

PATHWAYS TO SYSTEM CHANGE

Working together to make justice a reality

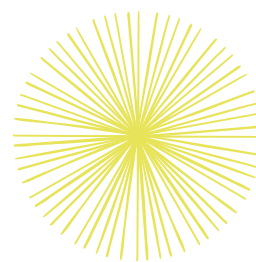
*Fighting impunity, making justice work*



“ The efforts of grassroots activists working tirelessly to unearth injustice and call for systemic change give us hope, even in the midst of crisis. Building a community of support and solidarity around them will increase their chances of being heard by those in power, and to make a lasting impact. _____”

MARLIES STAPPERS Executive Director, Impunity Watch.





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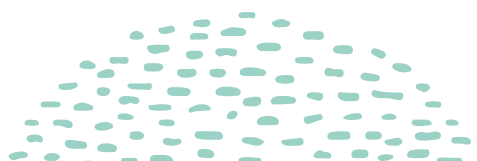
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Introduction

Who we are: Impunity Watch is an international, non-profit organisation working with victims of violence to uproot deeply ingrained structures of impunity, deliver redress for grave human rights violations, and promote justice and peace.

For more than 15 years, we have worked in countries emerging from violent conflict. We have found that victims know best what is needed to achieve justice for themselves and their communities and prevent violence from recurring, yet they are routinely excluded from these processes.

Our role is to address this omission and ensure their demands are met.

Who are the victims?

REFERENCE TO VICTIMS IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN INCLUDES VICTIMS, SURVIVORS AND COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES.

those whose voices are central to making change happen. We include a particular focus on dismantling patriarchal norms and violent masculine cultures responsible for aggression and repression against women and others. We promote their voices so that they can influence the justice processes that concern them.

A key aspect of our work is to contribute to victims' self-representation in policies that affect their lives. This leads to recognition and trust, as well as bringing a more equal distribution of power and resources.

We aim to help build societies where victims participate freely and actively in decisions that relate to their rights, and where social cohesion, justice and the rule of law become the norm.

We do this by partnering with grassroots organisations to amplify the demands they make to national and international policymakers and by building partnerships and coalitions that can push for deeper systemic change. We know important shifts are possible when we work together in this way.

We seek justice and accountability for past violations, and challenge political, social, and economic structures of oppression that exclude, marginalise and discriminate against

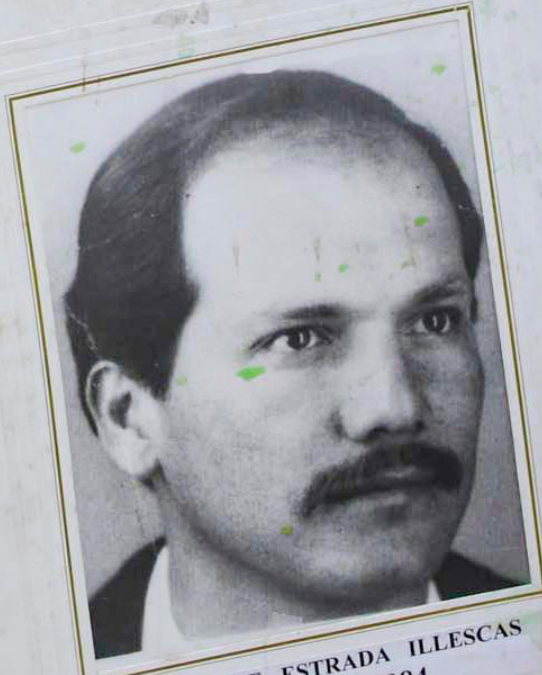
“ We continue our fight for justice, so these human rights violations never happen again. ——— ”

MARIA ALICIA CATLAN

Member of AMDE in Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, and survivor of the armed conflict in Guatemala.



Teresa Chub chij



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15 MAYO 1984



We recognise that fighting impunity is a long-term and inter-generational process, that is highly political and requires our approach to be diverse, combining legal, social, and economic dimensions.

