The Impact of Rights Based Approaches to Development
- how can it be shown if they make a difference?

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Abstract
This study deals with how NGOs make human rights impact assessment in relation to their Rights-Based Approaches (RBAs) and discuss what a common framework for impact assessment could look like. The study deals with Oxfam, CARE and Amnesty International, and analyse how their different backgrounds and approaches influence their work with measuring impact. It is showed that they are not able to link development to human rights and not successful in reporting impact in human rights terms. The NGOs with a background in the development field focus on empowering rights-holders while the NGO with a background in the human rights field focus on duty-bearers. The paper concludes that to be accountable to people in the south NGOs need to co-operate on impact assessment and link it clearly to human rights law. It is important that this is done in a process that empowers partners and rights-holders, rather than reinforces old power structures.

Key words:
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1. Introduction

The recent change among UN Agencies, National Development Agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to include a Rights Based Approach (RBA)\(^1\) to development gives the promise of a transformed development society. The idea is a change from a charity-oriented perspective to one focusing on human rights, power relations and holding development actors and governments accountable for their acts. I find it encouraging that these ideas have got so much resonance in the field. At the same time one has to ask, is this change really happening? Are organisations and donors really prepared to transform the power relations to their beneficiaries? And can they show that by working with a RBA organisations contribute better to changing the lives of people than by working with a traditional development perspective? If the organisations can not answer those questions their honesty and commitment will be put to question with the same high moral standards they are advocating.

This paper studies how organisations measure changes and make impact assessment. Although this can not provide the complete answer to the effect of RBAs it can give valuable insight to how the organisations themselves try to deal with the problem and sketch a framework for how tools can be created. The importance of being able to show clear results increase when questions are being raised about the legitimacy and authority of NGOs to take advocacy actions in someone else’s name.\(^2\) There is a challenge to take a step from the rhetoric about human rights to proving their impact:

[W]hile there are many documents detailing the value of [a] RBA in theory, little empirical evidence exists. [...] Organizations have the experience with rights, but lack cohesive indicators, methodologies and resources to do systematic evaluations.

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\(^1\) There are other terms for this concept like Human Rights Based Approach used by the UN system, Human Rights Based Strategies, Rights-Based Development or Child Rights Programming, in this thesis the term most used by the NGOs studied will be used. It should however be noted that the choice of term in some cases can be a marking of whether the organisation or institution put emphasis on legal aspects or more traditional development aspects.

of their work. Development organizations have a wealth of monitoring and evaluation experience [...] and the tools for measuring service delivery and socio-economic progress, but do not have the same experience with rights and advocacy. Measuring the impact of rights in development (participation, empowerment and the ability to claim one’s rights) is a more challenging task than measuring socioeconomic performance.  

The NGOs themselves feels the pressure to answer the issues of accountability through tools like the INGO (International Non Governmental Organisation) Accountability Charter, not the least since there is a growing human rights movement in the developing countries. In the long run it is a matter of their legitimacy as institutions. If they can not prove their impact and be hold to account for their actions – how could they legitimate their existence?

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim with this thesis is to study how NGOs can show if their RBA work make more impact in order to improve the lives of people in developing countries (and elsewhere) than a more traditional development approach. The aim also includes the ambition to contribute to the discussion of what methods could be used to measure impact of RBA work and what such a framework could look like.

To be able to do this the study is arranged around the following questions that try to capture both the current state of the problem and what could be done to solve it:

- How does leading NGOs today work with evaluating human rights impact of their work?
- How is their work founded in theory, what do they see as the key problems and why is it so difficult to measure impact?
- And what could a framework that can help NGOs create a common set of indicators and methods to evaluate impact look like?

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3 Jochnick, Chris and Garzón, Paulina (2002), Rights-Based Approaches to Development- An Introduction to the Field, CARE and Oxfam-America, p. 12.
1.2 Theory, method and material

This study is a comparative study based on a small number of NGOs. The cases will be compared based upon how their method of evaluation integrates core parts of a RBA: linking development work with human rights; accountability; empowerment; participation; and finally non-discrimination and attention to most affected groups and what impact assessment strategies they use. The comparison will then be used to analyse theories of how human rights impact could be measured and how NGOs could proceed towards that goal.

The study aims at constructive theory where empirical findings on how NGOs deal with impact assessment are analysed in relation to the normative statements their RBAs are built on. It tries to find to find basic requirements for a model that can help NGOs with impact assessment even though within the scope this study it is not possible to conduct the empirical research that would be needed to create a complete model. While the normative theory about RBAs is well developed, the empirical theory and empirical findings that could be used to create a well working model for impact assessment lacks simply because so little practical work has been done on measuring human rights impact. Therefore constructive theory is needed to create tools for NGOs and others to start measuring impact; the result of such attempts should then be used to enhance both empirical and constructive theory.

