

# Peace Brigades International (PBI) UK

## STRATEGY SUMMARY

**Our Vision** - PBI envisions a world of social justice and intercultural respect, in which human rights are universally upheld.



### Our inspiration - human rights defenders

Human rights defenders (HRDs) are people who take peaceful action - voluntarily or professionally, individually or collectively - to promote and protect human rights. They are often catalysts for human rights change in their communities, countries, and globally.

HRDs are often ordinary people taking extraordinary actions, sometimes at great personal risk. Some are Indigenous leaders or rural communities protecting ancestral lands and the environment from destructive or illegal business projects like mining or dams. Others are women's rights activists and LGBTIQ+ movements demanding an end to gender-based violence and discrimination. Human rights defenders include victims and lawyers seeking justice and reparations, journalists exposing violations, and NGOs proposing reforms.

What HRDs have in common is their crucial role in making the world a better place, ensuring values of freedom, respect, justice and equality are reflected in policy and practice, and that democracy and the rule of law are universally upheld. They are regularly threatened, attacked, smeared and imprisoned just for taking a stand, which is why PBI works to keep them safe and heard.

### Our Mission

PBI UK supports, protects and empowers human rights defenders around the world, contributing to their ability to safely and effectively promote rights and protect the environment.

We do this by campaigning for policy changes to ensure that governments and businesses respect human rights and take proactive action to prevent and respond to threats against human rights defenders. We mobilise resources and action from UK civil society, Parliament and the Government to enhance defenders' impact and help keep them safe; and we resource and support the PBI field projects providing holistic protective accompaniment to defenders whose lives are at risk.

### Holistic Protective Accompaniment

Our unique model has evolved since it was first pioneered in 1981, but what makes PBI unique remains the same. It's the diverse teams of international volunteers in conflict zones and complicated contexts around the world, wearing the distinctive PBI vest, who are trained to protect threatened HRDs. They back this presence with outreach and lobbying, with PBI one of the only organisations to advocate at all levels - from the soldier at a local checkpoint to UN leaders. These activities help create the security, policy and political environments in which HRDs can carry out their work. PBI UK supports our field projects by fundraising, by recruiting and training personnel, and by building support networks to respond in emergencies.



*Our commitment is to ensure that human rights defenders are safe and heard, while holding governments and businesses to account for their role in the threats they face."*

**BEN LEATHER**  
Director, PBI UK



*"I'm sure that I'm alive thanks to PBI's accompaniment."*

**BERENICE CELEITA**  
Nomadesc, Colombia



## Context

Around the world, human rights defenders face widespread obstacles, threats and attacks. 358 human rights defenders were killed in 2021. Nearly 60% of these were land, environmental and Indigenous people's rights defenders and almost 20% identified as women, including trans-women. Latin America and Asia saw the highest levels of killings.

HRDs take on the goliaths of governments, business, organised crime and other vested interests who will stop at nothing to maintain the status quo. This power imbalance is even more acute in the case of women, Indigenous peoples and other historically marginalised groups. Access to resources is particularly limited for rural activists and in places where governments impose legal and administrative restrictions on civil society.

Impunity for human rights abuses is the norm, with many judiciaries criminalising activism rather than punishing violators. Nonetheless, numerous nefarious actors working to silence activists have proven themselves open to international pressure and dissuasion.

Consecutive UK governments have failed to implement their international human rights commitments, while undermining rights at home. Nonetheless, they and their embassies regularly take effective action to support HRDs and contribute to democracy and the rule of law around the world. One of the world's largest economies, with extensive diplomatic power, the UK is home to a diverse civil society that is well-equipped to support HRDs.

## Our Geographical & Thematic Priorities

PBI works with defenders in some of the most high risk countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and advocates to ensure that all human rights defenders are protected and supported effectively. However, some of our programmes focus on groups whose activism contributes exponentially to global rights and justice, and who face specific and heightened risks:



**Land, environmental and Indigenous defenders** are on the front line of the fight for our planet's future. The IPCC recognises that the voices of Indigenous communities and environmentalists already suffering the consequences of climate change must be heard if we're to stem the crisis. Yet many live in fear of speaking out. More than four land and environmental defenders are murdered every week, with Indigenous defenders massively over-represented among those killed. Rural communities often lack the information and resources to counter business interests affecting their rights.



