

# Driving the Nation Towards Prosperity: An Insight on the Functioning of Robin Hood Army

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## Abstract

The paper aims to examine the functioning of the NPO Robin Hood Army with the speculation of being a society working for the welfare of the down trodden class of National Capital Region. The evaluation will be done on the aspects of functioning style which is helping the poor to emancipate and also the need to look at the those factors which can help the NGO to improvise its working to help the poor to uplift them in more better ways. Also to analyse the NGO's which are divided into three generations

**Keywords:** NPO, emancipation, speculation

## Introduction

The Robin Hood Army is a volunteer-based Non-profit organization-cum-Non-governmental organization that works to distribute leftover food from restaurants to the less fortunate parts of society in cities around India and ten other countries. The organization now serves meals to more than 122 million individuals and has (roughly) over 200,000 volunteers working in 403 cities. Business Standard reports the comments of Anand Sinha who came up with the innovative idea of what can be done with the leftover foods, "When we started, we were just six people in the team. But from the very beginning we were clear that we won't be serving these people waste food. We requested the eateries to give us leftovers" (Business Standard 2014). The organization offers aid to patients from public hospitals, homeless families, orphanages, old-age homes, night shelters, homes for abandoned children, etc.

India's New Delhi served as the base of the Robin Hood Army's activities until it finally expanded to other Indian cities including Kolkata, Noida, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Jaipur, Panipat, Jabalpur, Gurgaon, Pune, Ahmedabad, Faridabad, Dehradun, Surat, etc. Each locality/community within the city will participate towards supplying meals for the poor through its local volunteers and eateries. The cities in which the NGO operates is referred to as 'chapters'. This is the fundamental idea that the organization operates on and propagates

On February 15, 2015, the India-Pakistan cricket match of the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup concurred with the initiation of Robin Hood Army's operations in Karachi, Pakistan (FirstPost,2015). The Robin Hood Army established chapters in 10 more nations between February 2015 and February 2017: Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the Indian Subcontinent; Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines in South-East Asia; Egypt in Africa; Melbourne in Australia and Mexico in North America. RHA Canada was launched in the Greater Toronto Area in February 2018.

### RHA'S Vision

The survival of NPO's are artificially constructed. They only exist because of political reasons and serve interests for the services the government is not willing to provide (Kanter and Summers 156). The approach of Robin Hood Army is in the form of an NPO but as an establishment it functions as an NGO. NPO's are set up to promote useful purposes like science, art and research. They provide services and goods to the people on the doctrine that no member will be entitled to profits or losses by the entity. Robinhood Army now has associations with several eateries spread out across the 60 cities that supply them with meals ("RHA feeds the Homeless"). The charity exclusively distributes meals or gifts in kind that it gets from its restaurant partners and donors and does not take monetary donations.

Wearing green T-shirts, the Robin Hood Army uses the subsequent principles to further its cause:

1. Use social media to raise awareness of its initiatives and the concept of self-sustaining communities.
2. Partnerships with restaurants to supply significant quantities of food to communities who are homeless or less fortunate.
3. Consistently bring in new volunteers to the system to make a difference for the less fortunate and, in the process, motivate a community to lend a hand and support those who need it most.
4. The green T-shirts worn by the volunteers symbolize unity and most importantly it gives the volunteers an identity.
5. The main motive of RHA is "Hunger Alleviation".

According to D.C. Korten, NGO's are divided into three generations. first generation humanitarian and welfare NGOs, which are prevalent in developing countries, frequently maintain tight relationships with governments and foreign development assistance agencies while remaining obliquely nonpolitical. Locally based development NGOs of the second-generation bring people together to solve issues like public health and agricultural development. These organizations typically support their members in overcoming institutional limitations, taking on local and regional elites, and aiding in the reduction of dependent connections. Third-generation NGOs actively pursue political limitations through mobilization and "conscientization." Their primary concern is arranging connections and communications between people's organizations (Korten78).

### Functioning of the organization

RHA on a regular basis conducts food, academy and special drives to provide food, education and other necessities to the less fortunate communities in an effective and efficient manner. Furthermore, the organization has created a website for the volunteers to make their check-ins of the drives they have attended. This would help the organization to keep the tally of the number of drives attended by the volunteer ("Robinhood Army – The Idea"). The data collected from the website plays an important role in assessing the number of people taught and served in various cities. This would help in making improvements by organizing drives in those areas where the outreach is poor compared to the other places. Our goal is to reach and serve as many people as possible.

Special drives stand apart from the regular 'food' and 'academy' drives. These drives are somewhat multidisciplinary as there are more than one or two areas through which people can learn about the problems in a community or area. 'Food' and 'education' although are the primary objectives to be achieved, Robin Hood Army makes an emphasis over the fact that there are other areas which needs to be focused and studies to focus on the holistic development of the less fortunate people sRobinhood Army's special drives include animal welfare programs, medical camps, blood donation drives, clothes

and blanket drives. The NGO arranges regular drives in Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Sector 94, Noida. Animal Welfare program aims to fulfill basic physical and material well-being of the animals in distress such as those at animal shelters. While curative animal welfare is concerned with treating injured animals, preventive welfare supports the material wellness of animals to keep them from being victims of mistreatment.

