

# What is Protection?







## What is protection?

Throughout our journey we have learned that there is no simple answer to this question, rather that an HRD's protection is like a puzzle: something that requires skills and persistence in solving. This report looks at some of the pieces in such a puzzle.

Protection is first about building the capacity of defenders to protect themselves. In 2014, this meant guiding 136 capacity building processes to provide long-term support in developing protection strategies and security management tools for communities and individuals in 25 countries across 3 continents.

Protection for defenders at risk is also about the ability to develop innovative and collective community-based protection mechanisms, such as protection networks established with the support of PI in Colombia and Guatemala, or through the use of video as evidence in Indonesia.

More and more, protection entails addressing and preventing the criminalization of human rights defenders. In 2014 PI researched this phenomenon extensively, drawing conclusions and identifying lines of action that will inform our work in coming years. Also, our Protection Desk in Guatemala published a handbook to improve knowledge around criminalization with local defenders and provide hands-on recommendations to criminalized defenders; meanwhile our Desk in Thailand focused on the arbitrary use of the criminal justice system and pressing charges against community-based human rights defenders.

The protection of defenders is about governments fulfilling their national and international obligations. In some contexts this obligation may translate into public policies for defenders' protection. In 2014,

**Protection International works hand in hand with defenders.**

this meant accompanying civil society in 9 countries across Africa and Latin America striving to build public policies in line with international standards both for human rights defenders and journalists. We encountered many challenges, especially when dealing with fluid political backgrounds; but at the same time encouraged by endorsement from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of our baseline standards for public policies on the protection of human rights defenders.

Overall, improving protection is PI's mission and this annual report shows snapshots of our work, which like irregularly shaped puzzle pieces interlock to form a picture of PI's work protecting defenders at risk throughout the world. We engaged with a large number of defenders. We have built many blocks and assembled difficult puzzle pieces, often overcoming many operational difficulties: this has been the impact of our work.

The situation of human rights defenders around the world proves that the protection puzzle is far from being pieced together and solved. Our vision for 2015 is to continue bringing strategic value through quality work and increased partnerships.

**Stay tuned!**

Luis Enrique Eguren,  
President of PI Board

**Protection International** envisions a world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are universally recognized and respected, and where everyone has the right to defend these rights and freedoms without fear of threats or attack.



