1</sup> Bille Larsen, P., Le Billon, P., Menton, M., Aylwin, J., Balsiger, J., Boyd, D., & Wilding, S. (2021). Understanding and responding to the environmental human rights defenders crisis: The case for conservation action. *Conservation Letters*, 14(3), e12777.

<sup>2</sup> Ghazoul, J., & Kleinschroth, F. (2018). A global perspective is needed to protect environmental defenders. *Nature ecology & evolution*, 2(9), 1340-1342.

<sup>3</sup> Civicus (2024). 2024 State of civil society report. [Available here](#).

<sup>4</sup> The actual number of cases is likely higher than reported.

<sup>5</sup> Global Witness (2025). Roots of resistance: Documenting the global struggles of defenders protecting land and environmental rights. [Available here](#).

<sup>6</sup> Global Witness (2025). Roots of resistance: Documenting the global struggles of defenders protecting land and environmental rights. [Available here](#).

<sup>7</sup> Global Witness (2025). Roots of resistance: Documenting the global struggles of defenders protecting land and environmental rights. [Available here](#).

<sup>8</sup> IUCN (2025). Women in a degraded Amazon: Struggles for land, body, and nature. [Available here](#).

<sup>9</sup> Ojo Público (2023). Amenazas contra defensores en la Amazonia se incrementan: 145 casos de riesgo en 4 años (2023). [Available here](#).



*'In the current context in Latin America, where civil society faces increasing obstacles to acting freely, it is essential that organisations working to protect environmental defenders adopt innovative and collaborative approaches.'*

SPDA team representative

Capitalisation within the PIDDA project and its predecessor is essential for consolidating the lessons learnt gained through years of work in the Peruvian Amazon. The capitalisation process aims to identify the factors that facilitated or limited the achievement of objectives and to draw lessons and recommendations that can strengthen future interventions. By generating practical knowledge, the process enables successful approaches to be replicated and adapted to new contexts. Capitalisation thus serves as a key tool for highlighting innovations, assessing impact, and offering methodological and operational recommendations that support the project's sustainability and expansion at both national and international levels.

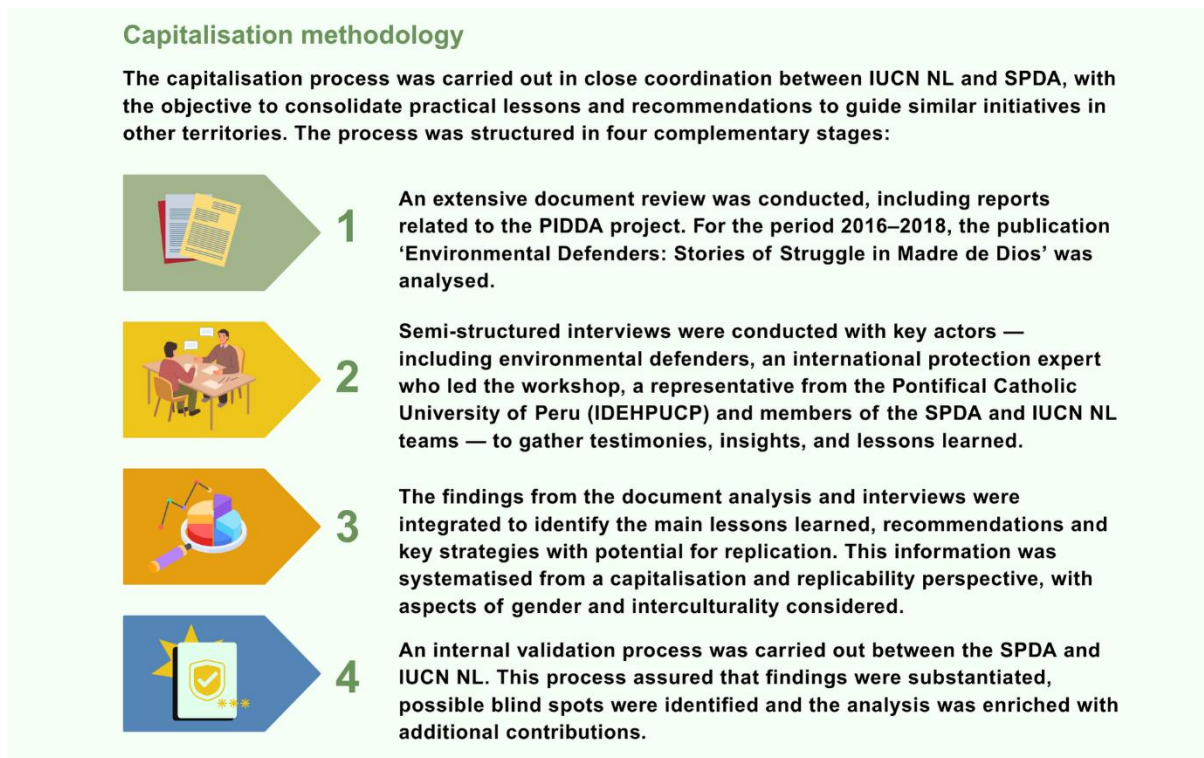


Figure 2: Methodological steps for capturing lessons from a decade of collaboration to strengthen environmental defenders © IUCN NL

This report outlines pathways toward inclusive and effective protection of environmental defenders, while acknowledging the complexity of political, social and territorial realities. As a start, the background of the PIDDA project and lessons learnt from earlier collaboration are elaborated (section 2), followed by an analysis of PIDDA's key strategies: an analysis of defenders' current situation (section 3), capacity-building (section 4), civil society proposals for institutional improvement (section 5), and advocacy at both national and international levels (section 6). The outcomes are presented as practical tools, with key lessons and recommendations offering a replicable framework adaptable to other territories and organisations facing similar challenges.

## 2. Lessons learnt from previous collaboration

Since 2016, IUCN NL and SPDA have worked together to strengthen the protection of environmental defenders in Peru, particularly in high-risk regions such as Madre de Dios. This collaboration focused on practical, locally rooted measures to enhance defenders' safety, including an incident reporting system, training in protection strategies, legal assistance, and emergency support.

A key achievement was the creation of the First Emergency Fund, a rapid-response mechanism providing immediate resources for urgent security needs. Through this fund, defenders received support for basic infrastructure — such as reinforced doors, fences, cameras, mobile phones, and temporary housing — allowing them to continue their work under safer conditions and with institutional backing.



'The emergency fund is useful for those who implement activities to protect environmental defenders, considering aspects such as flexibility, self-protection measures, links to mechanisms, and adaptation to the context of each person or team.'

- SPDA team representative

An additional innovation was introduced in collaboration with Rainforest Connection. Recycled mobile phones were installed in trees to detect sounds linked to illegal activities. This low-cost surveillance system enabled real-time alerts, allowing communities, and park rangers to monitor vast territories more effectively and with reduced personal risk.

The partnership further prioritised advocacy and visibility to strengthen public recognition of defenders' contributions. Initiatives such as the publication 'Defensores Ambientales: Historias de Lucha en Madre de Dios' (Environmental Defenders: Stories of Struggle in Madre de Dios) and engagement with United Nations (UN) mechanisms, including consultations with the Special Rapporteur and collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), amplified local voices at the international level and reinforced the legitimacy of their demands for protection.

### Key lessons from the early collaboration between IUCN NL and SPDA

- **Flexibility of emergency funds:** Emergency funds must be set up in a flexible, rapid, and non-bureaucratic manner. This ensures adaptability and timely responses to urgent protection needs, such as relocation of threatened environmental defenders and their families or the installation of security infrastructure in their homes.
- **Comprehensive reporting systems:** Incident registration systems are crucial. They should not only capture fatal attacks but also preventive and contextual information. This includes the underlying causes of violence (e.g. illegal activities), types of violence, and the profile of victims (based on gender, ethnicity, and community affiliation). This data is helpful to anticipate risks and design protection strategies.
- **Diversity and inclusion among environmental defenders:** Environmental defenders are a diverse group including both women and men, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Having said that, women, and particularly Indigenous women, are often on the front line of environmental defence but face additional threats and structural barriers. Protection efforts thus need to systematically integrate a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to ensure equity and effectiveness in protection mechanisms, as done in the case of PIDDA.
- **Importance of advocacy and visibility:** National and international advocacy and visibility actions are important to share experiences, consolidate alliances and maintain environmental

defenders' challenges on the global environmental justice agenda. Sustained advocacy must be upheld to enhance coordination with institutions and contribute to stronger accountability mechanisms.

- **Contextualised and participatory approaches:** Protection tools and strategies must be developed from within the territories and through participatory approaches with local communities. Such territorial approaches generate context-specific evidence, strengthen ownership, and enable the articulation of locally validated demands for improved protection and guarantees of rights.

### Key lessons

An intersectional approach is crucial to address the specific risks and structural barriers confronted by women environmental defenders.