One of the most significant aspects of the special drives is the health camps. The purpose of health camps is to educate the rural population about the ailments they are afflicted with and to offer free medical care and medication. It aids in the early identification and treatment of illnesses. The goal of health camps is to evaluate patients, raise awareness about health issues, provide medications to treat common illnesses, and recommend people for surgery or other medical treatment or for disease prevention, among other things. In February, RHA arranged a medical camp with Homoeo Amigo in Sector 82, Pracheen Shiv Mandir for children aged 3- 17.

In January, Robinhood Army and Rotary Noida Blood Centre with their joint effort organized blood donation camp in ATS Green Village, Sector 93 A. The reason to donate is simple...it helps save lives. In fact, every two seconds of every day, someone needs blood. Since blood cannot be manufactured outside the body and has a limited shelf life, the supply must constantly be replenished by generous blood donors. Virginia Woolf once stated, "one cannot think well, love well, or sleep well if one has not dined well". We live in a rapidly modernizing, technologically advanced society where there is ample food production to meet the needs of the entire population. But even with all of the resources at our disposal, hunger and waste coexist in our planet. Because of this, donating food goes beyond simple altruism. It is a model for being a change agent that benefits everyone. Giving a helping hand not only helps the recipient but also the giver by enhancing their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. RHA aspires to serve and provide nutritious meals to the nation's least fortunate residents.

### **Area of study: Robin Hood Academy**

NGOs play an important role in providing education to children living in difficult conditions who are not able to access formal governmental schooling. Alamgir Chowdhury and many other scholars highlight that in countries like India and Bangladesh, the NGOs cater around 8 to 10 percent of overall enrollment in the primary education sector (Chowdhury et al. 2004; Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development 2002).

The Robin Hood Academy was started in July 2016 with the purpose to bridge the gap between streets and school. By providing basic values and primary education the Academy empowers students by developing their inclination towards learning. As of December 2021, the Robin Hood Academy has empowered 7300+ street children with basic primary education. Furthermore, the Robins also support students with the procedure for enrollment into government schools. They have managed to get 2300 school admissions for street children across 148 cities. The volunteers conduct weekly classes and excursions with a standardized curriculum to introduce and drive the spirit of learning.

### **Sector 82 Academy**

Even though it is a fundamental human right, for many children, education is still a pipe dream. It is evident that simply passing laws is insufficient; further efforts must be made. If democracy is to flourish, everyone should have access to education. Numerous tribes and organizations, including women and members of underprivileged castes, have historically been denied access to education. It is crucial to

devolve authority if you want to give kids access to education. The portfolio not only correctly highlights how poverty affects children's education, but it also demonstrates how solving these issues may advance society. One is constantly made aware of the scholastic difficulties and interruptions that disadvantaged students experience because of a lack of economic stability and social security as a volunteer and a university student. The education of working-class students will continue to suffer until there is a robust and widely accessible state assistance system.

The responsibility of educating someone is bestowed upon us by the Gods and every religion. I bring religion into this as the East does not resemble the West in any sense. The word 'East' may sound oriental and too broad. So, narrowing down to 'us Indians', although we were colonized by the British, we only share their language and culture which to an extent only extends till the dressing sense and cuisine. Rest assured, our ideology and values are still focused on 'collectivism' unlike the Puritan and 'individualistic ideals' followed in the West. My emphasis here is that while belonging to privileged castes and families, why cannot one use his privileges to uplift a fellow citizen of the nation? We often live in the denial that India is the fastest growing economy, the caste system has now ended and the gap between the rich and poor has now considerably reduced. Instead of living our lives behind this façade, we need to consider the current situation as a wake-up call and not consider educating the future of the country as a burden.

In Noida's Sector 82 Pracheen Shiv Mandir parents who work and survive on minimum wages send their children to a school which lies in close proximity to the temple. There are no standards or grades in which the students are divided into. All the children ranging from the age of 3 to 14 were listed in the attendance register. It was a great challenge to organize the students into groups based on what they had already learned and what all concepts/ topics they were familiar with. But Robinhood Army had played a key role in elevating the rocky issues. The academy drives were previously held two days a week but with RHA's meticulous planning and arrangements, the academy drives in Sector 82 have now been extended to seven days a week. A lot of progress has been made in these five months (January 2023- April 2023). The students are taught a particular subject like Math, Hindi, English, Moral Science and Science for a week. The core members of the Sector 82 drives have taken the responsibility of keeping the record of what was taught and what is to be taught next. Thereby, keeping a progress report of the students and each day the students are given homework. This would keep them busy and the mistakes in their homework would help volunteers better assess the problems a student faces in understanding a certain topic.