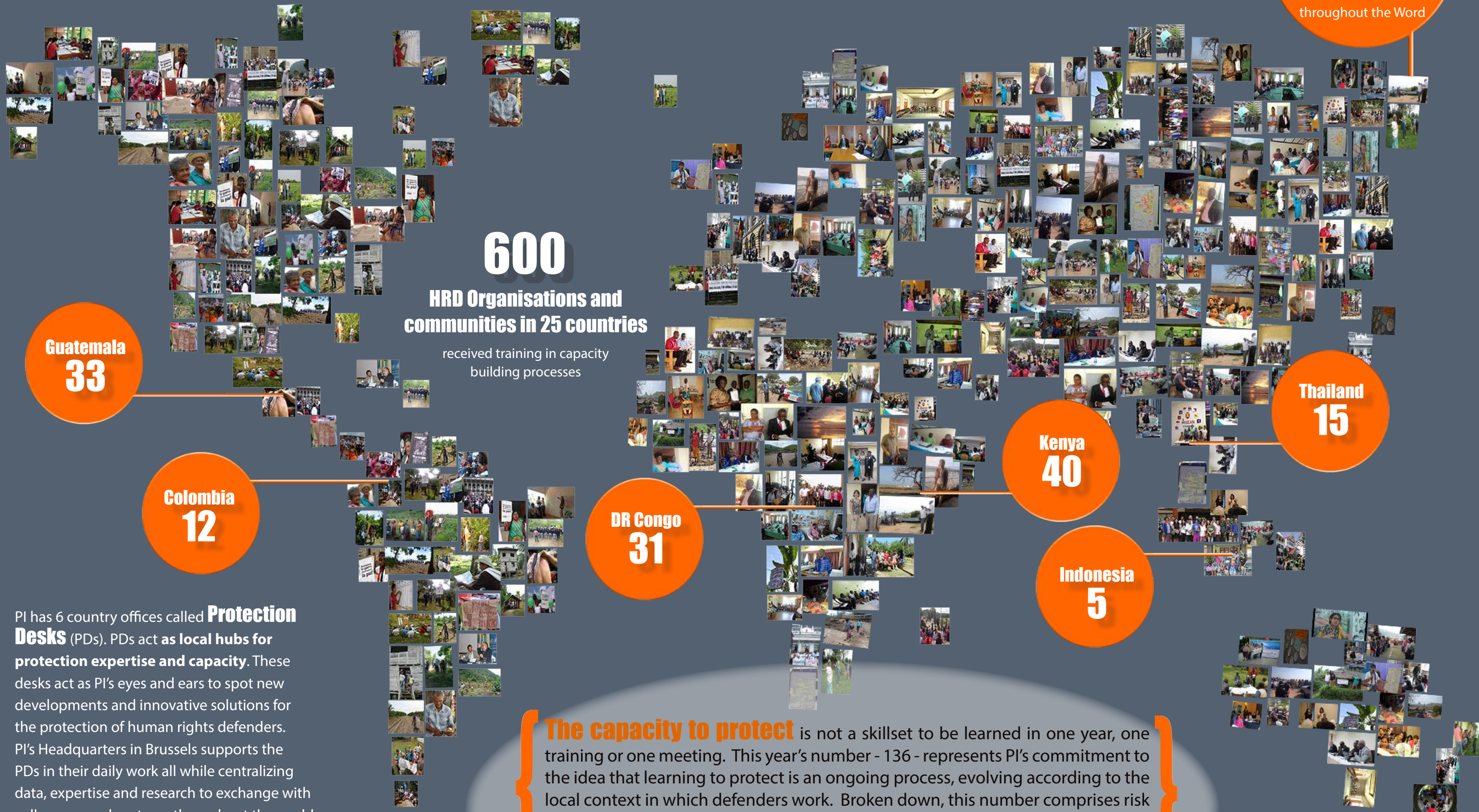
# Building the Capacity to Protect

A global snapshot of PI's impact in 2014

136

Capacity building processes

in PI's Protection Desks throughout the World



Guatemala  
33

Colombia  
12

DR Congo  
31

Kenya  
40

Indonesia  
5

Thailand  
15

PI has 6 country offices called **Protection Desks** (PDs). PDs act as **local hubs for protection expertise and capacity**. These desks act as PI's eyes and ears to spot new developments and innovative solutions for the protection of human rights defenders. PI's Headquarters in Brussels supports the PDs in their daily work all while centralizing data, expertise and research to exchange with colleagues and partners throughout the world.

**The capacity to protect** is not a skillset to be learned in one year, one training or one meeting. This year's number - 136 - represents PI's commitment to the idea that learning to protect is an ongoing process, evolving according to the local context in which defenders work. Broken down, this number comprises risk assessments, security management trainings, follow-up meetings, community forums and lots more between defenders and PI.



# Protection Networks

## What is a Protection Network ?

Protection networks are community-based networks aimed at protecting HRDs living in rural areas and their workspace. The concept is based on the idea that for protection to be effective, it must originate in the community and/or grassroots organisations themselves to ensure that all efforts and activities they carry out are brought together.



## Together we are stronger - Colombia

Collective protection is an essential yet underdeveloped process when it comes to protecting HRDs. PI has thus been developing protection networks based on the assumption that communities that build strong internal cohesion and bridges with external actors enhance their social capital in defense of their rights and territory, thus strengthening their ability to protect themselves.

Social capital seeks to evaluate the ability of group members to carry out communal tasks and collective action. Belonging to a network improves general community wellbeing and allows for unprecedented forms of knowledge and resource sharing among community members.