Figure 3: The critical role of intersectionality in safeguarding defenders against layered risks and structural barriers © IUCN NL



'A next step, which would be ideal but is sometimes unattainable, is to gather lessons learnt from experience to produce materials that really make sense to communities. Most existing materials follow formats that are heavily influenced by urban or Western cultures, even when these are intended to be accessible.'

- International expert on protection and security

## 3. Understanding the situation of environmental defenders

The previous collaboration between IUCN NL and SPDA laid the groundwork for the development of PIDDA participatory design and territorial and evidenced-based approach to environmental defender protection. PIDDA has placed emphasis on deepening the understanding of environmental defenders' reality, with particular attention to gender and intersectional dimensions.

As part of this effort, two complementary analyses were conducted — one addressing environmental defenders as a whole and another focused specifically on women environmental defenders. The latter analysis responded to the shortcomings of existing protection measures, which are often generic, territorially disconnected, and inattentive to the needs of women, Indigenous peoples, and local communities. These detailed analyses could be a strategic and replicable tool, enabling accurate identification of territorial risks and gaps, generating solid evidence for decision-making and ensuring that protection measures reflected local realities while integrating gender and intersectional perspectives.

### 3.1. Methodological framework

The PIDDA approach to analysing the situation of environmental defenders was built on three complementary pillars: understanding the territorial and institutional context, assessing the regulatory and institutional framework, and applying a participatory and gender-sensitive methodology. Together, these elements form a replicable model for evidence-based, context-specific protection strategies.

#### Territorial and institutional context

Understanding the territorial, social and political dynamics of each region was essential to tailoring protection strategies to local realities. In Madre de Dios, the analysis revealed escalating risks — six environmental defenders have been killed since 2015 for opposing illegal activities. Details on local risks are provided in Annex 1.

At the institutional level, a multi-layered review mapped the legal frameworks, key actors, and existing gaps affecting environmental defenders — particularly women and Indigenous environmental defenders. The Escazú Agreement served as a central reference for assessing commitments related to access rights and the protection of defenders. Even in contexts where it has not yet been ratified, its principles informed recommendations aimed at strengthening prevention, accountability, and funding mechanisms. Further details are provided in Annexes 2, 3, and 4.



*'Peru's delay in ratifying the Escazú Agreement highlights the systemic barriers that hinder progress in access to rights, environmental justice, and the safety of defenders.'*

**- Mariel Cabero, IUCN environmental justice expert NL**

## Gender and intersectional dimensions

A specific focus on women environmental defenders helped reveal barriers often invisible in generic protection systems — such as exclusion from decision-making, exposure to violence, and limited access to justice. An example is the need to update the normative tool of Peru’s Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP), which excludes the protection of women environmental defenders (find details in Annex 5).



Figure 4: Obstacles and risks faced by women environmental defenders in the Peruvian Amazon © IUCN NL

## Participatory approach

The PIDDA approach was grounded in the principle that legitimacy and accuracy of protection interventions depend on the involvement of affected actors. Indigenous organisations, local communities, communicators, journalists, and public officials were engaged throughout the process to build a shared understanding of risks and potential responses. Participatory tools included workshops, interviews, and focus groups — creating safe spaces for open dialogue, while visual and collective techniques encouraged reflection and learning. The approach was flexible, adapting to local contexts and cultural dynamics while prioritising trust, dialogue, and intersectional exchange. This adaptable model can be replicated in different contexts to map risks, build a shared understanding and co-design protection strategies. Its success relies on valuing local knowledge, fostering gender-sensitive participation and ensuring that defenders themselves lead the analysis of their situation and needs.



*‘In communities affected by mining, women cannot walk freely through their territory. They must be very careful not to put themselves at risk of attack. I don’t feel free to walk around my own territory either. Nevertheless, we must keep watch and check every spot to see if outsiders have entered.’*

**- Indigenous woman and representative of an Indigenous organisation**

## Participatory analyses

Two complementary participatory analyses were carried out to understand the realities and protection needs of environmental defenders, with a particular focus on women and Indigenous leaders. Both positioned defenders as co-researchers rather than research subjects, using participatory mapping, self-perception exercises, and comparisons between community knowledge and official data. This process revealed discrepancies between institutional records and lived realities, deepening understanding of what it means to defend the environment and enabling locally owned protection strategies. The women’s participatory analysis led to the publication [“Women in a Degraded Amazon: Struggles for Land, Body, and Nature”](#) giving visibility to their struggles and amplifying the voices of women’s environmental defenders. Detailed findings from both analyses are presented in Annexes 6 to 10. Together, these methods show how participatory, gender-sensitive, and intersectional approaches can generate actionable insights and be replicated to strengthen protection systems in other territories.

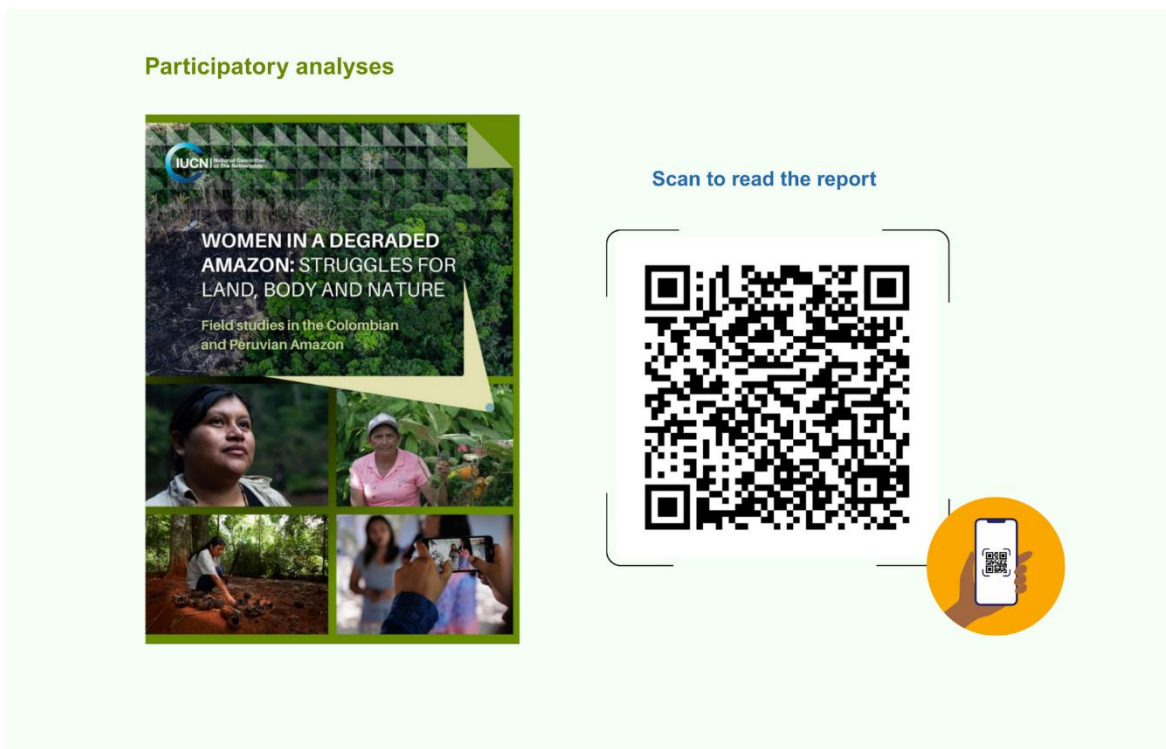


Figure 5: Participatory analysis culminating in a report on women environmental defenders and intersectional obstacles © IUCN NL

## 3.2. Self-protection practices of environmental defenders

In the absence of an effective national response in terms of environmental justice and protection, local organisations in Madre de Dios have developed their own self-protection and territorial surveillance mechanisms. These self-protection practices demonstrate that cooperation between communities, Indigenous organisations and national and international allies is a fundamental pillar for addressing challenges of environmental justice and territorial protection. At the same time, this approach highlighted resilience factors, including women’s leadership networks and community solidarity. Some examples:

1. The Native Federation of Madre de Dios River and its Affluents (FENAMAD) oversees forest community control and surveillance committees that strengthen the Indigenous response to threats, improve territorial management, and offer technical assistance. Although women’s participation is still limited, women represent about 20% of forest custodians in native communities.

The incorporation of a gender perspective is key to strengthening protection strategies. In one community in Madre de Dios, women defenders had their homes burned down and received no regional support. With the backing of community members and Indigenous organisations, this community managed to rebuild their homes and set up a checkpoint to monitor their territory. The community also received legal support to deal with criminalisation processes. This case demonstrates how, in highly vulnerable contexts, the collective action of Indigenous women — reinforced by support networks — can transform experiences of violence into opportunities for community strengthening and women leadership.

2. A local organisation manages a monitoring system coordinated by community leaders who periodically report changes and threats in their territories (such as illegal mining and land invasions) using georeferenced photographic records. This information is centralised, analysed, and, when appropriate, forwarded to the authorities, thus consolidating their community protection strategies.