Impunity Watch was originally set up in response to calls from Guatemalan human rights groups for support of their struggle for redress after the civil war of 1960-1996. We were founded as a project of Solidaridad¹ in 2004, and became an independent organisation in 2008. We currently work in Central America, North Africa and the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Middle East and the Western Balkans. We have presence in Guatemala and Burundi, and our headquarters are in The Hague, The Netherlands.

We have learned that there is a need for long-term relationships that build trust and solidarity. We have also learned that meaningful change comes only by actively collaborating with those who have themselves been victims. This drives our decisions on where we engage and how we expand.

The trend can be for implementing shorter-term interventions with quick results that feel

foreign to those they are meant to be helping. We are committed to promoting long-term engagements in our programming, operations and advocacy, working together with victims and survivors, ensuring they are heard and at the heart of change.

About this plan

The last strategic period saw us increase our level of experience and the numbers of programmes we implement. We continue to reflect on the field of human rights more generally, as well as our own work. We know we cannot fight impunity without seeking systemic change in partnership with others, and this will guide all our work in the next strategic period.

We sense a growing frustration that victims of serious human rights violations and abuses haven't received the answers they deserve for the wrongs they have suffered. Structural causes of impunity, such as inequality, oppression and marginalisation remain, and victims are left behind in their call for their right to receive justice, undermining their demand to prevent conflict and violence in the future.

1. Solidaridad is an international civil society organisation with over 50 years of experience in developing solutions to make communities more resilient, <https://www.solidaridadnetwork.org/>

Impunity has further increased over recent years, with COVID-19 and other crises seeing authorities use violence to crush dissent and persecute critics, shrinking the ability of civil society to have its demands met, and frustrating the promise of human rights for all. International policy approaches to justice are driven by short-term economic, political and security interests and often disconnected from what local communities and broader societies need. We saw this in the tragic case of Afghanistan, where decades of military, diplomatic and humanitarian interventions did little to address the root causes of violence.

This needs to change. Both at an international level and internally as an organisation, we are deepening our focus and analysis to understand what change really means and how we can make it happen. This will involve trying out different approaches that have been developed in partnership with victims of violence and discrimination. We seek to reflect on the systems and structures that continue to perpetuate impunity, and reflect on our own role in contributing to efforts to combat it, working together with grassroots movements to seek justice.

It's clear that more is needed than implementing ad hoc projects. There is a need to take a political approach that supports the creation of a united front against impunity for past and present crimes both locally and internationally. Building coalitions and

pursuing collective action for change are part of our work to help victims and society at large.

This plan involves identifying the needs and aspirations of victims. Impunity Watch, with our long-term commitments on the ground and focus on systemic causes for impunity will act as a broker in the years to come between needs on the ground and policy decisions made globally.



PHOTO: CARLOS ALONZO/IMPUNITY WATCH

“It is our responsibility (as victims and survivors) to lead the way by walking, to draw the path, to fight and show solidarity.”

FATNA EL BOUIH Co-Founder, Relais Prison-Société Association, Morocco.

Our vision and mission

Our vision is that victims of serious human rights violations can shape the processes of justice to get redress and contribute to addressing the root causes of impunity. This will lead to justice and accountability becoming the norm.



PHOTO: CARLOS ALONZO/IMPUNITY WATCH

Our mission: We work together with victims, survivors and communities affected by human rights violations to transform justice by:



1. **Gathering and sharing knowledge** on the root causes of impunity and what justice means from a victim perspective.

Growing partnerships and working with coalitions of victims so that their collective voice and demands are strengthened.

2.



3. **Mobilising joint political action** with victims to ensure that justice processes are shaped by them, and policymakers act on their demands.

The joint work with victims, survivors and affected communities is at the heart of everything we do.

What is impunity?

A climate of impunity exists when those in power systematically abuse human rights, commit crimes or other misdeeds and exclude others from opportunities without fear of consequences.

Impunity can be embedded in the guise of racism, gender inequality, other forms of discrimination, and harsh practices of violent or militarised masculinity – within the security sector and beyond. Existing national and international institutions and other mechanisms are currently not equipped to respond to these issues in a meaningful way, to restore justice and accountability.

“Every detainee is a human soul with a full life to live. We’re not talking about numbers. We’re talking about humans, about our sons, about our loved ones.”

FADWA MAHMOUD Families for Freedom, Syria.

This is because impunity is the result of profoundly unequal power relations, historical abuses, a lack of transparency, authoritarian governments, failed international interventions and actions, and state institutions controlled by corrupt elites. In the societies in which we work we see no accountability for wrongdoing; no chance of legal action that can bring about change. Calls for accountability are

suppressed; division and hate speech are used to intimidate opposition; trauma and suffering are ingrained and unaddressed; and there is a fatigue of inadequate and short-lived responses by international actors.

There are profound consequences for all aspects of society, especially those with authoritarian governments, and those suffering from conflict and economic oppression. Inequality is fuelled; the most vulnerable are disproportionately affected. People’s trust in social and political institutions and in each other is undermined. The chance of meaningful, fair, effective and peaceful change is diminished.

For these reasons we must seek to overcome impunity wherever it exists by increasing our efforts locally and globally. And we must do it together with the victims that have been wronged and who each deserve an answer to help them come to terms with the injustices they have faced.

Transitional justice

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IS AN APPROACH TO DEALING WITH LEGACIES OF SYSTEMIC OR MASSIVE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. IT AIMS TO PROVIDE REDRESS FOR VICTIMS WHILST REINFORCING CONDITIONS THAT PREVENT ABUSES FROM RECURRING, SUCH AS PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND RECONCILIATION.



PHOTO: PAUL WAGNER/THE SYRIA CAMPAIGN

Our theory of change

Overcoming impunity requires long-term commitment and engagement. Interventions must consider that impunity is endemic in structures in society and there are many inhibitors to consider when we look at how to overcome it. These have increased over the years.



PHOTO: CRISTINA CHIQUIN/IMPUNITY WATCH

Our strategies are built on an in-depth understanding of local, regional and global challenges that victims face. We work to increase our understanding of their situations, together with our partners and the groups we work alongside, helping us to evolve as an organisation that seeks to contribute to the fight against impunity.

A key aspect to overcoming impunity is to see the interconnections between the issues we face, and putting interventions in motion that have the potential for creating change.

Based on our experience, the following are key inhibitors to overcoming impunity:

1. Knowledge is disconnected: What is known about the causes and consequences of impunity, and its impacts on victims and other vulnerable groups, is often disjointed from the processes that seek to address these issues. For example measures to seek justice, truth, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence may fail to connect with what victims want and need. This undermines efforts to seek justice and accountability, missing essential opportunities for change.

2. Barriers to meaningful victim participation: While victim participation is firmly enshrined in international standards and considered a key driver in overcoming impunity, in practice there is a lack of will to ensure this participation is meaningful and leads to long-term change. There are also practical barriers that stand in the way of enabling those most affected by mass atrocities and other victims to participate. These can include trauma felt by victims, stigmatising those who have suffered, and sufficient resources to support them at the grassroots. In our work, we focus on gender barriers, the way other forms of discrimination combine to inhibit participation, and the impact on different generations – for instance the way young people can struggle to be heard.



PHOTO: CRISTINA CHIQUIN/IMPUNITY WATCH

“ Transitional justice has changed my life. When we teach transitional justice, people understand that evils do not come from ethnicity. ”

BIGIRIMANA DONAVINE Monitor, mother and teacher, Burundi.

3. Lack of political will: Overcoming impunity requires political will at a local and global level but we often see other policies being given a higher priority. We also see an indifference and lack of solidarity with victims of serious human rights violations. There are hierarchies of victims, leaving some ignored and discriminated against. We observe technocratic approaches² in justice systems. These can be narrow and top-down and suppress grassroots calls for change. We see fragmentation in civil society, often driven by partisan agendas or competition around funding. Pulling the fight against impunity in different directions in this way undermines the possibility of working together.

“ The conditions of exclusion, racism and labour exploitation that gave rise to the armed conflict have not changed. ”

FELICIANA MACARIO

CONAVIGUA (The National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala).

2. By 'technocratic approaches' we mean delegating public authority to an elite grouping with scientific expertise, their legitimacy derived from their perceived superior knowledge. In a technocracy, decisions can be challenged only by other experts. Everyone else must sit back and watch.



Our theory of change

These interventions and outcomes happen at local, national, regional and international levels.



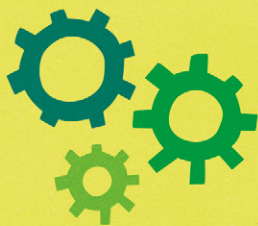
KEY SHIFTS

OUR VISION



Victims

Participate in justice processes



Decision makers

Act on victims' demands

JUSTICE



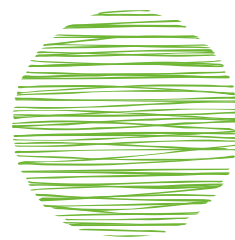
Root causes of impunity are addressed



Accountability and rule of law become the norm



Victims continue to be engaged in justice processes



To address the obstacles to overcoming impunity, three intervention strategies drive our theory of change:

1. Gathering and sharing knowledge: We share our own knowledge and that of others to help enhance the expertise of those we collaborate with. This strengthens their own strategies to overcome the legacies and root causes of violence and systemic impunity.

Our research, policy work, training, capacity building and support, as well as our communications efforts, are opportunities for knowledge sharing for local and international partners. For example, in Guatemala our strategies have been successful in helping our partners to challenge impunity before national and regional courts. In Burundi, Impunity Watch collaborated with community-based, truth-seeking processes that enabled young people to research their community's history of violence. This helped different generations communicate with each other and facilitated

local memory initiatives, helping to ensure that violence will not recur.

Our extensive and comparative research on victim participation in transitional justice has shown that those most affected by abuse are denied the ability to participate fully in justice processes, both formal and informal. Our latest research in Iraq, Burundi and Guatemala has focused on gender and reveals the way militarised or violent masculinities – the idea that men must prove their worth through violent action and dominance – stand in the way of true justice. Our global research has shown more broadly that policymaking is detached from grassroots experiences and expertise.

2. Growing partnerships and coalitions: One of our core missions is to help create partnerships, build strong coalitions, and work with groups of victims and survivors in order to combat impunity.



PHOTO: SANDRA SEBASTIAN/IMPUNITY WATCH

“The most important element of our partnership with Impunity Watch is that it genuinely supports victim organisations to be autonomous and pursue justice by putting all of its resources, including networking and experience, at the service of victim organisations and making sure that their voices are at the forefront. —”

AHMAD HELMI Co-founder of the Ta’afi Initiative, Syria.

We collaborate with grassroots justice initiatives, facilitating access to those who create policies. We provide policy advice for victims, survivors, and marginalised groups. For instance, our ongoing work with Syrian family associations seeking missing persons has helped to formulate a Charter on Truth and Justice that spells out the families’ clear demands.

Another example is our work in helping to establish the International Network of Victims and Survivors of Serious Human Rights Abuses (INOVAS), a transnational survivors’ network that helps strengthen the voices and demands of survivors in relevant policy debates.

3. Mobilising political action:

Building on these first two intervention strategies, Impunity Watch connects knowledge and demands from coalitions to relevant regional, national and international policymakers.

We collaborate with victims and affected communities, and lobby alongside them so agendas are based on their own needs and

aspirations. In this way, we do not initiate nor dictate local agendas but negotiate side by side with those we work with. Our lobbying work with a group of independent justice actors helped bring the issue of the persecution of Guatemalan activists and justice officials to the attention of European policymakers, contributing to a European Parliament resolution denouncing this behaviour and calling for action³. We are helping to advance the demands laid out in the Syrian-led Charter on Truth and Justice⁴ by advocating at the UN General Assembly for an international institution to be established in Syria to support the search for missing persons. In Burundi our programme designed a strategy aiming to coach a group of women to participate in politics. We also worked with a group of men to gain their support for what the women were achieving.

In all our work we advocate for the needs of victims to be included in policies on justice and the rule of law, helping to ensure they can shape decisions that affect their lives.