Confident in the value of social networks, PI Colombia worked with local communities in 2014 to build and implement protection network strategies along



three main lines of action: strengthening the community's internal network (social capital) to boost collective action, encouraging the expansion of this network through cooperation with neighbouring communities and building relations with regional, national and international organizations to facilitate full scope support, which in turn will improve the community's ability to communicate with the actors who are responsible to protect their rights.

## Protection Platforms - Asia

In December 2014, HRDs from all over Asia attended the 6th Asian Regional HRD Forum organized by Forum Asia in Manila, Philippines. PI focused on the protection and security of HRDs with the tagline, "HRD Protection Platform, towards stronger and vibrant HRD networks in Asia", and moderated the final session of the Forum on "Organizational protection initiatives, systems and mechanisms on the ground" highlighting a number of important aspects related to digital security measures, human rights and legal training and staff wellbeing.



## Strengthening Alliances - Guatemala

Since 2012, PI Guatemala has been working with 440 Mayan families of La Primavera community engaged in agrarian conflict with companies Eco Tierra and Maderas Filitz Díaz S.A. Facing constant threats of displacement, aggression, intimidation and criminalization, PI Guatemala conducted risk analysis workshops and supported the creation of protection networks to improve the protection of both communities and HRDs.

In 2014, La Primavera Protection Network agreed to participate in a research project on the functioning of protection networks led by PI in which HRDs took important steps towards strengthening their



collective protection. For example, having identified a lack of external relationships, the community began building alliances with nearby communities defending their rights to the land with the support of the UVOC (Verapaz Union of Farmer Organisations). As such La Primavera formed alliances with the communities of San Miguel Cotoxja and en Caabon.



# Criminalization

## 33 cases dropped - Thailand

In 2014, the gold and copper mine Tungkom Co. Ltd. (TKL) filed nine lawsuits against 33 villagers and members of Khon Rak Ban Kerd (KRBK), an organisation leading a community-based campaign in 6 communities in Northeast Thailand to reclaim their right to living in a healthy environment and leading healthy lifestyles. Allegedly charged for trespassing and loss of property, TKL demanded a compensation of 50-70 million Thai Baht (1.5-2.2 million US Dollars) from each villager.

To help the community fight this criminalization case, PI's Protection Desk in Thailand accompanied KRBK in submitting a letter to the Royal Thai Police and meeting with the UNOHCHR in Bangkok about the case. 10 human rights organisations then signed a joint statement calling for action from the UNOHCHR, EU and Thai National Human Rights Organisation.

As a result of this campaigning, the international community began to turn their attention to KRBK, and the UNOHCHR visited the community in mid-October 2014. TKL finally withdrew the nine legal cases and reached an agreement with KRBK on December 4th, 2014. This withdrawal was a result of international pressure and exchanges between TKL and KRBK group members.

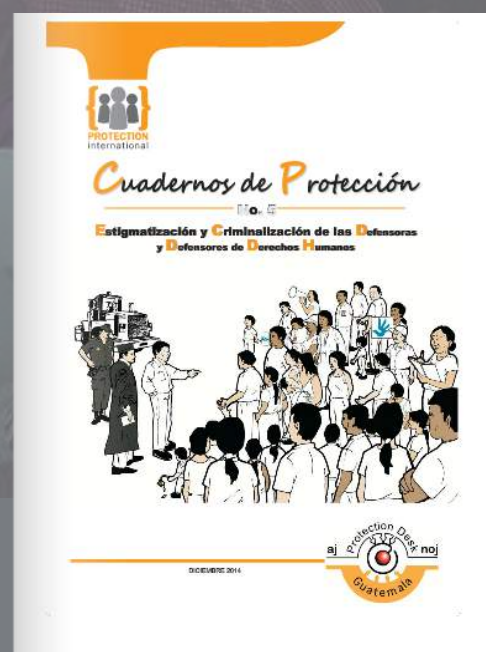


December 8th, 2014: Local Thai authorities meet with members of the KRBK to explain HRD legal cases. Local woman human rights defender Porntip facilitates.