### **Identifying Problems**

As discussed in the earlier sections, Korten's theory propounds "the three generations" of the Non-governmental organizations. The first generation can be seen at a nascent stage in the form of donations and welfare programs. They deal with immediate shortage of resources experienced by the population of a country or state from natural disasters such as drought, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes etc. or other reasons such as famine. The First-Generation strategies go as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottoman Sultan, Abdulmejid I provided 1,000 Pounds of financial aid to Ireland. Moreover, the Ottomans had also sent three or four ships full of food during the Irish famine. The sultan intended to provide more financial aid, sources suggest up to 10,000 pounds but the proposal was rejected as the English ambassadors to the Ottomans advised against this as the Queen would have been annoyed with the fact that a foreign entity would give a larger sum of money compared to her 2,000 pounds.

The Second- Generation strategies include improving and developing the capacities of the people so that they can focus on their own needs. The strategy here focuses on self-reliance and self-reliability.

Commonly, the activities entail village-level self-help initiatives like the creation of health committees to carry out preventative health measures, the adoption of better farming methods, the establishment of community councils, the construction of feeder roads, the digging of wells, etc. The difference between first- and second-generation methods is the emphasis on local self-reliance with the intention that benefits will be sustained by community self-help activity beyond the term of NGO aid. The Robinhood Academy would instill basic moral and ethical values into the children on how to conduct themselves. Furthermore, by making their basics strong in mathematics and science, the Academy aims at preparing the students for the future.

The Third-Generation strategies transcends the limited space or communities at the local level. It aims to alter specific institutions and policies at local, national and global levels. These altercations are important as for communities and villages to remain self-reliant better policies need to be created and implemented for a nation's development. Third-generation tactics can entail the NGO collaborating with significant national organizations to assist them in realigning their policies and operational procedures in ways that improve widely based local control over resources. These tactics may also entail the development of substantial new institutions that will deliver vital local services on an ongoing, self-supporting basis. For example, in order to persuade the government of Andhra Pradesh State to reinstate open elections to cooperatives all over the state, Samakhya and the Multi-Coops Association launched a significant state and national campaign in India that involved the use of the courts, media, lobbying, and public protests. Robin Hood Army distances itself from involving itself into activities and schemes put forward by the government. Currently, many agencies and policy makers are focused on the collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations. These associations have a common goal; achieving universal development. Richard Batley and Pauline Rose in their paper study the extent of collaboration between NGOs and the governments of three South Asian countries, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. In Bangladesh, the role of NGOs is not made explicit within the government programs. On the other hand, in India programs such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Universalisation of Elementary Education Program) includes allocation of funds to the NGOs in some states, which require contractual and formal agreements. In the case of Pakistan, the governments during the 1990's involved "donor driven policy approach" which involved the recognition of NGO's by the government (Batley and Rose 2010).

While analyzing the relationship between these institutions, James R. Keese and Marco Freire Argudo's case study on *Decentralization and NGO-municipal government collaboration in Ecuador* becomes a pertinent example in this discussion. The case study can be viewed as a twostep process. First, the process of decentralisation is necessary for the allocation of funds to the local government from the central government. The second step, then involves the working together of NGOs and the local governments. The case study focuses on Suscal, a town in Ecuador. The first indigenous mayor elected in 2000, Manuel Castro, made an effort to execute the plan. The roundtable committee established consisted of 150 members representing all sections of the society, NGO members, local professionals and official delegates who focused on the issues women development, urban development, healthcare, education etc. The NGO's possessed the details of all the local-level planning and ten organizations were involved in the implementation of the Suscal plan. The plan was published in 2002 and is was passed into law by the municipal ordinance in 2003 (Kesse and Argudo 2006).

In this way, cities like Noida, can adopt a similar model. Working with the central and state governments in many cases might put to question the legitimacy of NGOs. Hence through models propounded by the Ecuadorians, NGOs like RHA can collaborate with municipal administrations like the Noida Authority.



With its logistics and infrastructure, RHA can train officials and build facilities for the Noida Authority to take on new functions, which would eventually help the local government administer their own service

### Learning outcomes

Sincerely volunteering for a cause may greatly improve your self-esteem. You stand up for what's right, you accept responsibility, and you work hard to bring out your finest. Your confidence grows, as does your capacity for contemplation. Every event enables you to discover your potential. Volunteering provides you with psychological relaxation and enables for self-reflection, which promotes personality development overall.

Your perspective is broadened by this volunteering experience. It simultaneously inspires gratitude for your possessions and an improved sense of perspective. I no longer view successes the same way because of my volunteer work. It helped me to see that not all significant achievements are necessary to make a difference. Small victories might also help you grow from the inside out. The trek keeps you grounded and humbled. The adventure of volunteering is reciprocal. It is a transition for both the one seeking to change and the person being changed. Such an event is important for all person at some time in their lives, whether it is on a larger scale or personally. My association with RHA as a volunteer was of a learning and a rewarding one. Not only has the experience awakened the self-conscious zone but has revealed the realities around me. The joy of volunteering is peerless, but the impact is stronger than one can ever envisage. My association with RHA as a volunteer was of a learning and a rewarding one. Not only has the experience awakened the self-conscious zone but has revealed the realities around me. The joy of volunteering is peerless, but the impact is stronger than one can ever envisage.

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