

Good Samaritans Are Political : Aid NGOs in Support of Human Rights for Sustainable Development^{*}

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| Abstract |

International aid non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are thought of as playing a humanitarian role, but this notion changed when a new development scheme called a human rights-based approach emerged. This strategy became a new norm in the development world, and some NGOs began to undertake political activities to achieve long-term development effects. However, others remained focused on the humanitarian activities associated with their traditional relief missions. The authors claim that religious identity is a key factor; secular NGOs are more receptive to the new development scheme than are religiously affiliated ones, maintaining their traditional mission unaltered. The research compares World Vision United States and Oxfam America, showing how the distinctive religious identities conditioned their compliance (or lack thereof) with human rights-based ideas.

Key Words | Aid NGO, Human Rights-Based Approach, Development Assistance, World Vision United States, Oxfam America

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I. Introduction

International aid non-governmental organizations (NGOs), providing goods and services to the poor and needy at the global level, have been regarded as some of the most significant participants in pure philanthropy in the world of international development assistance. These private and voluntary organizations play a critical role in providing goods and services to recipient countries, mainly developing countries in urgent need (Büthe et al. 2012: 572–574). With respect to the amount of foreign aid, the value of the humanitarian contributions from private NGOs in the United States (US) reached about \$44 billion in 2014, and this amount exceeded the size of the US government’s official development assistance, which was \$33 billion in the year (Adelman et al. 2017: 28-29).

Such aid NGOs have recently changed into political actors for the promotion of human rights in donor countries, or so-called internationally oriented public interest groups (Kim 2018).¹⁾ The new strategic orientation of these NGOs toward human rights is attributed to the recent resonance of human rights norms in the field of sustainable development. In the late 1980s, the human rights–based approach (HRBA) was highlighted as an alternative development strategy (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2004; Kindornay et al. 2012). Traditional strategies that had focused on the task of providing aid to people suffering from a lack of basic necessities had been understood as the main scheme of activities of aid NGOs, yet a sense of frustration and skepticism became pervasive within

1) Kim (2018) collects data from 561 aid NGOs in seven donor countries: Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States. All of aid NGOs are registered in the umbrella associations of aid NGOs in each country. Only aid NGOs that publish regular annual reports, including financial statements and activity reports, are included in this study (Salamon and Anheier 1992).

scholars and practitioners in the aid community as this approach turned out not to produce the expected development effects (Nelson and Dorsey 2003; 2007).

The HRBA scheme emerged as an alternative development plan aimed at eradicating any impediments to equal development opportunities by supporting the basic human rights to which each individual is intrinsically entitled from birth regardless of their given political and social conditions. In accordance with this newly emergent sustainable development scheme, many organizations that once had a purely humanitarian orientation passed through a metamorphosis, becoming political groups actively involved in human rights activities.

Herein lies a set of questions that deserve deeper scrutiny. Why did some aid NGOs adopt the new norms of the human rights-based development scheme, morphing into interest groups in political pursuit of human rights, while other NGOs remained immune to this new development approach? What factors explain the divergence in the missions and development activities of aid NGOs, some of which remained focused on humanitarian philanthropy while others shifted toward political advocacy in the face of the newly resonant norms?

The authors claim that aid NGOs' policy orientation is predicated upon their distinctive identity. In other words, who they are determined how they responded when international norms shifted toward a HRBA to sustainable development. Religiosity is one factor assumed to play a role in shaping the identity of NGOs. Kim (2018: 43–50) finds in the analysis of 561 aid NGOs that their religious affiliation is a statistically significant factor determining their discrete choice of development strategy. Secular NGOs are more susceptible to the new human rights-based scheme being pushed by international organizations, due to the flexibility of their identity as opposed to religiously affiliated NGOs, whose identity tends to remain impervious to secular notions

like human rights (Kim 2018: 70–71). Based upon this analysis, the current study compares two aid organizations, World Vision US and Oxfam America, to see how their opposing identities (religious and secular, respectively) influence the way they respond to human rights norms, resulting in contrasting development strategies.

The study consists of five parts: the first part introduces the two concept of human rights and the human rights–based approach (HRBA) as a new development scheme; the second part describes the aid NGOs who acceded to the scheme and began to undertake political activities for human rights advocacy; the third part presents a theoretical framework the captures the resonance of the human rights norms and how religious identity determines the transformation (or lack of transformation) of an organization in accordance with these norms; the fourth part offers a comparative case study of two NGOs, the Christian organization World Vision US and the secular Oxfam America, who diverged in development strategies, with the former maintaining a purely humanitarian (and philanthropic) approach while the latter became politically engaged in human rights promotion; the study wraps up with a conclusion that addresses the contributions and limitations of this research and outlines an agenda for further research.