‘For protection, we rely on confidentiality and communication, a system that ensures no institution knows too much and uses constant messaging among members to keep us safe.’

– Environmental defender

3. SPDA and IUCN NL co-created a support fund for environmental defenders at risk. This fund financed improvements in basic security infrastructure (such as fences, gates, and cameras), with the aim of strengthening daily self-protection measures.

### 3.3. Lessons learnt

#### Security and context

- The persistent context of insecurity requires that organisations and key actors involved in analytical processes remain anonymous.
- A murder recorded during the capitalisation phase underscored the need for continuous risk assessment and adaptation of protection strategies.

#### Collaboration and knowledge exchange

- Building trust between civil society and local groups is essential for conducting in-depth analyses and designing effective protection measures; strong communication links strengthen collective protection efforts.
- Comparing official information with realities on the ground helps uncover illegal activities and risks that are often absent from official records, such as criminalisation.

#### Identity and inclusion

- The existence of multiple definitions of ‘environmental defender’ creates differing perceptions and weakens collective identity.
- Environmental defenders encompass a wide spectrum, from experienced community leaders to young advocates engaged through education and creative initiatives.

#### Capacity and autonomy

- Exchanges among women defenders act as powerful catalysts for female leadership and empowerment.
- Inclusive methodologies, safe environments, and attention to family responsibilities are vital for strengthening women defenders.
- Targeted capacity-building and mentorship in forest monitoring as a tool to increase women’s representation in nature reserve committees’ roles.

### 3.4. Recommendations

- **Security and context:** Implement continuous monitoring of international resolutions, periodic risk assessments, and systematic updating of the methodological framework to reflect the evolution of threats and context.
- **Collaboration and knowledge exchange:** Build trust with environmental defenders, ensure active communication, and maintain anonymity in risky contexts.
- **Identity and inclusion:** Develop participatory and intersectionally sensitive methodologies, with itinerant spaces and dynamics led by communities and women in their own territories.
- **Capacity and autonomy:** Strengthen networks between organisations and promote the exchange of experiences, especially among women defenders.
- **Gender and intergenerational approach:** Prioritise youth participation and leadership training while creating enabling conditions for women's involvement, to strengthen generational succession.



*Photo: The lived realities of women defenders must guide the development of inclusive protection strategies*  
© SPDA

## 4. Strengthening capacities of environmental defenders

Strengthening the capacities of environmental defenders was a central pillar of the PIDDA project. Through targeted training and knowledge exchange, the project enhanced the protection skills of Indigenous communicators and women leaders in key organisations, aiming to strengthen their capacities and safety. These efforts not only addressed immediate risks but also fostered long-term resilience and leadership within their communities. As part of PIDDA, two parallel programmes were developed to support both Indigenous and community members as well as professionals on environmental defence. Elements of the training programmes are replicable and can shape initiatives in other territories.

### 4.1. Indigenous Communicators programme

The Indigenous Communicators programme is an innovative initiative for Indigenous youth that combines theory, practice, network building and project development.<sup>10</sup> Participants develop skills in writing, photography, video, social media, and environmental journalism. They create audiovisual materials that highlight the challenges faced by their communities, strengthen the defence of their rights and bring local realities to a wider audience.<sup>11</sup> One example is the short documentary [“Women in the Indigenous World”](#) in which an Indigenous leader shares her experience and encourages other women in the Peruvian Amazon to take on central roles within their organisations.

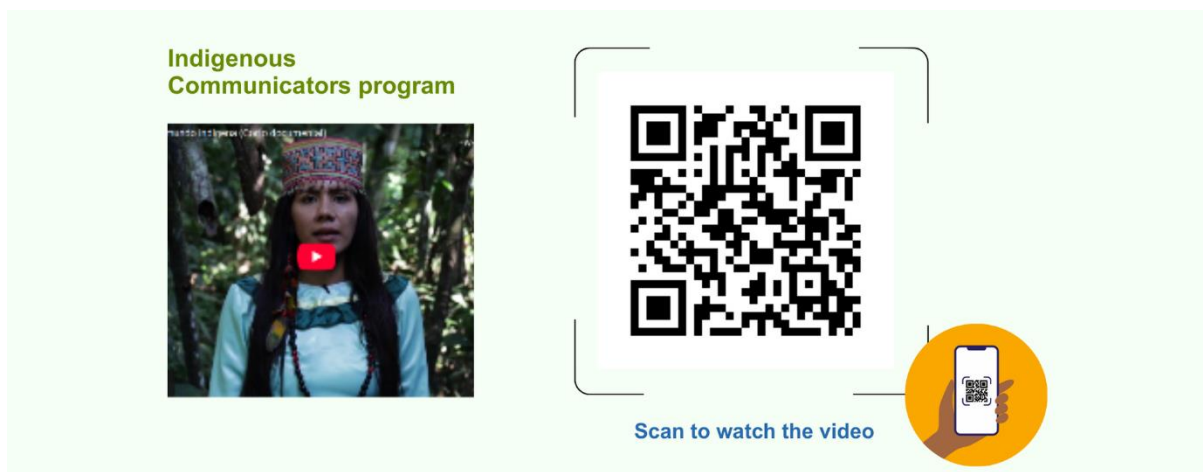


Figure 6: The Indigenous communicators programme an innovative approach to involve and train young community members © IUCN NL

Since 2020, the programme has trained 60 Indigenous youth — 42% of them women. The programme’s success indicates potential for replication and for the strengthening of indigenous communicators as a way of defending the environment and territory in different contexts.



*‘For Indigenous communicators, having a future job where they can create documentaries to help their people really matters.’*

**- Indigenous communicator**

<sup>10</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2023). Programa de Comunicadores Indígenas. [Available here.](#)

<sup>11</sup> One example is the short documentary ‘Mujer en el mundo indígena’ (Women in the Indigenous World), in which an Indigenous leader shares her experience and inspires other women in the Peruvian Amazon to take on leadership roles within their organisations.

## Mentoring

In parallel, PIDDA supported the strengthening of the Madre de Dios Communicators Network by providing one-on-one mentoring, tailored technical support, and the provision of technical equipment suited to the specific needs and risks of each community. This approach reduced exposure to urban travel risks, enhanced local documentation capacities, and fostered greater autonomy in producing and publishing content.

“ ‘The workshop with Indigenous communicators was very positive. There was high participation, they followed the methodology, flowed well in the story, and went beyond what I expected.’

- International expert in protection and security

## Safety workshop

Building on this initiative, PIDDA also implemented a workshop on safety and protection to familiarise young Indigenous communicators and journalists with the risks associated with their work and to provide strategies for prevention at both individual and community levels. The workshop encouraged the exchange of experiences between participants from different communities and fostered networks to complement training and support future projects. Through fictional narratives, participants safely explored risky situations, identified threats and possible responses, and reflected on the emotional and psychological dimensions of their work. Using fictionalised accounts rather than personal testimonies helped prevent re-victimisation while enabling open dialogue and mutual support.

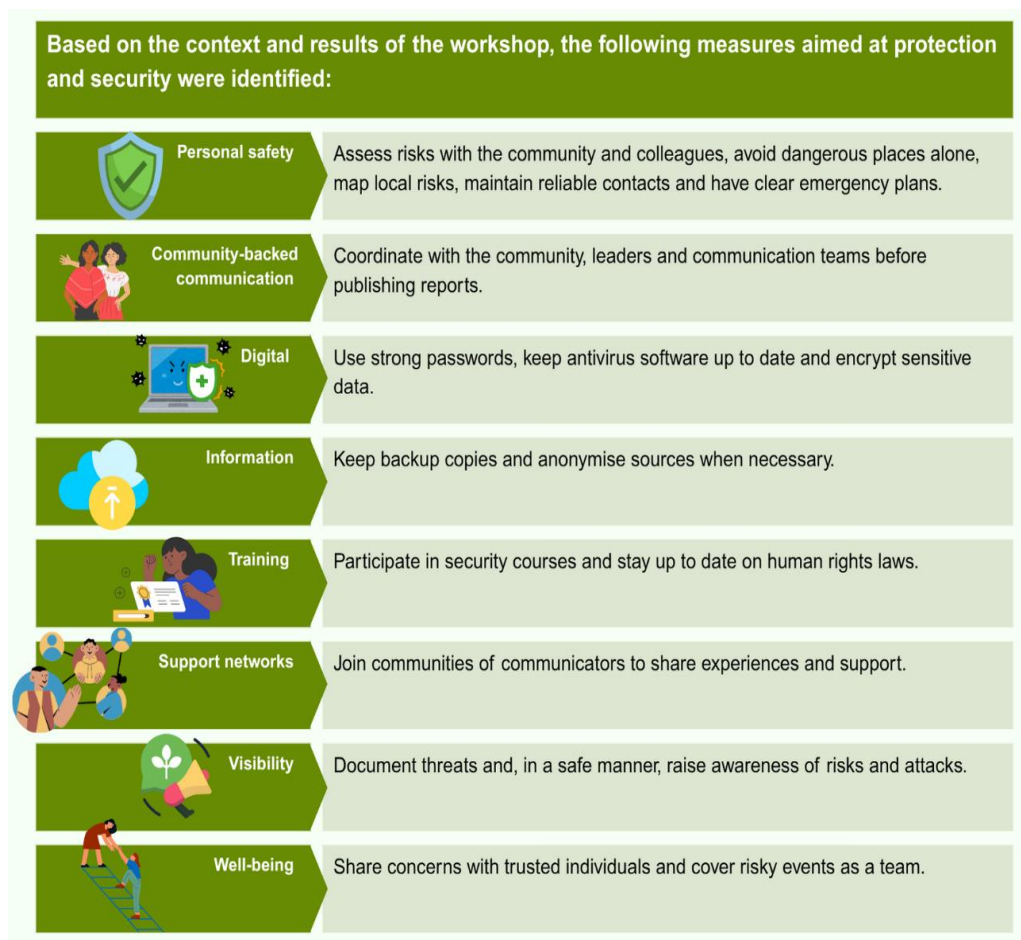


Figure 7: Risk prevention and protection strategies jointly identified for journalists and Indigenous communicators © IUCN NL

