



# MULTI-ANNUAL STRATEGY

2021-2023

**FREE  
A  
GIRL**

Free a Girl

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# 1. THE PROBLEM

## 1.1. INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION

Despite clear commitments in the international policy agenda and international legislation, children's rights, especially the rights of girls, are still being violated. The sexual exploitation of children is a gross violation of Article 34 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed by almost every country in the world, and the accompanying Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Many countries have also signed the Stockholm Declaration (1996) and the Rio Declaration (2008), which specifically call for an end to child sexual exploitation. More recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were added to these declarations in September 2015. Adopted unanimously by governments around the world, the SDGs represent an ambitious agenda that includes obligations relating to children's rights and the rights of women and girls. SDGs 5.2 and 16.2 call for an end to abuse, exploitation, human trafficking and all forms of violence and discrimination against women, girls and children.

## 1.2. DEFINITION

A child is a victim of sexual exploitation if he or she participates in a sexual activity in exchange for something (including a gain or benefit, or merely the promise of such), offered by a third party, the perpetrator or the child themselves. Coercion or threats can be used to force a child into a sexually exploitative situation, but a child can also be persuaded to participate in a sexual activity as a result of more complex and nuanced factors. These can be of both a human and a situational nature, including unequal power relations between the victim and the perpetrator (source: Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse).<sup>1</sup>

## 1.3. SCOPE

The sexual exploitation of children (SEC) is a major problem around the world. Although exploitation happens in all countries, clear statistics are lacking. This is due to the hidden, criminal aspect of the problem, the lack of a central SEC database, and the different terminologies and definitions of SEC that are used in legislation and judicial systems, among other things. In addition, the victims do not speak out about the problem, because they are ashamed about what has happened to them and fear repercussions. Criminals also operate out of the government's sight in order to avoid arrest, meaning that this is a relatively invisible crime.<sup>2</sup>

### What do we know?

It is estimated that 2 million children fall victim to sexual exploitation every year, the majority of them girls.<sup>3</sup> It is thought that 100,000 dollars can be earned from a child<sup>4</sup>, and that a minor is exploited on average for two years before they are rescued or manage to escape.<sup>5</sup>

Girls from lower social classes are frequently more vulnerable, spend less time in education, and tend to grow up on or below the poverty line. As a result, these children are often an easy target for exploiters.<sup>6</sup> The direct and indirect effect of COVID-19 is to make these children even more vulnerable, which may magnify the problem of SEC yet further.

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1 Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

2 Barnert, Igbal, Bruce, Anoshiravani, Kolhatkar, Greenbaum (2017). Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Children and Adolescents

3 UNICEF

4 ILO 2017. Global Estimates of Modern Slavery

5 ILO 2018. Global Estimates of Modern Slavery

6 ILO 2020. Covid Impact on the child labour and forced labour

## 1.4. JUSTICE

Aside from the exploitation itself, another major problem is impunity. There are several underlying reasons for this. Many victims fail to report crimes because they are ashamed or fear reprisals, or because they are unfamiliar with the legal system.<sup>7</sup> Even if a victim does report a crime, though, this does not automatically lead to a trial, let alone a conviction, owing to the lack of legislation and policy on child sexual exploitation, the lack of knowledge about the problem and how to tackle it, corruption, the lack of resources, and the fact that it is not made a priority, among other things.<sup>8</sup>

There is a wide gulf between the number of victims of SEC and the number of convictions. Combining the many reports and statistics, we have calculated that less than 1% of perpetrators who are responsible for the sexual exploitation of minors are actually convicted.

## 1.5. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

It is expected that the abuse and exploitation of children will increase because the COVID-19 situation has left them particularly vulnerable to falling into the hands of human traffickers.

There is increased vulnerability in the countries where Free a Girl is active, because young people themselves or their families have lost income, leaving children at risk of being sexually exploited (or re-exploited) in order to provide for themselves. They are more open to human traffickers who promise them an income and accommodation elsewhere.

In countries such as Nepal and Thailand, for example, the tourism sector is a key source of income for poor families. The disappearance of this sector will result in even more unequal power relations between abusers and exploiters and their victims and families under pressure.