II. Concepts of Human Rights and the Human Rights–Based Approach

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “everyone is entitled to all ...rights and freedoms...without distinction of any kind” (United Nations 1948). Basic human rights, such as the right to speak, are inherent

entitlements that exist irrespective of any conditions attached to the birth. Scholars bifurcate the concept of human rights into two types: civil and political rights (CPRs) and economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs).²⁾ The CPRs pertain to the freedom and dignity of individuals in a society, resisting against any impediment to the value of equality, justice and impartiality. In contrast, the ECSRs are associated with the satisfaction of basic needs such as food, shelter or health services and the promotion of social welfare.

This dyadic conception of human rights can be placed in the context of aid strategies for economic development. CPRs are associated with activities aimed at expunging structural obstacles that are inimical to long-term development, such as class or gender discrimination that deprives certain people of opportunities for development. In contrast, ECSRs can be regarded as relating to the traditional work of NGOs, providing people in dire conditions with economic aid to help them survive.

This research focuses on the CPRs for two reasons: first, the CPRs are conceptually germane as the major concept that engendered the HRBA. This concept particularly emphasizes active political participation of aid recipients as major driving force for long-term and sustainable economic development. HRBA has recently received the most attention as a method of empowering the marginalized people beyond simply meeting the urgent economic needs of the suffering. Since this concept is consistent with the aspects of grassroots democracy and citizen's political participation, it is directly relevant to the CPRs.³⁾

2) The division between CPRs and ESCRs is described in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (Donnelly 2003).

3) Brysk (2009) used the phrase "Good Samaritan" meaning a nation-state which connects

Second, it is important to evaluate the HRBA to gauge its efficacy as a development strategy competing with traditional approaches. In the years after World War II, development assistance began to be provided to countries suffering from chronic underdevelopment with the expectation of raising their overall standard of living. However, decades later aid programs began to be viewed as ineffective, because they failed to lift the recipient countries out of poverty (Nelson and Dorsey 2003; 2007). This policy debacle has been ascribed not to the amount of aid provided but to political and structural barriers that engendered inequality and discrimination associated with gender, race or class. Given the abortive track record of the traditional development approach somewhat related to the ESCRs, it is time to direct our attention to the HRBA, which is associated with the eradication of structural obstacles to opportunities associated with sustainable development. The ultimate goal of sustainable development is to provide a more fundamental development model, not just a short-term and temporary remedy for the global poverty problem. In this sense, the HRBA is corresponding to the main goal of sustainable development because it seeks the self-reliance of aid recipients. Along these lines, promoting human rights, particularly CPRs, of marginalized local groups and supporting their empowerment have recently surfaced as a focal point of development strategies (Korten 1987; Sengupta 2001; Schmitz 2012).

global norms and values with national interest in humanitarian intervention and human rights activities. The same phrase “Good Samaritan” in this paper refers to non-state actors partaking in development strategies promoting political and civil rights of marginalized people for their sustainable development. Brysk (2009) tends to focus on the “goodness” of state actors in their benign intentions in compliance with normative structure yet we shed light on the “goodness” of non-state actors in the effectiveness of their political strategies in pursuit of sustainable development.

III. Emergence of New Political Aid Actors with HRBA in Pursuit of Sustainable Development

According to Kim (2018), 156 out of 561 non-profit aid organizations in seven major developed countries have committed to the promotion of CPRs (43–51). Given the traditional humanitarian role to which most of these organizations had originally committed, mainly saving the lives of people suffering from the deficiency of basic necessities, the number of organizations who shifted to pursue CPRs is remarkable and worthy of greater scrutiny. What drives non-profit aid organizations to commit to CPR promotion?

Existing international relations studies on the motivations and behavioral processes of actors, including non-state actors, tend to view those as either instrumental or normative. The first group of scholars argues that a non-profit organization operates similar to a business company or a collective actor (Cooley and Ron 2002; Sell and Prakash 2004; Bob 2005; Johnson and Prakash 2007). From this perspective, the motivation of their activities is the survival in their field, or to increase the market share (Bob 2010: 139-142). They may actively promote their organization by publicizing their activities alongside their name or logo on their website or in mass media coverage. In short, this instrumental approach asserts that the non-profit actor is motivated by material incentives (Prakash and Gugerty 2010: 1–7). Another group of scholars claims that NGOs have inherently “good” intentions in international society, and they mainly pursue normative goals. These scholars believe that NGOs promote such principles as justice or equality at the domestic and international levels by “combining their tactics with efforts to develop new international legal norm[s]” (Clark 2001: 9). The underlying behavioral motivation of NGOs is undergirded

by principled ideas, norms or values (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Clark 2001; Risse 2010).