The paper studies three organisations that are very active in assessing the human rights impact of their programmes: CARE, Oxfam and Amnesty International. They are chosen on the basis that they represent both the group of INGOs being most influenced by the profit-related management strategies in Anglo-Saxon NGOs and organisations working seriously with integrating a human rights approach in all their work. They also diversify in their approach in that while CARE works with a central clearly defined strategy for their RBA, Oxfam has left that for a more decentralised strategy while Amnesty works with a rights based approach without a clear connection to development. This means the cases are selected based on a

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6 Hereafter just Amnesty.

variation of variables when it comes to their adoption of a RBA while they all fit into a relatively small group of organisations that fit the conditions above.\textsuperscript{8}

The empirical material is collected from both primary sources like policy documents, evaluations and annual reports and as secondary sources articles that deals with the work of the selected organisations. The credibility of the organisations own external publications and material might be limited since they are written in a context where the organisations try both to show their results and influence the public, this is however also what makes them interesting in this study since they are an opportunity for organisations to present their human rights impact. Internal documents of the organisations also have multiple purposes as they have a role in promoting the adoption of impact assessment strategies within the organisations. At the same time that means they give insight into how those processes are currently working.

One problem in the research of this paper has been the lack of access to the INGOs studied. The ambition was to be able to do interviews with all organisations and at the same time collect material. Unfortunately the people working with these issues are very busy and have not been able to participate. “I’m afraid I will not be able to help with your request on this occasion. I get a lot of requests from Masters and PHD students and to be honest I just can’t keep up and meet with everyone especially as I’m mostly overseas.”\textsuperscript{9} Only one organisation (Oxfam) was able to participate fully, although to get as comparable results as possible I opted to do that interview on e-mail with the ambition the other organisations would be able to participate. The material used has because of this been limited to what the organisations themselves make public. This means the material is also somewhat diverse in character, not the least when it comes to documents that deal with evaluation strategies.

At the same time, while the empirical material lacks the depth and richness that could have provided a deeper understanding of the organisations, it can still be used to answer the questions asked. Together with theories about what human rights impact assessment could look like it will provide a useful background for the constructive ambition in this study. The


\textsuperscript{9} Magdalene Lagu, Rights Advisor, CARE UK, E-mail communication with the author, 2007-05-03.
combination of material, using a number of different types of sources, is used to address the problem with inadequate access to the organisations.\textsuperscript{10}

The selection of theories that can be used in this study is limited by the fact that little is written on how to measure human rights impact. Therefore after a presentation of RBAs and their background generally, frameworks and theories, a discussion of how such theories and methods could develop will be presented. Thereafter some of the efforts to create tools for impact assessment will be presented. The theories are dealt with more in depth in chapter three. It is important to note however that most research in this field is done by persons that are connected to UN institutions or NGOs. Other material like the workshop reports, Danish Institute of Human Rights (DIHR) and Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) reports have a very practical purpose for the participating organisations and are created with that in mind rather than to further research in the field.

In the analysis the theories and tools will be applied to the empirical material to discuss the relationship between the efforts to create impact assessment models and the current work by NGOs and what challenges the organisations have to deal with. This will be done through a subjective assessment of how those documents deal with human rights impact assessment and RBAs.\textsuperscript{11} This will then form a base for the constructive part of the analysis.

1.3 Delimitations
This study will only deal with INGOs while many other institutions like United Nations (UN) agencies, national development agencies, national NGOs and even some trans-national corporations work with finding methods to measure impact of their RBAs. Those actors will only be discussed when it is relevant in relation to the study. Also the empirical material is limited to documents at a strategic level and includes no plans or evaluations at a national level.

The study will also not focus on specific indicators of impact or human rights change. Instead it aims at discussing what the framework in which they are created could look like.

\textsuperscript{11} May, Tim (2001), pp. 220-221.
1.4 Chapter outline

After this first introductionary chapter the second chapter will focus firstly on a historical and theoretical background to RBAs and central concepts and secondly on background, theoretical issues and the development of tools and indicators for human rights impact assessment. The third chapter will present the empirical material with a background of the organisations, their approach to RBA and more thororughly how they report on and evaluate their rights based work. In the forth chapter the theory will be used to analyse if the NGOs succeed in reporting and evaluating in accordance with RBA principles, answer why it is so difficult and discuss what a framework for impact assessment could look like. In the final conclusions the findings of the study will be summarised, the ideas concerning an impact assessment framework will be brought together and some issues for further research will be discussed.
2. Theories of Rights Based Approaches and their evaluation

It is important to give a background to the reasons why the concept of RBAs has emerged because as presented below it is founded on a number of normative ideas and it is important do discuss the what forces are behind those. It is also important to understand why organisations have changed their thinking in order to grasp the issues of accountability at the foundation of the impact assessments. That is dealt with in the first section of this chapter. Similarly it is important to have a background to some key concepts of a RBA is and its normative base forming the foundation for analysing how the organisations deal with impact assessment in relation to RBAs. It is also important to briefly introduce some of the criticism that these new ideas has encountered, which is dealt with in the second section. The third section deals with problems in measuring impact and methods that are being developed in order to tackle those.

