



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Strategic Plan 2016-2019

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Vision, Mission and Review of Key Achievements.....	2
2.1 Vision.....	2
2.2 Mission.....	2
2.3 Review of 2010 – 2015: Lessons Learned and Characteristics of Success.....	3
3. Core Values, Methodology and Theory of Change	5
3.1 Core Values	5
3.2 Methodology	6
3.3 Theory of Change	7
4. Strategic Plan 2016-2019	7
4.1 Our Starting Point.....	7
4.2 The Strategic Questions.....	8
4.3 Results-based Vision: Towards 2019	9
4.4 The Strategy Screen.....	9
4.5 Strategic Relationships.....	10
5. Strategic Priorities	11
5.1 Programmatic Priorities.....	11
PP1. ADVANCING NEW FRONTEIRS IN ESC RIGHTS	11
PP2. PROVIDING CONSISTENT, VISIBLE LEADERSHIP ON ESC RIGHTS WHERE WE HAVE DEEP EXPERTISE.....	13
PP3. FOSTERING MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS FOR ESC RIGHTS IMPACT	13
PP4. STRENGTHENING THE LEGAL ENFORCEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ESC RIGHTS.....	13
5.2 Organizational Priorities.....	14
OP1. INCREASING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AT PROGRAMMATIC AND ADMINISTRATVIE LEVELS.....	14
OP2. REGULARIZING AND STRENGTHENING OPERATIONS IN GENEVA	14
OP3. STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS	15
5.3 Funding and Financial Resource Priorities.....	15
FP1. DIVERSIFYING OUR BASE OF FUNDING AND STEADILY INCREASE ANNUAL OPERATIONAL BUDGET TO SUPPORT NECESSARY GROWTH.....	15
FP2. SECURING LONGER TERM FUNDING FROM DONORS.....	15
FP3. INCREASING PROPORTION OF UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	15

5.4	Governance Priorities.....	15
	GP1. HOLDING REGULAR IN-PERSON BOARD MEETINGS.....	15
	GP2. INCREASING INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION ON THE BOARD.....	16
	GP3. FORMALIZING BOARD MEMBER ROLES AND TERMS.....	16
	ADDENDUM: SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW ...	17

1. Introduction

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) began in 2010, as an initiative to advance the realization of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights globally, tackling the endemic problems of poverty, social injustice and inequality through a human rights lens. In the short time since its inception, GI-ESCR has provided world-class technical support and achieved groundbreaking outcomes that are respected within and beyond the human rights community. As a result, it has become increasingly recognized as a leader in the area of ESC rights advocacy. For example, in 2014, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights invited a select few non-governmental organizations to meet with him to discuss priorities. The large traditional players (organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc.) were at the table, and it is an honor to be able to say that so was GI-ESCR. Even though we are undoubtedly smaller, and far newer as an organization, this recognition demonstrates that GI-ESCR is valued for high quality advocacy work and the unique perspective provided to the Geneva human rights scene and beyond. We think it bodes well for the fact that we are a unique organization, playing an important role, and making a contribution which is not only significant, but urgently needed in today's world.

Our work has also been recognized by networks of peer organizations at both the international and national levels. For instance, GI-ESCR has been appointed to serve on the Steering Committee of the ESCR-Net Strategic Litigation Working Group, is part of the core leadership of the ESCR-Net Women and ESC Rights Working Group, and is an active member of the ESCR-Net Corporate Accountability Working Group. We have been elected, and subsequently twice reelected, to serve on the Steering Committee of the ETO Consortium (extraterritorial obligations). In recent years, we have also been sought out by UN agencies and partners to contribute expertise on specific projects advancing rights.

With growth in credibility, reputation, and expectations, the Co-Directors and Board of Directors of GI-ESCR agreed that the time is right for a transition from organizational “start up” to organizational “step up.” The launch phase had distinguishing characteristics: organizational agility, nimbleness, high quality technical insights, an eye for the strategic, partnering with and drawing upon other networks and advocates with expertise, and an appreciated respect for local actors and agency. These qualities and core values must be nurtured and sustained as growth and greater impact are pursued in this next phase. Organizations and institutions in both the private and non-profit sector do not always get this transition right and find the right balance between too much/too little ambition, structure, staff, change, vision, growth, and resources. The GI-ESCR is at a cross roads, and has the desire and ability to get it right.

This document, therefore, is less a rigid, defined plan with given metrics, and more a living document and guiding framework, vision, values and principles for making intelligent choices and actions. Often strategic plans are already outdated by the time they are approved and implemented. Effective organizations in today's world must be strategic in real time, and continuously thinking, acting, and learning from their work and their rapidly changing and challenging contexts. Getting it right and stepping up mean building on:

- strengths and accomplishments;
- partnerships and actions based on credibility and respect;

- the on-going reading and understanding of global trends and the global context of human rights -- and understanding issues that can be leveraged;
- the thoughtful and rigorous selection of strategic program priorities; and
- developing organizational capacity, and resources to pursue them.

Therefore, this Strategic Plan seeks to build upon GI-ESCR's innate strengths and distinct placement in the field. Within a consultative process of strategic planning and organizational development, GI-ESCR seeks to clarify its organizational narrative, refine its organizational methodology, identify strategic pathways for future growth, and address some of the institutional challenges that have arisen as a consequence of growth and increasing expectation. The aims of the Strategic Plan and corresponding organizational development plan are to ensure that GI-ESCR is well placed within its field to make meaningful contributions; to ensure that organizational, administrative and support capacities are developed to implement the plan; and that organizational values, funding and sustainability are progressively aligned and enhanced over the 2016-2019 period and beyond. Another intention of the process is to build an organizational environment and culture that is agile, nimble, and has systems for continuous learning for effectiveness and impact.

2. Vision, Mission and Review of Key Achievements

2.1 Vision

Our vision is of a world where the human rights framework reflects the real world experiences of all of us, effectively furthering social and economic justice and human dignity, and catalyzing change from the local to the global, back to the local. To realize this vision, our role is one of catalyzing social change through leveraging of strategic spaces. This is work that we undertake in close partnership with local partners and advocates from around the world; what we like to call “making the UN work for the poor,” although it also encompasses strategic spaces beyond the UN.

GI-ESCR believes that reaching that next, needed scale of impact requires both the amplification of voices of local advocates by leveraging international law and mechanisms – and informing the content, meaning, and interpretation of international human rights law from the perspectives of marginalized groups and communities. *It is no longer enough to think globally and act locally; GI-ESCR works with partners to think and act, globally and locally, where work at one level is enriched by, and strengthens and supports the other.* Indeed, the complex problems and issues of our day require thinking and acting across boundaries, sectors, disciplines and fields. If we have learned anything over the decades, it is that certainly people themselves affected by rights violations should be engaged in designing the solutions to those violations.

2.2 Mission

The mission of the GI-ESCR is to:

Strengthen the international human rights framework through creative standard setting, so that the framework reflects the experiences, needs and aspirations of marginalized individuals, groups and communities.

Partner with advocates, social movements and grassroots communities at national and local levels to more effectively claim and enforce ESC rights, including by engaging international mechanisms for local impact.

Contribute to the effective implementation of ESC rights, so that everyone is able to fully enjoy their ESC rights in practice, and are able to do so without discrimination and on the basis of equality.

Provide innovative tools to policy makers, development actors and others on the practical implementation and realization of ESC rights.

Enforce ESC rights through international, regional and national mechanisms and seek remedies for violations of these rights, with a focus on creating beneficial jurisprudence aimed at transformative change.

Engage networks of human rights, women's rights, environmental and development organizations and agencies to advance the sustainable enjoyment of ESC rights at both national and international levels.

2.3 Review of 2010 – 2015: Lessons Learned and Characteristics of Success

From 2010 to 2015, GI-ESCR worked to push emerging issues to the fore, including the issues of extra-territorial human rights obligations (ETOs), women's rights to land and other productive resources, the human rights impact of privatization, among others. Key successes have included:

- On ETOs, our work has led to increased recognition of ETOs under both the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Our individual complaint against Bulgaria to prevent the forced eviction of the Dobri Jeliakov community in Sofia was the first complaint of its kind before the UN Human Rights Committee. Following our intervention in 2012, the Human Rights Committee issued its landmark decision in the case of *Liliana Naidenova et al. v. Bulgaria*, in which the Committee issued a permanent injunction preventing the forced eviction of the community as well as the reestablishment of access to water. With this win the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has been opened as an additional avenue for the enforcement of social rights such as the rights to housing and water.
- In 2014, we filed the first Individual Complaint before the Human Rights Committee dealing with ETOs in the context of corporate accountability, requiring States to regulate trans-national corporations for activities abroad.
- On women's rights to land and other productive resources we have worked closely with local partners to achieve ground breaking pronouncements from the treaty bodies on this important issue related to women's equality and equity. Since we started, we have intervened on 27 countries and secured a range of progressive pronouncements which are now being used to strengthen local advocacy.

- In 2014, we were invited by the Secretariat of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to assist in the drafting of the Committee's General Recommendation on the Rights of Rural Women.
- In 2013, we successfully worked with partners for the adoption of ACHPR Resolution 262 on Women's Right to Land and Productive Resources, and since that time have been building on this effort by working towards a new General Comment under the Maputo Protocol on women's rights to equality upon dissolution of marriage.
- We have provided periodic 'Advocacy Updates' and 'Updates from Geneva' which highlight important advancements, events and discussions related to ESC rights, as well as thought pieces, Practitioner's Guides and other resources, which have been appreciated and widely shared by partners.
- We have engaged with UN experts on a range of ESC rights issues, for example by emphasizing the extraterritorial human rights obligations and their critical role in formulating an effective and relevant human rights response to climate change with the Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment, and by hosting an NGO Consultation with Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing to address recent and emerging themes related to the right to housing worldwide. This exposure has not only enabled us to increase our profile in Geneva and led to our being seen as a vital voice for ESC rights in Geneva, but helps ensure that voices of our local partners are heard within these important discussions.
- Our work on the human rights impacts of privatization in education has been praised as a "game changer" by donors and partners, and our advocacy resulted in the first ever pronouncements critiquing the detrimental impacts of privatization of education in Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Morocco, Chile and Brazil as well as the ETOs of the United Kingdom. This resulted in a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education which recognized education as a public good and the obligation to ensure that privatization does not have any detrimental human rights impacts.
- We have worked in partnership with various networks (ESCR-Net, the ETO Consortium, and others) to connect our work with other spaces, processes and organizations globally. Partnerships can be with a range of entities, such as peer NGOs or communities which benefit from partnering with the GI-ESCR by the strengthening of their own human rights advocacy. Since our work is often pioneering and involves opening new avenues for ESC rights advocacy, these networks also have proven beneficial to our communications strategy by disseminating the results of our work and strategies on how such results can be replicated by others.
- Consultations undertaken from 2013 to 2015 have also indicated that there is a gap of expertise in ESC rights in the NGO sector in Geneva. This message comes from members of UN treaty bodies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and civil society partners without a permanent presence in Geneva. Our presence in Geneva has filled a key gap, and there are many ways to build upon the trust, credibility and substantive change we have achieved there thus far.

An important thread ties this work together and lies at the heart of the work we do and our approach to human rights advocacy. The achievement of these diverse results in different contexts have

emerged from a common methodology, which in turn has increasingly been recognized as our unique contribution to the field of ESC rights advocacy: as described above, *we work with local and national groups to use international human rights law and access international human rights mechanisms to achieve impact at the domestic level as well as inform international norms from the local perspective.* Expertise in using this advocacy approach is a fundamental part of who we are and what we do, and goes all the way back to earlier work in the development of the right to adequate housing and the prohibition on forced eviction, as well as the rights to water and sanitation, achieved by human rights advocates that have brought those experiences into the GI-ESCR. This experience resulted in the universal recognition, application and enforcement of these rights and an understanding of these rights informed by marginalized groups and communities.

Beyond identifying our core methodology, a key aim of this Strategic Plan is to build upon our advocacy and apply our methodology to a more well-rounded set of new and emerging issues. Indeed, *the focus on emerging issues – as a strategic and intentional decision of the organization – is itself another key thread which ties our advocacy work together into a coherent whole.* A key contributor to our success to date is the ability to remain flexible and nimble in order to quickly engage in emerging issues that fall within our mission as well as the ability to tap into a network of human rights advocates with various expertise in areas in which we work. By being small and comparatively nimble in a world where funding and organizations and their plans can be inelastic - as needs, opportunities and contexts change - we can have a strategic eye, pioneer, and break ground for issues that best leverage change.

3. Core Values, Methodology and Theory of Change

Amongst organizations that work for social justice, or even for ESC rights as human rights, our core values, methodology and theory of change set us apart. Our role is fundamentally as an advocacy organization, whose primary role it is to catalyze change through strategic leveraging of international spaces.

3.1 Core Values

We believe we can make a difference in improving lives, and we believe in the power of the human rights framework to effect change. Our values are social justice and human rights values, and we seek to uphold the principles of equality, human dignity, and interdependence of rights in everything we do. We also value our independence as a human rights organization, so that we can be a credible voice for ESC rights globally.

In addition, GI-ESCR understands that the human rights framework has far too often been constructed by a handful of global elites. For the human rights framework to be meaningful to those most impacted by human rights violations, and in particular violations of ESC rights, the human rights framework needs to be constructed and informed by the real world experiences of marginalized groups and communities that all too often bear the brunt of such violations. We believe that by being the architects of their own human rights solutions, those working on real world human rights violations can affect the global human rights architecture. That architecture, in turn, has the potential to change the world in lasting, profound and positive ways.

We value respect and trust, in our work and in how we work. Internally we've built a team of staff and Board that is based on respect and trust as well as a shared enthusiasm

for human rights advocacy. Our aim as an organization is to facilitate an organizational culture where all feel valued and all have the space to provide leadership, strategy and ideas on how the organization conducts its human rights advocacy. This respect and trust also guides us in our external relationships with partners whether at the UN level, NGO sector, local grassroots activists and, most importantly, those bearing the brunt of human rights violations. Respect is practiced not by speaking up for partners, but by helping bring their realities, voices and perspectives to the table.

3.2 Methodology

The primary methodology of the GI-ESCR of achieving impact is advocacy, and we will deploy research, documentation, strategic litigation and other forms of legal advocacy, and field building through deep and dynamic partnerships. Our methodological approach is aimed at achieving transformative change by working with partners to effectively leverage the power of international human rights law and mechanisms for local impact.