**Defenders of women's rights and gender equality** work to end the discriminations underpinning problems which disproportionately affect women and the LGBTIQ+ community, such as sexual and gender-based violence and inadequate healthcare. This has become even riskier, with fundamentalist interest groups whipping up anger about supposed 'gender ideology'. Many working on these issues are women human rights defenders, who face distinct challenges, including threats from within their own communities, meaning they require specific and tailored support.



**Defenders working for peace, justice and the rule of law** help build, protect and strengthen the institutions that allow democracy to flourish and safeguard human rights. Whether working on emblematic cases of injustice or advocating for systemic change, these activists are on a collision course with vested interests benefiting from the status quo. Sophisticated protection strategies and specific tools can allow these defenders to catalyse effective transitions to peace and the development of laws and mechanisms that give effect to international human rights obligations.

PBI's innovate work builds on over



of experience globally



PBI provides protective accompaniment to over

**1,784**

human rights defenders

In turn, these defenders support



**205,928**

people in communities around the world



PBI staff and volunteers come from over **27 countries** across **6 continents**

## Our Tactics



**Campaigning alongside defenders for policy change** so that governments and businesses respect rights and protect defenders proactively.



**Mobilising resources & action from a range of UK stakeholders** to enhance the safety and impact of defenders globally.



**Facilitating capacity and strategy exchange across regions & campaigns** to improve resilience, innovation & impact throughout the global human rights movement.



**Fortifying PBI's resources & infrastructure** to ensure our sustainability, effectiveness and agility.

## Our Overarching Strategic Goals

- 1 PBI's field projects have the resources and capacity they need to provide holistic protective accompaniment to human rights defenders at risk.
- 2 UK civil society contributes to the impact of human rights defenders, by providing resources, boosting legitimacy, and collaborating in strategy and policy spaces.
- 3 UK Government policy and practice provides effective protection and support to human rights defenders, including through stronger regulation of business behaviour.
- 4 PBI UK has the resources, infrastructure and legitimacy to carry out our work sustainably and effectively.

## Our Values

**We are BOLD** - we think outside of the box and act creatively.

**We are BRAVE** - we stand alongside at-risk defenders and we aren't afraid to speak out in the face of injustice.

**We are INCLUSIVE** - we believe that anyone, anywhere, can defend human rights and should be able to do so safely.

**We are INTERSECTIONAL** - we consider the impact of our work on justice and equality in regard to gender, race, LGBTIQ+ identities, disability and other protected characteristics.

**We are COLLABORATIVE** - we know we can't do it alone, so we partner with like-minded individuals and organisations, working to one another's strengths.

**We are EFFICIENT** - we prioritise key leverage points for the biggest impact possible.

**We are HRD-LED** - our field projects and our direct contact with defenders on the ground allow us to respond to their needs with the right actions at the right time.

**We are TRANSPARENT** and accountable - to our donors, our supporters, and to the human rights defenders we work with.

## Case Study



In **Guatemala**, members of the **Central Farmers Coordination Ch'orti' Nuevo Día (CCCND)** have faced threats, physical attacks, and imprisonment as a reprisal for their work defending Indigenous rights in the face of controversial extractive projects colluding with corrupt authorities.

PBI provides CCCND and several ch'orti' communities with **holistic protective accompaniment**. Our teams ensure a monitoring presence in high conflict areas, and provide physical accompaniment to some of the most threatened Indigenous leaders and their lawyers.

