2020-2024 Strategic Plan

Approved by IFEX Council on 15 October 2019

This Strategic Plan guides IFEX’s collective scope, priorities and approach over the period 2020-2024 in promoting and defending the right to freedom of expression and information (FoE&I). It builds on IFEX’s work over the past 27 years and responds to the unfolding contexts and needs of IFEX members.
INFORMED BY THE CONTEXT, DRIVEN BY THE MEMBERS

IFEX’s strategic direction was determined by members and supported by IFEX’s partners and allies through various consultation processes that explored IFEX’s ongoing work and approaches, current contexts, future trends, and priority needs to drive impact.

RESEARCH: The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan development process began in late 2018 with research into key areas of enquiry. This research included independent evaluations of IFEX’s ongoing member support mechanisms and IFEX’s increasing voice and visibility, as well as a Think Big Tank exploring best practices for network management, engagement and operations.

PRIORITY-SETTING, LED BY MEMBERS: Building on the results of this research in 2019, all members were invited to participate in a network-wide questionnaire and consultation sessions. An independent evaluation among members, partners, allies, donors and staff assessed IFEX’s past work, strengths and weaknesses, and informed our future direction, including opportunities and threats. The consultations held at the April 2019 Strategy Conference explored current and future contexts, drivers of change and IFEX’s priorities over the next five years. The resulting priorities for IFEX’s strategic direction were refined and further developed through a series of subsequent consultations with members throughout the Summer of 2019.

MEMBER-INFORMED STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT: The IFEX Council and IFEX staff members worked with the direction provided by members to craft and refine the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, with final review and approval of the plan in October 2019.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES & DEFINITIONS

A number of critical themes cross-cut the Strategic Plan, reflecting IFEX’s values, approach and shifting contexts. This includes IFEX’s commitment to meaningfully integrate gender identity and diversity into its work, from operations and internal functions to programming, content and member support.

IFEX is also dedicated to respecting diversity and striving for equitable inclusion and representation - in particular of those who have different experiences and perceptions of issues due to intersecting identities and differing contexts. IFEX is committed to freedom of expression and information both online and offline, and considers and integrates a digital lens throughout all aspects of its work.

The following terms used throughout the IFEX 2020-2024 Strategic Plan are intended to be understood as follows.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION/ INCLUSIVITY: IFEX’s values and approaches strive to respect and reflect different social, political, economic, environmental and cultural contexts, and to respect, reiterate and integrate the perspectives and voices of different members and people and their intersectional identities (including gender and sexual identities) affected by relevant FoE&I issues. Where IFEX states that it will incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity into its work, this will be implemented to different degrees respecting/in line with the circumstances.

INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES: IFEX acknowledges that a person’s experiences and perceptions of FoE&I issues differ due to their intersectional identities. An individual’s identities are formed (and shift over time) based on a number of factors, including gender, race, class, sexuality, language, abilities, age.

ALLIES: IFEX is dedicated to deepening strategic connections with allies, namely groups and/or individuals who are committed to FoE&I and human rights. These may be existing allies with whom we already work or potential allies who could promote IFEX’s messages and expand IFEX’s impact.

ENGAGE: Working with stakeholders (e.g. members, allies) on a number of levels, which may include: collaborating with, consulting, facilitating a platform for, providing support to, learning from, and/or considering perspectives and experiences of these stakeholders in IFEX’s work.

Please note how IFEX is used in the plan:
“IFEX” or “IFEX Network” refers to the members and the IFEX Secretariat together
“IFEX Members” refers to the organisations that are members of IFEX
“IFEX Secretariat” refers to the staff that work for IFEX
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

IFEX’s 2020-2024 Theory of Change details the contextual challenges that IFEX will work within and respond to, the assumptions inherent in IFEX’s strategic priorities, and the logical progression from IFEX’s day-to-day work to reaching our vision. It should be noted that IFEX’s Network Goal fundamentally supports the three Thematic Goals as a key driver of change.

CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

- Distrust of and attacks on media, NGOs and institutions
- Surveillance of citizens by states and corporations
- Use of technology to control public narrative
- Climate crisis affecting global stability putting human rights at risk
- Increased infiltration and use of big data
- National security excuse for censorship, surveillance, internet shut-downs, etc.
- Declining effectiveness of multilateral democratic institutions (e.g. UN, ICC, etc.)
- Rise of corporate interests in creation of legislation and policies
- Growing restrictions on civil society impacting the most marginalised
- Rise in protest movements for change (climate, LGBTQI+, reproductive choice, etc.)

