



**TRIAL**  
International

# PAVING THE WAY FOR JUSTICE

*STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024  
SHORT VERSION*

# **TRIAL INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN (2021-2024)**

**TRIAL International is a non-governmental organization that uses the law to fight impunity for international crimes, including genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture, sexual violence, enforced disappearances and the crime of aggression. In this endeavor, the organization stands firmly on the side of victims and survivors, supporting them in their quest for justice.**

**Founded in 2002, TRIAL International has over 40 staff in 2021, operating in a dozen conflict and post-conflict countries. TRIAL International has developed an innovative and victim-centered approach to help survivors of unfathomable abuses obtain justice before national and international legal fora, including through the use of state-of-the-art investigations and strategic litigation. The organization also works with and supports local NGOs, judicial actors/tresses, and victims' groups to pursue justice close to home where it matters most for survivors and affected communities.**

**Since its creation, TRIAL International has grown exponentially, significantly honed its ability to investigate and innovatively use the law to pursue accountability, and secured numerous victories for victims and survivors of international crimes.**

**Between 2021 and 2024, TRIAL International plans to build on the lessons learned through litigating cases, while at the same time navigating a growing number of challenges. We intend to focus on consolidating and improving our ongoing work, enhancing our investigative capacity and innovative use of the law, and strengthening the governance and management structures of the organization.**

# GUIDING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

## ➤ Victim- and survivor-centered approach

TRIAL International prioritizes the interests and perspectives of victims and survivors in all aspects of its work, endeavoring to transform them into rights-holders and **active agents of their own quest for justice**. Our main focus is to strengthen their participation in judicial processes and expand their access to reparations. We care about their security and well-being, ensure we always obtain informed consent, and strive to avoid further traumatization. We link our activities with the work of **other actors/tresses supporting victims and survivors** as much as possible, such as in the area of medical and psychosocial support. The organization works according to the most stringent confidentiality protocols and fully respects its legal professional obligations and code of ethics.

## ➤ Human dignity and respect for diversity

TRIAL International believes that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights. That applies to the victims and survivors for whom we strive to obtain justice. But it is true also of the relationships that bind us with each other, with our partners and our stakeholders. This belief pushes us to be kind and caring and not to tolerate injustice. TRIAL International values diversity and treats all people with respect and dignity. The organization works effectively with stakeholders from all backgrounds, irrespective of age, gender, culture or religion.

## ➤ Gender mainstreaming and transformation

TRIAL International takes a **gender-sensitive approach** in all of its activities out of the realization that international crimes impact women and men differently. The organization has a strong focus on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), particularly with regard to women, as it believes this to be a critical area for tackling impunity and redressing harm suffered by survivors of such crimes. Our work around reparations also stems from the strong belief that reparations that support women's empowerment can contribute to **transformative justice** by placing women in a better position to break with historic patterns of subordination and social exclusion. TRIAL International is also committed to the promotion of gender equality and to the principles of gender balance and equal opportunity in its decision-making structures and processes.

## ➤ Legal innovation

The law can be a crucial instrument of change when used in innovative ways. **Developing progressive judicial strategies and breaking new legal ground** have long been part of our DNA. We also believe that new technologies, responsibly used, provide tremendous opportunities in the fight against impunity.

## ➤ Expertise and strategic work

TRIAL International has increasingly focused its work on strategic and high-profile investigations and cases that can make a real difference in the fight against impunity. We value **quality over quantity** and carefully weigh all relevant factors before deciding to take on a case. We attempt to identify gaps in the legal framework in key jurisdictions and cases that are

likely to have a broader impact on the fight against impunity and bring about structural change. We strive to go where other actors/tresses are not involved or are not fulfilling all of the survivors' needs, in order to spread the reach of justice and **ensure our work has meaningful added value.**

### ➤ Collaborative partnerships, capacity building, and expertise sharing

We highly value working in partnership with other civil society groups, in particular with local actors/tresses and victim/survivor organizations. We seek to work with groups who can take on individual cases as well as organizations committed to broader strategic objectives. We strive to build the investigative and legal capacities of our partners, thus helping to **ensure local actors/tresses take ownership** over judicial processes and broader change in their country.