2.1 Background and recent developments

Even though as mentioned above the concept of a Rights Based Approach is a new invention since the mid 90s, Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, researchers in development studies, show similar movements linking human rights and development as far back as the anti-colonial struggle. They argue that the fact that these ideas finally got popularity can be explained by several factors. Firstly, the end of the Cold War and the 1993 Vienna conference strengthened the position of human rights generally. Secondly, NGOs took the initiative to adopt and promote a more integrated view of rights and development concerns and increasingly also large mainstream human rights NGOs choose to involve in that process. A third factor was the shift that means aid is delivered directly to government budgets in development countries. That has been accompanied by an increase in the support of civil society as a mean to control and put demands on the receiving government. Fourthly, the ideas have been used as a mean to improve the increasing emphasis in development practice (and rhetoric) on participation as an essential aspect of strategies for poverty reduction. Finally, an important factor was that the governments of rich countries were ensured that the contemporary language of a rights-based
approach was not the same thing as the ideological content of the Declaration on the Right to Development where all states were seen as duty bearers to the people of poorer countries.\textsuperscript{12}

There could also be other explanations. One put forward by Darrow, coordinator of the HURIST (Human Rights Strengthening) joint programme between the OHCHR and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Thomas, independent consultant, is that the turn to RBAs was a response from the UN to the failures of the structural adjustment programmes of the 80s.\textsuperscript{13} At the same time Sano, Head of research department at the DIHR, claims the change, at least on the part of the NGOs, much has been driven by their partner organisations in the developing countries that has turned towards working with human rights methods after their democratisation in the beginning of the 90s.\textsuperscript{14}

Because of the interest of RBAs among large governmental donors like SIDA, DANIDA, DFID and NORAD the involvement rate of NGOs has then accelerated through their funding. This can be related to recent developments in the field where the increasing attention of world leaders to world poverty and the need to respond to public opinion about globalisation and human rights. There RBAs provide an opportunity to at least publicly respond to those concerns.\textsuperscript{15}

In several UN bodies the concept of RBAs evolved simultaneously after the call from the Secretary-General in 1997 to mainstream human rights, raising the need to a common understanding between the organs of what the concept means. They arrived at the following:

1. All programmes of development co-operation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other international human rights instruments.


\textsuperscript{13} Darrow, Mac and Tomas, Amparo (2005), \textit{Power, Capture, and Conflict: A Call for Human Rights Accountability in Development Cooperation}, in Human Rights Quarterly 27, p. 472.


2. Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the UDHR and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process.

3. Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of ‘duty-bearers’ to meet their obligations and/or of ‘rights-holders’ to claim their rights.\textsuperscript{16}

That means that all UN programming should aim for direct realisation of rights (not just incidentally). The document points out the following principles that should guide the RBA work: universality and inalienability; indivisibility; interdependence and inter-relatedness; non-discrimination and equality; participation and inclusion; accountability and the rule of law.\textsuperscript{17}

Another important development in the field is the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to Alston, Professor of Human Rights Law and Special Adviser to the UNHCHR on the MDGs, reporting on the MDGs does not include the intended connection to human rights. He claims little has happened on the ground when it comes to most UN agencies. He argue the keys to joining the MDGs and human rights are: “(i) overt recognition of the relevance of human rights obligations; (ii) ensuring an appropriate legal framework; (iii) encouraging community participation but doing so in a realistic and targeted way; and (iv) promoting MDG accountability mechanisms.” Finally, he argues, that while being ready to criticise the development community for not considering human rights, the human rights community has also been reluctant to get into the development field.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{2.2 Normative base and key concepts of a RBA}

As mentioned above there is no simple definition of what a RBA is and what should be included in the practical work. The CRIN webpage lists at least 26 different definitions ranging from UNHCHR, via Sen to Oxfam.\textsuperscript{19} This can be a way to make the concept more


\textsuperscript{17} UNDP (2003a) pp. 1-3.


useful and adaptable to different settings, still there is a risk that it also loses its meaning. Darrow and Thomas argue that the unclear RBA concept risk undermining the legitimacy of Human Rights even in other aspects.  

Another important aspect is that actors try to use the concept to underline different aspects of development, from organisations that emphasis the legal aspect of rights to organisations that promote a more holistic view of rights. In this paper I will deal with some normative arguments and then turn to how NGOs themselves define the concept. This is done because this paper focuses on the NGOs although their approach has to be put in a more general context. I will also return to how their different ways of defining what a RBA means influence their work and impact assessments.

2.2.1 RBA key elements and how it differs from a traditional approach
The description of the organisations’ arguments in this presentation is based mainly on the webpage Equalinrights.org that is based at the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights and how they describes and argue for a RBA but is very similar to other descriptions by the UN, CARE, Oxfam, Save the Children and others. That view is complemented by how researchers have framed the concept.

Many organisations see a RBA as a catalyst that transforms the development practice from the needs based focus to enabling people to recognize and claim their rights. The ambition is a process where development actors get the potential to change their ways from a “unreflective patronage” to a self-aware agency in support of people that are discriminated against or marginalised. Equalinrights describes a RBA as an approach that is at the same time a methodology, a process and a goal in development work. They agree with Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall on that the core of a RBA is that it prioritises agency for those living in poverty to drive the development process, that it integrates human rights within the heart of decision-

20 Darrow, Mac and Tomas, Amparo (2005), pp. 483-484.
22 Equal in Rights (a), What is the human rights based approach to development? www.equalinrights.org/content/hrba_approach.html last visited 2007-05-03.
23 Theis, Joachim (2004), Promoting Rights-Based Approaches Experiences and Ideas from Asia and the Pacific, Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden; UNDP (2003a); and see the descriptions of Oxfam and CARE in chapter 3.
making and that it focuses on underlying power relations when it deals with poverty and social injustice.\textsuperscript{25}

It shifts development initiatives from a focus on the needs of people living in poverty to recognition of their equal rights to access resources necessary for their well-being and social inclusion and it also focus on the underlying causes of exclusion and “empowers those living in poverty to renegotiate their relationship with the State and other groups, to effect meaningful changes in their own lives and to influence their future”.\textsuperscript{26}

Equalinrights claim there is an evolving global consensus on the essential elements of a RBA that are presented below:

\textit{Linking development work with human rights}

Equalinrights link development to Sens notion of a mean to expanding the real freedom that people enjoy.\textsuperscript{27} They relate this to that human rights also seek to expand freedom from fear and freedom to access resources. They point to that RBAs takes a holistic approach to human rights and recognise the moral political and legal power human rights provide to advance struggles against poverty. They also set out as an important factor that human rights prohibit trade-offs and mandate priority for the most marginalised groups in society.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{Accountability}

Accountability focus on the relationship between rights-holders and duty-bearers and refers to the ability to hold duty-bearers to account for actions or lack of action to fulfil their obligations to the rights-holders. Working with a RBA NGOs try to focus on how to support the rights-holders to hold governments or other duty-bearers like corporations, development agencies, NGOs, regional institutions, schools, and families responsible. That the NGOs themselves are included in this list of duty-bearers are important since it makes them focus on

\textsuperscript{25} Equal in Rights (a).
\textsuperscript{26} Equal in Rights (a).
\textsuperscript{28} Equal in Rights (b), Linking development work to human rights, www.equalinrights.org/content/HRBA_element1.html last visited 2007-05-03.
how they can be open and transparent towards rights-holders in that they claim to want to
make themselves accountable.\(^{29}\)

The means to work with accountability can vary from internal processes within NGOs to be
accountable towards communities they work with and employees, to working towards other
actors with criminal law, litigation, campaigns, parallel reports, naming and shaming and
negotiation.\(^{30}\)

**Empowerment**

With empowerment organisations mean “how individuals and groups strengthen their
capacity to renegotiate their relationship with the State and other groups, to take control of
their circumstances and achieve their own goals to improve the quality of their lives and to
influence their future”.\(^{31}\) They try to help people develop power, other capabilities and access
to resources so that they can challenge injustice and inequality. This view stems from the
basis that people are not beneficiaries but rights-holders. This is one of the issues that makes
RBAs interesting since it challenges traditionally non-political organisations like Save the
Children, CARE and Oxfam to become much more political in that they start to work with
political issues of power.\(^{32}\)

Equalinrights describes this as a process where unequal power relationships are transformed
and structures at the root of poverty and social injustice are challenged. This means traditional
institutions like the family, state, church and culture are changed in a long-term process of
challenge, analysis, resistance and engagement. Equalinrights writes this requires NGOs to
work not only on public systems, structures and tools, but also personal beliefs and value
systems.\(^{33}\)

**Participation**

Participation is seen as something mandatory because of that it is mentioned as a right in the
UDHR and therefore they argue that “all individuals have a right to active, free and

\(^{29}\) Equal in Rights (c), *Accountability*, www.equalinrights.org/content/HRBA_element2.html last visited 2007-05-03.

\(^{30}\) Equal in Rights (c).

\(^{31}\) Equal in Rights (d), *Empowerment*, www.equalinrights.org/content/HRBA_element3.html last visited 2007-05-03.

\(^{32}\) Equal in Rights (d).

\(^{33}\) Equal in Rights (d).
meaningful participation in all stages of the development process.” They also differentiate this from a utilitarian notion of participation as a tool for effective project outcomes. It is also important that rights-holders have the right to real participation and not just consultation. Duty-bearers must make sure there are possibilities to participate in and influence the agenda, process and implementation of development. Related to this are other rights like right to information. Important for organisations that work with a RBA is also to prioritise participation for the most excluded.\textsuperscript{34}

It is also important that supporting participation becomes itself a key development goal, not just a mean. It is also a critical part of ensuring accountability of duty-bearers. And again it is a test for NGOs as it challenges them to transform decision-making structures and systems within their own organisations.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Non-discrimination and attention to most affected groups}

The last principle is based on the right of non-discrimination. That principle means NGOs need to prioritise the most marginalised or impoverished groups, such as women, minorities, migrants, indigenous peoples and prisoners. There is also a duty of states and development workers to identify groups that may suffer discriminatory practices or outcomes, which means, as Equalinrights exemplify that data must be disaggregated, as far as possible. Finally it is important that development decisions, policies and initiatives do not reinforce existing power imbalances for example, between women and men, or employers and employees.\textsuperscript{36} Here is an important difference towards a more traditional approach where a RBA will likely prioritize gross human rights violations even if those only affect a small number of people while a traditional (or needs-based) approach would justify a focus on less severe types of violations that affect a larger number of people.\textsuperscript{37}

The combination of these five elements is what Equalinrights mean distinguish the RBA from other approaches, including rights approaches. “More traditional rights approaches, for example, focus solely on the State’s obligations and responsibilities, leaving little space for

\textsuperscript{34} Equal in Rights (e), \textit{Participation}, www.equalinrights.org/content/HRBA_element4.html last visited 2007-05-03.

\textsuperscript{35} Equal in Rights (e).

\textsuperscript{36} Equal in Rights (f), \textit{Non-discrimination and attention to most affected groups}, www.equalinrights.org/content/HRBA_element5.html last visited 2007-05-03.

\textsuperscript{37} Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Cornwall, Andrea (2004), p. 3
active citizenship or community driven alternatives essential for long-term, sustainable transformation. The HRBA differs by empowering those living in poverty to negotiate their roles and entitlements with the authorities.”\textsuperscript{38}

When NGOs have started to work with rights in this way they have realised their work is now becoming far more political. Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall notes that the shift from the rights talk during the de-colonisation struggle to large development institutions meant a depoliticiation of poverty.\textsuperscript{39} Today a reverse process is taking place as previously politically careful NGOs are becoming more political in their claims, the transformation of Oxfam and how they has worked with the WTO negotiations is one typical example.\textsuperscript{40}

In this section we have seen that a RBA brings something different from both a traditional and human rights perspective and tries to create a more holistic approach, in the next section we will see how the approach has been criticised by others and what problems NGOs themselves bring forward in trying to work with a RBA.

2.2.2 Discussion of RBAs and problems put forward by NGOs
In this thesis I deal explicitly with one of the main critiques and discussions around RBA, the lack of evidence and tools for impact assessment. In this section I will briefly deal with other questions, including moral ones, which are discussed in relation to RBAs. Within the scope of this thesis it is not space to deal with them exhaustibly.

Generally it has been argued that very little of all the rights talk is actually resulting in direct rights work by the agencies (including other actors than NGOs) in contrast to all the talk. The concept is used to describe a field that is much broader than the field usually associated with human rights.\textsuperscript{41}

There is also a risk that RBAs become a label that organisations can use to make an impression that their work is based on human rights ideals and they have mainstreamed a human rights perspective even when they have not. One such example is the World Bank that

\textsuperscript{38} Equal in Rights (a).
\textsuperscript{39} Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Cornwall, Andrea (2004), p. 7.
\textsuperscript{40} See Aaronson, Susan Ariel and Zimmerman, Jamie M. (2006).
\textsuperscript{41} Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Cornwall, Andrea (2004), p. 46.
claims to have adopted a rights based approach while making no changes to its policies claiming it is not allowed to be political.\textsuperscript{42} Darrow and Tomas stress the risk that such an approach risk undermining the legitimacy of human rights in general because it removes their role as a tool of empowerment for the most marginalised people. They claim that partial or insincere engagement with a RBA may serve only to neutralise and sanitise the human rights concept.\textsuperscript{43}

Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall also point to that RBAs have to live up to their promise of a positive transformation of power relations among the various development actors. They argue that agencies that articulate their vision in rights-based terms need to be interrogated for the extent to which it enables those whose lives are affected the most to articulate their priorities and claim genuine accountability from development agencies. The agencies also have to be examined for the extent to which they become critically self-aware and address inherent power inequalities in their interaction with those people.\textsuperscript{44}