## 4.2. University-level programme

As part of PIDDA, a university-led training programme was developed and co-taught by SPDA and IDEHPUCP, an institute specialising in human rights at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. Entitled ‘Environmental Defenders: Rights and Mechanisms for Their Protection’, the course combines certified academic learning with a participatory approach. Designed jointly with environmental defenders, public officials, and academics, the programme integrates theory with local practice, strengthening participants’ capacity to engage in policymaking and protection processes. Its itinerant and adaptable format allows implementation in diverse territories, ensuring long-term continuity by equipping trained students and community members to report abuses and activate protection mechanisms when civil society organisations face constraints.



‘In many cases, academic training remains theoretical, without being translated into concrete actions. We managed to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and its practical application. The course allows what has been learned to be reflected in the field, in work with communities and with the State itself.’

- Representative from the teaching team at IDEHPUCP

To ensure the relevance of the university programme, a validation workshop brought together representatives of Indigenous peoples, local communities, and public institutions to review and refine the preliminary curriculum. Their feedback shaped a course that is both practical and responsive to real risk situations.



‘Having materials that make sense, for example, for different cultures in the Amazon, with a logic that does not pretend to be falsely cultural, but rather a logic that aims to be fluid enough so that anyone can grasp it and adapt it to their needs is essential.’

- International expert on protection and security

The programme takes a dual approach, addressing both defenders and public officials to create a shared understanding of protection from both perspectives. For Indigenous and community defenders, it offers a concise 12-hour programme grounded in local experiences. For public officials and professionals, it provides extended training of 20 hours, combining theory with practical fieldwork. Led by experienced instructors, including former Ministry of Justice officials involved in designing national protection standards and SPDA professionals with field experience, the course offers a grounded and comprehensive perspective. Proven effective in Madre de Dios and Loreto, the course holds strong potential for replication in other Peruvian regions and elsewhere. A course module overview and notes on the first edition of the programme can be found in Annex 11 and 12.

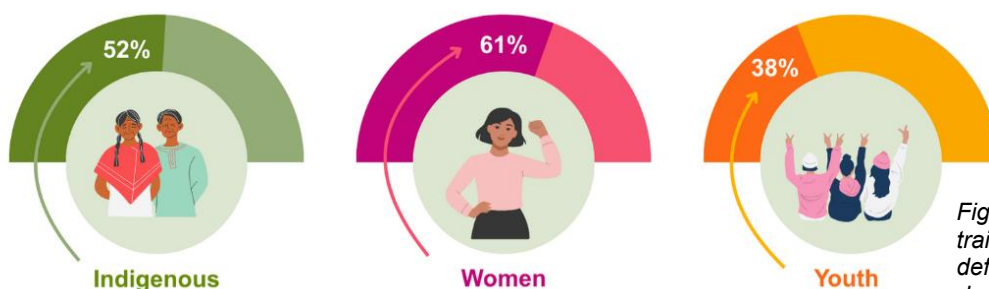


Figure 8: Effective protection training for environmental defenders requires inclusive design and an intersectional approach © IUCN NL

Participation was inclusive and diverse, with 52.2% being Indigenous, 61.3% women and 38.6% youth (these categories are not mutually exclusive, as many participants hold intersecting identities that shape their experiences as environmental defenders).

### 4.3. Lessons learnt

#### Security and context

- Implementing security measures, such as participant screening, controlled meeting spaces, and restricted information sharing, helps ensure participant safety, and project continuity in high-risk settings.

#### Collaboration and knowledge exchange

- Participatory methodologies create safe and trusting environments where risks and responses can be identified collectively.
- Involving Indigenous peoples, local communities, and public institutions in curriculum validation ensures that training reflects real territorial contexts and advocacy needs. Active listening and contextual understanding are essential throughout this process.
- Effective training combines theoretical and practical experience; instructors with backgrounds in both academia and public service bring valuable contextual insight.
- Training is most impactful when it includes mutual learning — not only transferring knowledge but also drawing from the lived experiences of defenders.

#### Identity and inclusion

- The Indigenous Communicators programme required quotas for woman participation, whereas the program co-taught with the university, without quotas, attracted a 60% female cohort, highlighting the need to establish targeted quotas for women's participation in spaces directly linked to environmental defenders.
- Traditional online registration processes from the academic world created barriers for Indigenous and local participants. This underscored the need for more accessible enrolment methods, which have been recognised and applied by the university.

#### Capacity and autonomy

- Providing technical equipment (such as cameras and laptops with editing tools) reduces dependence on third parties and increases autonomy in content production.

### 4.4. Recommendations

- **Security and context:** Create inclusive, secure spaces and plan for safe transport, connectivity and group-based participation to minimise risks.
- **Collaboration and knowledge exchange:** In restrictive contexts, foster creative strategies, and alliances with universities, Indigenous organisations, and public institutions to strengthen collective action.
- **Identity and inclusion:** Engage Indigenous women, young environmental defenders, and public entities in content design and validation to ensure relevance, ownership, and long-term sustainability.
- **Capacity and autonomy:** Implement itinerant programmes tailored to local realities, using flexible, participatory, and trauma-sensitive methods that encourage safe reflection. Provide technical equipment, individual guidance, and facilitators with both academic and practical experience to meet specific territorial needs.



*Photo: University-led training programme “Environmental Defenders Rights and Mechanisms for their Protection” held with professionals in Ucayali © SPDA*

## 5. Civil society proposals for stronger protection

In Peru and elsewhere, public policies are often developed without dialogue with civil society, which limits the effectiveness of protection mechanisms for human rights defenders and reduces inclusive access to their rights. Therefore, formulating civil society-led proposals to strengthen national protection systems is essential to ensure inclusive participation and ownership by environmental defenders.

### 5.1. Collaborative proposal development

In an effort to strengthen national protection systems, two proposals were developed in coordination with environmental defenders and defenders of the rights of Indigenous peoples in Madre de Dios.

This work was carried out with defenders trained in the project's training programmes. It thus added to their direct experience in defending rights and led to the consolidation of improvements, with the aim of making them functional and appropriate for the territory.

The proposals seek to (i) strengthen the financial sustainability and rapid execution of the budgets of the Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and (ii) integrate gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches into existing protection frameworks.

To (i) improve the financing and responsiveness of the Intersectoral Mechanism, the proposal suggests:

- Amending the Budget Law for the respective fiscal year in order to authorize exceptional budget modifications that allow resources to be allocated to the Intersectoral Mechanism, for use exclusively for that purpose.
- Enable budget modifications with the risk assessment report, so that financial decisions respond in a timely manner to real needs.
- Streamline the process of contracting suppliers for the activation of the Mechanism, facilitating immediate responses in risk situations.
- Incorporate functional responsibility in cases of return or non-use of resources allocated to the Mechanism. Also, include the evaluation of the Mechanism's budget execution in the annual Global Budget Management Report.

To (ii) strengthen the institutional response to women human rights defenders—who face differentiated and structural risks—the proposal suggests:

- Modify the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations' Guidelines on the Mechanism, explicitly recognising violence against women defenders as a risk that should trigger protective measures.
- Strengthen the role of the Warmi Ñam National Programme<sup>12</sup> so that it can receive requests for protection from women at risk, expanding its operational powers.
- Expressly incorporate the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations' authority to issue recommendations within the framework of the Mechanism, ensuring a more comprehensive and intersectional approach to protection.
- Together, these initiatives improve institutional conditions, demonstrate the importance of developing standards and policies through participatory processes, and generate ownership among the actors who participated in the validation process. These proposals, the workshop methodology, and the conclusions will be published with the aim of maintaining their relevance over time, taking into account political changes in the country.