Which theoretical approach offers a more plausible explanation for why some non-profit aid organizations commit to the activities for civil and political rights? The instrumental approach would claim that NGOs participate in human rights activities to raise their stake in the competitive charity market. This interpretation, however, cannot explain why some, but not all, aid NGOs began to engage in the human rights promotion. If the human rights-based approach was more effective at capturing market share, all NGOs would be expected to adopt the same approach as they vie against other organizations. In practice, however, organizations adopted varying strategies, implying that their choices were not based on instrumental calculations.

Instead, a normative framework likely reveals why some NGOs have committed to promoting human rights. The normative approach sheds light on how the human rights-based norms emerged and resonated such that countries began to change their human rights practices (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998). The idea of international human rights emerged in the aftermath of World War II and became recognized as a standard with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations (UN) in 1948. Human rights norms have remarkably changed the way various international actors interact with each other. Most importantly, NGOs emerged as one of the major actors tackling various global agendas, including human rights issues.⁴⁾ Activists in human rights NGOs have played a leading role in

4) The United Nations (UN) was eager to cooperate with NGOs. For instance, UN Charter Article 71 specifies that the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) “make[s] the suitable arrangements for consultation” with NGOs (UN 1945, 13).

putting the human rights agenda forward on the world stage.⁵⁾ Keck and Sikkink (1998: 36) posit that “a domestic group should reach out to international allies to bring pressure on its government to change its domestic practices.” Transnational advocacy networks in turn put pressure on governments that are violating their citizens’ rights through a strong linkage between domestic and international advocacy work. The so-called “boomerang effect” has helped build and promote social norms related to human rights. The role of international organizations like the UN is essential for such norms to cascade from the global to the domestic level, connecting domestic and international non-governmental actors.

The normative framework fits well with the human rights principles to which some aid NGOs have committed and the way that they strategize to achieve their sustainable development goals. First, these NGOs are involved in activities to protect basic rights, such as protecting the physical safety of socially marginalized people like women, children and minorities and preventing discrimination or violence perpetrated by their governments (mainly authoritarian regimes). The physical protection of marginalized people became an increasingly important initial step not only for human rights as a universal value but also as a strategy for sustainable development (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Weldon 2002; Htun and Weldon 2012). The NGOs have supported community-based organizations that monitor violence at the local level. They have also launched special campaign offices to mount social movements aimed at empowering marginalized local groups while investing in development

5) See Clark (2001) for the most prominent example of a human rights NGO, such as Amnesty International, who contributed to constructing principled human rights norms and persuaded nation-states to adopt these norms.

programs that provide basic services to local communities in urgent need. This movement is a direct approach that benefits all recipients while empowering the oppressed who may be under threat of violence.

However, these aid NGOs did not just support local communities, they also began to fight against the governments oppressing vulnerable citizens. The organizations hold authoritarian governments accountable for the violations of human rights and put pressure on donor governments to change their aid strategies. These NGOs engage in the process of policy deliberation with donor governments and international organizations, coaxing or urging them to recalibrate development strategies to halt and prevent oppressive regimes from committing the violations of human rights (Kingdon 1995; Weldon 2011). Aid NGOs have participated in the agenda setting process with regard to aid policy and have lobbied bureaucratic institutions using information that they collect about countries' human rights records and alternative policy approaches.⁶⁾ These aid organizations' efforts to elevate human rights standards and practices contribute to the development of socially vulnerable people, who gain opportunities irrespective of their race, gender or class, which may have been a major barrier to their basic human rights. Despite the significance of aid NGOs' engagement in human rights advocacy for sustainable development, unfortunately not much is known about why some organizations have transformed into public interest groups with a HRBA to sustainable development while others remained charitable organizations with traditional aid missions.

6) See Lang (2013), Yanacopulos (2016), Cameron and Kwiecien (2019), and Green (2016) for how NGOs engage in public policymaking.

IV. Analytical Framework: Human Rights Norms and Religious Identity in the Transformation of Aid NGOs

This section investigates the theoretical puzzle of why some aid NGOs transformed into human rights advocates. The change was inspired by international bodies that disseminated human rights norms. These human rights principles were filtered through NGOs' religious or secular identities, determining their compliance (or not) with the new norms of the HRBA as a development strategy.

1. International Human Rights Norms Matter

The increasing resonance of human rights norms has changed the way aid NGOs establish their strategies to achieve their developmental goals. Ideas about human rights emerged, resonated, and cascaded in the 1980s,⁷⁾ and some aid NGOs began to embrace an agenda for a new human rights-based development scheme. Aid NGOs' traditional role was only to deliver basic necessities of life to people suffering from urgent need, enhancing their well-being without regard to the more structural causes of chronic economic drawbacks. In retrospect, after several decades of this approach to aid, it was seen as having failed to procure solutions to abject poverty and chronic underdevelopment in developing countries (Nelson and Dorsey 2003; 2007). The aid community, full of frustration and skepticism, broached the agenda of aid effectiveness and formulated an alternative development strategy, the so-called HRBA, in the late

7) See Stewart (1989), Nelson and Dorsey (2003; 2007), and Cornwall and Nyanmu-Musembi (2004) on how human rights ideas evolved to be accepted as norms.