The home situation is unsafe, in many cases, and children and young people are at increasing risk of exposure to sexual exploitation and (domestic) violence. Now that children and young people are unable to attend school, they are spending more time online, which can bring them into contact (again) with perpetrators. Demand for online sexual services and child pornography has also increased during the pandemic.

What's more, girls are at risk of never returning to school, which reduces their chance of finding a job. In a context where children are advised to stay at home, fewer cases are detected by the police and NGOs.

The lockdown makes it impossible or difficult for the police and local NGOs to carry out investigations rescues in red light districts. As the pimps and exploiters still want to earn money, children are increasingly being offered on Internet platforms or made to perform sexual acts in front of webcams. The red-light districts are still closed in many countries.

## 1.6. ONLINE

In the past few years, we have observed a trend in our program countries towards a fall in the number of brothel rescues and the rise of more hidden locations, such as massage salons, private homes, hotels or via webcams. Online elements are increasingly playing a role in exploitation cases, including the recruitment and blackmailing of victims via social media and the offering of minor victims on the Internet for sexual exploitation online or offline.

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7 Barnert, Igbal, Bruce, Anoshiravani, Kolhatkar, Greenbaum (2017). Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Children and Adolescents

8 Barnert, Igbal, Bruce, Anoshiravani, Kolhatkar, Greenbaum (2017). Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Children and Adolescents



The shift from offline to online sexual exploitation accelerated enormously in 2020, because many red-light districts were closed due to COVID-19 measures. The perpetrators are using new technology such as social media, special fora and the dark web to contact minors and/or to exchange information about the sexual abuse of children. However, governments and local NGOs often lack sufficient in-house knowledge to conduct online investigations to trace the sexual exploitation of children. As a result, the criminals stay one step ahead and cases often remain hidden. In order to change to this, in 2019 Free a Girl launched an investigation and a workshop in India to gain more insight into the new use of technology in the sexual exploitation of children. This led to the development of a program, Smart Rescue, which will be rolled out in Free a Girl's program countries.

## 2. ABOUT FREE A GIRL

### 2.1. FOUNDING

Free a Girl was founded in 2008 by Arjan Erkel, Roelof van Laar, Evelien Hölsken and Yolanthe Cabau.

### 2.2. VISION

Every child has the right to grow up in a safe environment. All of the world's children must be protected against every form of sexual exploitation.

### 2.3. MISSION

Free a Girl fights the sexual exploitation of children.

### 2.4. OBJECTIVES

Free a Girl has two global objectives:

1. To protect all children around the world from sexual exploitation;
2. To raise awareness around the world of the existence of child sexual exploitation and the urgency of fighting it.

### 2.5. CORE VALUES

- **Action-oriented.** We take action to prevent and fight the sexual exploitation of minors. We shake up established systems, if necessary.
- **Results-oriented.** We are a professional organization with objectives that we strive to achieve. We expect our partners to do the same.
- **Effective.** We've proved ourselves since Free a Girl was founded eleven years ago. There are places where hardly any minor girls are abused anymore, more people in local communities are aware of how human traffickers operate, and 4,500 girls have been rescued from brothels in Asia. Thousands of girls can look forward to the future again.
- **Transparent.** We are open about issues, both about how we work and our operational management. Figures, facts and activities are recorded each year in the annual report, which is published on the website.
- **Distinctive.** Free a Girl is a small organization with global ambitions. We can respond quickly compared to other organizations, and we are not afraid to speak out.

## 3. FREE A GIRL'S STRATEGY

### 3.1. PROTECTING CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Free a Girl considers it intolerable that children are exploited in the sex industry. The sexual exploitation of children is one of the grossest violations of children's rights. We believe that too little concrete action is being taken around the world to fight the problem. We see a clear role for our organization in this respect, but with a sharper focus in the coming three years.

Since Free a Girl was founded in 2008, we have gained considerable expertise in both tackling SEC and in the complexity of the problem in the specific countries where we work. We believe in our strategy of rescuing minor girls, but we also believe that impunity and the great ignorance surrounding the problem are helping to maintain the system.