ASSUMPTIONS

- Networks are powerful connectors
- IFEX members are experienced and knowledgeable
- IFEX has a proven track record of collaboration and solidarity
- We are responsive in shifting political and civic environments
- Funding can be challenging
- Change can happen, but not in a day
- Conventional tactics in addressing abuses need to be rethought
- Diversity enriches our credibility and approach

TACTICS & STRATEGIES

- Exchanging experience and expertise
- Regranting
- Convening
- Collaborating
- Strategising
- Campaigning
- Advocating
- Lobbying
- Building IFEX’s voice, visibility and leverage
- Responding to emerging and longstanding issues

THEMATIC GOALS

- SECURING THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION through open, safe and equitable access to information, its circulation and integrity, both online and offline
- ENABLING AND PROTECTING CIVIC SPACE through countering restrictions on civic space as it relates to FoE&I and reinforcing its value among IFEX’s target audiences
- IMPROVING SAFETY AND ACHIEVING JUSTICE through a strengthened normative environment for FoE&I and improved justice for those experiencing violations

OUR VISION

Everyone is free to exercise their right to freedom of expression and able to access, generate and share ideas and information in any way they choose without fear.
OUR NETWORK
IFEX is the leading global network of organisations that defends and promotes the right to freedom of expression and information.

OUR VISION
Everyone is free to exercise their right to freedom of expression and able to access, generate and share ideas and information in any way they choose without fear.

OUR MISSION
To promote and defend everyone’s right to freedom of expression and information, we harness the expertise and diversity of the network in order to:

• Engage people in claiming the right;
• Challenge those who violate the right;
• Foster a broader and deeper understanding of the right to elevate its value in society; and
• Contribute to an environment where more people can fully exercise the right.

As a network, we do this by:
• Mobilising the power of collaboration and solidarity within and outside of the network to increase our impact;
• Leveraging opportunities in shifting political and social contexts;
• Strengthening the capacity of the network;
• Convening creative and innovative spaces for debate and action;
• Acknowledging and highlighting that groups and individuals with certain intersecting identities experience issues differently;
• Including considerations of gender and other forms of identity in our approach, reducing discrimination where possible; and
• Considering impacts both online and offline.

OUR VALUES

DEMOCRACY: equity in relations and exercise of power in its decision-making;

DIVERSITY: respect for the distinct social, political and cultural contexts of members of the IFEX network;

COLLABORATION: acknowledging the strength, impact and overall added value that result from members working together;

ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY: in all dealings with stakeholders;

RESPECT: All IFEX colleagues have a right to be treated respectfully in the network and likewise respect all network policies, decisions and commitments, including legal and financial responsibilities;

EQUALITY: in IFEX policies, programmes and projects; promoting gender and racial equality; and

NON-DISCRIMINATION: the network does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or any other status.
GOAL: Strengthened capacity of the IFEX network to promote and defend the right to FoE&I

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced member organisational capacity</td>
<td>Enhanced meaningful connections between IFEX members</td>
<td>Connections with allies outside the IFEX network are strengthened and diversified</td>
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**STRATEGY STATEMENT**

IFEX will engage members in opportunities that are aimed at strengthening members’ organisational aims, in line with the Strategic Plan, while working with members to apply a diversity, equity and inclusion lens.

IFEX will provide opportunities for members to identify and exchange experiences and knowledge that result in meaningful and respectful collaborations that promote strengthening aims, and that maintain and build network solidarity in support of the Strategic Plan.

IFEX will take an inclusive approach to expanding alliances to engage new and diverse allies such as civil society organizations and movements, international bodies, states, technology actors, academic institutions and other strategic partners that can be leveraged in support of the Strategic Plan goal areas.

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<tr>
<td>Level of member satisfaction with IFEX-facilitated initiatives to enhance organisational capacity in support of IFEX Strategic Plan, disaggregated by goal area</td>
<td>At least 75% of members report a positive level of satisfaction by end 2024 with IFEX-facilitated initiatives that enhance organisational capacity</td>
<td># of exchanges facilitated/supported by IFEX, disaggregated by topic and geographic focus</td>
<td>100 exchanges facilitated/ supported by IFEX by end 2024</td>
<td># of allies (new or existing) engaged by IFEX who can contribute to IFEX’s goals, disaggregated by thematic goal area, region, type of ally (political, academic, etc), and gender</td>
<td>50 allies (new or existing) by end 2024 disaggregated by thematic goal area, region, type of ally (political, academic, etc), and gender</td>
<td>Level of member satisfaction with the connections that they have made with other IFEX members</td>
<td>At least 90% of members report that IFEX-facilitated exchanges are respectful and meaningful</td>
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<td># of initiatives delivered that are aimed at strengthening members' organisational aims, disaggregated by goal area and those that incorporate an element of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
<td>250 initiatives delivered by end 2024 that are aimed at strengthening members' organisational aims, with at least 30% incorporating an element of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
<td>Level of member satisfaction with the connections that they have made with other IFEX members</td>
<td>At least 90% of members report increased connection with other members</td>
<td>Descriptions / examples of collaborations with allies outside the IFEX network, disaggregated by goal area and region</td>
<td>20 examples of collaborations by end 2024</td>
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**THEMATIC GOAL:** RIGHT TO INFORMATION