1980s (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2004; Kindornay et al. 2012). The HRBA focuses on sustainability in development effects by taking the promotion of human rights into serious consideration. The aid strategy does not purport to immediately save lives or even temporarily help recipients survive dire conditions that threaten their well-being. The HRBA attempt to restructure the political framework to promote the basic human rights and dignity, i.e., the CPRs, of socially and economically vulnerable groups within recipient countries (Kindornay et al. 2012).

The UN played the role of norm entrepreneur in promulgating the new aid strategy in accordance with a globally accepted idea of human rights. According to official UN documents on the HRBA, the empowerment of local residents and their active participation in a society is a key component to ensure the economic self-reliance of aid recipients. First, *the Common Understanding on Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation and Programming* fleshes out the principle of human rights as an integral part of the recent development strategy, which recognizes “people as key actors in their own development, rather than passive recipients of commodities and services” (United Nations Development Group 2003: 3). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) stipulates that the concept of HRBA includes empowering poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups, and “ensuring community participation in planning, decision-making and implementation” (United Nations Development Program 2006: 43).

The next section unpacks the condition that drives compliance or noncompliance with human rights-based norms by aid NGOs.

2. Religious Identity Determines the Transformation of Aid NGOs

This study argues that NGOs' identity determines their political participation in human rights promotion. In other words, the identity of an NGO conditions its compliance with the international norms of the human rights-based development strategy. The research specifically examines religious affiliation as a major factor shaping the identity of NGOs. Organizations' histories influence their operations. An ingrained bureaucratic culture can produce managerial inertia and path-dependency. The routinized and specialized characteristics of organizations can render them resistant to changes in their work strategy for the sake of systemic stability (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 715–725). An organization's mission affects the organization's character in its work and determines the trajectory of aid NGOs' management.

This research focuses on the religious or secular identity of NGOs. The authors contend that a religious affiliation in an NGO's original mission tends to affect how they perceive who they are, and this identity determines the nature and the goals of their development activities and the strategies they use to accomplish them. Aid NGOs with strong religious affiliations are less likely to engage in human rights activities, while aid NGOs with a secular identity are more likely to engage in political work as part of a HRBA to sustainable development. Gill and Pfaff (2010) argue that for religiously-affiliated NGOs, the opportunity to evangelize and proselytize is a major driving force behind their humanitarian activities. Such NGOs gravitate toward conventional humanitarian aid, such as relief for refugees or emergency food aid. Moreover, religious organizations are generally more immune to fundamental social changes than are secular organizations. For instance, religious NGOs are

particularly unyielding to changes driven by secular human rights values such as women's rights, which may be incompatible with their own religious creeds (Haddad 1985; Amien 2006). They are inclined instead to stick to their original religious principles in tandem with a conservative desire to maintain existing practices, rather than accepting a new secular human rights standard (Htun and Weldon 2010: 210–211). They may also be less likely to engage with issues around civil and political rights when some of their own religious principles may run contrary to human rights values (Freeman 2004).

Secular organizations, however, have more flexibility to accept new ideas and reorient themselves toward a new mission. When introduced to human rights norms, they are more likely to embrace new human rights-based strategies for sustainable development as political advocates. Religious or secular identity is, therefore, a critical factor that shapes NGOs, determining whether or not they transform into political actors committed to a human rights-based approach.⁸⁾

NGOs' level of commitment to human rights advocacy is embodied by two different indicators: whether the NGO operates a particular division for human rights actions; and whether the mission statement contains the phrase human rights. First, when an aid NGO has a separate and independent division for campaign activities promoting human rights, the NGO can be deemed highly committed to that cause. The specific name of such a division might vary as follows: advocacy team, campaign office or policy office. Second, an NGO is

8) A group of scholars on international norms studies how human rights norms are delivered to NGOs. NGOs who are active in the international arena, participating in international conferences or meetings that are mainly convened by the UN, likely have more exposure to the norms (Okafor, 2006; Murdie and Bhasin, 2011; Greenhill, 2015; Kindornay et al., 2012). Some NGOs have contact with the norms through local advocacy networks (Bartley, 2007; Okafor, 2006; Murdie and Bhasin, 2011). In this case, overseas local offices serve as gateways for access to human rights norms.

assumed to be firmly associated with human rights advocacy if the NGO has the phrase human rights in their mission statement. NGOs' annual reports, which contain organizational details such as financial records or mission statements, can be examined to determine whether they embrace an HRBA. Particularly, mission statements provide critical information about an organization's strategic identity (Williams 2008).⁹ Aid NGOs' philosophy or belief is revealed in the text of their mission statements, which usually include phrases such as poverty reduction, healthy life or welfare. When aid NGOs explicitly state in their mission statements that support human rights values, these NGOs can be regarded as human rights advocates involved in the empowerment of politically marginalized and vulnerable people for sustainable development.