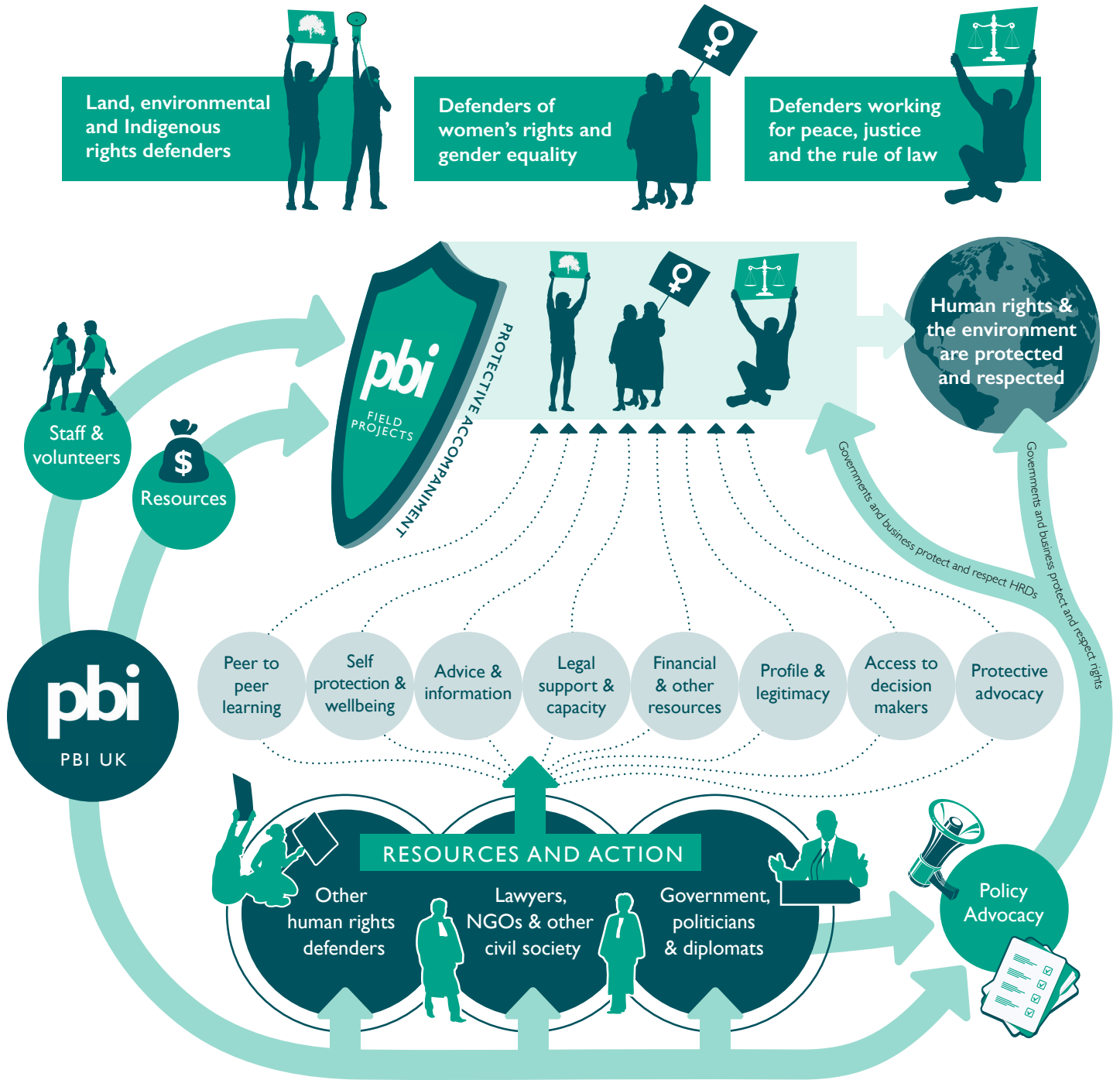
PBI UK arranged for legal delegations to visit the region, successfully advocated for the UK Government and embassy to take action in support of the communities, and connected CCCND representatives with **global support networks**.

With sufficient safety and enhanced international backing, CCCND has helped Indigenous communities to **resist land grabs and prevent the imposition of destructive extractive projects**. For example, a 2020 Constitutional Court ruling recognised the collective right to property of various ch'orti' communities, and promised to cancel mining licences in the area. With local communities continuing to farm sustainably, the result is a win not only for the Ch'orti', but for the planet.



# PBI UK: Supporting, Protecting and Empowering Human Rights Defenders

PBI UK catalyses resources, action and advocacy to support threatened human rights defenders and ensure governments and businesses respect rights and the environment. Through PBI's field projects, we provide holistic protective accompaniment to activists whose lives are in danger, with a focus on those facing specific and heightened risks:



PBI works with defenders in some of the world's riskiest countries, and currently has field projects in:

