

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

For

# **AL-HAQ**

SUBMITTED BY

THE EVALUATION TEAM
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#### I. INTRODUCTION

Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights organization located in Ramallah - West Bank, was established in 1979 with the goal of protecting and promoting human rights and respect for the rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). For over 20 years, Al-Haq has been the West Bank affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva. The organisation has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Al-Haq conducts and disseminates legal and human rights research based on international humanitarian law, as well as on human rights principles and standards. In addition, the organization, using its extensive database, documents and exposes human rights violations.

Since 1979 and in the face of difficult working conditions and risks to the organisation, Al Haq has skilfully managed to sustain its operation and to build itself into what is today probably one of the most credible and resourceful human rights NGO in the West Bank. In 1997-98 Al Haq faced a severe split based on strategic difference as to the future course of the organisation, which almost lead to the demise of the organisation. However, the organization managed to rebuild itself, forge a consensus on its policies and successfully communicate this to staff, donors and its constituencies at large. It is a testimony to the dedication of its management, staff and Board that Al Haq today appears as a premier human rights organisation with wide recognition nationally as well as internationally.

Success, as the saying goes, comes at a price. There are increasing internal and external demands on Al Haq to engage across the board in an increasing range of human rights activities. The expansion of activities over the past years has lead to strains on the resources of the organization and has led to discussions about both the identity and future strategy of the organization. The political environment in which Al Haq works is highly complex and risky, in particular given the growth of the Palestinian Authority and the increasingly factitious political life within the Occupied Territories and the extent of continued violations of human rights.

In the clear realization of the challenges and risks posed to the organization, Al-Haq commissioned a comprehensive evaluation of the entire organization in August 2005. This is a self-driven assessment that has been perceived by the management of the institution, and which will be used as a management tool to inform the future strategy. In our opinion as external consultants, this is a commendable initiative which demonstrates a standard of "good practice" by an organization that has been struggling to continuously learn and improve, meet the overwhelming challenges and yet stay relevant, competitive and responsive.

The main objectives of the evaluation were as follows:

- Review the achievements vis-à-vis the stated overall and specific objectives, strategies and implementation plans
- Assess the program relevance, quality and effectiveness
- Examine the channels of decision-making and communications and assess their effectiveness and transparency at the programmatic and managerial levels.
- Identify overall strengths, weaknesses and major challenges (to include those strengths which are unique to Al-Haq).
- Draw up recommendations for Al-Haq's future development to improve its effective operation at the programmatic and structural levels and ensure its institutional sustainability.

An evaluation team visited Al-Haq in the period 15-28 August 2005. The team was composed of Mira Rizek, (team leader), Herman Abels, Blue Rhino Consulting, The Netherlands, and Jacob Gammelgaard, Rule of Law Partners ApS, Denmark. The present report of the team was submitted to Al Haq in September 2005.

In the course of the mission, the team met with and conducted workshops with the Board and staff members of Al Haq. Individual meeting were held with the director and heads of departments and units, and with Al Haq field workers in Nablus and Hebron. The evaluation team met with key partners and stakeholders of Al Haq on the West Bank and in Jerusalem, including officials of the Palestinian Authority, Palestinian and Israeli human rights NGOs, international NGOs, donors and UN agencies.

The team would like to express its sincere appreciation and thanks to the Board and staff of Al-Haq for their sustained support and willingness to share their knowledge and experience, without which this evaluation would have been impossible.

Special thanks go to Ms. Randa Siniora, Al-Haq's General Director who has given the team unlimited time and effort, to Ms. Rouba Salem, legal researcher at Al-Haq who supported the team throughout, and to Ms. Nouran Nassif care and attention to all the logistics involved in the process.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the team, and cannot be attributed to any single member of the Board and staff of Al Haq.

### II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall finding of the team is that Al-Haq is successful human rights NGO, which has managed to build itself a strong reputation of credibility and impartiality based most significantly on its documentation of human rights violations. Al Haq has established a strong field presence coupled with good international advocacy and international access. Al Haq has established legal services including legal representation and counselling with clearly defined objectives, and is expanding its activities as a centre for human rights and humanitarian law training. A long standing tradition within the organization of legal analysis is successfully being developed into a lobbying forum for introducing human rights standards into Palestinian legislation.

Al Haq has a committed and resourceful staff, which is prepared to work well beyond the call of duty. The funding situation of Al Haq is strong, and the organisation benefits from an unusually high level of core funding from a number of committed donors.

However, given the political environment coupled with increasing violations of human rights, and the increasing demand on Al-Haq to do more, by both the local and international community and donors, the organization has been and will always continue to be called upon to do more and be more responsive, and consequently get more stretched.

While Al Haq bears every sign of a successful NGO, the combination of expansion and new governance structures has lead to some inward signs of stress in the organization, expressed in overload of staff, uneven distribution of work loads, ad-hoc planning of activities, disruption of agreed schedules, increasing debate on the overall strategic direction and identity of the organization, and a struggle to adapt to the increasing demands on the internal management and governance structures of the organization.

At the programme level, Al Haq suffers from mission drift brought about by a wide and expandable human rights mandate and combined with a tendency to take up new tasks. The organization is faced with increasing external demands on its activities from donors, Palestinian Authorities and other NGOs, while at the same time there has been insufficient prioritization of tasks within Al Haq.

Al Haq organizational structure is manageable but could afford some improvements as regards the functional organization of the work in departments and units.

The internal management structures of Al Haq are on the whole adequate, but there is a clear tendency to over-manage staff in terms of internal reporting and monitoring.

The general director's responsibilities are overstretched due to the fact that she is covering three positions. This affects the system of checks and balances between departments and units, and contributes to limiting the strategic functions of the director.

The culture of the organization is result oriented and based on commitment to high professional standards yet suffers from flawed decision making practice, resulting in over-attendance to external agendas and emergencies, at times affecting its core agendas.

The team finds that Al Haq is well placed to take effective remedial action. The organization is familiar with the concepts and processes of strategic planning, and has already identified such a process as a key solution.

Successful planning would require that Al Haq concludes an ongoing discussion about the identity and shared vision for the organization, that it revisits its mission and objectives, that it takes effective steps to prioritize and manage any expansion of its activities and that it engages in annual activity budgeting to allocate staff and financial resources efficiently and predictably.

To assist the organization in its future planning, the team has proposed a model for a strategic plan and made a number of recommendations on the planning process itself.

#### III. STRATEGIC VISION AND STRATEGY

Since the elaboration of the first strategic plan in September 2002, Al Haq has experienced a noticeable growth in its staff and activities, and the organization has successfully managed to expand its activities into new areas of human rights work to include new studies, training, awareness raising and related work. Al Haq has also successfully rebuilt its image as one of the premier human rights organizations on the West Bank, with an increasing interaction with the Palestinian Authority and a growing international network of contacts and partners.

While Al Haq bears every sign of a successful NGO, the combination of expansion and new governance structures has lead to some inward signs of stress in the organization, expressed in overload of staff, uneven distribution of work loads, ad-hoc planning of activities, disruption of agreed schedules, increasing debate on the overall strategic direction and identity of the organization, and a struggle to adapt to the increasing demands on the internal management and governance structures of the organization.

All of these factors are common to organizations undergoing significant qualitative and quantitative development, and need not be a serious threat provided that the problems are systematically confronted through planning, resource allocation and proper use of the comparative advantages and unique strength of the organization.

#### A. AL HAQ'S MISSION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

It is important to underline that the present strain on the organization is clearly linked to the strategic objectives of the organization, which are numerous and wide-ranging, and which can be difficult to contain within professional and manageable proportions.

The strategic plan 2003-2005 is built around 6 stated strategic goals. To each of the 6 strategic goals are linked a set of objectives, numbering altogether 27 directives for the overarching work of Al Haq.

The Action plan for 2005 operates with a set of 5 objectives, each subdivided into subobjectives and/or activities. To this is added a total of 9 additional activities, some of which are difficult to distinguish from objectives as such, and one of which does not appear in the subsequent plan of activities.

The result is a self-defined mandate that is expandable into an almost universal coverage of human rights issues, each of which can be justified under the mandate. There does not appear to be any substantive limitation on the mandate of the organization from a human rights perspective, and the only constraint on activities appears to be the geographical limitation to the Occupied Territories.

However, the expansive interpretation of the mandate threatens to stretch the capacity of the organization and its ability to operate at the desired levels of quality and professionalism. An example of such expansion is the introduction in the strategic plan 2002-05 of an objective for AI Haq to increase its "use of the legal mechanisms available for the protection of economic, social and cultural rights", with little apparent consideration of the implications in terms of analysis, scope, resources, staff qualifications and impact on other programs. This expansion of the mandate is called mission drift throughout this report, and constitutes the key internal weakness of the organization in the view of the evaluation team.

A major weakness in the action plan is the apparent lack of attention to the inputs of human and financial resources required to achieve the desired outputs. An illustrative example are the 5 main objectives and 9 secondary objectives of the Action Plan for 2005, for which almost 150 activities have been specified with due attention to the planned outputs. However the plan contains no estimation of the staff resources needed, and there are no detailed activity budgets to support and justify the plan, A calculation of the resources required to attain the outputs would quickly confront Al Haq with a reality check and the need to prioritize and focus its ambition. Failure to do so risks spreading resources too thin and damaging the quality and credibility of Al Haq's work.

This observation is quickly confirmed when surveying the implementation of the Action Plan 2005 so far. In particular the manuals and training activities on international humanitarian law led to a resource crisis with staff being pulled away from their key assignments for months on end, while other activities are unlikely to be accomplished and staff frustration resulted.

#### B. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Al-Haq has an ambitious strategic plan, which is expandable to virtually all areas of human rights protection and promotion. Such a mandate requires vigorous management of tasks and planning of staff resources, something which Al-Haq has not always been able to do.
- 2. Al-Haq faces an overload of its staff and financial resources brought about by a tendency to mission drift, which has several potentially detrimental effects on the organization, including reducing the efficiency of the staff, lowering the quality of the work and eroding the credibility and image of the organization.
- 3. Al-Haq is well placed to take effective remedial action. The organization is familiar with the concepts and processes of strategic planning, and has already identified such a process as a key solution.
- 4. Successful planning would require that AI Haq concludes an ongoing discussion about the identity and shared vision for the organization, that it revisits its mission and objectives, that it takes effective steps to prioritize and manage any expansion of its activities and that it engages in annual activity budgeting to allocate staff and financial resources efficiently and predictably to specified outputs. A model for this process is described in greater detail below in section seven (VII).

#### IV. AL HAO'S PROGRAMS AND PROGRAM STRATEGY

#### A. CONTEXT

Al-Haq's programs are conceived within the framework of the strategic plan. As a matter of fact, Al Haq's present mission and programs are derived from its strategic plan for 2002-2005. Specifically, its stated mission reads as follows: "Al-Haq woks to protect and promote human rights and respect for the rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with a commitment to the uniform application of international humanitarian and human rights law regardless of the perpetrator or victim of abuse" 1

The mission is supported by Al-Haq's vision, which conceives Al-Haq as a modern and efficient institution that seeks to:

- Develop a culture of respect for human rights by documenting human rights violations
- Work to influence policies
- Hold accountable those responsible for committing or condoning human rights violations and international crimes
- Become a basic reference source for those seeking information on human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Opts).
- Fortify its presence and raise awareness of human rights on the local, regional and international levels.<sup>2</sup>

This section of the report intends to:

- Assess the program relevance, quality and effectiveness.
- Assess whether the planning, implementation and monitoring framework that the Al-Haq instituted as well as the communication structure and strategy are adequate, responsive to its needs and structure, and ensure transparency and efficiency
- And finally, assess program achievements versus stated objectives or plans

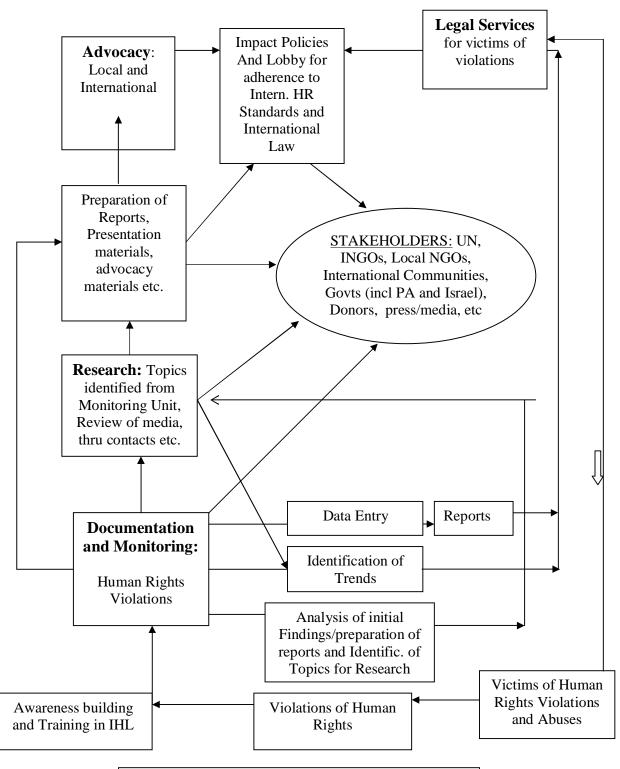
#### B. AL-HAQ'S PROGRAM RELEVANCE, QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The Flowchart below provides a visual representation of Al-Haq's program implementation and core business and activities as understood by the team. As reflected in the boxes, Al Haq has actually created three program units and clustered its activities within these units, namely:

- Monitoring and Documentation Unit
- Research and Advocacy Unit
- Legal Unit

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Al-Haq three year strategic plan 2003-2005 prepared in September 2002. p3.



FLOWCHART OF ACTIVITIES FOR AL-HAQ

This flowchart demonstrates that at the heart of everything is Al-Haq's identification, monitoring and documentation of violations of human rights. This is the starting point for all programs, whether documentation and reports, advocacy, legal services, awareness building or other legal interventions. Although, the MDU has a central function in the organization in terms of identification and documentation of violations, yet all other units share that responsibility as well. In addition to the MDU, all units identify trends of violations, provide initial analysis of findings and provide data /reports for intervention. If this is not done regularly, systematically and in a timely manner, all of the other functions will be adversely affected.

#### **General Observations and Findings:**

**Strengths:** the evaluation team has the following observations:

- All stakeholders and the evaluation team will agree that one of Al-Haq's major strengths is its systematic, objective, accurate and timely documentation of violations. Many international NGOs, UN organizations, donors and other stakeholders rely on Al-Haq's information and reports on violations of human rights, and uses their reports to make a position or initiate an action.
- The whole West bank is practically covered. The field workers who are spread in the north, south and central districts of the West Bank collect information regularly and supply to the field office twice a week, and sometimes more often if issues need urgent attention, or in extreme cases of violations.
- The themes for regular documentation are agreed upon and clearly identified, and consequently, the formats are well structured to guide that process.
- The fieldworkers are well trained and equipped to do the job, and receive regular support and training.
- The coordination between units is very efficient. The unit members meet regularly and as needed. There is also a standing program committee that facilitates that sharing. Once information is received from the field, the Head of MDU regularly calls for meetings with heads of other units to bring forward issues to be taken up for research or advocacy. Likewise, other units might bring to the attention of the other programs issues that need further research or action. These issues are identified through review of reports, media, press, and other documentation, as well as through special activities e.g. women prison visits done regularly by the legal unit.
- All-Haq has gone a long way in terms of identifying new initiatives that are targeted specifically for women, as well as gender streaming its reports and publications. Yet more needs to be done in this area (see below)
- Al-Haq has a library which apparently has a unique collection of reference materials, notably legal documents, and is now considered to be among the best equipped HR libraries in the West Bank.
- Al-Haq is well appreciated by its funding agencies, which manifests itself in an
  unusually high level of core funding. The two core donors, namely Ford Foundation
  and the Netherlands Representative Development Cooperation Office expressed
  their appreciation of Al-Haq's documentation and monitoring work, as well as legal
  research and advocacy programs, and both subscribe to the position that Al-Haq is
  doing highly credible and important work in these fields. It can also be deduced that
  these donors have no intention of shrinking or phasing out their support to Al-Haq.

#### Weaknesses:

Because of its wide mandate, Al-Haq deals consequently with many targets. If we look at the flowchart above, we will notice that most activities target the public stakeholders: local and international communities, the UN, judicial system, press, international and local organizations, except for legal services that target the victims themselves and the training and awareness building that target individuals and organizations working in the area of human rights (more specialized targets). The training and awareness building is an activity which is floating because again it is not targeted towards the victims of violations, but to human rights activists and professionals working in the area of human rights.

- In the present strategic plan of 2002-05, the targets, respective programs and program strategies are not adequately addressed, and if this continues, there is a risk that new activities will continue to be added without questioning whether they will contribute to achieving the objectives, and it becomes difficult to draw the line in terms of what constitutes core programs and what not.
- Al-Haq has the tendency to assume that it is either the only or best player in some areas of human rights, and thus allowed itself to stretch its mandate based on this assumption. Even if this is true, Al-Haq still needs to objectively assess its internal capacity before making these strategic decisions, which in the team's opinion was not regularly done.
- In its strategic plan, Al-Haq's defines that one of the objectives of its advocacy program is to end the occupation. Although this is a national goal that all Palestinians aspire for, international Palestinian advocacy to date has failed to do and Al-Haq should recognize that it can positively contribute to that, but surely cannot be the party responsible for attaining that goal. It certainly is beyond the reach of one organization to do it. In this sense, it is suggested that Al-Haq defines a more realistic goal and set of objectives, and work towards achieving them.
- The starting point of Al-Haq's work is the field: documentation and monitoring of violations of human rights. In this sense, Al-Haq needs to ensure that the field workers are well equipped, facilitated and trained to do the job professionally. Despite this, and as mentioned under the section on "Governance and Structure, there is an imbalance between its field structure and office structure. While the field is thinly staffed, the office is well staffed.
- Although donors and partners have expressed appreciation for Al-Haq's work, many have expressed that there is more room for coordination and cooperation, and will all agree that Al-Haq is well placed to play a pivotal role, as well as improving the effectiveness of the present networks, which right now Al-Haq is not exploring.
- In light of the emergence of other libraries, it should be argued now whether the library is still or should continue to serve the public or not. Given that this issue has not been adequately addressed by Al-Haq, the library now reports directly to the general director, adding to her overload.
- More specifically, and in terms of the gender balance, it is noted that all field staff are men. So far Al-Haq's credibility has not been questioned, and it is crucial for the organization to sustain these professional standards and quality of the information. It is clear that some for the field staff are finding it difficult in some localities and settings to identify or validate violations inflicted on women, and they might not have the needed expertise to do that. This needs to be addressed with staff, and there might be a need for specialized gender training for all staff to ensure that staff understand the importance and implications of gender inclusion in all activities. If this continues, there is a risk that violations inflicted on women will not be fully covered, or if covered the implications and interventions are not fully explored and appropriate.
- It was noted that the production of the IHL training manual and the actual training delivery have taken extensive time, oversight and intervention from management to

meet donor expectations. It can be concluded that since Al-Haq's comparative advantage and expertise is not as strong in curricula development and training, Al-Haq should think seriously before embarking on such initiatives. If Al-Haq intends to do more training in the future, it will have to be aware of staffing needs, budgetary and structural implications. This needs special attention in the upcoming strategic planning process.

- Advocacy and awareness building are centered around the efficiency and costeffectiveness of media. The team noted that there is no clear strategy for media, and
  since media coordinator reports directly to the director, coordination and integration
  with program might not be optimal at present.
- The role of media in advocacy is not clear. The team noted that there is no strategy for media, let alone an overall communication strategy. Hence it is difficult for the media coordinator to link his mandate with the needs of the program units, and consequently be made accountable for meeting their expectations. This calls for the formulation of an institution wide communication strategy, which would include public relations and media exposure, identifying clearly the staff to be involved and outputs to be achieved.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Al-Haq needs to make clear strategic options in terms of its strategic mission: does Al-Haq want to be more of an advocacy and research organization, or does it want to position itself more in service delivery? The options are many, and this is further discussed in section VII B (selecting strategic options: business defined). It will be unrealistic to expect that Al-Haq can do everything in the Human Rights arena. The organization needs to quickly define its core business and develop its expertise, structures and institutional experience in whatever areas it selects.
- 2. In defining its core business, Al-Haq needs to clearly identify its comparative advantage, as well as develop better knowledge of the other players in the field. This might necessitate a mapping exercise which again could be part of the strategic planning process. If needed, the researchers at Al-Haq could also do rapid research of organizations working in human rights to find out what each is doing, where they are working, who the targets are, and what strategies are being followed.
- 3. In the opinion of the team, the issue of identity and program targets have also not been adequately addressed in the past strategic plan, and needs be given special attention in its upcoming strategic planning process. This is one way of helping Al-Haq focus its services better.
- 4. Once the program is more focused, Al-Haq might need to review its existing staff to ensure that there is a good match between the job and the skills available, and if needed build additional capacities where needed.
- 5. There is room for better coordination and cooperation, and Al-Haq should perhaps recognize its existing and potential partners clearly, and explore ways of coordinating and cooperating and building partnership programs with them, as well as activating the role of local and the Arab human rights network.
- 6. Although the field workers constitute the building stones for its work, and the organization puts more demands on them, yet the support and resources are not always equally matched. Also, some of the administrative procedures could limit their initiatives and extent of responsiveness and productivity. One example is the policy regarding transport reimbursement, which in the long run might become a disincentive for outreach, at a time when field workers are expected to cover all the West Bank and in very difficult mobility situation. Management needs to review its administrative policies to ensure that they are not excessively demanding and constraining, and that staff feel properly appreciated and supported.

- 7. Although its publications and some of its core programs have clearly identified and addressed some gender gaps, yet more needs to be done in this area. The field is not adequately gender sensitized. Al-Haq should consider providing on the job training and engaging its staff in systematic gender discussions and audits, to ensure that all its programs, strategies, staff, policies and procedures are gender sensitized and promote gender equity.
- 8. Although Al-Haq has a good library, which has been built up consistently over the years, special consideration needs to be given to the functions of the library at present and in particular who it serves or should serve. When the library was started, it was the only specialized HR library. Should it be decided that the library is to serve Al-Haq, the acquisition services, its location and supervision needs to be reconsidered. Hence it could also be placed under the research and advocacy unit. All that will have to be addressed in the upcoming strategic planning.
- 9. Media is a core element of communications, and there is a need for drafting a clear communications strategy. Once this is done, it will inevitably lead to better coordination with the programs. Given that one of Al-Haq's primary functions is research and advocacy, media coverage should become the strategic tool for promoting this and producing optimum impact. It is thus recommended to produce a detailed media plan for Al-Haq which will take into consideration:
  - a. Its target groups and thus diversity of needs and strategies
  - b. The themes and messages to be promoted
  - c. The content of public documents and reports
  - d. The strategy/means of promotion: press, circulars, appeals, reports, website announcements/circulars etc. etc.
    - 1. Frequency
    - 2. Language
    - 3. Budget

## C. PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS VERSUS STATED OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Strategy as Outlined in Strategic Plan (2002-2005)	Strategic Goal as outlined in the Strategic Plan and Action Plan 2005
1. Monitoring and Documenting Violations	Goal: Al-Haq becomes a reference point in international human rights and humanitarian law in the OPT, for concerned organizations and individuals at the local and international level.  (4 objectives defined)
2. Defending Against Human Right Violations	Goal: Work on the local and international levels to bring human rights abuses to an end in the occupied Palestinian Territories, and to increase respect among the Palestinian and Israeli Authorities for human rights and the rule of law.  (5 objectives defined)
3. Influencing Policies on the Local, Regional and International Level	Goal: To work for protection of Palestinian human and national collective rights by highlighting policies and actions that leas to abuses of Palestinian human rights, and by pushing to ensure that new resolutions, treaties, legislation and agreements comply with international law.  (5 objectives defined)
4. Developing Al-Haq's Presence in and Use of the Media	To raise awareness about Palestinian human rights by facilitating al-Haq's advocacy work and campaigns through the building of contacts and sharing of information with the media, public and friends of Al-Haq.  ( 3 objectives defined
5. Networking on the Local, Regional and International Levels	Goal: to coordinate Al-Haq's work and maintain open lines of communication with NGOs, Government, International Organizations, and individuals on the local, regional and international levels.  (5 objectives defined)
6. Institutional Development, Organization Development, Human Resources Development	Goal: to build and maintain a modern and efficient institution  (5 objectives defined)
7. Developing an Emergency Plan	No specific strategy, goal or outputs specified for this goal. Also, dropped from operational plan

As mentioned earlier, Al-Haq's mission is quite ambitious, and the organization goes even further to develop an extensive set of objectives for its goals, which are then taken into the action plan and developed into yet a more expanded set of activities. In the team's opinion, it is questionable whether Al-Haq can really deliver all diversified activities and sustain its program quality.

These activities also are wide ranging and need diversified skills and experiences. It takes one set of skills to document violations, and other skills to produce advocacy materials based on the documentation, or use this documentation to impact policies and raise awareness, or train resources to defend against these violations. The present strain in the organization is directly linked to the fact that staff are expected to do many things, and do them efficiently. This in the team's opinion is not an efficient way of allocating human resources, and additionally might not be a realizable expectation. This will also affect the extent to which staff could specialize and build their learning curve.

#### **Observations and Findings:**

#### Strengths:

- Al-Haq has already developed good experience in strategic planning and operational planning, and is well placed to do the necessary refinements and revisions of its planning framework, which should help it define in a more focused manner its core business and produce more realistic objectives.
- Based on a review of the unit reports, it is obvious that each unit has been working very hard and delivering large amounts of work.
- The implementation is well driven by achieving objectives and activities, but because
  of inconsistencies in its planning, this intention is weakened and diffused. (see below
  under weaknesses)

#### Weaknesses:

- Because of inconsistencies between the operational and the unit plans, it is difficult to determine to what extent objectives have been met. This can be done, but it will need extensive analysis.
- There is a risk here that if Al-Haq does not focus its mission, objectives and activities the quality of its programs could suffer in the future.
- Upon review of both plans (the general and departmental) it is clear that they do not always directly correlate with each other. The outputs included in the unit plans differ from the outputs expected to be delivered in the general plan. Given this, it is difficult to exactly determine which outputs have been delivered and which not, and therefore how much of the operational plan was actually achieved.
- On the other hand, many activities listed as achieved have actually not been in the
  original plans. Thus, it is difficult to determine how much of staff time is actually spent
  implementing the existing plan, versus activities outside of the plan, and the
  implications of this on the institutional effectiveness and staff efficiency.
- Al-Haq management prepares and submits reports every four months to the Board. The latest report covered the period January to June 2005 and has been prepared in August 2005. Since the unit reports are not in conformity with the Board's report, it is anticipated that it will take the general director a long time to prepare. The latest narrative report is also quite long and provides extensive detail. It is questionable whether this level of detail provides any value to the Board. If the Board intends to use this as a policy monitoring and decision-making tool, this format can be improved

to incorporate more policy issues. The Board will need a more concise report, preferably in table form that reports directly against objectives, list activities achieved, identifies the problems faced and measures taken, and consequently call on the Board to make the necessary policy or general decisions that will facilitate and improve the work.