V. Case Studies: How Do Aid NGOs Become Human Rights Advocates?

This section compares two aid NGOs, World Vision US and Oxfam America, to observe how identity determines commitment (or lack thereof) to human rights advocacy. These two organizations of roughly the same age have relatively divergent missions. World Vision US began its work in 1950, to feed Korean War orphans. The organization helped children in need while following the Christian principle of evangelism. Its identity as a traditional humanitarian aid organization providing emergency relief and food assistance did not change in the face of newly resonant human rights-based development ideas. In

9) See Weiss and Piderit (1999), and Davis et al. (2007) for the details on how mission statements determine the characteristics and performance of members of agencies.

contrast, Oxfam America originated in the United Kingdom as a secular organization providing food and basic necessities to the poor and needy, especially during World War II. It developed into a political actor promoting human rights, with an approach commensurate with the human rights-based development strategy. The case studies that follow compare these two aid NGOs to see how their organizational identities affect their attitude toward human rights advocacy.

1. World Vision US: Aid NGO with Humanitarian Activities

World Vision is a US-based aid and charity organization that was founded by the Reverend Robert Pierce in 1950 to serve the needs of orphans of the Korean War. From the beginning, its programs were driven by the Christian principle of evangelism. The organization's development strategy was deeply rooted in its Christian values (Whaites 1999: 411).¹⁰⁾ In its mission statement, World Vision describes itself as “an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁾ The religious fundamentalism in its identity prevented the organization from transforming toward a human rights advocate despite the resonance of the human rights-oriented scheme for sustainable development.

10) The first one of its core values is “We are Christian.” On the World Vision website, “Who We Are” <http://www.worldvision.org/about-us/who-we-are> (retrieved on April 24, 2014).

11) “Mission & Values” <https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/mission-statement> (retrieved on September 21, 2017).

Table 1: Comparison between World Vision US and Oxfam America

	World Vision US	Oxfam America
Key mission statement	World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice, and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God. ¹²⁾	Local to global, Oxfam uses advocacy to tackle the systems, policies, and practices that keep people trapped in poverty. We take on inequality, climate justice, gender justice, and inequities in the food chain, and we advocate for the basic human rights and dignity of survivors of conflicts and disasters. We challenge governments, multinational companies, international organizations, and other actors to use their vast power and influence to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable people. ¹³⁾
Division for political action	Advocacy team (“World Vision bases its advocacy work on the same values that shape our humanitarian work: our Christian faith and our commitment to the poor.” ¹⁴⁾)	Oxfam America Action Fund (It is a partner organization that “focuses on challenging unjust laws and policies in the US and around the globe.” ¹⁵⁾)

World Vision US is an aid NGO, but it has also shown the effort to promote human rights given its commitment to children’s rights. The organization

12) World Vision “Mission & Values” <https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/mission-statement> (retrieved on March 14. 2020)

13) Oxfam America “About Oxfam” <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/about/> (retrieved on March 14. 2020)

14) World Vision Advocacy “How we advocate” <https://worldvisionadvocacy.org/about/> (retrieved on March 14. 2020)

15) Oxfam America Action Fund “Who we are” <https://www.oxfamaction.org/who-we-are/> (retrieved on March 14. 2020)

attempts to challenge policies, systems and structures that inhibit vulnerable children from living decent lives.¹⁶⁾ One of World Vision US's major accomplishments was building a sponsorship network that matches children with sponsors on a one-to-one basis; the advocacy network promotes children's rights by advocating for better education and an end to child trafficking and child labor. In addition, the organization exhorted countries to ratify an international treaty for the promotion of children's rights in developing countries. An officer of World Vision US pronounced that "states must demonstrate their commitment to promoting and protecting children's rights by ratifying this new treaty, [the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure], so more children can access international justice."¹⁷⁾

Barnett (2009) reports that this alleged transformation began during the Cold War era. First, the demand for a comprehensive development program increased among World Vision staff. As World Vision US became a more professional development NGO, the organization began to focus more on a specialized development strategy than on Christian principles in order to create new funding opportunities (Barnett 2009: 647). Second, World Vision US rapidly expanded its branch offices overseas during this era, and it now has branches in nearly 100 countries, including non-Christian countries. This expansion gave way to the dilution of the Christian orientation in its development programs. Focusing more on children's human rights promotion, World Vision US "broke away from its

16) World Vision Advocacy "About Us" <http://www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/about/> (retrieved on September 21, 2017)

17) World Vision Media Center. April 14, 2014. "World Vision Urges Countries to Support Landmark Child Rights Treaty Entering into Force Today" <https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/media-center/world-vision-urges-countries-support-landmark-child-rights-treaty-entering-force-today> (retrieved on March 5, 2020)

traditional religious confines and into the political world as it addressed explicitly issues of power, governance, and justice” (Barnett 2009: 648).