<sup>12</sup> Refers to a National Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Family Group Members.

Together, these initiatives improve institutional conditions, demonstrate the importance of developing standards and policies through participatory processes, and generate ownership among the actors participating in the validation process. These proposals, the workshop methodology, and the conclusions will be published with the aim of maintaining their validity over time, taking into account political changes in the country.



*'Improving conditions for environmental defenders requires creating conditions that enable women, Indigenous people, and young people to participate in designing public policies that guarantee the full exercise of their rights.'*

- IUCN NL Director Liliana Jáuregui<sup>13</sup>

## 5.2. Lessons learnt

- Co-creation and/or regulatory validation processes require training on the issue of concern. Otherwise, participants will not have sufficient and adequate information to contribute to the process.
- An inclusive methodology and content tailored to the audience are necessary when seeking to develop regulatory proposals.
- Validation spaces must be ample and include practical work to ensure better and more solid participation.
- Processes related to Indigenous women's rights must consider the participation of leaders. This also generates awareness-raising processes.
- As with the training workshops, these spaces must be managed under safety rules appropriate to the participants' profiles.

## 5.3. Recommendations

- In adverse political environments, it is recommended to opt for the development of regulatory proposals with civil society groups to avoid losing these proposals as a result of political instability.
- Ensure the equitable participation of defenders in regulatory creation processes. This includes strengthened knowledge, security conditions, and logistical measures appropriate to gender and family roles.
- Prioritise and encourage this type of work with young people. That way they can replicate the methodology in other spaces, including national public policy, and maintain the proposal and experience within their grassroots organisations for longer.

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<sup>13</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2023). Madre de Dios: urge tomar acciones para protección de personas defensoras del ambiente. [Available here.](#)



*Photo: Indigenous communicators share insights and challenges from their work © Lucía Florez-SPDA*

## 6. Advocacy to support environmental defenders

In the context of existing legislative challenges, it is crucial to increase the visibility of, and support for, environmental defenders at both national and international levels. Various tools are available to strengthen and make visible environmental defenders' efforts in a wider context.



'A key moment was the meeting with a former UN rapporteur, which marked the first formal link with a high-level international figure. This experience allowed defenders to feel that their voice could reach decision-making bodies. To this day, they remember it with pride, keeping it visible in their public presentation slides. That is why I recognise that environmental defenders have legitimately valued these spaces.'

– SPDA team representative

### 6.1. Tackling invisibility

PIDDA has effectively raised awareness of the challenges faced by environmental defenders while ensuring that public exposure did not heighten their security risks, such as retaliation from opposing actors. By combining IUCN NL's international reach with SPDA's national leadership, the initiative strengthened advocacy efforts and increased the visibility of defenders from local to global levels across Latin America.

Key tools on the national level include a web portal called "Defenders of the Environment and Territory" hosted on SPDA's Actualidad Ambiental website,<sup>14</sup> providing systematised information, news, data, and audiovisual content on environmental defenders. Feedback from communicators in Madre de Dios helped refine the platform content, keeping it relevant for protection efforts. For example, it is the first Peruvian website to systematise official information from the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights in a heat map that shows risk situations and associated causes by region. It also contains a complementary podcast series, based on the publication "Environmental Defenders: Stories of Struggle in Madre de Dios 2016-2018"<sup>15</sup> (see section 2), amplifies defenders' voices through first-person stories of Tambopata National Reserve Management Committee. The episode "[The Teacher and the Future](#)" tells the story of Isabel Yalico, a women environmental defender who dedicated her life to environmental education and territorial protection in Madre de Dios. These episodes

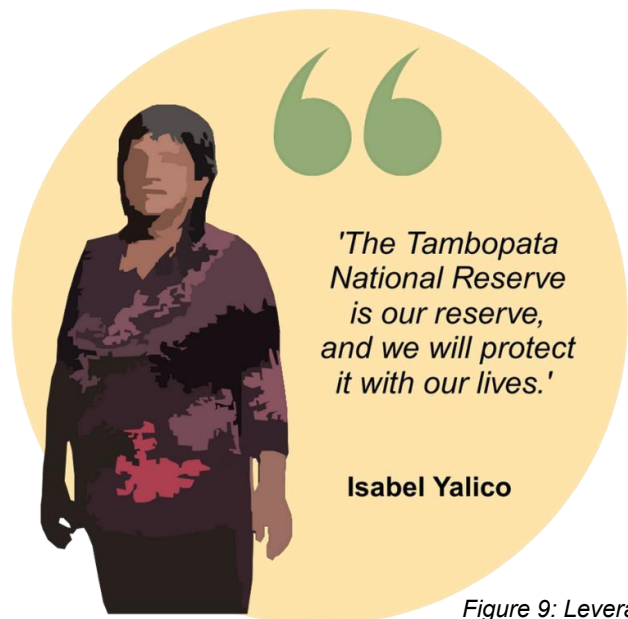


Figure 9: Leveraging international visibility as a key strategy © IUCN NL

<sup>14</sup> Defenders of the Environment and Territory, SPDA Actualidad Ambiental web page. [Available here.](#)

<sup>15</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2019). Defensores Ambientales: historias de lucha en Madre de Dios. [Available here.](#)

educate, foster empathy, engage young audiences, and reinforce collective commitment to the protection of environmental defenders. Such multimedia formats can inspire replication and increase visibility of defenders' realities in Peru and elsewhere.

## 6.2. From global agenda to national impact

PIDDA has advanced the visibility of environmental defenders by actively participating in alliances, forums, webinars, and meetings. This strategy tried to ensure that these issues remain on the global agenda for environmental protection and justice, and to ensure the sustainability of actions beyond the project. Strategic alliances with embassies, multilateral organisations, and international conventions have strengthened advocacy and long-term impact.



Figure 10: Building strategic alliances and using international platforms to amplify defenders' realities and demand accountability © IUCN NL

### Examples of enhancing environmental protection through international collaboration and visibility

- Embassy visits to risk areas, such as the visit by the Netherlands, Germany, and France plus OHCHR representatives to Madre de Dios, fostered dialogue with the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations on the challenges faced by women defenders and their exposure to risks from illegal activities.
- Attendance at international forums, including the Environmental Peace Conference in the Netherlands, COP16 on Biodiversity in Colombia and the IUCN South American Conservation Forum, provided high visibility spaces to disseminate lessons learned and promote exchange of experiences.
- A webinar held during COP3 of the Escazú Agreement highlighted the challenges faced by environmental defenders in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. This webinar emphasised the urgent need for protection through the Escazú Agreement and its action plan, even in countries that have not yet ratified the agreement.

## 6.3. Lessons learnt

### Security and context

- While increasing visibility is essential, care must be taken to ensure that public exposure does not heighten risks for environmental defenders.

### Collaboration and knowledge exchange

- Ongoing collaboration between organisations at national and international levels, adopted as a risk mitigation measure, both strengthens defenders' capacity and amplifies the reach and impact of protection efforts.
- Involving community representatives in national and international forums strengthens the project's legitimacy and ensures local perspectives are included.
- Sustained partnerships provide institutional backing and help maintain the long-term visibility of environmental defenders' work.

### Identity and inclusion

- Intersectional and gender differences must be made more visible in international spaces, with approaches that acknowledge and address the specific vulnerabilities of women environmental defenders.
- Participation in international forums enhances defenders' visibility, recognition, and sense of empowerment and pride.

### Capacity and autonomy

- Consistent participation across diverse platforms is key to building awareness and supporting defenders' autonomy in representing their own narratives.

## 6.4. Recommendations

- **Security and context:** Ensure that public visibility does not jeopardise the safety of defenders by applying an approach that is sensitive to intersectional differences and the varying levels of risk they face.
- **Collaboration and knowledge exchange:** Implement a joint communication and advocacy strategy that integrates national and international channels to maximise reach.
- **Identity and inclusion:** Prioritise the attendance of women defenders at international events to strengthen their visibility and advocacy capacity.
- **Capacity and autonomy:** Use visibility to create strategic alliances, mobilise resources, and ensure the continuity of the project and long-term efforts.
- **Community support:** Obtain the support and consent of communities before disseminating specific cases, while understanding that visibility must be strategically planned, contextualised, and aligned with the needs, risks, and priorities of women defenders and their territories.



Photo: Protection strategies tailored to local territorial realities © AFD

## 7. Conclusions

This report aims to capitalise on the work related to the strengthening of environmental defenders, spearheaded by the cross-continental collaboration between civil society organisations through various programmes. It specifically highlights the partnership between IUCN NL and SPDA, with a focus on defending environmental rights and supporting environmental defenders in the Amazon region of the Republic of Peru.