3. The European Parliament resolution on the human rights situation in Guatemala was passed on 7 April 2022. 4. In 2021, five Syrian victim associations launched a joint Truth and Justice Charter to set out their demands for ending arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in Syria. The associations are: Association of Detainees and Missing Persons in Sednaya Prison; Caesar Families Association; Coalition of Families of Persons Kidnapped by ISIS (Massar); Families for Freedom; and Ta’afi Initiative. Impunity Watch supports them with strategy and advocacy work.



Lessons from our previous strategic period

Our previous strategic plan enabled us to become more targeted, strategic and skilful in working towards our vision, with our commitment and focus acknowledged by many outside the organisation.

Our level of collaborative work within movements and coalitions has grown, at a local and global level. Internally we have strengthened our fundraising and communications departments. We stayed true to our vision and mission, despite the shifting political and geographic priorities of our donors which led to constraints on some of the ways we were able to allocate our resources.

Using partner and stakeholder feedback as well as our own internal review of achievements and challenges, we are satisfied that Impunity Watch met its objectives. The feedback we've received externally and from our own research is that we should continue our work on victim participation and also **sharpen our understanding of strategies to overcome impunity more generally and uproot its causes.** This is what victims want to see.

What follows is a snapshot of more specific lessons that inform the way forward for the strategic planning period 2023-2027, developed from stakeholder and staff consultation.

1. Gathering and sharing knowledge: Our work on sharing knowledge with victims' groups and local communities is paying off. Our partners praise our work and

value the advisory support they receive. They inform us that Impunity Watch does not tell victim associations what they should do, but is willing to listen, provide advice and enable victim associations to retain control over their own activities.



Our research and reviews demonstrate that victim participation is not yet well established and for this reason does not play its full part in overcoming impunity. We have focused on sharpening understanding around formal and informal victim participation in transitional justice processes. This must translate now into wider change within the way whole systems function. We work to link experiences on the ground with the behaviour of policy and decision makers.

We can still expand our international advocacy tools and engage more with international institutions including the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU).

Through our research, we need to increase our knowledge base on ‘gender-transformative’ approaches⁵ and how they can help to overcome impunity. This has been a key recommendation from our team. Input from our programmes will help us provide a framework for mutual learning and engagement with policymakers so that their interventions are geared more clearly to transformation and change.

Over the past five years we have gained important additional knowledge on what it takes to overcome impunity in the contexts in which we work and beyond. Our experiences in affected communities, coalition building and victim participation have shown us that we have learned important lessons in how to make our approaches politically sensitive, and how to handle issues concerning gender with care.

To ensure these lessons have an impact on our future work, we will invest in strengthening our planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning capabilities. This will enable us to take a broader perspective, beyond individual projects and programmes. We will be able to develop a tailored approach to capturing change that will help us understand whether we are making progress towards our objectives or whether adaptations need to be made. A tailored approach will be crucial to ensure our monitoring, evaluation and learning system remains manageable, preserves our creativity and flexibility, and does not become an end in itself but rather a tool that helps us to be more effective.

Gender-transformative approach

A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO JUSTICE FOCUSES ON ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITIES AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE; TRANSFORMING GENDER STEREOTYPES, INCLUDING VIOLENT OR MILITARISED MASCULINITIES THAT PERPETUATE CYCLES OF VIOLENCE AND REPRESSION; AND PROMOTING THE AGENCY AND LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN.

“Victims and survivors on the ground have a vision, a locally led and transformative approach. They need long-term resources to preserve and maintain their goals.”

RAM KUMAR BHANDARI Network of Families of the Disappeared/NEFAD, Nepal.

5. A gender-transformative approach focuses on addressing the root causes of gender inequalities and sexual and gender-based violence, such as violent masculinities and gender stereotypes.



2. Growing partnerships and coalitions: Our partnerships have grown over the last five years with the growth of our organisation. Over the next five years we need to take stock of what we have learned and how we can work with our partners in our drive to overcome impunity. Key issues include how to engage in topics beyond our core focus, in line with expectations from our partners. We will consider how to respond to the trend amongst institutional donors to increasingly turn towards international NGOs (including Impunity Watch) to act as a sub-contractor towards national and grassroots organisations. We will also examine our own role as an actor in the fight against impunity vis-à-vis our role in collaborating to build and support movements.