## Silencing Dissent in Coastal Kenya

Joel Ogada is a farmer in Marereni, Kilifi County on the Kenyan coast. He is a vocal HRD and member of the Malindi Rights Forum working to protect the land rights of farmers in Marereni. Since the arrival of salt companies in the area, Ogada and fellow community members have faced numerous charges and court cases. In his latest case in 2014, Ogada was sentenced on May 16th to 7 years in prison for arson.

The Kenyan HRD denied all charges and has since appealed with support from the National Coalition on Human Right Defenders. Meanwhile, PI Kenya and other human rights organisations denounced the imprisonment of Ogada as part of a larger strategy by salt companies to silence him and other community members so they can continue to work undisturbed on the community land. With technical support and accompaniment by PI Kenya, Ogada's case went to the Appeals Court on December 5th, 2014. In Spring 2015 the court announced that Ogada's imprisonment would be shortened from a nine year to a two year sentence.



In order to help defenders understand the concept of criminalization and its distinct characteristics, Protection International Guatemala produced a special publication titled **“Zoom in on Protection: Criminalization and Stigmatisation of Human Rights Defenders”**. This publication aims to help defenders identify when one is victim to criminalization and actions one can take to face the threat.

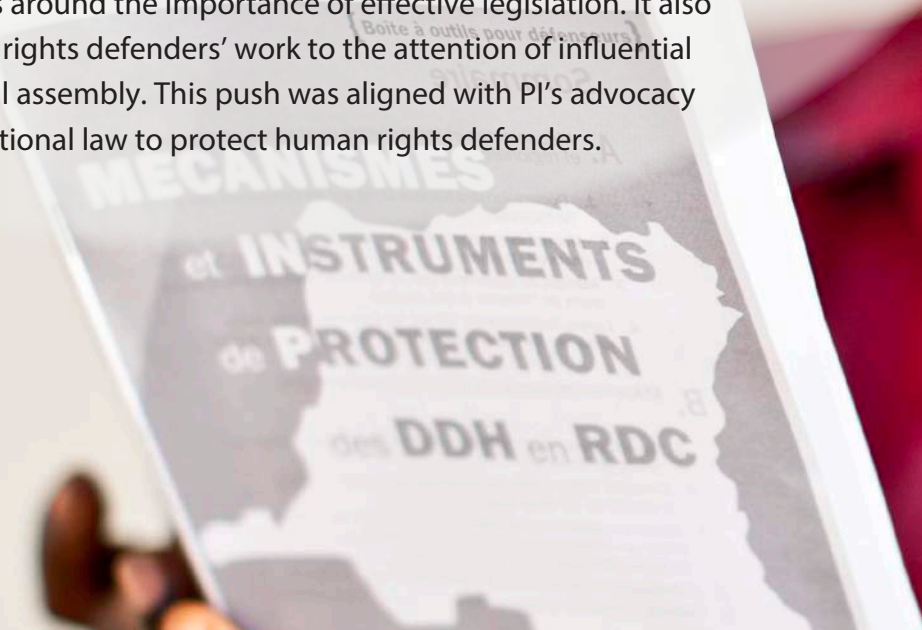
**What is Criminalization?** Criminalization is the use of legal frameworks and strategies, as well as political and legal actions against HRDs with the intention of treating the defence, promotion and protection of human rights as illegitimate and illegal, thus attacking HRDs and/or impeding their work.



## Draft provincial bill for HRD's protection in D.R. Congo

PI engaged with Congolese local authorities to adopt national and provincial legislation to better protect human rights defenders.

A draft bill for the protection of human rights defenders in South Kivu had been blocked since 2007. Then, in 2014, PI collaborated with key actors of the United Nations and key deputies from the provincial assembly to re-engage policymakers. A series of consultations soliciting the expertise of Protection International led to a re-examination of the draft bill by an official commission (at the time of writing this article, the draft bill was waiting to be tabled at the provincial assembly). The advocacy campaign led by PI helped mobilise civil society and local media to raise awareness around the importance of effective legislation. It also helped bring the human rights defenders' work to the attention of influential deputies at the provincial assembly. This push was aligned with PI's advocacy work in Kinshasa for a national law to protect human rights defenders.