The report mainly consolidates the collaborative experience within the PIDDA project — an initiative financially made possible by AFD that aimed at strengthening and implementing a system for protecting environmental rights defenders in Peru. The initiative also promotes fairer conditions for defenders and seeks to guarantee their rights of access to information, participation, and justice from an intersectional and gender perspective. However, PIDDA did not start from scratch. Between 2016 and 2019, a precursor programme was implemented that laid the foundations for this collaboration. This initial program fostered relationships of trust in the territory and provided fundamental lessons that are now integrated into the current approach.

Amid the urgent need to protect environmental defenders working in highly conflictive and risky contexts, this report draws on the long-standing collaboration and experience of IUCN NL and SPDA. It distils key lessons and recommendations for replication in other territories, aiming to support solid and context-sensitive approaches to strengthening environmental defenders.

### Tools in place

Ongoing efforts have demonstrated that it is possible to move towards inclusive and effective protection of environmental defenders through a variety of tools and mechanisms. Among the strategies addressed in this report, the following stand out:

- Providing rapid and flexible financial support to address urgent protection needs of environmental defenders facing threats.
- Developing in-depth and current knowledge of the real and evolving situation faced by environmental and Indigenous defenders.
- Strengthening the protection capacities of environmental defenders through participatory methodologies that activate and reinforce protection mechanisms.
- Formulating civil society-led proposals aimed at institutional improvements of the national protection systems.
- Implementing public advocacy activities at national and international levels to raise awareness and visibility of the challenges faced by environmental defenders.

These actions have been developed with participatory, intersectional, and gender-sensitive approaches, which has been key to their effectiveness. The tools systematised in this document, together with the main lessons learnt and recommendations, offer a practical, replicable and adaptable framework that can serve as a useful reference for other organisations or territories facing similar challenges.

### Contextual considerations

The context in which environmental protection takes place remains difficult. Violence and threats against environmental defenders persist, in Peru as well as globally. These contextual challenges, while limiting, offer a realistic view of the effectiveness of the presented tools and highlight the need for broader structural and political change. In Peru, this includes the ratification of the Escazú Agreement, the strengthening of intersectional and territorial rights, the empowerment of civil society and non-governmental organisations that support environmental defenders, and the expansion of civic space in defence of human rights.

## Key lessons and ways forward

Despite these contextual challenges and the need for systemic change, civil society collaborations that are at once cross-regional and territorially grounded can still help tackle and reduce risks and challenges for environmental defenders. For such initiatives to be effective, they should consider the following key lessons learnt:

- **Differentiated information and context sensitivity:** Participatory approaches allow for the design of more effective protection policies and measures that are sensitive to local realities.
- **A gender and intersectional approach are essential:** Incorporating intersectional perspectives ensures that actions respond to the specific needs of women, Indigenous peoples, and diverse communities, strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of protection measures.
- **Methodologies make a difference:** Tools such as adapted training programmes make it possible to address sensitive issues and strengthen actual protection capacities.
- **Multi-level advocacy amplifies:** Coordinating territorial work with national and international advocacy ensures greater visibility and impact on the public agenda.
- **Partnerships multiply effects:** Building strategic networks between local, national, and international actors ensures sustainability of protection efforts.
- **Systematise to replicate:** Documenting and converting experiences into practical knowledge allows other territories to adapt and replicate these approaches.



Figure 11: Key learnings to tackle risks and strengthen environmental defenders, with potential for replication © IUCN NL

## No blueprint

The capitalised tools, lessons, and recommendations are not a blueprint. However, they do point to potential avenues for the strengthening of environmental defenders in other contexts. It remains to be seen which tools and lessons will resonate, and which new insights and tools might emerge that can again cross-pollinate to other locations.

# Annex

## Annex 1: Contextual overview of environmental defenders' situation in Peru



Figure 12: Current situation of environmental defenders in Peru © IUCN NL

### Focus on the Madre de Dios region

Located in southeastern Peru, Madre de Dios occupies 11% of the Peruvian Amazon. Until the 1990s, this region was the best-preserved region and considered one of the most biodiverse areas in the world — with more than 3.8 million hectares of land being part of protected natural areas where eight Indigenous communities coexist. However, this region is also the cradle of Peru’s mining and related illegal activities. Over the years, conflicts have increased, and environmental defenders are seriously exposed to constant threats.<sup>16</sup>

### Environmental defenders killed in Madre de Dios since 2015

This overview reflects environmental defenders murdered in the region in the past decade. This highlights the harsh territorial reality faced by environmental defenders.

<p><b>2015</b> <b>Alfredo Ernesto Vracko Neuenschwander</b> (leader of the RNTAM management committee)<sup>17</sup></p>	<p><b>2020</b> <b>Roberto Carlos Pacaheco Villanueva</b> (son of a leader of the RNTAM management committee)<sup>18</sup></p>	<p><b>2022</b> <b>Juan Julio Fernández Hanco</b> (brother of a leader of the RNTAM management committee)<sup>19</sup></p>	<p><b>2024</b> <b>Victorio Dariquebe Gerewa</b> (Indigenous park ranger)<sup>20</sup> <b>Gerardo Keimari Enrique</b> (Indigenous leader)<sup>21</sup></p>	<p><b>2025</b> <b>Hipolito Quispehuamán Conde</b> (leader of the RNTAM management committee)<sup>22</sup></p>
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<sup>16</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2023). Madre de Dios: urge tomar acciones para protección de personas defensoras del ambiente. [Available here.](#)

<sup>17</sup> Mongabay (2015). Un ambientalista es asesinado por mineros ilegales en Perú. [Available here.](#)

<sup>18</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2020). Diversos organismos se pronunciaron frente a nuevo asesinato de un defensor ambiental. [Available here.](#)

<sup>19</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2022). Asesinan a defensor ambiental de la Reserva Nacional Tambopata. [Available here.](#)

<sup>20</sup> IUCN NL (2024). Indigenous environmental defender Victorio Dariquebe Gerewa killed in Madre de Dios. [Available here.](#)

<sup>21</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2024). Investigan muerte del líder matsigenka encontrado sin vida en el río Madre de Dios. [Available here.](#)

<sup>22</sup> Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (2025). Fiscalía investiga asesinato de defensor ambiental de la Reserva Nacional Tambopata. [Available here.](#)

## Annex 2: Timeline of international protection mechanisms

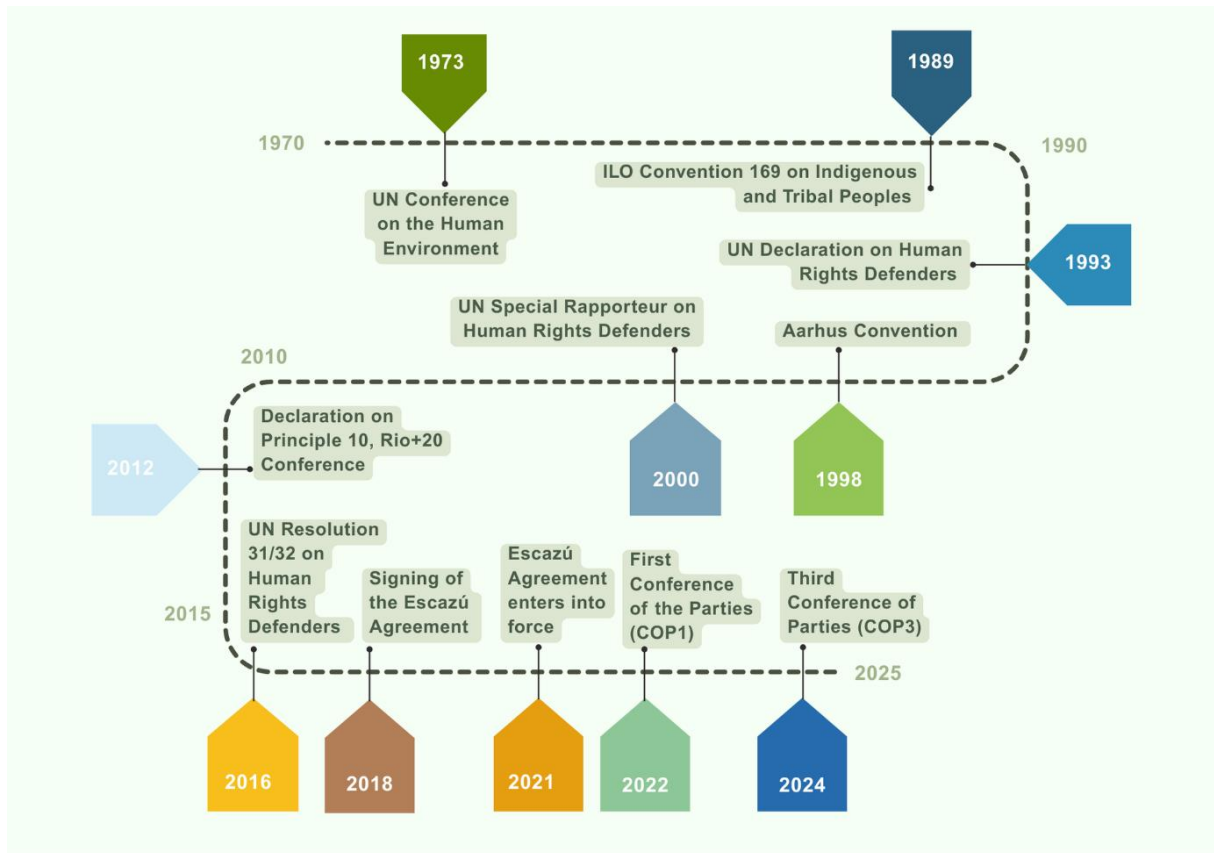


Figure 13: From early initiatives to the Escazú Agreement: advancing protection for environmental defenders © IUCN NL