This methodology not only amplifies the voices of local advocates and activists by leveraging the power of international law and mechanisms, but also informs the content, meaning and interpretation of international human rights law from the perspective of marginalized individuals, groups and communities. *As such, this two-way exchange of information and advocacy results both in specific change at the local level and structural change within the international human rights normative framework, and a more intentional and profound symbiosis between the two. We are effective when our partners are effective.* We assess impact both in terms of real transformative change on the ground, by a progressive understanding of human rights norms, and by increased capacity of our local partners to effectively use the human rights framework and successfully utilize human rights mechanisms in their advocacy.

Our methodology relies on key specific tactics to promote and advocate for ESC rights, including (but not necessarily limited to):

- Engaging with UN mechanisms and agencies, regional human rights mechanisms, States, human rights experts, partner organizations and others to promote ESC rights and highlight State obligations;
- Preparing parallel reports on ESC rights issues to UN treaty bodies, highlighting specific violations and emerging issues;
- Advocating for the development of new standards relating to ESC rights, and contributing to substantively to the development of such standards;
- Providing training and capacity building on ESC rights and related mechanisms;
- Convening strategic meetings and other events with partners to highlight, and/or develop joint strategies around key issues;
- Preparing and disseminating quality research, tools, guides, and other resources on ESC rights;
- Engaging in strategic litigation on ESC rights and providing legal support on ESC rights related cases.

3.3 Theory of Change

We believe that positive change happens when partners working together at different levels of advocacy join in concert to achieve and maximize the impact of wins made at various levels. As an organization, we partner with local advocates to play a key role in creating strategic ‘wins’ in international human rights spaces, which can then strengthen the advocacy of those partners on the ground. To be sustainable, effective and meaningful, however, we believe those wins must be informed by the experiences of those who directly experience violations of ESC rights. As such, our theory of change implies a cycle, or upward spiral of iterative and accumulative change where the local impacts and benefits the global, and the global in turn impacts and benefits the local. *In other words, advocacy and impact must both ‘roll up’ (that is, when specific, smaller victories accrue into larger, normative, and strategic ESC rights ‘wins’) and strategies that ‘roll out’ (that is, when those larger wins actually get implemented and translated into concrete improvements in people lives).*

In spite of the advances over the past decades in establishing global human rights treaties, standards, mechanisms and instruments, they stand in contrast to a still profound gap in implementation and respect for rights. We believe that this divide can be bridged and transformed by democratizing the human rights system and engaging those most effected in the formulation and progressive improvement of policies and practices. Indeed, our aim is to build upon the foundation of human rights by taking experiences and models from the community level, reflect them up to the international level to advance norms and dialogues, and in turn alter both global and national policy and practice.

4. Strategic Plan 2016-2019

4.1 Our Starting Point

The fight for the realization of ESC rights has never been so vital: the world and our future are so imperiled by social inequality, rampant poverty, and environmental degradation. We live in an era of growing inequality, and of unprecedented levels of global poverty. Despite the relevance of the cause, the movement for ESC rights has not yet been able to fundamentally change the *reality* of endemic ESC rights violations in a clear and compelling way. If the ESC rights movement is not successful, the reality for billions of people around the world will continue to be characterized by systematic violations of their human rights with devastating consequences day in and day out for the world’s poor.

We believe that we must work to close the chasm between the standards which exist protecting ESC rights, and their actual implementation and enjoyment on the ground. To do so, we need to have creative and collaborative strategies which highlight and address the deep flaws in our current global model of economic prosperity and development – a model that turns a blind eye towards human rights in general, and in particular towards the human rights of the poor. Based on our lessons learned, we also know that Geneva is a critical space for advocacy, and our work there fills an important gap. Geneva is an important nexus for our advocacy and a place where strategies can ‘roll up’ and ‘roll out’ in ways that align with our mission.

Looking ahead in the strategy period and beyond, we believe we must continue to be a voice for ESC rights, raising the profile of ESC rights in key strategic spaces, and

insisting on the implementation of the standards already achieved. It is also critical to demonstrate how previously defined standards in the area of ESC rights can be made most meaningful to the most marginalized groups and individuals around the world, including women, indigenous peoples, and minorities who often face multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion. Drawing upon deep expertise in key areas, we must continue to ensure the strength, coherence and continued relevance of the international human rights framework and the accountability of actors that violate human rights.

We believe that to be effective, we must also advance new frontiers in ESC rights. Today's global reality is pushing the crossing of new substantive frontiers in ESC rights. It will require the re/defining of new standards vis-à-vis extra-territorial obligations, for example, or human rights and development; water and sanitation; land rights; security of tenure; climate change; corporate accountability, privatization, and rights over common spaces and resources; among others.