#### **Recommendations**

- 1. The overall operational plan and unit plans need to be the same and include the same set of outputs. These should also correlate with the strategic plan.
- 2. The unit reports go into too much unnecessary detail, but lack basic information like start dates and completion dates of activities, budget allocated and spent, obstacles faced and steps taken to ensure continuity.
- 3. The reports should distinguish between activities in the original plan, and activities that lie outside the scope of the plan. This way, the report will help the staff and management monitor their activities better and prioritize their efforts in the direction of accomplishing planned activities.
- 4. The present planning and reporting formats can be improved and simplified. As is, it takes too much time to prepare, yet it might not be as effective if used as a monitoring or decision-making tool.
- 5. Management needs to undertake a discussion with the Board to get a better sense of what their expectations of the reports are. This will determine the kind of reports to be submitted, content, format and structure, and frequency. As is, the narrative reports are too long and not focused towards required Board inputs
- 6. Although donor reports have not been reviewed, but they should follow the same principle of reporting. It should be assumed that donors are keen on getting a good sense of progress, problems faced, actions taken to resolve these problems, and budget status.
- 7. In general terms, every report should ensure the following:
  - a. That the expectations/needs of its end users are met
  - b. That there is good understanding of how the reports will be used. This in turn will determine the structure and content.
  - c. Simplicity and Accuracy
  - d. That it measures progress: and thus be result/output oriented, and less details and text.

## D. ASSESSMENT OF THE PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPORTING: ITS EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS TO MANAGEMENT NEEDS

After the preparation of its strategic plan, Al-Haq continued its planning process to produce the operational plans. Drawn from its detailed action or operational plans, the different departments prepared their annual plans as well. These plans outline every objective, and propose a set of activities to be implemented in relation to these objectives. There was a time lag between the strategic plan and operational plans. Additionally, the units started preparing their respective plans and reports only in 2005. During this time, many things changed calling on some changes in plans, but this is not documented, and changes that have been instituted are not properly justified, and the reasons for these changes are not explained. It is recognized that Al-Haq has gone a long way in instituting workable planning frameworks and mechanisms, yet the implementation of these plans have not been efficiently carried out.

The departments or units, namely the Legal Research and Advocacy, Monitoring and Documentation, and Legal Units then drew their own departmental plans and reported against thee plans. These plans are all done using the same formats, although some are done in Arabic and others in English.

Regarding administration, the office of administrative officer has been vacant between mid March and May 2005. Now that the post has been filled, the administration unit also prepared its reports for May and June 2005, which is consolidated in the narrative report submitted to the Board.

If these reports are well written, they should serve as the basis for decision-making on many programmatic issues. For example shifting human or financial resources between units could be triggered by these reports. This will help produce a systematic and objective decision-making process in the office.

#### **General Observations and Findings:**

#### Strengths:

- Al-Haq recognized the importance and need for strategic planning, and after the
  preparation of its strategic plan it proceeded with the action or operational plans and
  unit plans. In principle, this is a good sequence of planning and sets the grounds for
  a good planning and monitoring framework.
- Al-Haq is making progress and substantial efforts in instituting a regular reporting and monitoring system. New reporting formats have been designed: the management report, unit reports, and administration reports.
- Staff take the reporting seriously and have submitted reports in time. The reports also provide extensive information, which if properly structured could strengthen the institutional capacity for learning. This should be recognized as good practice, and ensures transparency and accountability within the organization.
- Management submits regular reports to the Board, and is thus accountable towards its governance.

#### Weaknesses:

The Evaluation Team noted that there are two sets of reports issued internally by Al-Haq. One is the consolidated program report issued every four months for the Board, based on underlying departmental reports, written against the plan as prepared for 2005 (which has objectives, outputs, activities and responsibilities assigned), and the other is the six monthly report to external stakeholders, mostly donor agencies.

Although this is a generally good practice, yet the usefulness of these reports are in question for the following reasons:

- The planning and reporting system has not been built up systematically. The
  departmental plans and reports are prepared in table format, and although they are
  meant to link with the objectives, outputs and activities as outlined in the action plan,
  yet they do not consistently do so. For these reasons, it is difficult to determine the
  extent to which objectives or activities in the overall operational plans have been
  achieved.
- More specifically, the departmental reports are periodic and do not offer any cumulative results to indicate for example how much of the planned has been

- achieved as of a certain date, or what percentage has been accomplished. Because time needed for activities is not well forecasted, there is a risk of non-completion, especially as the year end approaches.
- It is also noted that the reports have no financial information and thus it is not clear whether each head of unit takes responsibility for managing their departmental budget, which in the team's view could be an important aspect of middle managers' iobs.
- Some staff also mentioned that although they submit the reports regularly, these reports have actually not been discussed with them, and they are not yet sure how management is using them, which makes them less valuable and important.
- The staff evaluation system is not directly linked with institutional objectives. If the organization intends to follow a "management by objectives motto" then the staff should become directly accountable to accomplishing objectives, and their annual plans should be tied directly with the operational and strategic plans.

#### Implications and Consequences

- Due to this method of reporting, it is easy for staff to lose sense of accomplishment, and thus the tendency to not follow agreed upon plan and move towards pursuing tasks that provide them with an alternative and better sense of accomplishment. The risks of course are that if these tasks do not clearly link with objectives, they could drive the institution off track, and divert efforts of staff from focusing on meeting the institutional objectives.
- 2. Not having budgetary tracking information alongside activities implies that these functions are segregated. If so, there will be a need for close coordination between finance and heads of unit. Also heads of units need to get timely expenditures reports so they can intervene and take necessary steps to ensure budgetary compliance, or initiate budget revisions.
- 3. If reports are not used as progress and budget monitoring and management tools, then they lose their value and the purpose they are designed for. If Al-Haq is to institute a "management by objectives" drive, and hold staff accountable for achieving these objectives, then these reports should be designed to accomplish that.

#### **Recommendations**

- 1. The team recommends that Al-Haq institute a more structured and responsive planning and monitoring system and design appropriate tools and formats for that purpose. It is recommended that the reports should become a monitoring tool to ensure that planned outputs/activities are being met, as well as a management allocation and disciplinary tool to ensure that corrective actions are taken. This will also make staff more accountable towards delivering objectives. Management could also link this to staff performance evaluations, and build in staff development and incentive systems in linkage with this.
- 2. If activities are not accomplished, the first question that management should be asking is why? Once it is clear why activities are not completed, then management and staff should try to propose solutions to ensure prompt delivery, or maybe if constraints are serious enough, a decision to drop them altogether might be valid. This can be done through formal review of reports, in regular steering committee meetings and within departments. The present planning and reporting formats will have to be improved to meet this objective.
- Once a planning, monitoring and reporting framework and system is instituted, staff will need to be well trained to use it effectively. There might be need for Al-Haq to try to solicit external funding or resources for that purpose. Donors will need to

understand the importance of this aspect of institutional development and its link with program quality and assurance.

#### V. GOVERNANCE

#### A. LEGAL STATUS AND FOUNDING DOCUMENTS (BYLAWS)

Al Haq is incorporated and registered as a non-governmental organization under the terms of Law Nr. 1 of 2000 in Palestine. This NGO law requires civil society organizations to establish a General Assembly which, from its midst, appoints a Board of Directors. The Bylaws of Al Hag are its sole constituting document.

The Bylaws recognize working and honorary members. Working members are assembly members who pay subscription fees and are entitled to be elected and to elect and vote. Honorary members do not have voting rights. Membership criteria are well-articulated: track record in human rights work, academic education in the field of human rights, age of at least 30, no criminal record and abidance to the goals and objective of the organisation.

The responsibilities of the General Assembly include: the amendment of the membership fees, the election of the members of the Board of Directors (by secret ballot), review the Board's annual report the approval of initiating new branches for the organization, the appointment of an external auditor, and the approval of annual financial statements. The Assembly meets at least once a year.

Board members are elected for a term of three years and can be re-elected without restriction. The Board elects a chairperson, a deputy chairperson, secretary and treasurer and meets at least once every three months. In case Board members resign, leading to the inability to meet the minimum requirement for a legally recognized board, then the remaining members will actively direct the organization and the General Assembly is allowed one month to elect new members. Failure to do so will prompt the Ministry of Interior to install an Acting Committee from General Assembly members, which will then have a month time to hold an extraordinary meeting to elect new Board members.

The Bylaws place considerable responsibilities with the Board of Directors. Some appear to be in contradiction with the responsibilities of the General Assembly, such as approval of the previous year's financial statements and narrative reports. Others could be considered as infringing on what regularly could be regarded as a managerial responsibility i.e. responsibility of the executive arm, such as representing the organization and hiring and firing of staff.

The Bylaws articulate particular responsibilities for the chairperson, the secretary and the treasurer of the Board of Directors which in the case of the treasurer are rather minutely worked out. These constitute legal liabilities for these functionaries.

In case of self-liquidation of the organization, the Ministry of Interior will be notified and after settlement of all financial obligations the remaining assets will be distributed among one or more Palestinian NGOs working in the same field.

#### B. IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

The stipulations in the Palestinian NGO Law are far-reaching in terms of formulating the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Directors. It is the Board rather than the Assembly

that effectively governs the organization and the Board rather than Management that is being held accountable for executive performance.