## Annex 3: Overview of the Escazú Agreement

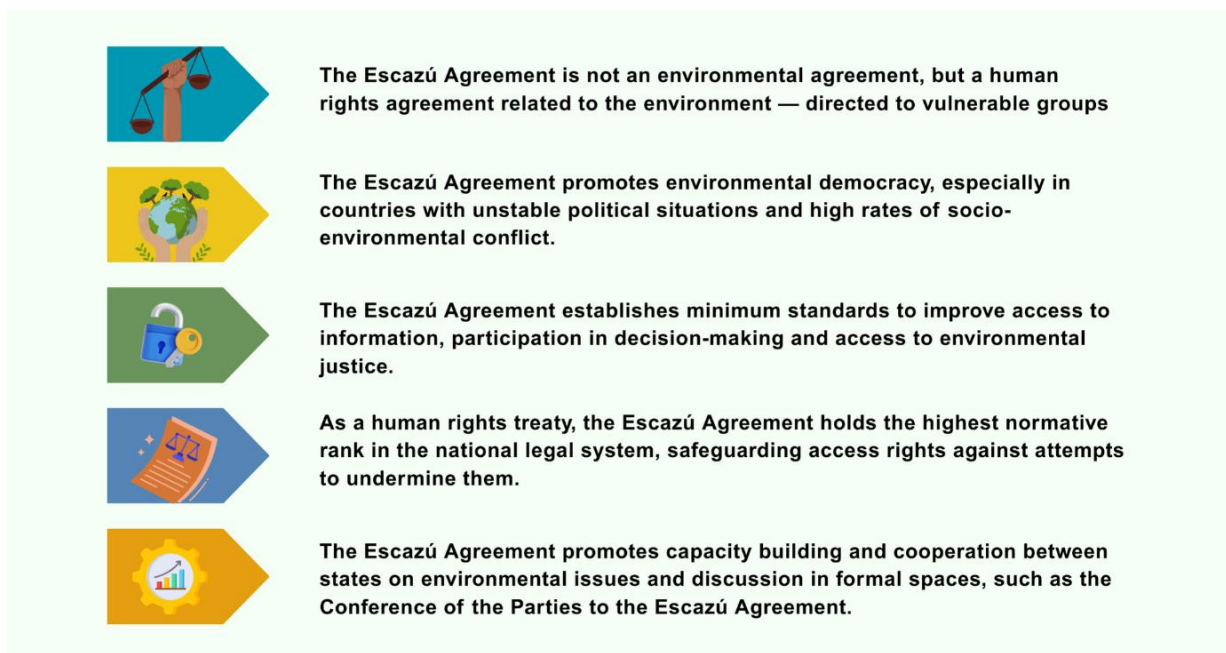


Figure 14: Key facts about the Escazú Agreement © IUCN NL

## Annex 4: Relevant national mechanisms

Various legal mechanisms have been developed in Peru to protect environmental defenders, covering regulatory frameworks on the environment, human rights, gender, and territorial defence. A selection of relevant mechanisms is outlined below.

### Plans and mechanisms:

- **National Human Rights Plan 2018–2021 (Supreme Decree 002-2018-JUS):** This plan came into force in January 2018 and is overseen by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. It is a comprehensive, multi-sectoral tool designed to implement public policies on human rights in the country.
- **Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Supreme Decree 004-2021-JUS):** Approved in April 2021, this became the first legal instrument allowing for the coordination of eight ministries on human rights issues. Its objective is to establish the principles, measures, and procedures that seek to guarantee the prevention, protection and access to justice of human rights defenders in situations of risk arising because of their activities. It also establishes the definition of a human rights defender. With its approval, the Ministry of Justice's Protocol to Guarantee the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the Registry on Risk Situations for Human Rights Defenders were repealed and their objectives and functions were assumed by the intersectoral mechanism.

### Regulations associated with these mechanisms:

- **Sectoral Protocol for the Protection of Environmental Defenders (Ministerial Resolution 134-2021-MINAM):** Approved in July 2021 and overseen by the Ministry of the Environment. It establishes guidelines for the coordination, implementation, and evaluation of prevention, recognition and protection actions within the framework of the provisions of the Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.
- Directive for the adoption of measures to prevent situations that put Indigenous or native people and Afro-Peruvian defenders of their collective rights at risk, within the framework of **Supreme Decree 004-2021-JUS and the competences (Directive 001-2022-VMI/MC):** Approved in May 2022, with the Ministry of Culture responsible for its implementation. The directive establishes provisions for the adoption of measures to prevent situations that put the groups at risk within the framework of the supreme decree that creates the Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, with the aim of fostering an environment conducive to the promotion, protection and defence of their collective rights.
- **Guidelines for Ombudsman Intervention in Cases Involving Human Rights Defenders from the Ombudsman's Office (Administrative Resolution 025-2023 / DP-PAD):** Approved in June 2023 and overseen by the Ombudsman's Office. Establish uniform criteria and guidelines for action that allow for adequate intervention by the Ombudsman's Office in relation to complaints, petitions, and inquiries submitted to the offices and modules of the Ombudsman's Office in cases involving human rights defenders.
- **Protocol on 'Prosecutorial Action for the Prevention and Investigation of Crimes against Human Rights Defenders':** Approved in March 2022 and overseen by the Public Prosecutor's Office. It establishes the prevention and investigation of crimes against human rights defenders, ensuring the effectiveness of prosecutorial action in accordance with international standards and national regulations on the matter.

### Regional working groups for human rights defenders:

- **Regional Ordinances:** Since the Mechanism was approved and in response to the increase in murders in Peru, regional working groups have been created in the regions that pose the greatest risk to environmental defenders: Ucayali, Madre de Dios and San Martín. To date, only the regional governments of Ucayali and Madre de Dios have institutionalised this space through Regional Ordinance 002-2022-GRU-CR and Regional Ordinance 016-2022-RMDD/CR, respectively. In the case of Ucayali, the protection of human rights defenders was also declared to be of regional interest.

**National mechanisms related to women defenders:**

- **Directive for the Prevention, Assistance, Protection and Recognition of Women Human Rights Defenders (Ministerial Resolution 223-2023-MIMP):** Establishes provisions for the prevention, assistance, protection, and recognition of women in their diversity, as human rights defenders and victims of violence.

**Aimed at relatives of human rights defenders:**

- **Law promoting the protection and comprehensive development of orphaned children and adolescents (Law 31405):** Published on 4 February 2022, with its regulations approved in May of the same year. It promotes the protection of orphaned children and adolescents by providing financial assistance and professional support to help guarantee their access to health care, education and life plans and enable their comprehensive development. It includes children and adolescents in accordance with Supreme Decree 004-2021-JUS, which creates the Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

## **Annex 5: Example of exerting influence on Peru's legal and institutional mechanisms**

In Peru, key legal and institutional mechanisms include the Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Supreme Decree 004-2021) and the Directive 223-2023 from the MIMP, which outlines protection measures for human right defenders. While the MIMP directive represents a step forward for women rights defenders, its current focus on gender-based violence as the primary criterion for activating the protection may exclude women environmental defenders whose attacks do not fit into this category. In this context, an executive summary of the IUCN NL study "[Women in a degraded Amazon: Struggles for land, body and nature](#)" was prepared and shared with the MIMP. This summary highlighted the need to update the Ministry's normative tool so that it covers more than just situations of gender-based violence and emphasised the importance of having financial tools in place to strengthen the protection of women environmental defenders.

## **Annex 6: Perceptions on environmental defenders' efforts in Madre de Dios**

Perceptions of Indigenous peoples on the efforts of environmental defenders:	Perceptions of local communities on the efforts of environmental defenders:
Seeking to protect the forest to protect their livelihood from deterioration.	Seeking the sustainability of nature to protect their livelihood and legacy to descendants.
Raising their voices to achieve forest protection.	Filing demands, complaints and reports regarding environmental issues and sustainable development.
Seeking sustainable economies and use of natural resources.	Seeking the attention and interest of authorities and officials on environmental issues and sustainable development.
Raising awareness about the problems facing Indigenous territories and populations.	Repeatedly addressing issues related to environmental protection in public.
Asserting their rights over the territory and its resources.	
Fighting for conservation, seeking well-being and defending the rights of Indigenous peoples.	
Seeking to expand Indigenous territories.	
Raising awareness of their peoples, characteristics and problems.	