Listening to our partners is paramount. In designing future projects, partners have recommended we invest more in psychosocial support for victims and we are clear that funding for these services should be included. This support already plays a significant role in our work in Guatemala and Burundi and will continue to be included in the work of the Iraq and Syria country programmes.

A key lesson is the importance of supporting emerging victim initiatives in a collaborative manner, in other words how to make new and growing coalitions and networks sustainable. The work in Guatemala, with Syrian victims' associations and INOVAS, and our comparative research on victim participation in different contexts among others will allow us to develop further our approach to making a meaningful contribution to maintaining victims' movements and coalitions, at local and global levels.

Our long-term engagements reveal to us how needs are changing on the ground. We've been asked by stakeholders to increase our focus, potentially by exploring the topics of corruption, independence of the judiciary, and preventing and reducing violence, going beyond 'classic' work on overcoming impunity (e.g. transitional justice). While there may be risks in departing from our core business, we have to recognise the growing complexities in the world today and the need to connect different kinds of interventions. We need to ask how we can adapt as an organisation to changing environments with changing needs; what value do we add as an organisation and what role do we play; what risks might this involve to our staff and organisationally; and where do we draw the line on where and how to engage.



PHOTO: CARTER_PHOTOGRAPHY257/IMPUNITY WATCH



PHOTO: PAUL WAGNER/THE SYRIA CAMPAIGN

3. Mobilising political action: The way we work needs to be developed to ensure that globally our objectives are met. We need to improve our visibility and strengthen our voice, to work with victims to ensure their needs and aspirations are taken forward by decision makers in policies that aim to overcome impunity. This will include re-orienting priorities and processes to make them more grassroots-friendly and achieving more sustainable and diversified funding. We have extensive experience through our programmes that shows where international commitments can be built.

Constant digital transformation and its consequences require deeper reflection on both the opportunities and challenges for activism. The enormous speed and acceleration in our work through new technologies needs to be assessed from the perspective of impact on victims' participation and on organisations, for instance how it affects the wellbeing of staff.

Mobilising political action requires reflecting more deeply and engaging in active lobbying around funding that can make an impact and contribute to change. The last strategic planning period reaffirmed the need to

establish long-term financial support. We need to seek a more diverse donor base that understands the needs of our organisation and the movement we are part of. At the same time, it also means a need to ensure we have effective operational structures in place that enable us to meet our commitments and work towards our priorities. There is a necessity to engage more proactively with donors to bridge the disconnect between the grassroots and donors' priorities. International donors need to recognise that, once victim-centred initiatives are supported and like-minded victim associations become increasingly organised, they cannot divest as this would, once again, undermine trust.

“Justice cannot be only about criminal or legal proceedings, justice also means equity and fairness.”

KARIM ABDESSALEM
President of the Association for Justice and Rehabilitation, Tunisia.



Objectives 2023–2027

What do we want to achieve in the next five years in our mission to overcome impunity?

Based on the lessons and our commitment to deepening our understanding of and contribution to change, the following section outlines our substantive objectives for the next five years.

Our programme objectives for 2023–2027 have been distilled from our theory of change; a strategic planning process which included broad consultations with our staff, partners and stakeholders; mid-term reviews of our programmes; our practical experience during the past five years; and our recent research findings. These include the 2020–2021 research project on victim participation in informal transitional justice processes.

find ways to enhance our role in contributing to overcoming impunity. Victims have a right to receive answers about the wrongs they have suffered and know that root causes of impunity are being addressed to prevent re-occurrence. For us, at the heart of transformation are local initiatives, victims' movements and civic resistance.

Transformation from a gender perspective, along with victim participation and politically sensitive approaches, was already a programme objective in the last strategic plan. We will continue these objectives but will look at them more specifically from the perspective of how they may bring change and overcome impunity.

Our organisation will stay committed to research as a backbone of our policy work.



PHOTO: CRISTINA CHIQUIN/IMPUNITY WATCH

Programme objectives

The focus of the upcoming strategic planning period will be on promoting systemic change.