The other side of standard setting is implementation and enforcement, and as such we must advance in the area of litigation and legal accountability, as well as in practical tools to implement rights. While many organizations working in the area of ESC rights stress the importance of implementation, litigation and case law, very few are actually actively working to advance concrete jurisprudence in this area through the use of strategic litigation and even fewer provide concrete tools for how to implement rights.

In this process, it is also imperative to change the pattern of ESC rights being defined by global elites so that human rights are increasingly given meaning by those most impacted in real-life by violations of their rights, including via engagement with social movements and civil society actors. In this, GI-ESCR seeks to be a pivotal partner.

4.2 The Strategic Questions

As an organization poised to leave its start-up phase and embark upon a new phase of growth, there are a number of questions that we need to be asking ourselves in order to approach growth intelligently, ethically and strategically. This Strategic Plan is an iterative, living document and a framework, lens, and guide to achieve what we are going to achieve, not a ticked box of things to achieve and list of activities. Because we must be agile, opportunistic and have an on-going, intelligent reading of the global and local trends and contexts, it is important for us to be consistently asking ourselves strategic questions. Strategic thinking, learning and action/reflection are on-going, and the following questions have guided this Strategic Plan and should continue to guide the growth and development of the organization.

- How do we best align our organizational vision, mission, values and governance?
- What are our priorities and how are these priorities reflected in programmatic development, including advocacy priorities and strategy? How do we decide what to work on and what not to work on?
- What are our strategic and comparative advantages?
- What is our key methodology? How do we make change happen? Are there supporting methodologies which should also be used for advocacy and if yes, which ones?

- How are the operational systems and structures functioning and what are the necessary human and financial resources needed to ensure organizational effectiveness?
- How do we seek to develop institutionally in order to maximize human rights impact? What are the institutional supports that are needed to ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan? How do we ensure that the GI-ESCR is sustainable over the long term?
- How do we as an organization better measure and communicate our impact and success?

4.3 Results-based Vision: Towards 2019

Our vision of the GI-ESCR at the end of 2019 is that of a sustainable organization which has clearly outgrown its start-up phase. We see a more mature organization, with a well-rounded body of work and accomplishments, and a more coherent organizational identity. We envision an organization which is recognized and valued for its leadership on a range of ESC rights issues, and with a regularized presence in Geneva. It is of an organization with a solid and growing base of donor support, with active and engaged staff, management and Board.

As we look ahead to 2019, GI-ESCR has grown, but grown intelligently, does ethical and relevant work, and stayed true to itself. All that we hope to achieve over the coming years we hope to achieve while not sacrificing the institutional culture and values that we cherish, values which prioritize the people, relationships and partnerships that make up the organization and its work in the world. We see an organization that effectively navigates legal and technical spaces, but which nonetheless comes to the scene with heart; understanding that change is something we all can only contribute to when we have enthusiasm, hope, and a deeply seeded commitment to the cause.

Finally, at the end of 2019, we hope this more robust and consolidated organization has achieved programmatic results in each of our programmatic priorities as highlighted below. Our work often and intentionally generates results that build the foundation for future advocacy. Our aim is to ensure that concrete outcomes and impact not only further our mission but lay the foundation for future human rights advocacy of others. These results build into our vision of a world where *the human rights framework reflects the real world experiences of all of us, effectively furthering social and economic justice and human dignity, and catalyzing change from the local to the global, back to the local.*

4.4 The Strategy Screen

As a growing organization, deciding what we do not work on is just as vital as deciding what we do work on. The question is critical to how we contribute to the strategic advancement of the field, to our coherent identity as an organization, and to fostering positive and clear partnerships with others. Our strategy screen as an organization therefore encompasses the following components:

The work in which we engage must first and foremost be consistent with our values and methodology. Before we engage, we must make sure that we have the

capacity to engage effectively, or a strategy to acquire additional capacity. We must ask whether successes would be transformative, scalable and replicable.

Given our placement and profile within the field, we work to fill unique niches and address glaring gaps either by contributing to the advancement of ESC rights norms and standards that are **innovative and pioneering** or by providing **leadership where we have deep expertise**, in order to promote ESC rights and their implementation.

A key factor is that our work leads to **normative development** relevant to ESC rights or to **improved implementation**. We seek to work in areas **where others are not already leading, or when we can meaningfully connect other sectors to human rights mechanisms**.

In practice, our work also focuses primarily in the area of **social rights**, although we advocate for the importance and universality of the ESC rights framework as a whole. We recognize the important overlaps between social rights (i.e. housing, land, water and sanitation, health, education, etc.), economic rights (i.e. right to work and to favorable conditions of work), and cultural rights. To advance these areas, we seek to provide **quality research and compelling legal arguments** strengthening the ESC rights framework.

The work in which we engage seeks **transformative impact/change, tackling big issues**, and leading to **tangible change in the lives of the world's poorest people**. It seeks to address inequality by targeting the locus of power, abuse and injustice. It seeks to change fundamentally the systems and structures which maintain inequality and marginalization.