**GOAL:** The challenges of access to information, its circulation and integrity, are confronted

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<td>Increased adoption and implementation of robust access to information (ATI) laws and standards by states</td>
<td>Circulation of information online and offline better promoted and defended</td>
<td>Greater action to counter the threats to information integrity online and offline and their impact on FoE&amp;I</td>
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<td>IFEX will support members working on ATI issues with advocacy support, tools, and opportunities to share and collaborate with each other and with diverse allies to influence governments and public bodies to adopt, effectively implement and comply with robust ATI laws. IFEX will promote an inclusive approach that engages and seeks to reduce discrimination against groups disproportionately affected by a lack of access to information.</td>
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<td>IFEX will bolster its approach to, and engagement in, promoting the circulation of information online and offline, and countering any restrictions, including those that disproportionately affect certain groups.</td>
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<td>IFEX will leverage opportunities to counter the threats to information integrity, including increasing the understanding of the impact of these threats among diverse allies.</td>
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<td># of robust ATI laws or standards adopted and/or implemented by states where IFEX has supported members, disaggregated by region</td>
<td>5 robust ATI laws or standards adopted and/or implemented by states where IFEX has supported members by end 2024</td>
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<td># of initiatives that promote and/or defend the circulation of information; disaggregated by progress achieved and incorporation of elements of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
<td>20 initiatives by end 2024, 20% of which incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
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<td># of initiatives that IFEX supports to address the threats to information integrity; disaggregated by the incorporation of elements of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
<td>20 initiatives address the threats to information integrity by end 2024 as compared to 2020 baseline figures, 30% of which incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
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# GOAL: Civil society enabled and civic space protected as it relates to FoE&I

## OBJECTIVE

- Increased network push back against efforts and issues that diminish and/or restrict civic space as it relates to FoE&I
- Value of civic space as it relates to FoE&I acknowledged and reinforced among IFEX’s target audience of members, allies, and other engaged individuals & actors

## STRATEGY STATEMENT

- IFEX will bolster initiatives that respond to issues impacting and limiting civic space (both online and offline), particularly through campaigns and advocacy efforts. In advancing this objective, IFEX will engage members and relevant stakeholders, including groups disproportionately impacted by the closure of civic space.
- IFEX will use its platform to reinforce the perspectives and positions of groups disproportionately impacted by the closure of civic space, including as a result of intersecting identities. IFEX will also reinforce the critical role of civic space & CSOs in exercising the right to FoE&I (both online and offline).

## INDICATOR

- # of initiatives that address issues and/or push back against efforts to diminish and/or restrict civic space as it relates to FoE&I, disaggregated by type of issue, and incorporation of elements of diversity and/or inclusivity
- # of instances where IFEX uses its platform to reinforce the value and critical role of civic space & CSOs in the exercise of the right to FoE&I, disaggregated by incorporation of elements of diversity and/or inclusivity

## INDICATIVE TARGET

- 75 initiatives undertaken by end-2024 address issues and/or push back against efforts to diminish and/or restrict civic space as it relates to FoE&I, of which at least 30% address online issues and 30% incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity
- At least 250 instances of IFEX using its platform (e.g., original content, statements, Twitter threads, meetings with stakeholders, presentations at events) to reinforce the value and critical role of civic space & CSOs in the exercise of the right to FoE&I by end 2024, of which, at least 30% incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity

- Examples of members reporting that IFEX has contributed to reinforcement of the value of CSOs and civic space as it relates to FoE&I in their contexts
- At least 25 members report by end-2024 that IFEX has contributed to reinforcement of the value of CSOs and civic space as it relates to FoE&I
**THEMATIC GOAL:** SAFETY AND JUSTICE

**GOAL:** A safer environment for those exercising their right to FoE&I

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<td>Strengthened normative environment and protection practices for the safety of those exercising their right to FoE&amp;I</td>
<td>Improved justice for those experiencing FoE&amp;I violations</td>
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<td>IFEX will promote and foster an environment that reflects international standards for safety as they relate to FoE&amp;I, and will facilitate network engagement in the development and implementation of protection practices, addressing both online and offline aspects of safety.</td>
<td>IFEX will leverage, engage with and strengthen justice standards and practices (including alternative mechanisms) for and with those experiencing FoE&amp;I violations, particularly groups disproportionately impacted by these violations (including due to their intersecting identities).</td>
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<td>% of members that IFEX supported in this area reporting a strengthened normative environment and protection practices for the safety of those exercising their right to FoE&amp;I in their context</td>
<td>At least 25% of members that IFEX supported in this area, report a strengthened normative environment and protection practices for the safety of those exercising their right to FoE&amp;I in their context by end 2024</td>
<td># of cases that have been resolved and/or achieved significant progress, disaggregated by groups affected</td>
<td>10 cases have been resolved and/or achieved significant progress by end 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of IFEX-supported initiatives in pursuit of a strengthened normative environment and protection practices for the safety of those exercising their right to FoE&amp;I that incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
<td>At least 30% of IFEX-supported initiatives in pursuit of a strengthened normative environment and protection practices for the safety of those exercising their right to FoE&amp;I incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
<td>% of IFEX-supported initiatives in pursuit of improved justice that incorporate elements of diversity and/or inclusivity</td>
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