We will go back to the roots of our work and

“A key priority will be to contribute towards building stronger coalitions and partnerships that focus on achieving meaningful victim participation. —”

IMPUNITY WATCH

Here are priority areas that we will focus on over the next five years to make a lasting contribution to systemic change. They are grouped around the objectives of our intervention strategy:

Objective 1: Gather and share knowledge to deepen understanding of the root causes and consequences of impunity, informed by grassroots perspectives.

By deepening our understanding of root causes and consequences, we will gain better insights into how change happens at different levels, using this knowledge to inform our strategies. This will ensure policymaking is informed by grassroots perspectives, and strengthen coalitions.

Focus areas include considering the issues of gender and conflict, including militarised masculinities; the link between impunity and corruption; and the more globalised aspects of the fight against impunity involving the political economy. We will continue to use a locally informed and collaborative research methodology that is based in and supports grassroots movements and participation. We will conduct targeted research on transformative reparations, youth inclusion, dealing with trauma and psychosocial support, and militarised masculinities. This will be done in an inclusive, collaborative and participatory manner.

Objective 2: Strengthen key partnerships at international, national and regional levels, and develop new coalitions and collaborations to fight systemic impunity more effectively.

A key priority in the next five years will be to contribute towards building stronger coalitions and partnerships that focus on achieving meaningful victim participation. This has begun with INOVAS, the national victims' platform in Guatemala, the support for families of the missing in Syria, and the creation of

civic platforms in Iraq and women groups in Burundi. Making these voices heard and giving them meaning through representation will contribute to our work in overcoming impunity.



PHOTO: JUSTICE FOR GIRLS' PROTEST IN ZAGREB. THE BALKANS INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING NETWORK.

We will deepen our existing collaborations with partners such as INOVAS and identify new entry points with other victims' initiatives and movements. This will involve mapping where these movements exist and the actors that support these movements, helping us to understand more clearly the general landscape and our role within that. An important component of our work on partnerships and coalitions will be a strong communications strategy that will promote the voices of victims and Impunity Watch more broadly. This can include sharpening our narrative and storytelling approaches, increasing visibility through campaigns, events and digital communications tools, increasing contacts with media and developing targeted papers for policymakers.

Objective 3: Increase our grassroots partners' and Impunity Watch's presence and visibility in key policy hubs at the UN, EU and AU, mobilising political action to combat impunity.

In the upcoming five years we will increase our engagement at the international and regional levels, using grassroots knowledge as part of a critical strategy to promote approaches that have the potential to contribute to meaningful change.

As an international organisation with strong foundations in grassroots movements, we have the experience and responsibility to engage further to help to close the gap between the needs and aspirations of victims in the fight against impunity and international responses.

We will strengthen our presence and voice in key international policy hubs such as the EU, UN and AU. We will look for entry points for

change as well as identifying, together with victims, other policy spaces that could make a difference in the fight against impunity. This will include activities such as annual events linking victim participation with a specific country focus or to policy processes such as the SDG High Level Panel. We will support international monitoring mechanisms to take on grassroots voices and aspirations in the fight against impunity.

“Often, we feel alone in our countries. Solidarity is a way for us to build bridges, and get our voices heard.”

MIGUEL ITZEP Coordinator of Q'Anil Tinamit, Guatemala.

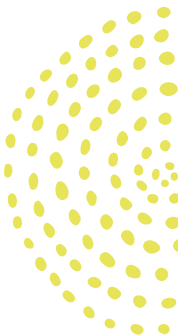


PHOTO: CRISTINA CHIQUIN/IMPUNITY WATCH

Organisational objectives

The organisational priority for this strategic period is to be better equipped to support the ambitions laid out in our theory of change. It is not a re-organisation but a refocus of our priorities to be more targeted.

There is also a need to investigate the feasibility of balancing substantive needs with our level of capacity as an organisation, while providing space for creativity and flexibility in our complex mission. What follows are three focus areas that are important to strengthen our interventions so they can be more effective in contributing to change.

“If perpetrators are not held accountable through fair trials, you or your children might be the victims in the future.”

BASMA AL DAKHI

Yazidi survivor and peace mediator in Northern Iraq.