One of the more concrete issues that are being discussed in relation to how to work with a RBA is how to deal with the focus on civil society and governmental responsibilities when working in failed states. Should organisations be prepared to go in and assume some governmental responsibilities for guaranteeing rights until the state can take over?\textsuperscript{45} Another is the consequence of becoming more political organisations. That means a new role in standing on the side of the poor against the powerful and can mean the NGOs come in conflict with their donors.\textsuperscript{46} That change also means staffs that were once hired for traditional needs based development programmes are now expected to carry out advocacy. Finally there is a challenge to find new ways of working with human rights. NGOs need to make a move to broaden the traditional human rights protest and monitoring strategies to finding a more holistic approach that includes engagement at many levels.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{42} See the discussion of the World Bank in Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Cornwall, Andrea (2004).
\textsuperscript{43} Darrow, Mac and Tomas, Amparo (2005), pp. 483-484
\textsuperscript{44} Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Cornwall, Andrea (2004), p. iii.
\textsuperscript{45} The Danish institute for Human Rights (2006), “Group theme 4: Rights Based Programming - Challenges and Value Added” in, Workshop on Rights Based Approaches, 7-8 November 2006, Copenhagen, Denmark, Workshop Report, Copenhagen: The Danish institute for Human Rights, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{46} See Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Cornwall, Andrea (2004) p. 44 for a description of a case where ActionAid were summoned to a meeting with DFID to explain a campaign that were perceived as an attack in British commercial interests.
\textsuperscript{47} Equalinrights (a).
2.3 Human rights impact assessment challenges

This section starts by giving a background to why the issue of impact assessment has arisen among human rights NGOs and gives an introduction to the challenges discussed. Thereafter it outlines some of the frameworks and models researchers and NGOs have proposed to measure impact. Finally it presents some of the measurement tools currently being developed that serve as a background for the discussion of what a framework for impact assessment could look like.

2.3.1 Background of human rights impact assessment and NGOs

Since the 80s there has been an increasing interest in issues of accountability in the development community in general. Part of the reason for this was an increasing influence from the corporate world especially among Anglo-Saxon development NGOs. They have in close relation to academics and consultants adopted strategies for impact assessment and accountability.48

NGOs agree that there are huge challenges in assessing impact from RBA work. Even though changes can be measured at project level RBA aims for more structural changes in power relations and it can be argued that NGOs has not been able to produce such evidence.49 There have been no evaluation of RBA on a systematic level50 and the initiatives that are currently being taken have to be built from scratch by NGOs themselves.51 There is none or very little academic research in the field.52

For sceptics the lack of evidence and the simple addition of the new concept to old strategies like Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers “[…] appear to simply add fuel to the suspicion that the rights-based approach is nothing more than a sexy new term to dress up old-style development, and one that will last only a couple of years before being cast aside for the next bit of fashionable jargon.” 53 They argue that unless RBAs actually means and brings something distinctive, definable, and effective, it can be dismissed in years to come as “feel-

50 Darrow, Mac and Tomas, Amparo (2005) p. 479.
good window dressing,” or just another development fad.\textsuperscript{54} Therefore Darrow and Thomas underline the need for increased conceptual clarity.\textsuperscript{55}

According to Crawford, consultant working for the UK Interagency Work Group on Rights Based Approaches, NGOs have a problem in that they are weak in building information that can be a base for impact assessment. They also focus too much on process results rather than outcomes. She argues that NGOs feel impact is related to hard facts like reduction in maternal deaths and increased school enrolment rather than the work with empowering people or working for the realisation of rights.\textsuperscript{56} They have felt the exaggerated focus on numbers and quantifiable measures of success miss the essence of their work. However Raine, Executive Director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, while agreeing with some if the criticism, claim NGOs have to change their defensive strategy and see impact measurement as a tool to create accountability to those in whose name human rights NGOs work, to increase co-operation between organisations and improve the impact of their work.\textsuperscript{57} He concludes his article: “The return that improved measure techniques might bring is no less than an increase in collaboration; an invigoration of the human rights movement; more donor support, and accelerated social change. What could be more worth an investment of resources and time?”\textsuperscript{58}

Another reason for the lack of impact measurement of RBAs is that organisations often focus on strengthening their institutional capacities and creating awareness of human rights through advocacy activities. When indicators for documenting the impact of their work are set out, organisations usually refer to institutional performance, such as number of workshops or production and dissemination of human rights information, while neglecting the long-term human rights goal.\textsuperscript{59}

In the last years several attempts has been made among NGOs and governmental agencies to deal with these issues and critique. These involve information sharing and discussions in

\textsuperscript{54} Nyamu-Musembí, Celestíne and Cornwall, Andrea (2004), p. 14. \\
\textsuperscript{55} Darrow, Mac and Tomas, Amparo (2005) p. 482. \\
\textsuperscript{56} Sheena Crawford p. 6. \\
\textsuperscript{57} Raine, Fernande (2006), p. 8. \\
\textsuperscript{58} Raine, Fernande (2006), p. 25. \\
networks like CRIN and UK Inter-Agency Group on Rights Based Approaches, and in cooperation with research institutions like the DIHR and Netherlands Institute of Human Rights.