Fighting SEC requires a holistic approach in which various intervention strategies play a key role. Free a Girl has divided these into the following program themes: Prevention; Rescue; Rehabilitation; Reintegration; Tackling Impunity; and Lobbying & Advocacy. Not all of these themes need to be funded by Free a Girl.

In order to work more effectively and efficiently, and thus to increase our impact, in the coming three years we will focus on two themes: 1. Rescues (in combination with online research), and 2. Fighting impunity. We will continue to pay attention to acute care and aftercare for victims after they have been rescued, however, because this is an essential part of achieving sustainable rescue results and fighting impunity.

We see 2021 as an intermediary year in which we will conduct further research on online investigative methods and the causes of impunity, develop programs that focus on the two themes, and talk to partners about the consequences of this focus for their programs. If we decide to drop activities, we will always give our partners enough time to find new donors, if needs be. This may mean that we decide to end certain partnerships in 2021, and we may also bring in new partners that are more in line with our focus.

#### Selection of countries

Free a Girl is active in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Laos, Thailand, Brazil, Iraq and the Netherlands. As we will have a thematic focus, we want to maintain our ability to expand in different countries. We will develop and agree criteria for the countries in which we run projects in 2021. The decision frameworks will include issues such as the presence of good partners and available resources, but also our expertise on the local problem and the needs of local beneficiaries.

#### Fighting impunity

In 2021, we will launch research into how best to tackle the problem of impunity. The establishment of the strategy will include an evaluation of a number of current programs in order to draw on lessons learned, interviews with partners and other stakeholders, and extensive desk research. All of the information we gather will help us to determine where we need to build up more expertise or capacity at Free a Girl, or which partners we can work with that already have this expertise. We want to work towards a policy on impunity that can be applied by all our project partners and in all of the countries where we work. These will not be separate activities, but a multi-annual plan that starts with strengthening the girls' mental resilience, and then focuses further on the School for Justice program for suitable candidates.

In addition, we will focus on providing legal aid during lawsuits, and on lobbying and advocacy activities in relation to governments and law enforcement authorities. The precise approach and needs of the target group will be clarified by the planned research and evaluation track.

### Online and offline research & rescues

Free a Girl has commissioned an NGO, the Child Protection Resource Center (CPRC), to develop software that can be used in any country for online research on the clear web and the dark web.

Our partners in India and Thailand will be trained to use this software in 2021, so that they can conduct online investigations in addition to offline research. Cyber-security professionals will be hired for this purpose. In the other countries, Free a Girl will do additional research in 2021 into the partners' capacity and needs in relation to online research. All of our rescue partners will eventually use a combination of online and offline research methods when rescuing minor victims from situations of sexual exploitation. The software and the training program will be provided by Free a Girl.

### Care and rehabilitation

The care and rehabilitation of victims are not among the core activities in Free a Girl's new strategy. However, we realize that we have an obligation to ensure that victims receive proper shelter and care after they have been rescued. We will therefore continue to pay attention to acute care and aftercare for victims, because this is an essential part of achieving sustainable rescue results and fighting impunity. In the case of victims who need long-term shelter and care, we and our partners will look at how this can be secured and which additional parties could provide funding. In 2021, we will urge our partners to seek other donors for this component of the program, and we will support them with our network.

### PME

Free a Girl is working towards a programmatic approach. We will achieve a structured approach for each project, and a coherent project portfolio that clearly capitalizes on our strengths and added value.

The most important step that we have taken in this regard is the development of the Theory of Change (TOC), which gives insight into how we will achieve our strategic objectives in the coming three years. The TOC can be found in

[Annex 1](#).

In addition to the Theory of Change for Free a Girl as an organization, TOCs are also being developed for all large projects. These provide a clear overview for each project and making them easy to measure. The TOCs include indicators: realistic, measurable criteria for the progress of a project. Agreed at the beginning of a project, they allow us to monitor and evaluate whether a project is achieving its stated aims. In this way, the indicators form a link between theory and practice.

For each project, all of the indicators will be established in the planning phase. We will ensure that they are measured annually, which will both allow us to report results to donors and partners, and also allow us to adjust our strategy if we achieve fewer results than expected.