Since 2008, with its **FOCUS Global Observatory**, PI has specialised in researching, systematising and disseminating good practice and lessons learned in the field of public policy and legal instruments for the protection of HRDs. In addition to the permanent monitoring of the situation in several countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia in which these kinds of policies have been implemented or where efforts exist to pass legislation. In the 2014 edition of Focus, PI highlights the renewed interest in adopting legal instruments for the protection of HRDs in Latin America



(Honduras and Guatemala) and Sub-Saharan Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi and Mali). In this report, PI featured important contributions from UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of HRDs Michel Forst, Inter-American Commission Rapporteur on HRDs Jesús Orozco and African Commission Rapporteur on HRDs Reine Alapini



Public Policy processes monitored by Protection International

# Public Policies

## Towards a HRD protection mechanism in Guatemala

On September 30th, 2014, the OHCHR in Guatemala invited PI to participate in an international seminar on mechanisms for the protection of journalists. The session gathered together over 80 state officials and representatives of local journalists and HRDs. PI actively contributed to the discussions by sharing its experience in the field of public policies for the protection of HRDs and journalists in other countries and issued recommendations on this matter to the Guatemalan authorities and CSO representatives involved in the process.



## Engaging Burundian civil society on HRD protection legislation

A roundtable on the situation of HRDs was held in Bujumbura on 20 March 2014. The UN-supported event was part of a consultation process with civil society led by the National Independent Commission on Human Rights (CNIDH). The roundtable discussed the CNIDH's draft bill to protect HRDs. PI contributed



by sharing its experiences in similar legislative processes in Latin America, where public policies for the protection of HRDs have been implemented. Following the roundtable, PI has continued to engage with the CNIDH by providing a detailed analysis of the draft bill and hands-on suggestions to strengthen the normative framework.



## Learning to protect by example - Kenya

The Nyanza Rift Valley and Western Kenya (NYARWEK) LGBTIQ coalition is an emblematic success story for PI Kenya, who, working with the group since 2012, has seen the local partner take the seeds of improving their security management and let it blossom into an orchard.

It was thus decided in 2014 to showcase NYARWEK's story as a learning tool for HRDs and at-risk communities to inspire and show them how useful a network for security is and how it works. The PI Kenya team decided that video would be the best way to portray the methodology of protection networks and incorporate examples and perspectives from key coalition members.

The production process had its ups and downs: capturing natural and authentic interviews proved difficult, particularly when asking coalition members to articulate and celebrate the success of their hard work. To resolve this, multiple and longer film shoots were carried out to make the community as comfortable as possible speaking to the camera.

PI Kenya plans to incorporate the video, launched in March 2015, into its security management trainings as well as distribute it online and at human rights events to inform new HRD communities about protection networks.



# Video Advocacy

## Using video as evidence-Indonesia

Recording incidents with mobile devices or portable video cameras has become a powerful tool for HRDs, especially those in remote areas. Yet many HRDs struggle to ensure video quality and using the right channels to effectively campaign against human rights violations.

PI Indonesia and local partner KontraS thus initiated a video training project in 2014 with 15 HRDs from four regions of Indonesia aimed at building their capacity documenting human rights violations with video.

Participants were trained in basic film production and storytelling, and also on

assessing the possible security implications in filming human rights violations. They learned to think about personal and equipment safety in case of filming during sudden escalations, and take into account the safety of the person being interviewed. This meant asking informed consent prior to filming and offering to blur faces or distort voices.

Following the initial training, participants were given the task of producing video profiles of people in their communities who have been actively promoting and protecting the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief. The footage will be used to produce a short documentary video, projected for beginning of 2015, aimed at raising the profile of community based HRDs through a public campaign.



# 65,544

Individuals viewed PI's advocacy videos this year



# Our Donors & Partners



One of our principles is to work in partnership. We would like to thank all individuals, groups and institutions with whom we have partnered in 2014. We would especially like to thank the donors featured on the previous page for their collaboration.



# Thank You