

Role of NGOs in the Practice and Promotion of Human Rights

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ABSTRACT

Health research is dire essential for development. A major issue is an inequitable distribution of research efforts and funds directed towards populations suffering the greatest health problems. This imbalance is fostering major health problems of low and middle income people. NGOs have a responsibility in protecting human rights, but problems (some systemic) within organizations can threaten the very rights those NGOs seek to protect. That doesn't mean NGOs should be thrown out. This paper highlights some of the prevalent thinking and is intended to encourage new thinking on how NGOs can further this role.

KEYWORDS: NGOs, Human Rights, Practice and Promotion

INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been defined by the World Bank as 'private organizations which pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services or undertake community development etc. The activities of NGOs can be local, national and international. The NGOs have contributed to the development of communities around the world and are important partners of many governments – while remaining independent from governments. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India was established on 12th October, 1993. The statute under which it is established is the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993 as amended by the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006. The Constitution of India 1950 incorporated 10 fundamental rights suggested under the committee. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946 passed the objective resolution containing most of the human rights and it also guaranteed safeguard for minorities, backward classes, tribal people, oppressed as well as other classes in the country.

The NGOs are non-governmental organizations and operate independently from governments. As non-profit groups, many NGOs typically focus on humanitarian issues like poverty, gender inequality and other social injustices. As organizations that are separate from governments, many organizations around the world dedicate their efforts to protecting human rights and ending human rights abuses. The NGOs monitor the actions of governments and pressure them to act according to human rights principles.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Globally, the champions of human rights have most often been citizens, not government officials. In particular, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a primary role in focusing the

international community on human rights issues. The NGOs monitor the actions of governments and pressure them to act according to human rights principles. Some of these groups are listed below:

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights for all. With more than 2.2 million members and subscribers in more than 150 countries, they conduct research and generate action for preventing and ending grave abuses of human rights and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated (www.amnesty.org).

Children's Defense Fund (CDF)

The CDF is a child advocacy organization that works for ensuring a level playing field for all children. The champion policies and programmes of CDF, which lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect and ensure their right to equal care and education (www.childrensdefense.org).

Human Rights Action Center

The Human Rights Action Center is a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, headed by Jack Healey, world-renowned human rights activist and pioneer. The Center works on issues of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and uses the arts and technologies for innovating, creating and developing new strategies to stop human rights abuses. They can also support the growing concept of human rights groups all over the world (www.humanrightsactioncenter.org).

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch is dedicated for protecting the human rights of people around the world. They investigate and expose human rights violations, hold abusers accountable, and challenge governments and those who hold power for ending abusive practices and respecting international human rights law (www.hrw.org).

Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF)

The HRWF focuses on monitoring, research and analysis in the field of human rights, as well as promotion of democracy and the rule of law on the national and international level (www.hrwf.net).

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

The mission of the NAACP is ensuring the political, educational, social and economic quality of rights of all the persons and for eliminating racial hatred and racial discrimination (www.naACP.org).

Simon Wiesenthal Center

This prestigious international Jewish human rights organization is dedicated to repair the world one step at a time. The center generates changes by confronting anti-semitism, hate and terrorism, promoting human rights and dignity, standing with Israel, defending the safety of Jews worldwide and teaching the lessons of the Holocaust for future generations (www.wiesenthal.com).

CHARACTERISTIC OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The chief characteristics of human rights are as follow:

- ❖ Human rights are universal
- ❖ Human rights are inalienable and immutable
- ❖ Human rights are Indivisible and interrelated
- ❖ Human rights are inherent
- ❖ Human rights are protected by the court of law
- ❖ Human rights are enforceable

The three categories of human rights are: **(1) civil and political rights, (2) economic, social and cultural rights and (3) solidarity rights**. It has been typically understood that individuals and certain groups are bearers of human rights, while the state is the prime organ that can protect and/or violate human rights.

The Human Rights Day theme, **“EQUALITY- Reducing inequalities, advancing Human Rights”**, is focusing on addressing and finding solutions for deep-rooted forms of discrimination which have affected the most vulnerable people in societies including women, and girls, indigenous peoples. Human rights are the basic rights which cover everything from health to the freedoms of every person. Human beings are born with certain inalienable fundamental rights. The right to equality and peaceful existence is a basic and an immensely inseparable right of the human being.

The United Nations Convention held on December 10, 1948 formalized the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) that identified human rights as fundamental to the achievement of peace and progress. This declaration was taken as a primary document for defining the birthright of human beings to certain innate and inalienable rights. Ever since 10th of December is celebrated as the World’s Human Rights Day. The NGOs play a crucial role in the preservation and promotion of human rights especially in the developing countries like India, where there is scanty knowledge of the importance of human rights. The NGOs practice promoting public awareness while conducting institutional advocacy, and lobbying to stop any kind of violation. It not only assists in developing society and improving communities but also works in the promotion of citizen participation.

“The 21st century will be an era of NGO.”- Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General

There are a few things that NGOs should always focus on while performing their responsibilities along with the practice of human rights. The major roles of NGOs are protection and the promotion of human rights.

Providing Information

The NGOs work at the local level and they are the one who knows the problem of those people in the roots better than the Government. They have better access to the people facing the problems. Thus, the NGOs play an essential role in providing the information to the Government along with the human-

centric solution. The NGOs have functioned as the conscience in the field of human rights by taking prompt action for investigating the instance human right by undertaking and spot studies and publishing the observations.

The NGOs disseminate information about human rights in general. The education on ‘human rights’ issues contributes to the improvement of human rights situations by themselves because people learn about their rights and thus increase the possibility of claiming them. May it be a campaign, organizing courses, releasing publications, and organizing events (seminars, round tables and etc.) on various topics of human rights, thereby increasing public awareness of human rights can be done.

Lobbying

The NGOs play an influencing role in keeping the co-operation with the Government and its fellow organizations. They are active members of working in different sectors based on human rights. The NGOs lobby powerful decision-makers to take account of the interests of marginalized people and influence the Government to change its favour to the public.

Aid/Assistance

Of late, the role of NGOs is very significant as well as more effective. Many NGOs are coming forward in giving legal assistance to vulnerable communities who do not understand the right and cannot afford legal services because of economic, social or other reasons. It has been common to be concerned with NGOs with humanitarian assistance and human rights. The NGOs should focus on the relief and sustainable development of society by coordination with the Legal Services Institutions at the central level.

Eliminate Social Problems and Health Issues

Human rights are the rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status. It includes the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture. The NGOs have played a pivotal role in managing human trafficking, prevention of HIV/AIDS, educating to teach and train the vulnerable people, childcare, providing counselling related to health issues, promoting human rights laws and rules among the people by going from the local level to the central level.

Bridge between Government and Local People

The NGOs are easily access the local people and deeply understands their problems. They can understand where the problem lies for the lacking of human rights. The NGOs reach in more than that of the Government. There is dire need for cooperation between the two levels of grassroots organizations aiming to impact the state’s decisions to encourage the fact that the impact of transnational NGOs is limited by the internal politics of target states. Thus, national/local NGOs erode sovereignty from inside; meanwhile, the international NGOs are seen as external to state sovereignty. Usually, advocacy NGOs (like Amnesty International) threatens and weakens state sovereignty rather than service-delivering NGOs. The latter’s aim is to change the status quo in favour of the interests of the people representing and pressuring the governments for supporting the issues which are addressed by NGOs.

Nevertheless, not all the NGOs have been successful in achieving their goal of maintaining equal rights to all. The government should prioritize the work and activities of the NGOs providing services continuously in the sector of human rights. The NGOs focus should be made for expanding their programmes, campaigns, skits from yearly to bi-yearly to monthly. They should provide crystal clear data about their work. The NGOs should carry the role of facilitator between the people and the Government with innovation and sustainable solutions. Human rights can be secured with the joined work of both the NGOs and the Government. Then only those efforts put together towards building strong national human rights systems will go a long way in ensuring that the SDGs work for everyone.

CONCLUSION

NGOs are moving towards expanded inclusion in the authorization of human rights. The implementation of the human rights approach is acquiring consideration among the NGOs working in authorization and numerous NGOs are currently accepting the requirement of human rights exercises. There is a need to more effectively include NGOs in all aspects of practice and promotion of human rights for maximizing the potential benefits. Moreover, the NGOs should play an instrumental role in. With a renewed sense of purpose and a common goal, the NGOs and their partners should make strong and lasting inroads into reducing the burden of the world's most affected populations through effective research action.

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