2.3.2 Theories of measurement of human rights impact

Raine propose a framework for how NGOs could start to deal with these issues. First he points out several serious problems organisations face when they start to work with impact measurement. General problems for NGOs are: balancing donors’ demands with organisational needs; adapting private-sector tools to the civil society; capture the importance of leadership and overcoming the resistance in civil society to acknowledge the importance of leadership in change; overcoming the cultural gap where measurement seem foreign to the culture of civil society; managing scarce resources; overcoming the prevalence of non-systematic impact assessment; and, for non-English NGOs, addressing language barriers because literature is written in English. In addition he points out specific problems for human rights NGOs: balancing transparency and security for employees and partners; allowing for flexible responses; acknowledging the collaborative nature of advocacy where it is very difficult for organisations to take credit for results; empowering others to take credit; acknowledging the long-term nature of impact; accommodating the culture of value-based volunteerism where emotionally motivated support groups might be un-interested in the issues of measurement and effectiveness; and finally to appreciate the contextual nature of human rights work where different methods have to be used in different settings. All those points have to be guiding principles for the creation of assessment frameworks.\(^{60}\)

To start addressing these challenges Raine claims organisations must in a first step make a collective effort to map the mechanics of a specific problem. This is important in order for the organisations to see their role in relation to other organisations working on the same issue and should be carried out in co-operation with academics and foundations. It is however important that the NGOs themselves are the driving force behind this and that it focus on values rather than technicalities.\(^{61}\)

When that has been done the second step is to design an impact-assessment framework at an organisational level and Raine points out that his framework only provide a model for organisations as they try to develop their own tools. Firstly, organisations have to evaluate

\(^{60}\) Raine, Fernande (2006), p. 15.
their mission, support networks and operations. It is especially important that the mission of the organisation is clarified as it is the fundament for measuring impact. That is a time-consuming process that will have to include all members of an organisation and will have to look at how the organisation can combine capital, human resources and knowledge in a way that maximize its impact.\textsuperscript{62}

Secondly the organisations need to define indicators of progress. He divides indicators into four levels – activities, outputs, outcomes and impact – where the first three are rather simple when the mission is clear. The challenge lies at the forth level.\textsuperscript{63}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicate</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Programmatic activities</td>
<td>Product of activities</td>
<td>Results of work</td>
<td>Effect of work on the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of consultation centres</td>
<td>Number of people counselled, number of returning clients</td>
<td>Number of women freed from abusive situations due to consultation</td>
<td>Number of women suffering domestic violence in the region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Adopted from Raine, Fernande (2006) p. 23.

Raine does not define how the last level can be measured in detail but stress that it will have to include both qualitative and quantitative measures as well that it should focus on a few strong indicators rather than long lists of issues that the organisation tries to affect. There is also a need for much more research on these issues.\textsuperscript{64}

In the third step Raine proposes organisations need to develop learning communities among themselves. Self-assessments should not be a solitary mission but rather collaboration with both academics, consultants and other NGOs.

Analysing the issues of assessment Andreassen, researcher at Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, and Sano outline four analytical challenges in measuring impact. The first challenge is “matching” means that apart from seeing the activities of a project as a objective in itself it has to be put in relation to a relevant human rights change. Then there also need to be an identification of the “type of change” that follows the project. Is it change in state behavior, in social change or is it a strengthening of the civil society? Thirdly, it is the question whether a

\textsuperscript{62} Raine, Fernande (2006), pp. 21-23.
\textsuperscript{63} Raine, Fernande (2006), p. 23.
project has had an “aggregated impact” for human rights at a local or national level. Finally, it is also the task of identifying “key result indicators.”  

To be able to measure impact it is obviously important that clear goals are set for programmes. According to Andreassen and Sano organisations seldom use human rights terms when they set goals and objectives. They argue that it is crucial that in order to verify human rights impact to define the overall goal as well as more specific objectives in rights terms. By doing so all the objectives and the activities that lead to them are justified by their contribution to the overall goal of strengthening and promoting specific human rights.  

They analyse the process in similar terms as Raine and see the challenge in showing the relation between the outcome of activities and project objectives. Examples of objectives can be enhanced awareness, change of attitudes, change in institutional or legal behaviour or social change. The purpose of human rights impact assessment, they argue, is to indicate how these objectives contribute to the goal of human rights improvements on the ground. This is difficult and includes the two considerable challenges to: ensure that a documented effect is attributable to a particular intervention and to quantify impact by scales or other measurement. Often measurement has to deal with these issues through making assumptions about likely impact of a project. NGOs could possibly also see human rights change at a national level as a sign of success even without a proven causality link to their interventions.  