Despite its commitment to children’s rights, it is presumptuous to say that World Vision US transformed wholly to a professional (rather than religious) human rights organization even if its activities fit well with the human rights–based development scheme. The marginal increase in human rights activities is overshadowed by the original mission of child sponsorship in a Christian framework. The Christian identity genuinely engraved in the organization’s mission statement serves as a centripetal force directing the organization toward its original humanitarian mission. This organization could not evolve beyond the principles espoused in the mission statement. In other words, the original mission reflecting the organization’s Christian identity will remain as a major task as far as the organization sticks to its existing mission statement.

World Vision US operates an Advocacy team that engages in political action. The Advocacy team creates online petitions about specific issues, which are delivered to members of Congress. This is how World Vision US participates in political action, and the specific topics of the petitions include: “poverty-focused foreign assistance,” “refugees,” “child protection,” “healthy moms and babies” and “food security and livelihoods.”¹⁸⁾ While this advocacy contributes to better living standards for aid recipients, such endeavors are merely economic assistance. World Vision US engages in political activities in the field of foreign aid, but the activities are still focused on humanitarian assistance, which is World Vision’s traditional area of work.

The transition of World Vision US toward human rights advocacy would not

18) World Vision Advocacy website <http://www.worldvisionadvocacy.org> (retrieved on April 28, 2020)

be viable or at best would remain limited because its mission does not seem to subject to change. The religious identity of World Vision US is predicated upon the preferences of the specific group whose contributions are crucial for the organization. World Vision US is funded largely through contributions from conservative Christians to the child sponsorship program, and their preferences with regard to the activities of the organization should not be overlooked. The preference of the sponsors to the organization is shaped by the Biblical teaching to “Love one another”¹⁹⁾ or “Love your neighbor as yourself.”²⁰⁾ This Biblical principle is clearly captured in the official statement as seen in Table 1. It implies that the sponsors’ underlying intention is to share the pain of the poor and needy, yet the sponsors are emphatically uninterested in the social or political structural conditions that engender this adversity. Based on the Biblical teaching that a higher authority is given by God, Christians tend to comply with governmental authority and are less likely to challenge government or government policies that might impose on the human rights of the socially and politically marginalized. Given the organization’s Christian identity reflecting the preferences of its Christian sponsors, World Vision is restricted in its activities to humanitarian assistance to the needy, rather than political action to change the deleterious structures that cause the social predicament.

In addition to the contributions of Christians who share a religious identity with the organization, World Vision’s financial reliance on the US government makes the organization unlikely to challenge government or government aid policies. Numerous US-based aid NGOs, including World Vision US, are subsidized by government agencies, including the United States Agency of

19) John 13:34 (New International Version)

20) Leviticus 19:18, Luke 10:27 (New International Version)

International Development (USAID) and the US Department of Agriculture, (USDA). For this organization, confrontation with the government may do more financial harm than good. In 2019, World Vision US received about 393 million dollars from government agencies including USAID, and the amount of the subsidy accounted for 35 percent of World Vision's annual revenue.²¹⁾ Given the substantial amount of funds and subsidies on which the organization is dependent, it would be difficult for World Vision US to criticize US foreign aid policy. The organization must be circumspect not to provoke the government in order to maintain this funding. In this context, World Vision US has little ability to put pressure on the government, such as by engaging in lobbying activities. This reticence toward political action is another aspect of World Vision US's identity.

In brief, World Vision US was established with the principle of Christian evangelism, but recently it has begun to engage in children's rights promotion. Still, this organization highlights child sponsorship and fundraising activities, which are based on the original work of World Vision US.

2. Oxfam America: Good Samaritan with a Political Role in Human Rights Advocacy

Among aid NGOs, Oxfam has been one of the most successful at promoting human rights in its development work. This secular organization, established in 1942 by a group of social activists and Oxford academics in the United Kingdom, has developed advocacy efforts in development work since the 1980s.

21) World Vision "Financial Accountability" <https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/financial-accountability-2#1468438377863-040c8abd-5609> (retrieved on March 13, 2020)

The main action of this organization is developing campaigns for social change and justice. Oxfam has a confederation of 15 autonomous global branches that encourage campaign activities at both the international and the domestic levels.