At the end of a multi-annual program, we will also have our programs evaluated by an external party, in order to be able to show the long-term impact and collate the lessons learned for the next series of programs. In this way, Free a Girl will run through the complete cycle of starting up, managing and evaluating projects, and draw lessons from them for the next cycle.

To ensure that this structure is reflected in all of our work processes, we will work on a Program Manual in 2021.

By the end of 2021, Free a Girl will have made the full shift to programmatic working and Monitoring & Evaluation.

## **3.2. RAISING AWARENESS AROUND THE WORLD OF THE EXISTENCE OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND THE URGENCY OF FIGHTING IT**

### **3.2.1. The Netherlands**

Free a Girl will carry out information activities in the Netherlands by using our social media channels in partnership with our (social) ambassadors, and by developing a program for schools. We will also intensify our contact with the media by sharing news throughout the year, keeping Free a Girl constantly visible. Our lobbying activities will focus on urging the government to free up funds from the foreign affairs budget to fight SEC. As of 2021, we will no longer carry out awareness-raising campaigns without a fundraising objective.

#### **Ambassadors**

Our ambassadors have played an important role since the organization was founded. They provide a platform for Free a Girl, and we will thus gratefully continue to work with them. The ambassadors are well-known public figures who can reach their own unique target groups. In 2021, we will take a critical look at whether our current ambassadors reflect today's society, and consider who we might add. We will also investigate whether new celebrities could be linked to specific campaigns without their becoming Free a Girl ambassadors, which would allow us to work together in a flexible and more informal way.

In 2020, Free a Girl took on 17 new ambassadors who are especially active on social media: our social media ambassadors. They play a key role in increasing familiarity with Free a Girl and raising awareness among a new, young target group (aged 15-35). A 12-month strategy and content calendar is developed for each ambassador, and each focuses on a particular aspect of the problem. By recruiting these influencers, Free a Girl has access to an entirely new target group of 6 million followers. Our aim is to have more Instagram followers than any other charity in the Netherlands within two years.

#### **Schools**

Free a Girl is also active in the Netherlands. We want to inform young people (aged 11 and upwards) about the dangers of social media and the tactics used by pimps. Rather than taking a didactical approach, we want to do this in an inspiring way by working with social ambassadors, who act as role models for many young people.

### PR & Free Publicity

We would prefer to work with a PR agency, rather than the different parties that currently provide their services for each campaign on a pro bono basis.

We will work internally to expand our media contacts, but ideally in a partnership with a single PR agency, finances allowing.

### Government policy in the Netherlands

In cooperation with partner organizations that are also active in the fight against child sexual exploitation, Free a Girl will draw attention to the structural funding for this problem, as unanimously agreed by the Dutch House of Representatives in the amendment brought by MPs Voordewind and Kuik (November 2019).

### 3.2.2. International

At the international level, students at the School for Justice will be at the forefront of our information activities. This unique program, in which survivors are trained as lawyers, public prosecutors, journalists or police officers, includes an important awareness-raising component. The students receive empowerment and media training, so that they can become change-makers in their own countries and abroad. They help to break the silence around the issue and play a unique role in raising awareness. The School for Justice program gives Free a Girl exposure in international newspapers and magazines.



## 4. FUNDRAISING

IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE THE ABOVE-MENTIONED OBJECTIVES, FREE A GIRL WILL NEED TO ACQUIRE FINANCIAL RESOURCES THROUGH FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES.

In the coming three years, Free a Girl's fundraising will focus on:

- The private market, in partnership with our ambassadors and social ambassadors. Innovative fundraising on social media (especially Instagram) among a young, committed target group, with national fundraising campaigns and individual campaigns by the ambassadors.
- Stimulating private fundraising via social media and the fundraising page on the website.
- Our own web shop, selling products that are produced in-house or in partnership with companies that want to make a difference.
- We have developed a program for businesses that allows them to become business partners for €50, €200 or €500 per month. For donations of €10,000 and above, there is the option of a tailor-made partnership that allows a company to fund a particular project. As a result, the business network should grow into a permanent pool of 100 companies in 2021.
- Expanding the Committee of Recommendation, which consists of members with large, valuable networks.
- Becoming a permanent beneficiary of the National Postcode Lottery.
- Together with our alliance partners, receiving structural funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as of 2021.
- Maintaining relations with private charitable foundations and family funds, and developing these into strategic partnerships.