### ➤ Accountability

**We demand accountability for perpetrators.** We also recognize that we are ourselves accountable, primarily to the victims and survivors we support, but also to the communities in which we operate, and to our donors. We constantly apply the **highest professional standards** and review our work to improve practice and bring about necessary change. We try to lower our carbon footprint. We reject corruption, fraud and nepotism, manage our resources as efficiently as we can, and are as transparent as our operations allow.

# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## 1. Building a world in which perpetrators — individuals, corporate actors/tresses and States alike — are increasingly held accountable for their crimes

We will continue to work towards a world in which perpetrators of international crimes are increasingly held accountable. This may be direct perpetrators, military or civilian superiors, or members of armed groups or of private military companies, but also business persons or corporate entities and States. Whatever the case, we will find ways to **challenge the well-rooted structures of impunity** that allow these perpetrators to act and promote better legal frameworks for ensuring accountability.

We will use whatever legal means are available to bring perpetrators to book, whether in the country where the crimes were committed, in front of other national jurisdictions, or before international courts or bodies. We believe that **trials at the local level have the most significant impact on victims and survivors** of the crimes and affected communities, and we will therefore make local trials a main focus of our work. However, where domestic accountability is not possible, we will use **universal jurisdiction** to ensure perpetrators are nonetheless held accountable.

We will also contribute to efforts at preserving documentation and evidence for future trials, including through collaboration with established investigative mechanisms. Whatever the avenues available, we will strategically use them and focus on cases that have the potential to uphold the rule of law and meaningfully contribute to changes on the ground.

## 2. Enforcing the right to justice, truth, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence for victims and survivors

We will act so that victims and survivors see their right to justice, truth, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence respected. We will take a broad approach to justice, including **seeking and obtaining reparations for victims**, survivors, and affected communities. Such compensation is often left out of judicial processes but constitutes a key demand of victims in their quest for justice.

We commit to **placing the needs of victims and survivors at the center of our work** and to making sure their wishes and needs are understood, respected, and eventually met.

We will continue to tackle the serious, but often neglected, issue of sexual violence in conflict. We will also push to ensure perpetrators are vetted and removed from government service and that abusive regimes are sanctioned appropriately and held to provide redress to their citizens and affected communities.

### 3. Increasing local ownership and enhancing engagement with relevant stakeholders

**We will strive for justice to be brought closer to where it really matters.** We strongly believe that justice lacks meaning if it does not make a difference on the ground where the crimes took place, especially for victims, survivors, and affected communities.

We place the utmost value on our work with and support of **local actors/tresses**, who have the strongest interest in achieving accountability and broader reform in their countries and who are often best placed to bring about such change. We will strengthen efforts to share expertise and build the capacity of local actors/tresses, such as victims' and survivors' groups and local NGOs who support them, along with local lawyers. We will encourage them to play a stronger role in investigating and litigating cases. In the coming years, we hope to build and reinforce pools of lawyers that are empowered in a sustainable way to strategically use available legal tools to combat impunity in their respective communities. More recently, we have also started to train judicial actors/tresses such as prosecutors, judges, and investigators, an initiative we will pursue in the coming years.

Finally, we will increase our engagement with relevant stakeholders to ensure that **the call for justice continues to grow louder and stronger** and is accompanied by adequate donor support.

### 4. Building an organization that is sustainable and will have a lasting impact on the fight against impunity

We are committed to **managing growth in a strategic and sustainable manner**, ensuring we have both a vision and the necessary resources before opening any new country or thematic programs, and pulling out of countries or programs once we have met our objectives and the work can be carried on by local actors/tresses.

We intend to make **continued investments in staff**, who are at the core of our work, by improving working conditions, offering additional development opportunities, and providing support to manage daily stress. We strive to invest in key positions needed to further our objectives and to better manage the overall risks to the organization, in particular around physical and technological security.

We will approach growth in a **holistic way**, weighing all relevant risks and attempting to secure more core funding for the organization. We will also optimize our governance structure, diversify the expertise and skill set of Board members and possibly expanding to include international members as well as engaging Board members more strongly in the oversight of the organization.