Oxfam America, the Oxfam branch in the US, began in the 1970s as an aid NGO mainly involved in economic assistance programs and emergency responses to humanitarian crises in developing countries. The first mission of the NGO, when it was founded by Oxfam Great Britain, was to fundraise for Pakistanis in need after a cyclone killed about 500,000 people in East Pakistan (currently Bangladesh). Oxfam America employed an approach of small-scale emergency response to meet the urgent needs of impacted locals on the ground (Raalten and Roper 2010).

The initial activity was to “advocate for the basic human rights and dignity of survivors of conflicts and disasters,”²²⁾ yet emergency relief is not the only mission pursued by Oxfam America, as reflected in its mission statement. According to the official mission statement, Oxfam America grapples with structural impediments to human rights such as social inequality and political injustice, as well as the basic human dignity of survivors; the organization announces, “We take on inequality, climate justice, gender justice, and inequities in the food chain.”²³⁾ The mission to support international justice was put into action in the 1980s when many complex human rights situations and humanitarian emergencies unfolded around the world. The statement defines the political identity of the NGO, stating, “We challenge governments, multinational companies, international organizations, and other actors to use their vast power

22) Oxfam America “About Oxfam” <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/about/> (retrieved on March 20, 2020)

23) Oxfam America “About Oxfam” <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/about/> (retrieved March 20, 2020)

and influence to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable people.”²⁴) Oxfam America became politically active in promoting human rights practices; it problematizes human rights violations and attempts to rectify the practices or policies that vitiate the quality of life of socially marginalized groups by exhorting, encouraging or even forcing a variety of powerful actors to promote human rights by rectifying existing policies.

The mission statement depicts the NGO as a human rights advocacy network and enables it to employ a human rights-based approach to sustainable development. In 2003, several UN agencies agreed to adopt the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding among UN agencies (United Nations 2003), which contains the following three themes of the human rights-based approach: (1) the further realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments in development programs; (2) human rights standards guiding all development cooperation in all phases of the programming process; and (3) development cooperation contributing to the relationship between right-holders and duty-bearers in development programs. Oxfam America had already begun to implement the idea of the human rights-based approach in its development work starting in the 1980s, whereas most aid NGOs began to incorporate the concept of the human rights-based approach into their work only after the UN document was adopted (Offenheiser and Holcombe 2003: 285; Schmitz 2012: 524). This shows that Oxfam America played a role in development cooperation as a norm entrepreneur before the concept of the human rights-based approach was agreed

24) Oxfam America “About Oxfam” <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/about/> (retrieved March 20, 2020)

upon by the UN agencies in 2003. During the 1980s, Oxfam America consolidated and diversified its human rights movements in its international development aid programs as suggested by the human rights-based approach. With the abortive consequences of simple relief activities in mind, Oxfam America applied the rights-based approach to its development programs, which encompassed issues such as the environment, women's rights, and child labor.

One of the human rights agendas with which Oxfam America particularly engaged was women's rights. Its identity as an aid NGO with a clear objective of empowering marginalized people to speak up fits well with the promotion of the social, political and economic status of women. Oxfam America first undertook a campaign to end violence against women in developing countries where women typically remain vulnerable. Physical security is the most fundamental condition under which other rights can be advanced, and women's lack of physical security not only reflects gender inequality but also precludes their progress in socioeconomic and political dimensions. In addition to working toward granting women physical freedom from fear, Oxfam America also worked on women's education, which can enhance their economic and political rights and also facilitate a more favorable social and political structure for women that engenders equal opportunities regardless of gender. This aid NGO advocates a movement for women's education as a solution that has long-term and sustainable effects on the development of recipient countries.

Oxfam America also played a political role as an autonomous grassroots aid NGO by influencing US government policies pertaining to international human rights and justice. The mission statement articulates that the NGO refrains from receiving any government subsidies: "Oxfam America decided to not accept US government grants and to instead try to build broad-based, grassroots support

.”²⁵) The NGO’s financial independence from the government enables them to criticize government inaction on human rights issues and to more actively organize campaigns to pressure the government to facilitate policy actions that promote human rights. In practice, Oxfam America embarked on campaigns in the 1980s to educate the US Congress and the public about the importance of empowering local people in development work. In the early 1980s, when there was political unrest under Guatemala’s Montt government, Oxfam America took a stand against US military intervention, and the NGO urged US senators not to engage in further involvement in Guatemala (Simon 2010: 134–136). Oxfam America also strived to reform the US Farm Bill in 2007 in order to better support socially disadvantaged farmers (Offenheiser 2010: 306–308). Oxfam America lobbied state governments and statehouses to protect local farmers, and members of the NGO met with Congressional officials, including members of the House of Representatives, particularly members of the House Committee on Agriculture, to reform the US Farm Bill.