The work in which we engage seeks to be, as far as possible, **collaborative and in dynamic partnership** with local, national, regional and international organizations. We also strive to maintain **geographic coverage**, working with partners across regions. This however, should not preclude the GI-ESCR from acting on its own when need be, particularly in international advocacy.

4.5 Strategic Relationships

We value relationships and partnerships highly and see them as key to the effectiveness of GI-ESCR's methodology and a world that increasingly enjoys human rights. We seek to connect local advocates and victims of ESC rights violations (and their advocates) with these international human rights mechanisms, so that they can directly contribute to shaping standards in the area of ESC rights. Our strategic approach is to facilitate access for partners and work with them to strengthen the human rights standards emerging from these bodies, so that they are informed from a peoples' perspective. We strive to increase the capacity of partner organizations to directly utilize these mechanisms through targeted training and facilitation of access to influential actors, experts and decision makers.

We also value partnerships with other key actors in the human rights and ESC rights field, including networks, international organizations, UN agencies, States and experts.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 Programmatic Priorities

Our programmatic priorities seek to build upon existing areas of work which have proven successful and to expand current programmatic work areas to critical issues where we believe we can make a meaningful contribution using our distinct strategies. They seek to maintain a coherent (yet diverse) body of advocacy work leading to tangible results and impact; maintain quality expertise on ESC rights generally; and ensure balance between programme areas in terms of staff capacities and resources.

PP1. ADVANCING NEW FRONTIERS IN ESC RIGHTS

Continuing and ongoing themes:

- **Justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights** with the aim of economic, social and cultural rights being legally protected and enforceable at both the international and national level and with a progressive understanding and interpretations that reflect the real world experiences of those affected by violations of such rights. A focus will be on promotion and protection of the obligation to fulfill social rights, including positive obligations, with a focus on systemic violations.
- **ETOs:** We will work to raise awareness of the extra-territorial dimensions of ESC rights and strengthen standards around ETOs, highlighting the fact that in today's globalized world the extra-territorial dimensions of ESC rights cannot be ignored. We will also work to ensure that ETOs are taken into policy decisions, judicial decisions and otherwise implemented at the national level.
- **Women's rights to land and productive resources:** We will work to advance standards around women's rights to land and productive resources, and their implementation, highlighting the importance of these rights to gender equality, food security, HIV prevention, and women's economic autonomy.
- **Private actors and social rights:** We will work to deepen the research on the impact of the increasing role of private actors in education and to highlight the obligation of States to protect and fulfill ESC rights, and to offer a thoughtful response to privatization and its impact on the enjoyment of ESC rights in practice.

Priorities areas to build out as we grow:

- **Corporate accountability:** We will work to hold corporate actors accountable for ESC rights violations and to building an international legal framework which ends impunity for corporate actors by emphasizing the obligation of States to effectively protect ESC rights both domestically and abroad.
- **Climate change and sustainable energy:** We will work to highlight the ESC rights impacts of climate change and to develop an independent right to sustainable energy, building upon advocacy done at the nexus of water-energy-food security, and building upon the new SDGs.
- **Sanitation:** We will work to advance standards around the right to sanitation, highlighting how lack of access to adequate sanitation affects the dignity, health, and well-being of the world's poor and raising the recognition of the right to sanitation to be on par with the right to water.
- **ESC rights defenders:** We will work to ensure that the rights of human rights defenders working on issues such as ESC rights and climate change are increasingly protected and given the space needed for their crucial advocacy.

PP2. PROVIDING CONSISTENT, VISIBLE LEADERSHIP ON ESC RIGHTS WHERE WE HAVE DEEP EXPERTISE

- **Providing information and resources:** We will provide regular information on recent development on ESC rights, particularly updates from Geneva and thought pieces on emerging issues.
- **Maintaining a regular level of engagement on ESC rights issues where we have deep expertise:** We will increasingly engage on ESC rights issues through advocacy at UN Treaty Bodies and the Human Rights Council and will strengthen relationships with Special Rapporteurs, Working Groups, Missions and other relevant actors. Through our engagement we also seek to strengthen these institutions/mechanisms. As appropriate, we will also seek to convene panels, coordinate side events, and take advantage of other opportunities to highlight ESC rights issues. Here, we will focus on issues, which while not necessarily pioneering, the GI-ESCR has developed expertise, including:

- *Housing rights, including the prohibition on forced evictions*
- *The right to water*
- *Women's right to substantive equality and ESC rights*
- *The obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfill ESC rights*
- *The legal framework and case law protecting ESC rights*

PP3. FOSTERING MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS FOR ESC RIGHTS IMPACT

- **Strengthening partnerships with local, national, regional and international organizations:** We will work to foster, maintain and strengthen partnerships with a wide range of organizations working across sectors. We seek to maintain partnerships that are collaborative, respectful and mutually beneficial, and to contribute to coalitions as well as lead them.
- **Enhancing NGO access and participation in human rights spaces:** We seek to serve as a bridge for national organizations seeking to leverage international human rights spaces, and provide support in terms of training/capacity building, orientation and accompaniment, fostering connections, as well as assisting with strategy development and implementation.
- **Allowing those impacted by ESC rights violations to design solutions:** We seek to amplify the voices of those impacted by ESC rights violations and to enable them to directly influence the development of the international human rights framework, so that this framework better reflects the experiences, needs, and aspirations of the most marginalized.