Objective A: Strengthen our processes of internal learning and the way we generate and exchange knowledge to deepen our understanding of systemic change, how change happens, and to reflect on our role and contribution to combating impunity.

The need for more internal learning and exchange is a key recommendation from the consultation with staff. The topic of gender was highlighted and could be a focus of intense internal learning, as well as how to implement a politically sensitive approach to overcome impunity and how to build partnerships. This means we will increase guidance inside the organisation and to develop a strategy allowing for more learning, we can develop planning and monitoring tools to be used in specific contexts. Given the increasing

importance of technology and the speed of digital change in our field of work, we will focus on developing our understanding of how they can help us contribute to social change. To guide our work under this objective we will create a team to lead the process and ensure it is linked to our objectives.

Objective B: Ensure stable and sustained resourcing to allow us to work towards our strategic objectives and priorities.

The previous strategic period saw an increase in our income from fundraising. We secured important sources of unrestricted funding from the Dutch National Postcode Lottery and Oak Foundation. We strengthened our relationships with key donors including the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and set up a new form of fundraising through an online campaign in support of the Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa court case, for victims of violence and repression perpetrated by the government against peasant leaders and communities in Guatemala in 1970s–80s.

In this next period we will consider the growth of our organisation in a sustainable fashion, in recognition of our diversity of programmes, each with different needs. We will focus on consolidating our key donor relationships to ensure continued funding that contributes to the financial sustainability of the organisation. These are particularly challenging times with further reductions in development aid budgets, meaning the organisation of funding changes in a way that tends to favour larger NGOs, and refocuses geographic and other priorities. Efforts seeking to address systemic drivers of impunity are slipping down the agenda, with lists of priority countries and regions being increasingly restricted. In Guatemala, for example, many donors have, or are in the process of, drawing down their support. In response we will explore opportunities to apply our knowledge and experience within the broader region, to



strengthen solidarity in response to the rapidly deteriorating situation there and to draw out important reflections and learnings on the fight against impunity.

While we recognise that we must continue to rely on institutional donors, we will also take steps to diversify funding sources, most notably through cultivating relationships with private foundations that provide more flexible funding opportunities.

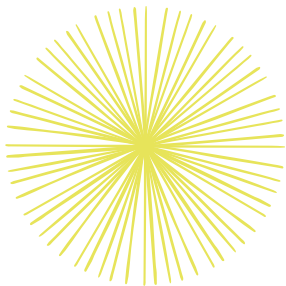
During this period, we will engage more proactively with institutional donors and private funders by discussing issues of mutual interest and importance. Institutional donors have a dual role as funders and policymakers. We plan to initiate discussions and reflections on how these roles should be better aligned and more supportive of civil society. This could include conveying the importance of responsible donorship in the context of changing political priorities and highlighting the impact donor practices have on the ability of civil society organisations and grassroots groups to access funding. We see an increasing desire among some donors to move beyond the traditional relationship between themselves and those receiving their grants – the ‘grantees’ – and engage in more equitable partnerships. While we welcome these ambitions, we recognise the inherent power imbalance that comes with control of financial resources and will address this with donors. We will seek to engage more proactively with groups and coalitions involved in the growing discussions on how funders,

especially philanthropic funders, can redress these imbalances and shift more power and resources to grantees to identify priorities and make decisions on how funding can be used most effectively.

Objective C: Ensure appropriate structures, systems, and processes are strengthened and in place to enable us to work towards our strategic objectives in a coordinated, cohesive, and deliberate manner.

We will use the upcoming strategic planning period to strengthen further management structures in the organisation. A key focus of the upcoming five years is to understand more clearly how we form partnerships; to clarify the different types of partnerships we engage in and the impacts of these on our organisational structure. This will include consideration of how we respond and adapt to the continuing trend among donors to favour funding consortia. We will invest strategically in better understanding how digital development relates to our operational work, as noted above.

The growth of the organisation and complexities of our work require additional resources to invest in strengthening our operational and developmental capacity. We will increase these resources to bolster our priorities such as our policy and gender work that cuts across different programmes. To support us in these endeavours we see a need for our board to strengthen and grow, to ensure it holds the necessary expertise, networks and representation to meet our objectives.



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