At two levels this poses challenges to Al Haq, as well as to all other Palestinian NGOs registered under the NGO Law. First, the Ministry of Interior has developed a practice of pursuing benign co-governance of NGOs. It claims presence in Assembly meetings and may refuse approval of annual statements and reports in case of such presence being denied, even though both features are not formally covered in the NGO Law. Second, it is a challenge to put in effect a clear functional distinction between governance and management of NGOs, for instance because the treasurer of the board is legally required to perform the duties of internal controller and chief accountant.

#### C. MAJOR OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

Al Haq is not in the position to ignore or deviate from the provisions in the NGO Law and its own Bylaws. There is, however, some leeway in establishing practices that could deal with the challenges expressed above. At the level of dealings with the Ministry of Interior a relation of 'critical engagement' has been established. Where its own sovereignty and independence is concerned, Al Haq does not hesitate to take a hard stand in defending its interests towards the Ministry. The 'sue me and see you in court' attitude is unreservedly applied when deemed necessary, such as in cases of withholding approval of annual statements due to non-invitation to attend Assembly meetings and unjustified Ministry attempts to monitor or control bank accounts and financial transactions. At the same time the policy of critical engagement leads to involvement of Al Haq in establishing more equitable and suitable Ministry policies and practices that aspire to promote the independence of NGOs. In doing so Al Haq cooperates with other NGOs (especially the PNGO network) and is generally considered to play a pivotal role therein (being a member of its steering committee).

Across the board this policy of critical engagement reportedly pays off. It is important to realize that the processes of state and civil society building in Palestine are young and dynamic with many lessons to be learned on all sides and functional relationships to be established between them. In addition it must be realized that this process is stressed by, on the one hand, huge financial demands towards the Palestine Authority to establish a full-fledged state apparatus and provide the many services needed by the citizens of Palestine and, on the other, the vast amounts of donor funds injected into civil society development and programmes.

As to the internal challenge posed by the setting, the team's observations are ambivalent. The Board appears to be willing and able to work towards a more effective division of tasks between itself and management, and has invited management to develop procedures and manuals which, once installed and adhered to, would allow the Board to delegate part of its responsibilities to the management. Despite efforts by managements in this area, the results have not been encouraging as of yet. At incidental occasions some progress has been achieved nonetheless, for instance in effectuating a more practical signatory system for payments, which has been endorsed by the Ministry in the meantime.

At the same time, attempts to draw a clearer division of tasks and responsibilities between Board and management threatens to be undercut by individual requests of Board members to management to take up work outside the framework of agreed activities plans or without full disclosure and discussion at Board level. This threat becomes quite manifest when such requests take the form of direct orders to management by individual Board members, as happens from time to time.

The evaluation team has two comments on this tendency of individual intervention by Board members. On the one hand it is appreciated that in a context of nascent state and civil society building there are strong forces at play to pool resources towards initiatives of potentially shared interest. Board members play distinguished roles in other organizations and institutions and are fully entitled to look for synergy and cooperation between these and Al Haq. In fact, this networking capacity constitutes a key element in making them eligible and wanted Board members.

On the other hand, Board members have to realize that individual intervention potentially has grave negative consequences: it can undercut the authority and position of management, it can overload the tasking of staff members and distracts them from their regular duties and core business, and it can it undermine formal decision making processes and can weaken collegial leadership and lead to lack of transparency.

For this reason the evaluation team cannot but strongly recommend that this practice be fundamentally changed and that due process of handling such requests is fully adhered to.

To summarize, the following are the strengths and weaknesses if Al-Haq's governance structure:

#### Strengths:

- Al-Haq has highly committed board members
- The quality of financial supervision by the treasurer is effective and provides a good measure of control
- The Board is finding ways to delegate more tasks to the executive structure or management, and is demanding that policies and procedures be developed to allow it to do so.
- The Board is aware of the risks of engaging in activities within the PNA structures, and is in favour of "critical engagement"

#### Weaknesses:

- The Board should recognize that its mission is too broad and thus allows for multiple interpretations of priorities and core business.
- Despite its willingness to hand over or delegate tasks to management, this has not been done, and the Board is not effectively pursuing this
- The board needs to be more aware of the risks involved when pushing for and promoting external agendas. There is already a mission drift problem to be dealt with, and this approach will certainly not help in correcting the situation

#### D. CONCLUSIONS

- The legal environment for Al Haq is a challenging one: there is risk of unjustified cogovernance by the Ministry and generally considered optimal division of responsibilities between Board and management is difficult to establish.
- Toward the Ministry Al Haq's policy of critical engagement appears to be functional
  and effective. There is more room though to push on the PNGO network and other
  coalitions to join forces and continue this collective pressure in the hope of bringing
  about more positive effects on the legal and regulatory framework and environment.
  Like all NGOs, Al-Haq should play an active role in demanding the Palestinian
  Authority in instituting a conducive and enabling environment based on mutual trust
  and transparency.

- Internal efforts to work towards a more balanced equilibrium between Board and management have partly been successful but leave considerable room for improvement.
- As regards individual (as opposed to formally approved) Board intervention, this
  practice needs to be urgently reviewed and changed given the serious risks involved.

#### E. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Al Haq's management as a matter of urgency designs and installs the procedures and manuals, also known as policies, considered essential by the Board to allow for further delegation of selected tasks and responsibilities to management and staff.
- 2. Al Haq's Board, also as a matter of urgency, designs and adheres to a proper policy for professionally dealing with requests for cooperation by individual Board members and organisations and institutions they are involved with, and be aware of potential conflict of interest and provide mechanisms and tools for dealing with this issue.

#### VI. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

#### A. SETTING

Al Haq's organizational set-up follows one of the two main conventions applied in civil society: Board hiring external management, as opposed to delegating executive powers to one of its own members. Management recognizes that the present organizational structure is not optimum, and has instituted some changes which are not reflected in the attached structure. In reality, the manager is supervising both program and administration staff, namely three heads of unit, the media coordinator, the librarian and the administrative officer. The program manager position does not practically exist, and in practice, the general director is acting as such. The administrative officer supervises not only administrative and office staff but also the accountant, with the understanding that the latter is also effectively cooperating with the treasurer of the Board, given legal and statutory requirements, as well as the executive secretary, secretary and messenger. (See Annex C)

The program manager if present could be supervising what effectively could be named a program department, which is sub-divided in three units: legal research and advocacy, monitoring and documentation, and legal services.

#### B. MAJOR OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

The organizational structure of Al Haq across the board is functional but features a few anomalies. The name of functions is in some cases inappropriate or non-functional. Is the manager an executive director or indeed an executive manager? A second odd feature is to find the executive secretary to be supervised by the administrative officer. In effect, Al Haq has no executive secretary in the sense that the staff person carrying that title is not responsible for tasks generally associated with the function. As the team was made to understand that in Palestine the job title of executive secretary is often used quite broadly, it even so suggests considering a more functional phrase such as administration or program secretary. At the same time the administrative officer effectively functions as the head of what actually is an administrative and support department or unit even though the name of this department has not been formalized in the organogram. It is also worth observing that although there is a legal research and advocacy unit, staff in this unit are all titled legal researchers, implying that formally there are no advocacy staff persons.

To a large extent the above is a matter of "what's in a name?" Nonetheless, there is some consequence as well. The organisation has a management committee, also known as executive or steering committee. A logical formation thereof would be: general manager, programme manager and administrative officer, and the media coordinator on an ex officio basis. In practice also the three heads of units of the 'program department' form part of this committee which is therefore made up of both senior and middle management.

This is inspired by the fact that the position of program manager is filled by the general director, who also was the acting head of the legal research and advocacy unit at the time of the evaluation. Apart from over-stretching the responsibilities of the general director, this potentially leads to over-representation of interests of the program department in the management committee. Middle-managers of the program department join management meetings, but those of the administrative and support department do not, as the latter department formally has no department status, no manager (though the administrative officer acts as such) and no middle-managers as it has no units.

In short, the organisational set-up appears to be less than optimal and offers room for improvement. This goes in practice concealed by the fact that working relations within Al Haq are rather collegial and result oriented. Moreover, commitment levels are high, the atmosphere is pleasant, informal and non-hierarchical, and resource allocation is adequate, at least at the office. Yet, underneath this warm blanket occasionally tension is building up. This typically manifests itself in periods of overload. This tension is the result of both cultural and structural causes.

As regards organisational culture, Al Haq has problems in saying no to the continuous internal and external demand to do more than it can reasonably and professionally handle. This is facilitated by the fact that staff has a strong commitment to contribute to Palestinian state and civil society building and often see their work at Al Haq as an opportunity, duty even, to attend to that commitment. This, however, brings external agenda's into the organization and if not managed carefully, overload is the result with potential threats to the quality and timely delivery of Al Haq's own agenda.

The drive to attend to external agenda's is also the result of a tendency towards overestimation of Al Haq's role in Palestinian society in combination with understating or simply ignoring the role and work of other actors in civil society. This presents itself in frequently encountered expressions such as "we are uniquely placed" and "we are the only ones who can do that" in sheer endless varieties and as the evaluation team found: often grossly unjustified.

As a matter of fact, Al Haq is very well, though not uniquely, placed in one particular segment of human rights work: documentation of human rights violations. Its coverage thereof is of undisputed quality and comprehensive as regards a large number of selected violations. Al Haq takes affidavits from victims, documents all these cases, applies legal research to it and feeds that into well acknowledged advocacy and publication activities. Al Haq truly is a master in this trade and no matter how high the workload, the quality of the work at all these levels has been consistently high.

