



Duration:

Length:	54 months
Start Date:	December 2021
End Date:	June 2026

Budget:

TOTAL:	\$ 2.5 Million
UNDP	\$1,531,018.00
OHCHR	\$467,911.70
UNODC	\$501,070.30

Implementing Agencies and Partners:

Implementing Agencies: UNDP, OHCHR, UNODC

National Counterparts: Judicial Branch; Human Rights Ombuds Office; Civil Society Organizations.

CONTEXT

Judicial independence is a fundamental pillar of the rule of law and democracy and is an enabling condition for conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

Institutional and social factors weaken the professionalization of the judicial career, institutional transparency, the protection of justice operators, and the effective participation of civil society in social auditing. These gaps directly affect public trust, accountability and democratic stability.

A PBF project on judicial independence in Guatemala, implemented by UNDP, OHCHR, and UNODC, is addressing institutional and sociopolitical barriers that undermine judicial independence in Guatemala.

OBJECTIVES

To create institutional and social conditions that enable justice operators to carry out their functions with independence, integrity and transparency, through the strengthening of the judicial system, the consolidation of state capacities for their protection, and the promotion of informed and constructive civil society participation.

KEY IMPACT AND RESULTS

The project has embedded institutional reforms within the judicial branch to modernize human resources, training, performance evaluations, and disciplinary procedures; more than 100 judicial independence indicators have been developed for use in monitoring judicial conduct and an ISO Certification on Anti-Bribery is underway. These reforms strengthen key ethical principles of judicial independence, impartiality, competence and diligence and reduce the scope of undue influence in judicial careers.

The project is increasing capacities for the protection of the human rights of justice operators through the integration of training and monitoring tools into the Human Rights Ombuds' Office's institutional systems.

The central role of civil society in promoting and defending the rule of law has also been bolstered via the training of leaders and activists, including from historically marginalized communities such as victims of the internal armed conflict, women and youth. Additionally, the establishment of an online Observatory Platform on Judicial Independence has facilitated access to standards, investigations, analysis and alerts (such as on instances of judicial interference or threats against judges) by over 13,000 users; these are key tools now being adopted by civil society groups to amplify the call for greater judicial independence before national and international bodies, especially in preparation for the critical judicial appointment processes which will take place in 2026.

CATALYTIC EFFECTS

Non-financial catalytic effects The project has catalyzed broader strategic coordination between civil society organizations supported by PBF and other key actors, including international organizations and mechanisms such as the OEA and the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, alliances which will be particularly critical in 2026.

Voices from the Field

"Having access to technical support and tools has made it possible not only to make cases visible from an objective perspective, but also to contribute to a shift in narrative that recognizes criminalized individuals as human rights defenders. This support has been critical in facing complex judicial processes."

Human rights defender.

"The project strengthened our understanding of procedural guarantees and enabled us to approach social oversight of the justice system from a constructive perspective. Advocacy is now understood as an exercise in informed dialogue, access to information and the use of institutional tools."

Representative of the National Youth Front.

"These workshops have really helped us as organizations become more engaged with the justice structure. Before, I saw it as inaccessible, but CiiDH (*Centre for International Investigations on Human Rights*) has opened doors for us to participate in training and empowerment processes—and I now see that the justice system is not as unreachable as I once thought. We can get involved."

Elvia Guch of the National Movement of Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict.