PP4. STRENGTHENING THE LEGAL ENFORCEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ESC RIGHTS

- **Strategic litigation and legal advocacy:** We will play a leading role in ESC rights litigation at the international level, selecting cases with strategic impact, and will assist with litigation strategies at the domestic level.
- **Contributing to the implementation of ESC rights, including by strengthening 'roll out' strategies:** We will work with partners to take the advances made in international advocacy and translate them into meaningful change on the ground

though supportive strategies. We will produce innovative resources and Practitioner's Guides aimed at implementing ESC rights in practice, highlighting concrete approaches, lessons learned and case studies.

5.2 Organizational Priorities

Our organizational priorities seek to build a balanced internal structure through slow, managed growth, which embodies effective governance and management, successful programmatic work, and adequate administrative support. We do not seek growth for growth's sake and intend to remain a small, nimble and effective organization. Overall, we seek to increase staff capacity in key areas, particularly in Geneva, but also in relation to specific programmatic priorities; create a legal entity in Geneva which will formalize operations there; and improve the organization's communication functions

OP1. INCREASING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AT PROGRAMMATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS

- **Bring on additional staff to fill key organizational gaps:** We will prioritize bringing on staff to fill key gaps within the organization, namely with respect to administration, accounting, communications and new areas of programmatic work. As we bring on new staff, we will seek to recruit staff persons from different regions and strengthen the organization's language capacities. We will also prioritize increasing the time, responsibilities, and remuneration of existing staff, so as to cultivate a culture of internal leadership and sustain organizational memory. For this purpose we will prioritize the following:

- +**Financial Officer** to assist with finance, accounting and annual independent audit of the GI-ESCR.

- +**Rights to Water and Sanitation Officer** with expertise in both the human right to water and the human right to sanitation with a particular focus on knowledge and experience in establishing the right to water than can be used to replicate similar success with the right to sanitation.

- +**Right to Sustainable Energy Officer** with expertise on sustainable energy and ESC rights with particular focus on implementation of SDG 7 from a human rights perspective.

- +**Assistant UN Representative** to bolster the presence and work of the GI-ESCR in Geneva and with UN mechanisms, with a particular focus on assisting nationally-based partners in effectively using international human rights law and accessing international human rights mechanisms.

- +**Communications Officer** to assist with development of communications tools and strategies and to use those tools to disseminate information relevant to the work of the GI-ESCR.

OP2. REGULARIZING AND STRENGTHENING OPERATIONS IN GENEVA

- **Establish a non-profit legal entity (Association) in Geneva:** We will take the administrative and legal steps to establish a non-profit legal entity (Association) in Geneva. This will require a formal Statute as well as defining the organs of the Swiss legal entity.

OP3. STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

- **Develop communication tools and strategies to increase awareness and visibility of ESC rights and to better communicate success:** We will develop communication protocols and a communications strategy (for both internal and external communication) and improve the quality of our web-site, which is a key public face of the organization. We will also produce a regular organizational newsletter and seek to provide more regular updates, press releases, and resource materials which highlight successes and emerging trends. The overall aim is to spread awareness of not only ESC rights but of effective advocacy strategies and the results of those strategies, particularly where they build the foundation for further advancement of human rights.

5.3 Funding and Financial Resource Priorities

Our funding and financial resource priorities seek to consolidate a solid base of financial resources from a more diverse set of funders to ensure sustainability of the organization and its programmes, as well as to increase unrestricted funding.

FP1. DIVERSIFYING OUR BASE OF FUNDING AND STEADILY INCREASE ANNUAL OPERATIONAL BUDGET TO SUPPORT NECESSARY GROWTH

- **Cultivate new and prospective donors, particularly with Foundations, individuals and ESC rights-friendly States:** We will scope out and cultivate new funding possibilities, particularly with US and European based donors, submitting applications for funding where priorities align.

FP2. SECURING LONGER TERM FUNDING FROM DONORS

- **Approach current donors to provide longer term funding to the organization:** We will explore the possibility of multiple year grants which provide sustainability to the organization's operations and advocacy.

FP3. INCREASING PROPORTION OF UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

- **Increase proportion of unrestricted grants and operational support:** We will prioritize donors which provide unrestricted grants so that we can support the administrative and over-head requirements of a growing organization, aiming to have 20-25% of the annual operational budget come from unrestricted funds.

5.4 Governance Priorities

Our governance priorities seek to strengthen the fiduciary, strategic and generative roles of the Board of Directors, through the establishment of in person board meetings, increased international representation on the Board, and increased formalization of Board roles and terms.