Whilst recognizing this competence and achievement, it must be acknowledged at the same time that Al Haq is not necessarily uniquely placed in all the other areas of human rights work: training, education, awareness raising, legal remedies and litigation, non-legal counsel or support to victims, and so on and do forth. That is to say, individual staff members might be well qualified to intervene in these areas, and in fact are in many instances; the organisation at large is not. It is not equipped or furnished, as it were, to claim a leading position. The organisation is built around the flow chart of human rights violations, from

documentation to advocacy. That is what it specializes in, what it is good at and where its credibility is derived from.

The evaluation team has no professional opinion as to the question of whether Al Haq should become more actively involved in areas of human rights other than violations. That question is a strategic one and has to be addressed by the Board and Assembly. What the team observes, however, is a strong drive among staff and Board members to venture into various new human rights areas so there is a need to address the question. Currently there are quite different opinions within the organisation as regards where Al Haq stands.

Structural and cultural weaknesses tend to reinforce one another in this context. Vacancies at program level, or overstretching of the general director, rather lead to managerial and monitoring gaps, which open the door wider for internal and external interventions, facilitated by a culture of not saying no and strong commitment to do more than what the organization is doing already. Combined with reallocation of human resources to secondary tasks and some incidental donor pressure to deviate from actual core business, the result could be a potentially poisonous cocktail of centrifugal forces.

To contain this risk, Al Haq would be wise to go through a rigorous strategic planning process and decisively identify its core business and accept and internalize the outcomes and consequences thereof, throughout the organization.

As regards the organisation of the workload and the allocation of resources, Al Haq is neither top-heavy nor bottom-heavy; it rather is 'thick in the middle'. Assuming for argumentation's sake that the 'middle' is adequately resourced, more work need to be done to coordinate and supervise the same 'middle' from the top and to feed it from the bottom.

Starting at the top, senior management needs to be strengthened. There is little use in creating the post of program manager and then not adequately staffing it. Whether to fill in this post or not, is contingent on the size and diversity of the core program to be defined in the next strategic planning cycle. It might be the case that what Al-Haq needs is more of technical posts, for example adding in a planning, monitoring and reporting staff, who will work directly under the general director. This should be recognized both as a senior position and a technical assistance position that will build internal capacity of staff in planning, monitoring and evaluations, and manages directly these programmatic tasks.

If the program stays as is, what AI Haq will need is probably three senior positions: one for managing all external affairs (donors and fundraising, public relations, advocacy, civil society and public sector in Palestine), one for content (programs and activities) and one for internal affairs (administration, accounts, human resources, support and systems). Three positions here mean three full-time persons. One of the three persons can double as general manager or executive director. Given the present situation, preferences and competencies, it would be possible to picture the current general director to assume the external affairs duties in addition to the overall responsibility of ensuring strategic coherence and implementation of the overall strategic direction and plans, and the current administrative officer to become the internal affairs manager. One of the current unit heads could become the program (content) manager.

The organisation would ideally have only two departments: programs and internal affairs, which could be further compartmentalized on a needs basis into units. The general director would have a 'director's office' where essential staff functions could be placed: media coordination, advocacy, fundraising, networking and perhaps a personal assistant. Within the office double functions are well possible.

At the bottom of the organisation, AI Haq must realise that the work there is considerably under-resourced taking its toll on the five field workers. Whereas the conditions they deal with on a day-to-day basis is deteriorating, especially in the field of mobility and access, the organization beefs up administrative demands without offering sufficient additional resources or incentives to do so. As the fieldworkers are exceptionally committed to their work, they do not complain and carry on relentlessly but fatigue and burn-out have already set in, and the current situation is not sustainable. It is worth considering the provision of secretarial back-up for field workers. This could include the appointment of free-lance or part-time assistant field workers to deal with the road block realities.

#### C. CONCLUSIONS

- Al Haq organizational structure is manageable but could afford some improvements as regards the functional organization of the work in departments and units.
- The general director's responsibilities are overstretched due to the fact that she is covering three positions. This affects the system of checks and balances between departments and units, and contributes to limiting the strategic functions of the director. The culture of the organization is result oriented and based on commitment to high professional standards yet suffers from flawed decision making practice, resulting in over-attendance to external agendas, at times effecting core agendas.
- There is a wide assortment of interpretations of how the organization's mandate (mission) translates into core objectives, program direction and alliance building (core business).
- Even though the organization has captured these in a strategic plan, personal or individual interpretation thereof remains a common feature.
- This results in permanent yet often inconclusive discussions on priorities and consequent allocation of resources leading to overload and, sometimes, frustration.
- Field work needs strengthening as the balance between field and head quarter work is biased to the latter in terms of resource allocation.

#### D. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Al Haq is quite capable to attend to the conclusions formulated above by going through a rigorous strategic planning process. This process should not only identify what the organization is to do, program wise, but perhaps more urgently also what it, by default, is not going to do in the coming years.
- 2. The outcome of this process must be profoundly internalized and adherence to the outcome must be effectively monitored. Board, management and staff must pledge to the outcome.
- 3. Based on its mission, core business and programs, Al Haq should define clearly its organizational structure and the principles for such a structure, and consequently amend positions of staff, titles, job content, qualifications. Unnecessary jobs that have been inherent should be addressed.
- 4. Staff should develop a healthy culture of challenging peers to adhere to the outcome and develop restraint in promoting individualized interpretations thereof.
- 5. Requests to entertain to external agendas should come in through the front door and not through back or side doors. At the front door gate keeping mechanisms must be installed and applied.
- 6. In the context of the next strategic planning process, Al Haq should review its field operations and formulate a more equitable pattern of resource allocation between field and head quarter operations.

7. As to the organization of the work, the same process will provide clues for some functional adjustments as regards the build-up in departments and units. Once identified, reorganization should be considered.

## VII. THE WAY FORWARD: A PROPOSED MODEL FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR AL-HAQ

#### A. Some prerequisites for successful Strategic Planning for AL-Haq

The existing strategic plan for 2002-2005 demonstrates that the organization is familiar with the concepts and process of strategic planning, and is able to put to practice such planning techniques as a SWOT analysis and scenarios.

While the overall recommendation of the team is for Al Haq to move forward on its plans to revise its strategic plan, the organization is nevertheless faced with a number of challenges and constraints to its planning capacity, which, if left unresolved, would limit the benefit of strategic planning.

#### THE ROLE OF THE BOARD IN THE PLANNING PROCESS:

The team finds that the role of the Board in the planning process is not sufficiently understood and agreed upon within the organization.

Elsewhere in this report, the team makes a number of observations regarding the governance of Al Haq and the role of the Board. It is characteristic of the Board that it defines itself as a "policy" Board, while both the bylaws and its self-declared functions tends to be executive and managerial. The team has similarly observed that several Board members tend to disregard the general dictum of good Board behavior in pressing upon the organization a number of tasks that are unrelated to the mandate of the organization.

Strategic planning is essentially a management tool. Hence the management, not the Board, generally elaborates the strategic plan. The strategic plan concerns the management, resource allocation and division of tasks in pursuit of a mission and a set of objectives, to which the Board, by definition of its supervisory role, is not directly responsible. If the Board is too directly involved in setting management parameters for the organization, it will eventually find itself in a conflict of interest that compromises its functions as the organ of independent supervision and governance.

The general practice in NGOs and other institutions embarking upon strategic planning is to leave planning to the management – understood as the director, the line managers and other staff members with managerial functions. The Board will usually be limited to having a representative on the planning group as an observer, and may have an overall role in approving the policies and strategic objectives of the organization.

Given the high level of commitment and organizational expertise of the members of the Board, it is desirable to involve the board members in the planning process. However, it is essential for Al Haq to decide on an adequate level of involvement of the Board and to agree on a division of labor between the Board and the Management.

In the proposed model and working diagram for strategic planning it is recommended that the Board be directly involved at the first level of planning, the key output of which is to produce the vision and (optionally) the strategic objectives of the organization. It seems a reasonable division of tasks, and one that would permit the Board to have a leading role in policy formulation, while at the same time delegating the tasks of planning to the management of the organization.

#### THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FOR CARRYING OUT STRATEGIC PLANNING

The team also observes that several members of the Board and the management staff are relatively new to strategic planning in the context of Al Haq.

To overcome the lack of experience in managing a strategic planning process and to support the management in achieving a high quality product, it is strongly recommended that an outside facilitator be brought in to assist at a number of crucial steps in the process.

The main functions of the external facilitator would be to:

- Assist the Board and Management in defining a workable division of tasks in relation to strategic planning.
- Assist the Board and Management in strategic visioning
- Provide methodological support to the management
- Assist management in analyzing structural and organizational implications of strategic objectives
- Build capacity in the staff to maintain and support strategic planning processes.

It is estimated that 15-20 working days facilitator input would be sufficient for the purposes of elaborating a first draft of the strategic plan.

#### THE PROCESS OF MANAGING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING

The team observes that there is a tendency in the organization to view the planning process as an instrument in satisfying (perceived) donor requirements.

While well-conceived strategic plans certainly will please and reassure donors that they are dealing with a professional partner, a strategic plan elaborated for the benefit of donors will tend to be more superficial and to avoid the necessary choices and decisions on strategy and organization inherent to any management tool worthy of its name.