## Annex 7: Identified sources of risk in Madre de Dios

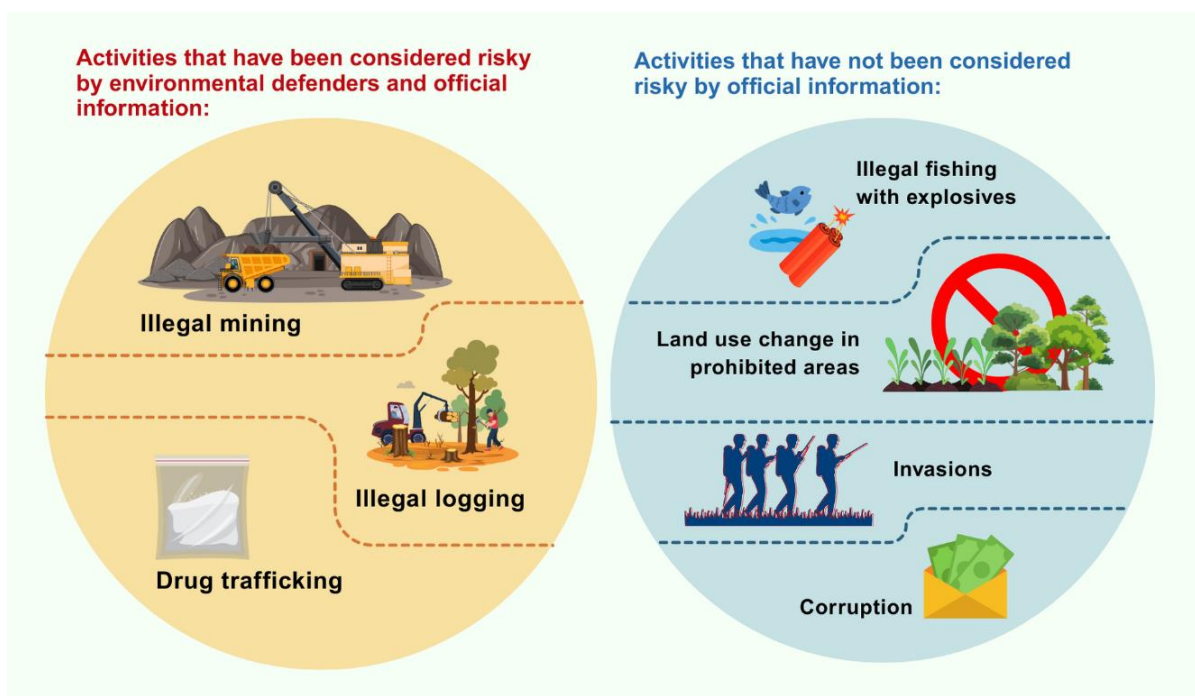


Figure 15: Risk identification through participatory analysis highlights layered threats to defenders in the Peruvian Amazon © IUCN NL





## Annex 8: Identified risks for environmental defenders in Madre de Dios

Risks considered by environmental defenders and official information:	Risks that have not been considered by official information:	Other consequences that have not been considered by official information:
Threats to security	Attempted murder	Mercury contamination
Harassment	Confrontations with criminal groups	Cultural loss
Intimidation	Constant assaults	Clashes between Indigenous populations
	Criminalisation	Discouragement
	Questions about integrity	Deterioration of habitats and ecosystems
		Delegitimisation and distrust of the state
		Perception of ineffectiveness and regulatory ignorance on the part of the State
		Perception of invisibility and lack of social or political relevance
		Lack of state institutions



## Annex 9: Identified factors hindering and facilitating the exercise of rights

Factors hindering the exercise of rights by women environmental defenders:	Factors facilitating the exercise of rights by women environmental defenders:
Restricted mobility, meaning limitations on moving freely through the territory due to illegal and extractive activities.	Implementation of quotas for female participation.
Criminalisation, such as legal proceedings aimed at delegitimising their work.	Strong family support networks.
Barriers to access to justice, such as process delays, corruption, institutional mistrust and lack of resources.	Support from organisations specialising in women's leadership.
	Training program on rights and protection skills and proficiency in Spanish as a tool for empowerment.
	Recognition of women as 'dialoguing' individuals.

## Annex 10: Comparison of two analyses on environmental defenders

	Analysis of environmental defenders:	Analysis of women environmental defenders:
 <b>Focus:</b>	Broad: directed to all environmental defenders.	Specific: directed to women environmental defenders.
 <b>Actors:</b>	Indigenous communicators Local communities (protected areas committees).	Indigenous women leaders Local women leaders and community members.
 <b>Methodology:</b>	Participatory workshop and safe space focus groups designed for Indigenous communicators and journalists.	Field visits, direct observations in the communities and safe space focus groups designed for women.
 <b>Emphasis:</b>	Exposing risks for environmental defenders, Indigenous communicators and journalists.	Exposing women leadership challenges as well as added risks and barriers for women environmental defenders.

## Annex 11: Overview of university programme modules

	<b>Modules and topics for environmental defenders:</b>	 <b>Modules and topics for university-educated professionals:</b>
<b>Module 1:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National and international regulations protecting human rights defenders.</li> <li>• National and international obligations of the State regarding human rights defenders.</li> <li>• Main international tools for protection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National regulations for the fulfillment of the State's obligations to protect human rights defenders.</li> <li>• State obligations in the international framework for the protection of human rights defenders.</li> <li>• Main international tools for the protection of environmental defenders.</li> </ul>
<b>Module 2:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intersectoral mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders.</li> <li>• Procedure for activating the intersectoral mechanism.</li> <li>• Role of public entities in the protection of environmental defenders.</li> <li>• Intercultural approach in protection mechanisms.</li> <li>• Use of information as a preventive tool: the role of the Registry of Risk Situations for Defenders.</li> <li>• Community strategies for the protection of defenders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intersectoral mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders, early warning procedure and registration of risk situations.</li> <li>• Role of public entities in the protection of environmental defenders.</li> <li>• Procedure for activating the intersectoral mechanism.</li> <li>• Intercultural approach in protection mechanisms.</li> </ul>
<b>Module 3:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illegal economies in the Amazon and the State's obligations to eradicate them.</li> <li>• Funding for the implementation of strategies to protect human rights defenders at the national level.</li> <li>• Landmark cases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illegal economies in the Amazon and the State's obligations to eradicate them.</li> <li>• Funding for the implementation of strategies to protect human rights defenders at the national level.</li> <li>• Landmark cases.</li> </ul>
<b>Module 4:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental legislation for the protection of the environment, territory and natural resources.</li> <li>• Procedural and administrative issues for reporting (criminal and administrative) actions that harm the environment (illegal mining, illegal logging and land trafficking).</li> <li>• Identification of entities and agencies competent in matters of environmental protection and defense.</li> <li>• Partnerships with NGOs and international organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental legislation for the protection of the environment, territory and natural resources.</li> <li>• Analysis and identification of functions and competencies in environmental matters.</li> <li>• Competencies in response to environmental complaints.</li> <li>• The obligation of coordination among public entities and functional responsibility.</li> <li>• Partnerships with NGOs and international organisations.</li> </ul>

## Annex 12: Notes on the first edition of the university programme

The first edition of the university-led curriculum brought together around 50 participants, divided between environmental defenders from Indigenous peoples and local communities in Madre de Dios and Cusco, plus professionals from government institutions that protect defenders. The latter group was selected from over 300 applicants, based on their experience. Participation was inclusive and diverse, with 52.2% being Indigenous, 61.3% women, and 38.6% youth. By the end of the curriculum, more than 65% of participants reported improved knowledge of rights and protection mechanisms. Interest was especially strong among women professionals, including representatives from the Ministry of Women, who highlighted institutional gaps in addressing the needs of women defenders.

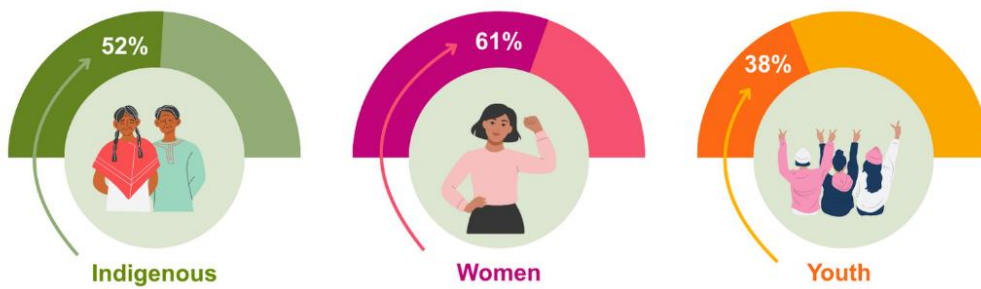


Figure 16: Inclusive design and implementation of protection training: a critical factor for success © IUCN NL