GP1. HOLDING REGULAR IN-PERSON BOARD MEETINGS

- **Institute a practice of regular in-person Board meeting:** We will prioritize setting aside funds to convene an in-person Board meeting, at least once a year.

GP2. INCREASING INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION ON THE BOARD

- **Increase international representation of the Board:** As we bring new members on to the Board we will prioritize increasing the Board's international representation, particularly with respect to adding members from the Global South.

GP3. FORMALIZING BOARD MEMBER ROLES AND TERMS

- **Build the capacity of the Board to ensure it plays a role in all key governance functions:** We will build the capacity of the Board of Directors to ensure it plays an effective role in three key governance areas, namely its fiduciary role (stewardship of tangible assets), its strategic role (strategic partnership with management), and its generative role (source of leadership for organization).
- **Hold regular elections on Board officers and address the question of Board terms of service:** We will institute a regular practice of elections for the positions of Board Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, and will address and clarify the question of Board terms and term limits.
- **Institute a regular practice of management review:** We will create protocols for the regular review of the Co-Directors by the Board, taking into account performance goals and opportunities for improvement.

ADDENDUM: SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW

Part of the uniqueness of our organization is the role that it plays to defend rights on the global stage. We are a small organization, but those who know us well will tell you that we lift above our weight, and that we get results where many do not. We are distinctive amongst our peers for our focus, methods and strategies, which we believe is vital to overcoming the dramatic inequalities and unnecessary human suffering which today characterizes the world, as well as to uniting various critical sectors (for example, environmental justice, global governance, women's rights, and the development sector) to align more closely and more powerfully. The complexity of today's and tomorrow's issues go beyond what any individual organization, sector or field can do.

Peers, partners and others in the field in which we operate have recognized the unique contribution of the GI-ESCR, including the ways in which we partner with others, our key methodologies, and our results. The following reflections were offered during an extensive Strategic Planning consultation process. The positive comments about the Co-Executive Directors and the GI-ESCR as an organization were unsolicited, and came within the context of observations about the past, present and future of GI-ESCR.

Within a competitive world of funding, institutional-centricity, and striving to gain credit for achievements, GI-ESCR is recognized and appreciated for their selflessness, valuing of others, relationship building, and helping others be, and be seen as successful.

Within a world of elite, often northern and western driven and dominated power relationships in foreign assistance, technical assistance, and human rights; GI-ESCR is seen as an exception, as true partners, and as respectful of local and national voices, processes, and values.

Within a world that has entrenched bureaucratic patterns, a bifurcation between human rights policies and human rights practices, rigid approaches to complex issues and changing realities, and partial and disjointed strategies, GI-ESCR is seen as being nimble, resilient, intelligent and ethical in its systemic and profound approach to change that integrates and links the global and local and an inclusive approach to the architecture and carpentry of human rights policy and practice... that results in real change on the ground as well as a framework for a change in the field of ESC rights.

Comments during the consultation process included:

- They let you provide leadership.
- They let you provide leadership. They do not change the message without checking with you, they make sure that you are comfortable with it going the way it is. Others pretend to listen and put in your thoughts, and then do and say what they wanted anyway.
- The GI-ESCR is one of the top five go to organizations on the issue of women and land rights. When anyone asks for advice, the GI-ESCR is the name that rolls off my lips. It is an amazing resource. Real honor to work with them.
- The GI-ESCR has done exceptional work on litigating with the new optional protocol. Regarding Strategic Litigation, I periodically turn to the GI-ESCR for

legal thinking and expertise, particularly on extraterritorial obligations. The GI-ESCR is a sounding board for members. When we take up cases, we think of them, “looks good, maybe we should run this by the GI-ESCR.”

- Unlike others, they do not overclaim. They are supportive of ESCR Net. GI-ESCR could have been a competitor and claimed success for what they did, but they made every effort to make recognition supportive of the broader community.
- They are small and the David to the Goliath.
- Right size, moving fast. They play fast, not stuck in procedures. Active and quick. Really want to keep on working with them. They bring other perspectives to the table. Their work on privatization in other fields informs us and helps the rest of us have a broader view.
- Their work is stellar. Part of your role is to strengthen your organization so you can continue – this could rub against being part of a network. But they are good examples of people that are doing credible work, and want to and are willing to do that in collaboration with others, working through a network.
- They are humble, self-reflective and know the grassroots – and no one to trust more in knowledge of human rights law. Our staff will testify that their legal knowledge is second to none. Many of our members will reach out to them, they are looked to for their expertise, and they are generous.
- They find sweet spots that not many people are willing to fill. Others bring different skills sets, they bring it all together. They think across levels and are uniquely positioned in the UN and particular struggles.
- Work with other organizations from the north is not seen as a partnership. GI-ESCR is a viable partnership. We feel at ease in going back to them in communications.