It is recommended to take the time required for elaborating the strategic plan, without working to any timetable set by donors. Donors will as a rule be satisfied that strategic planning is on-going, and to be informed briefly of the process and timelines. The availability of evaluation reports and audited accounts will serve as reassurance to donors while the plan is being elaborated.

#### B. A PROPOSED MODEL FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

#### **RE-VISITING THE SWOT ANALYSIS:**

To assist in the strategic thinking, the team took part in a SWOT exercise with the staff of Al Haq and presented and discussed a SWOT analysis with the Board.

The SWOT analysis elaborated by the team does not pretend to be any better or any more definitive than the analysis provided by staff. Nevertheless, the analysis does reflect the findings of the team concerning major strengths and weaknesses of Al Haq, and may thus serve as an input to the process of strategic thinking.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Credibility, Impartiality	Mission drift
Documentation of HR violations	Organizational culture, activism
Legal research	Managerial systems
Human resource base	Internal governance
• Funding	Vulnerability of field work
International access	Overload
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
International and regional networking	Government hijack
Advocacy with PNA	Donor hijack
	Mission drift
	Lack of democratic development in OT

The issues raised in the SWOT table above are discussed elsewhere in the report.

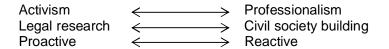
#### SELECTING STRATEGIC OPTIONS: BUSINESS DEFINED

As part of a focusing exercise, the team developed a set of strategic options for the Al Haq based on lengthy interviews with staff and board members.

The team readily recognizes that these strategic options are not comprehensive nor can they be free of a certain observer bias. Nevertheless, they do illustrate some of the main defining features of Al Haq's activities and the environment in which Al Haq is operating. Presently, these seem to be not well defined, and thus constitute the source of tension.

These options represents opposite ends of a spectrum of activities and implementation strategies available to Al Haq. The main options listed were as follows:





"Think tank" vs. "Grass roots" refers essentially to the identity – and by inference the constituencies - of Al Haq as either an organization based on legal and analytical work targeting selected international and national audiences, or as an organization with a broader basis in popular organizations and communities.

Advocacy vs. services refers to the delivery of international and national advocacy work based on documentation of human rights violations and other reporting, as opposed to a number of services that may include legal aid, studies, training, ad-hoc activities performed as a result of external requests and a number of emergency interventions performed by Al Hag staff.

Activism vs. professionalism refers to distinct methods of organizing and planning activities within the organization, where activism is the preparedness to react to emergencies and immediate needs of the surrounding society, thus taking away resources from other activities at short notice, while professionalism denotes planned, targeted activities performed according to clear limitations of mandate.

Legal research vs. civil society building refers to an often perceived schism between the "traditional" mandate of Al Ha within legal analysis and research as opposed to new demands on the organization to engage in civil society building, expanding constituencies to wider local communities and to engage in the political processes of "nation building".

*Proactive vs. reactive* refers to the ability of the organization to define and execute activities according to plans and resource allocations, as opposed to being lead in no small part by outside events as they happen.

In the following diagram, the vertical axis represents the identity of Al Haq as illustrated by the options of "think tank" vs. "grass roots", while the horizontal axis represents the activities of Al Haq as represented by the options of advocacy vs. services.

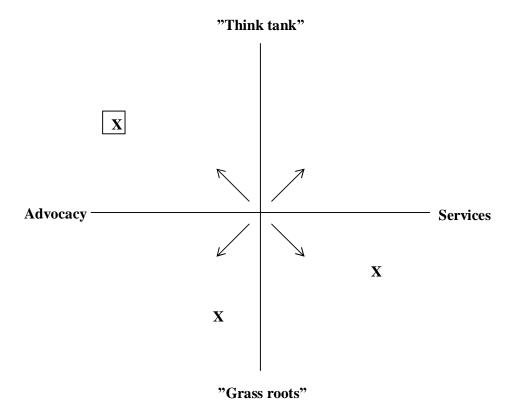


Fig 1. Strategic Options for Identity and Activities

From the model above, it will be perceived that the four quadrants – and any number of intermediate positions – represent identifiable and separate organizational profiles. It will also be appreciated that Al Haq to some extent can be placed in more than one of the quadrants, and that the various expectations and preferences of board members, of staff, and of the external demands on Al Haq, will tend to pull the organization into different quadrants – as represented by the four arrows.

From a strategic point of view that aims to develop and maintain the organization as a leader in its particular field of expertise, it will be appreciated that the Al Haq will be unable to maintain its quality of work and reputation in all four quadrants, and might even have difficulties in properly addressing a combination of two profiles.

The crosses represent possible positions and core profiles of the organization (these do not correspond to an actual analysis, but are purely examples). The cross can be taken to represent the core business of the organization. The position in the diagram of the organization is a matter of choice for its management – however, there are significant implications for choosing one position as against another. The optimal positioning and hence core business of the organization is determined by its comparative advantages in relation to other actors in the field. Moving into a quadrant that is crowded with other actors, where donor funding may be scarce, or where the organization does not enjoy a distinct comparative advantage, could be a very risky business and ultimately the result of bad strategizing.

#### A PROPOSED PLANNING MODEL

**Level 1:** The upper level is the strategic thinking, consisting of developing a shared vision for Al Haq. The vision must be shared by the Board and the management of the organization with the support of the staff. Agreement on the vision permits the organization to continue with more detailed strategic planning at levels 2 and 3.



Fig. 2 - Proposed Model for a Strategic Plan

**Level 2:** consists of developing a strategic plan, including the core business of the entire organization described as a number of Key Result Areas, and describing how the long-term work will be organized in achievement of the agreed vision and mission of Al-Haq.

**Level 3**: consists of detailed strategic planning at program level for each of the Key Result Areas defined at level 2. Typically, a Key Result Area will be the responsibility of a department or organizational unit.

**Level 4:** consists of the action plans to be developed for each area of strategic activity, or each area of prioritized activity in case Al Haq decides to operate on the basis of identified priorities. The action plans must all aim towards fulfillment of the mission.

The model can be expanded to show the various analytical and planning steps to be accomplished at each level, as illustrated in Fig. 3 below.

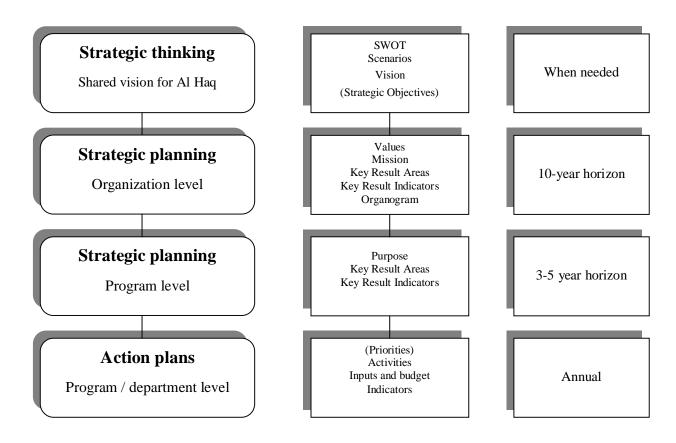


Fig. 3 - A Proposed Model for Strategic Planning

**Fig. 3** The model expands the 4 basic levels of a strategic plan and describes the necessary steps required to complete each level. Steps indicated by a parenthesis are optional; Al Haq may chose to include them if a need for them is perceived. Thus, strategic objectives can be omitted if the Key Result Areas defined on level 2 are found to cover the matter adequately.

The diagram also indicates the time frames of each level of planning. For the first level, strategic thinking, there is no time frame indicated. However, those involved should make their best effort to develop a long-lasting vision, which will not need any revision unless significant changes occur in the environment or the organization, affecting its entire modus and conditions of operation. At the second level, strategic planning should aim for a 10-year horizon, indicating that this level will be revised from time to time, but that changes are mainly minor adjustments. At the third level, the programme level, the time horizon will be shorter. Al Haq may usefully aim for a 3 year planning horizon, indicating that adjustments may take place at intervals. The fourth level, the operative and implementing level, is based on annual planning, and will be revised yearly, most usefully prior to and connected to the annual budgeting process of the organization.

A detailed description of each step is omitted in the text for reasons of space. It will probably serve Al Haq's purpose best to dedicate a workshop and short training sessions for key staff members on the planning concepts and methodology. This training should be undertaken by the external facilitator.

Finally, **Fig. 4** indicates who should be responsible for each step of the strategic planning process. It is important to have the right people participating in the process, i.e. in particular line managers with deep knowledge of the substance, and hereby to ensure that the implementation structure of the plan is adequately described and established within the organization.

The issue of dividing planning responsibilities between management and the Board is discussed above. The model in Fig 4. is a proposal for how such a division might adequately be addressed.