## 5. HUMAN RESOURCES

Free a Girl is a medium-sized, action-oriented non-profit organization. We have three departments: Marketing & Communication, Projects, and Finance & Operations. The organigram can be found on the next page.

With our clear mission, vision and strategy, Free a Girl's course is set for the coming years. Specific objectives, activities and results will be developed each year in the annual plan.

The director manages the organization and reports to the Supervisory Board. Within her portfolio, she is specifically responsible for establishing local, regional and international fundraising and for innovation and creation within the Projects and Marketing departments. Her actions are monitored by the Supervisory Board. The Supervisory Board approves the annual plan, the policy plan, the budget and the annual accounts, and meets four times a year.

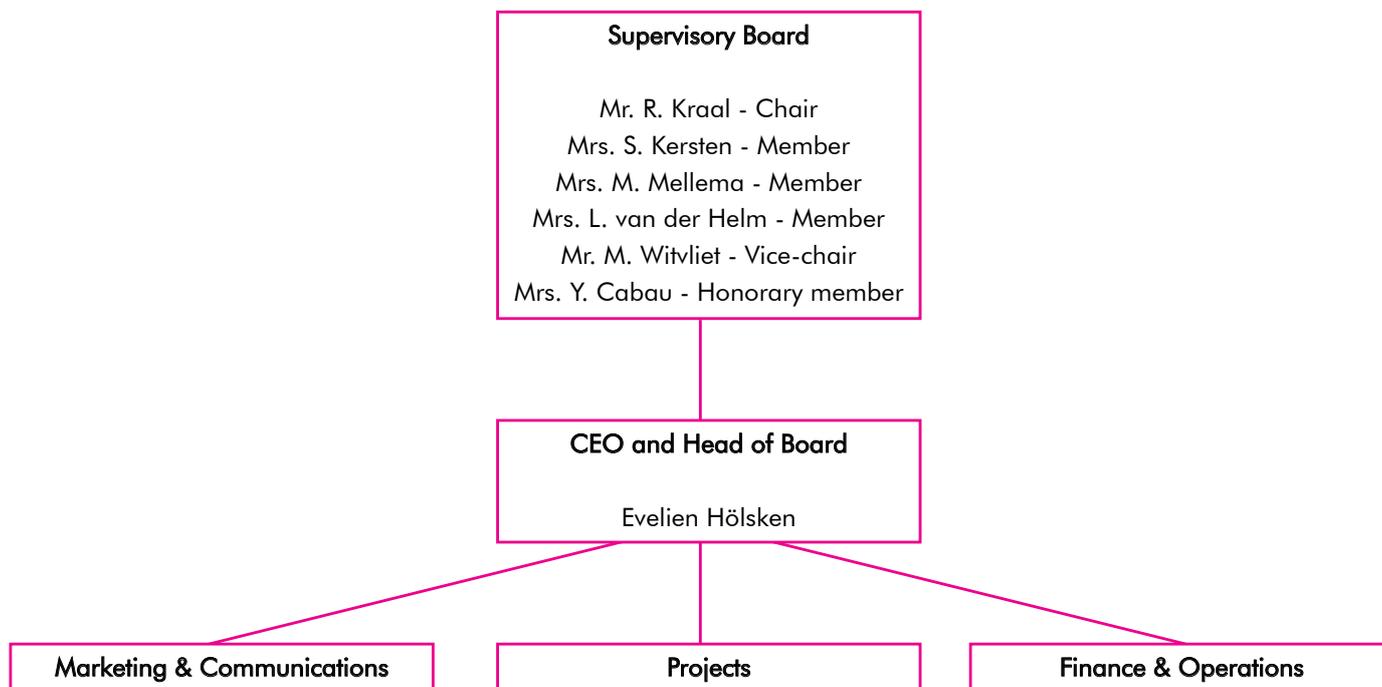
Free a Girl takes a critical approach to expenditure, and tries to ensure that as many funds as possible reach the projects in the program countries. We are transparent about expenditure; for example, the annual report is published every year with an audit statement by Free a Girl's regular accountant, Q-Concepts. Free a Girl intends to keep working with Q-Concepts.