Oxfam America also established a separate agency called the Oxfam America Action Fund, not only elevating the voices of the vulnerable, but also conducting legislative lobbying of Congress. One of the most significant missions of the Oxfam America Action Fund is to promote legislation to address sensitive political issues. This is a field of activities that traditional aid NGOs do not engage in. This action of Oxfam America reflects the new norm of the human rights-based approach to development. Looking at the legislative initiatives led by Oxfam America, topics include corporate tax evasion, which traditional aid NGOs have been reluctant to address. Oxfam America Action Fund urged the Trump administration to track down offshore tax havens and to enact legislation

25) Oxfam America “Our History” <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/inside-oxfam-america/our-history/> (retrieved March 20, 2020)

for the prevention of tax evasion.²⁶⁾ The reason that the Oxfam America Action Fund is able to engage in lobbying activities is that Oxfam America is financially independent from the US government, so the NGO is willing to discuss politically sensitive issues. Oxfam America has a long-established foundation as a political actor holding the US government accountable to improve the lives of local people in jeopardy at the domestic level.

VI. Conclusion

Due to the dysfunctionality of traditional development aid, which the aid community has problematized, the HRBA emerged as a more effective development scheme in the aid community. Some international aid NGOs went through a metamorphosis into public interest groups politically engaging in human rights promotion to empower poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups with the goal of sustainable development. However, there are organizations which did not embrace this approach but chose to maintain their traditional philanthropic, charitable and humanitarian relief missions.

This study revives the hoary theoretical debate in International Relations between rationalism and constructivism to investigate what motivates aid NGOs' choice of development strategies (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Clark 2001; Cooley and Ron 2002; Sell and Prakash 2004; Bob 2005). If an NGO's goal is the maximization of its profits, it is regarded as a rational actor. On the other hand, an NGO is deemed a normative actor if the organization purports to achieve social justice in the form of international development. This study shows the

26) Oxfam America Action Fund "Our Work" <https://www.oxfamaction.org/work/>(retrieved March 14, 2020)

case of an NGO that seems to be driven by an international normative framework, which lends support to the theory of the normative actor.

The study also emphasizes religious identity as a determinant of NGOs' philosophies and daily practices. This identity is predicated upon or reflective of their original missions; World Vision US, with its religious origin, has devoted itself to philanthropic charity and relief, following its Christian tradition. In contrast, Oxfam America, a secular NGO, has gone beyond traditional aid activities to play a political role advocating for human rights. The latter was receptive to the new norm of the HRBA, engaging in political activities for human rights promotion with the goal of sustainable development. The former, however, resisted these new norms, remaining true to its original mission. This study's focus on identity contributes to the literature that seeks to identify factors that affect the behavioral patterns of international actors including NGOs.

Despite its contributions, this research also has some limitations. While the findings are quite useful, the research does not identify other factors that might be significant. In statistical analysis, Kim (2018) examines other significant factors, assumed to determine the distinctive activities of aid NGOs. He claims that such factors as frequency of contact with norms or the civic and political culture of the home country are also statistically significant variables that could influence the transformation of aid NGOs in the middle of the newly accepted international norm. A much clearer explanation of the relative importance of each of these factors is needed. The research does not address differences within and between countries; for example, are non-religious NGOs based in the UK more likely to engage in human rights issues than their counterparts in the US or Canada? These are themes that may be explored in future research and that will contribute to the field of NGOs, international norms, and sustainable development.

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선한 사마리아인의 정치적 활동 : 지속 가능한 발전을 위한 개발원조 NGO의 인권 옹호

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개발원조 비정부기구(NGO)는 오랜 기간 동안 국제사회에서 인도주의적인 역할을 수행하여 왔으나, 최근 인권에 기반한 접근법(HRBA)이라는 새로운 전략이 등장하면서 개발원조 NGO의 역할에도 변화가 발생하게 되었다. 이는 개발원조 분야에서 새로운 국제 규범이 되어 개발원조 NGO들은 장기적이고 근본적인 개발의 효과를 얻기 위한 방안으로 정치적 활동을 하기 시작했다. 그러나 일부 개발원조 NGO들은 여전히 전통적인 접근법을 기반으로 하는 인도주의적 활동에 초점을 두고 있다. 본고는 이러한 차이를 발생시키는 핵심 요인으로 종교적 정체성을 꼽는다. 세속적인 NGO들은 종교적으로 연관된 기관들보다 새로운 접근법에 더 수용적이며, 반면 종교 기반의 NGO들은 기존의 인도주의적 접근법을 유지하고자 한다. 이 연구는 월드비전 미국(World Vision United States)과 옥스팜 아메리카(Oxfam America)를 비교하며, 종교 정체성이 NGO의 인권에 기반한 접근에 어떻게 영향을 주었는지를 보여준다.