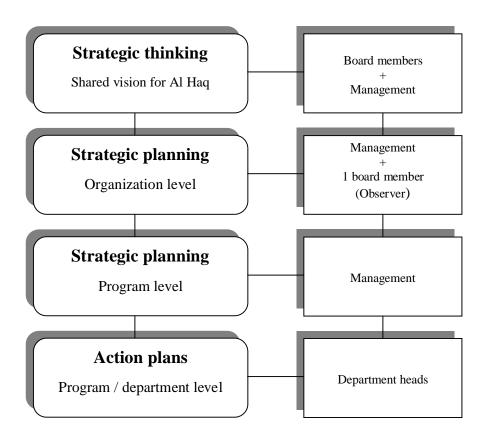


Fig. 4 A Proposed Division of Responsibilities for Strategic Planning

### **ANNEX A**

#### AL-HAQ EXTERNAL EVALUATION FINAL FIELD VISIT SCHEDULE 14 – 25 AUGUST 2005

DATE	DETAILS		
SUNDAY 14/08/ 2005	International Team Members Arrival		
MONDAY 15/08/2005	09:30	All-day team meeting: introduction, review of ToR and field schedule, review of tools and division of tasks. (Mira will join team in Ramallah in the morning)	
	16:30	Briefing Meeting with Ms. Randa Siniora, Managing Director of Al-Haq (preferably at hotel)	
TUESDAY 16/08/2005	ALL DAY	Y IN RAMALLAH AND INTERNA	L AL-HAQ MEETINGS
	8:30	Meeting with Board Members: Ezzat Abdel Hadi (Treasurer), Nidal Taha (President) and Lily Feidy (Vice President) at Al-Haq, Dina Naser, Khdeeja Habashneh, member	
	11:30	Meeting with Legal Research and Advocacy: legal researchers Anne Massagee, Nasir Rayyes and Rouba Al-Salem	
	13:00	Meeting with Rafeef Mujahed, Head of the Legal Unit	
	14:00	Quick Lunch- at Al-Haq	
	14:30	Meeting with Ms. Nina Atallah, Head of Documentation Unit	
	16:00	Meeting with Tahseen Elayyan, Media Coordinator	
WEDNESDAY 17/08/2005	09:00	General Meeting with Program and Senior Staff of Al- Haq (SWOT Analysis, institutional vision) and possibly 2 Board members	
	12:30	Quick lunch with Fadwa Al Saha'er, Director of public Relations at the Ministry of Interior	
	13:30	Lily Habash General Director- Prime Ministers office-Foreign Relations	Meeting with Ziad Abu Laban, International Committee of the Red Cross
		Meeting Place: Al-Haq	Meeting Place: Al-Haq

	15:00	Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid- Director Essam Al Arouri  Meeting Place: the office	Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (PICCR)- General Director Lamis Al Alamy  Meeting Place: PICCR-
		in Ramallah Al-Irsal, Zahret Al Masayef Building Tel: 2987981/59260	Ramallah Al-Irsal, Mikhmas Trading Center, 6 <sup>th</sup> Floor Tel: 298-6958/ 298-7536
		(Jacob)	(Herman)
THURSDAY 18/08/2005	ALL DAY	ALL DAY IN THE NORTH (NABLUS AND QALQILYA)	
	08:00	Interviews, meetings with selected beneficiaries of Al- Haq. To be decided in consultation with Nina and fieldworkers. Time can be used to interview also Al- Haq's fieldworkers in the area: (Yusuf Qawariq (fieldworker- Nablus)	
	09:00	Meeting with the Director of the School of Al Lubban Al Sharqiyyeh	
	10:00	Crossing Howara Checkpoint into Nablus	
	11:00	Balata Refugee Camp, Meeting with the Al Taftawi Family	
	12:00	Afnan Al Sayyed-Law Faculty at Al Najah University and also with participants in previous Al-HAq human rights training programs	
	13:00	Maysoon from the documentary: Inside the Spider's Web	
	14:00	Lunch	
	15:30	Leave to Jerusalem: Stay	at Meridian Hotel
FRIDAY 19/08/2005	MEETING	GS IN JERUSALEM ( SLEEP IN	•
	09:00	British Council , Sa'd Halwany	
	44.5-	Meeting Place: Meridian H	
	11:30	Adalah- Acting Director Orna Kohn  Mobile: 0523206653	
	44.00	Meeting Place: Meridian Hotel-Jerusalem	
	14:30	Meeting with Donor: DIAKONIA Ghada Harami and Netta Amer Office Tel: 532 29 72 Meeting Place: Meridian Hotel-Jerusalem	

	16:00	Chairperson of Association of International		
		Development Agencies (AIDA) <u>Mobile</u> : 0547797736		
SATURDAY 20/08/2005	ALL DAY ANALYSIS AND REPORT WRITING IN JERUSALEM			
MORNING	Free	9		
AFTERNOON		Initial analysis of find dentification of inform		
SUNDAY 21/08/2005	ALL DA	Y IN HEBRON		
	8:00	Leave Jerusalem for field visits to Hebron: interviews, meeting and focus group discussions with direct beneficiaries Meeting with		
	10:00	Land Defense Committee Mr. Abdel Hadi Hannash		
	11:00	Hebron Rehabilitation Committee- Director: Emad Hamdan and staff		
	12:00	Family of Nidal Al-Oweiwi from the Documentary: Inside the Spider's Web		
	14:00	Lunch and tour in the Old city of Hebron then return to Jerusalem		
	18:00	Mira leaves to Ram	nallah	
MONDAY 22/08/2005	JERUSA	LEM AND RAMALLAH		
	09:00	Hamoked- Center for the Defense of Individual Rights - Director; Delia Kerstein	B'Tselem- Director Jessica Montel Meeting Place: Ha Ta'asiya	Meeting with all Research and Advocacy unit staff
		Meeting Place: 4 Abu Obeidah Street, Jerusalem, next to the American Colony 6264438/6271698	Street, 4th Floor Talpiot (South Jerusalem) Tel: 6735599/ Mobile: 050-565- 2004	Meeting at Grand Park (Mira)
	11:00	Jacob and Herman Leave Jerusalem to go to Ramallah)		
	12:30	Telephone Convers	sation with Raji Sour	ani, Director of

		the Palestinian Center for Human Rights-Gaza (from Al-Haq)	
	13:30	Telephone Conversation with Emma Playfair, Director of the Ford Foundation Cairo Regional Office (from Al-Haq), and Abdel Basset Ben Hassan, Program Officer for Human Rights.	
	14:30	Meeting with Netherlands Representative's Office (Martijin Lambarts)  Meeting Place: 12	Meeting with UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (June Ray)  Meeting Place: their office in Ramallah Al Raja' Street First right after Khalil Al
		Hollanda Street, Al- Bireh, Ramallah Tel: 2987639	Sakakini Cultural Center Tel: 2965534
		(Herman)	(Jacob and Mira)
	19:00	Dinner Meeting with Khaled Batrawi and Dr. Lynn Welchmann (former Al-Haq staff) at hotel	
TUESDAY 23/08/2005	ALL	L DAY IN RAMALLAH	
	09:30	Meeting with Randa (Mira and Herman)	Meeting with Hanna Issa, Ministry of Justice (Jacob)
	11:30	Meeting with Staff of legal Unit (Mira)	Meeting with Nouran (Herman)
	14:30	Meeting with Ms. Nina Atallah – Documentation Unit (Mira and Jacob)	Meeting with Al-Haq Accountant Steve Kawaja (Herman)
	16: 00		
	18:00	Meeting with Deputy President of the High Court, As'ad Moubarak – Grand Park (Jacob)	
WEDNESDAY 24/08/2005	09:00	Brainstorming Session	with Selected Board Members
	11:30	Meeting with Legal Unit staff (Mira)	
	15:00	Debriefing Meeting with Ms. Randa Siniora, General Director: Presentation of preliminary findings and discussion of issues to be raised with the Board	
	16:30	Return to Hotel	
		Team Meeting: discussion of findings and analysis	

Thursday 25/08/2005	ALL DAY IN RAMALLAH		
	09:30 Preparation of Presentation for Al-Haq staff		
	11:00	Presentation of Preliminary findings for all Al-Haq staff: discussion, feedback and validation.	
	15:00 Discussion session on Strategic Planning and the way forward with Al-Haq's SP committee.		
	17:00	Farewell Dinner with Senior Al-Haq staff Return to Jerusalem (Mira and Jacob)	

### ANNEX B LIST OF AL-HAQ STAFF- 2005

Name	Sex	Position
Randa Siniora	F General Director	
Nouran Nassif	F	Administrative Officer
Tahseen Elyan	M	Media Coordinator
Steve Khawaja	M	Accountant
Nina Attallah	F	Head of Monitoring and Documentation Unit
Shawan Jabarin	M	Head of Legal Research and Advocacy Unit
Rafeef Mujahed	F	Lawyer and Head of the Legal Unit
Naser Rayyes	M	Lawyer and Legal Researcher
Marko Oberg	M	Legal Researcher
Anne Massagee	F	Legal Researcher
Rouba Al-Salem	F	Legal Researcher
Hana Amer	F	Lawyer
Ellen Saliba	F	Librarian
Lina Mustaklem	F	Data Bank Entry
Raba' Wadi	F	Data Bank Entry
Tareq Al-Haj	M	Fieldworker
Yusuf Jaradat	M	Fieldworker
Manaf Abbas	M	Fieldworker
Ziad Hamidan	M	Fieldworker
Amneh Ma'bad	F	Executive Secretary
Ireen Tannous	F	Secretary
Fa'ed Isnaf	M	Office Assistant
Gareth Gleed	М	Assistant Legal Researcher (on commissioned basis).
Maureen Murphy	F	Intern
TOTAL 24		
Female	13	
Male	11	

ANNEX C
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF AL-HAQ

