

Iraqi Al-Amal Association
Second General Conference
Arbil, 15-16 November 1999

THE FUTURE OF **AL-AMAL ASSOCIATION**

Introduction

The organised charitable and humanitarian work is a new experience in Iraq. Historically these activities were limited to the religious establishment or minor individual activities mainly within the provision of aid to the poor.

The present dire situation is due to eight years of war with Iran, the invasion of Kuwait and the destruction and sanctions that followed together with years of internal repression, deportation and emigration. The human disaster has been immense: one million dead or maimed, the disintegration of society, brain drain and the destruction of the infrastructure, the economy and the health and education institutions.

It is important to stress that the effect of the crises has effected all sectors of society and hit the core of the middle class, which adversely affected the educational, health and cultural services.

The depth and wholeness of the crisis has made the old charity work redundant. It is no longer able to meet the demands of the present situation. Therefore, new Iraqi humanitarian and charitable organizations were formed, mostly working outside the area controlled by the central government (in Kurdistan or refugee areas), with few works in the midland and the south.

These organizations are based abroad and concentrate on sending medicine and aid to Iraq. There was also an influx of international organizations, in general working in Iraqi Kurdistan on short-term projects.

The circumstances and the process in which the humanitarian / charitable organizations were created and the lack of co-ordination and cooperation between them forced these organizations to be "general providers" i.e. providing a variety of services within one organizational framework.

The depth of the tragedy did not allow specialization to develop. The political polarization influenced the creation of general providers with particular political characteristics.

The experience, globally, indicates that there are two types of organizations, generalists and specialists. The specialist organizations are the majority and provide specific services such as health or dealing with a particular health problem, or organizations for the disabled, women, children or young people etc, or even geographic or a single project interest.

Where dose AI-Amal Association fit in this description and what is its future?

"AI-Amal" was formed in the midst of these tragic conditions. And, like other organizations, its activities were varied to meet the desperate needs of the people. What distinguish "AI-Amal" is that it is a charitable / humanitarian organization adopted the vision of "**for the welfare of humanity**". It aims at linking the humanitarian work with the development of the individuals and their welfare, the development of the social consciousness and the support of the development plans.

It was natural that this direction will lead to the provision of varied activities, which can be grouped as follows:

- **Medical Services:** Clinics and health awareness
- **Cultural Services:** Cultural centre, events, courses, lectures, exhibitions and literacy classes.
- **Social Services:** Women's centres, social awareness and vocational training.
- **Re-construction:** Building schools, medical centres and water projects.
- **General Awareness Activities:** Human rights, the rights of women and children.

The broad relationship established with the local and international agencies, the management and control of projects and the right policies adopted towards internal conflicts allowed the Association to obtain the appropriate fund to develop its activities.

This paper is not intended as a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the management of the projects but to focus the discussion on the future direction to be adopted by AI-Amal.

The question is should AI-Amal continue to develop its activities on all fronts or should it concentrate on few aspects and develop them qualitatively and quantitatively?

It is possible, for example, to develop the health service and the establishment of a network of clinics and hospitals. New field within the health service can be instigated.

This focused approach will lead to the speedy development of this sector and will be more visible.

The same will apply to the other services in the case of specialization.

Al-Aamal was not created as a specialist organization. The needs of the Iraqi people are still varied and urgent. Furthermore, the likely political developments require flexibility in the ability to switch from one service to another.

After seven years of activities, the association's development should include the selection of appropriate projects and activities, procedures, management structure and its resources.

It is also important to enrich Al-Amal's development with the experiences of the international organizations in general and, in particular, with the Arab organizations through debating the essence of the humanitarian work in the world today and the significant role they can play in the social and political development towards building the structure of the civil societies.

On these bases, it is possible **to conclude that the following fields should be the framework for the development of the Association:**

1. **Identifying Strategy:** The participation, with other NGO's, in the establishment of civic society through the public participation in the development plan, in the main for the benefit of the disadvantaged and poorer sectors of society. This process requires the NGO's to play their full role in conjunction with the official departments and to encourage the state to fulfil its social obligations.
2. **General services provider with stated priorities** in the field of health, social, cultural and reconstruction, with specific attention to the conditions of women, children, youth and displaced people. It is important to continue to develop the present project and then look at possible new fields.
3. The over-riding framework for all the activities is "**the development of the people**" through personal development, wellbeing and integration.
4. **Influencing social consciousness** through raising awareness and education in solidarity, tolerance, respect to others, rejection of violence and war, exposure to international instruments etc. And, working towards changing the education process and the curriculum on these directions.
5. With the success of the experience in Kurdistan, it is important to **extend the activities to the rest of Iraq**. The Association should work towards creating the foundation for working throughout Iraq by preparing the human and financial resources

and the search for new methods of operating so as to be able to extend its activities geographically and be able to respond effectively in case of political changes.

6. Concerted effort to **develop the leadership and the specialized resources** with particular attention to women and young people together with the need for the development of proper policies on incentives.
7. **The Association is not a mass movement** as far as its membership are concerned.
8. The work towards **establishing strong links with the Iraqi communities abroad** in order to gain their support and to act as link with the international organizations for supporting the Association's projects.
9. The work towards establishing **strong relationship with regional and international networks**.
10. **Proper financial policies** in calculating the benefits of projects and its sustenance, the establishment of self-financing, the appropriate management resources and the creation of permanent sources of income to support the Association's humanitarian - charitable activities.
11. **Especial attention to the structural foundation of the projects and activities of the Association**, in order to make clarity the system of work of the Association and its development.
12. It must be stress **the importance of transparency and flexibility** in the work of the Association and its branches, particularly in the sources of income and the fields of expenditure.
13. Attention must be paid to the **development of publicity materials** including raising awareness in the conditions of the Iraqi people and the activities and the projects of the Association.

////////////////////////////////////