We have developed the following policy documents, which are assessed for relevance each year by the management/director and the Supervisory Board:

- Anti-fraud and corruption policy
- Fraud prevention policy for partners
- Child safeguarding policy and code of conduct
- Whistleblowing policy
- Sanctions policy
- General code of conduct Free a Girl
- Staff manual

Finally, Free a Girl meets the requirements of the ANBI and CBF quality marks. Having ANBI status makes us an attractive prospect for donors, because the donor's gift is deductible for tax purposes. The CBF is an independent foundation that evaluates Free a Girl, monitors our spending and fundraising, and provides information and advice to the public.

Free a Girl will start 2021 with nine employees (6.9 FTE) and two freelancers. We would ideally like to expand the number of employees in the Marketing and Communication department by 2-3 FTE in the coming years. There is no need for expansion in the other departments. The employees of Free a Girl earn salaries that are comparable with the average salaries at other charities of a similar size, based on the Dutch government's pay grades (Civil Servants' Pay Decree/BBRA).



## International

### The United States

We have set up a fundraising office in the United States to raise funds and to carry out lobby activities. The office is located in New York, close to the office of the United Nations. Although the American office is managed independently and is thus separate from the Dutch organization, an MoU has been drawn up and clear agreements have been made on the use of the brand name. Sixty per cent of revenues raised in the US go to the project partners via the Dutch office.

### India

Free a Girl India was founded in order to raise awareness and funds locally. The School for Justice program and, in the longer term, the Smart Rescue program are run by Free a Girl India. At present, the team, which consists of a fundraiser, a program officer and project officers from the School for Justice program, is still paid by the office in the Netherlands, but these costs will need to be borne by India in 2021. We are looking for a director to manage the team in India. In the short term, the local organization will thus make a start on local fundraising.

The Indian office monitors and evaluates the project partners. It also has an independent board, meaning that Free a Girl India is separate from the Dutch organization. An MoU has likewise been agreed with Free a Girl India on work agreements and the use of the Free a Girl brand name.

## 6. BUDGET

The budget is based on: annual growth of 10%, a permanent partnership with the National Postcode Lottery and a multi-annual grant from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim is to grow the continuity reserve each year, until all fixed costs can be covered for a minimum of one year.

MAIN BUDGET LINES	BUDGET 2020	BUDGET 2021	BUDGET 2022	BUDGET 2023
<b>INCOME</b>				
Income from individuals	260,000	720,000	792,000	871,200
Income from companies	145,000	300,000	330,000	363,000
<i>Income from Lock me Up campaign</i>	<i>45,000</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Income from lottery organizations	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
Income from government grants	653,265	800,000	800,000	800,000
Income from institutions and foundations	280,000	400,000	440,000	484,000
Income from international (FG USA)	125,000	100,000	110,000	121,000
Income in exchange for services/products	20,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
<b>Total income</b>	<b>2,028,265</b>	<b>2,845,000</b>	<b>3,129,500</b>	<b>3,442,450</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
Project costs (GAD)	1,100,000	1,600,000	1,760,000	1,936,000
Direct and indirect project costs FG	150,000	103,000	113,300	124,630
Personnel costs	480,000	533,800	587,180	645,898
Housing costs	35,000	35,000	38,500	42,350
Office and general	90,000	101,200	111,320	122,452
Subcontracted work	125,000	133,000	146,300	160,930
Publicity & communication	100,000	100,000	110,000	121,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2,080,000</b>	<b>2,606,000</b>	<b>2,866,600</b>	<b>3,153,260</b>
<b>RESULT</b>	<b>- 51,735</b>	<b>239,000</b>	<b>262,900</b>	<b>289,190</b>

# ANNEX 1: TOC STRATEGY