Another important factor in impact assessments is the time factor that may also limit the reliability and accuracy of the assessment. It is very hard to measure long-term effects or sustainability of a programme targeting for example cultural change. Finally Andreassen and Sano adds two more factors to be considered: the importance to communicate the choice of indicators to partners and to consult with them on the choices made which may enhance trust and transparency and make it easier to make changes to the project, and the importance of monitoring for the accountability of and transparency by the management.

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2.3.3 Tools and indicators

The focus of this paper is not to look directly on indicators for human rights measurement rather how organisations can start to develop and use such tools. At the same time the sets of indicators that are currently being developed play an important role in enabling NGOs to measure change.

As mentioned above it is important to measure impact both in quantitative and qualitative indicators. On a request of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies the OHCHR has been asked to prepare a background paper on the use of indicators to monitor compliance with human rights instruments. Although their indicators are set with the purpose of measuring state compliance and improvement they can be useful also in a NGO context.

The OHCHR notes some aspects that have to be addressed when outlining a framework for human rights indicators: indicators need to be anchored in the normative content of a right; indicators should reflect cross-cutting norms and principles like non-discrimination and equality, indivisibility, accountability, participation and empowerment; the focus of assessment must be on the efforts the duty-bearer makes in meeting his/her obligations meaning to include all rights; and reflect the obligations of the duty-bearer to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

To create indicators the legal meaning of the right must be translated into attributes to facilitate the process of selecting indicators and to operationalise the human right. The indicators can then be divided into: structural indicators that show the intent of the state to comply with the law through for instance ratification of treaties and domestic law; process indicators that are policy measures taken by the state to realise the right; and outcome indicators that measure the status of the realisation of the right.

The OHCHR paper discusses the importance of cross-cutting principle measurement and does include indicators to measure some of the main principles of a RBA that could be adapted by NGOs. For instance the example on the right to food does address issues of distribution and

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72 OHCHR (2006), pp. 5-6.
discrimination, and empowerment through civil society, and institutions for people to hold
government accountable although it lacks indicators for rights to participation.\textsuperscript{74} The paper
stress the importance of indicators to measure those principles and gives examples on how
this can be done, for example by measuring to what extent vulnerable and marginalised
groups in a country have participated in identifying measures that are being taken by the duty-
bearer in meeting its obligations. Importantly the OHCHR paper also stresses that a common
approach to assessing human rights, both civil and political and the economic, social and
cultural rights, is feasible and desirable.\textsuperscript{75}

For the UK inter-agency group on rights based approaches Crawford is developing another
model: “The Lesson Learning Framework”. It is not designed to measure the realisation of
particular rights like the framework by the OHCHR but is rather structured after NGO
programme implementation and more directed towards project level. The model is structured
around five areas of enquiry: \textit{voice, participation and accountability} that deals with how
people are able to participate in the project and accountability on many levels; \textit{transformation
of power: relationships and linkages} that looks at how individuals, groups and organisations
work together but also on discrimination and how the project changes power relations;
\textit{institutional response} that looks at all types of organisations respond to issues raised by
people in their constituency, allocate resources, and address issues of inclusion; \textit{tangible
evidence} that cover data on concrete targets on increased assets and decreased vulnerability
like Poverty Reduction Strategies and MDGs; and \textit{sustained change} that deals with if changes
are institutionalised and if they have lead to greater political security.\textsuperscript{76} Like the OHCHR
model it is in a working state but do suggest a number of indicators.

\textsuperscript{74} OHCHR (2006), p. 19. See table 2 at next page.

\textsuperscript{75} OHCHR (2006), pp. 8-13.

\textsuperscript{76} Crawford, Sheena (2006), p. 9.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural indicators</th>
<th>Process indicators</th>
<th>Outcome indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• International human rights instruments, relevant to the right to adequate food, ratified by the State</td>
<td>• Number of complaints on the right to adequate food received, investigated and adjudicated by the national human rights institution/human rights ombudsperson/specialized institution and other administrative mechanisms (created to protect the interests of specific population groups) in the specified period</td>
<td>• Proportion of underweight children below age five*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Period of application and coverage of the right to adequate food in supreme law/Constitution/bill of rights</td>
<td>• Net official development assistance for food security/provided as proportion of public expenditure on food security/gross national income</td>
<td>• Proportion of adults with body mass index (BMI) &lt;18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Period of application and coverage of domestic laws relevant to the implementation of the right to adequate food</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of recorded deaths/incidence of food poisoning related to adulterated food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of registered civil society organizations involved in the promotion and protection of the right to adequate food</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Per capita availability of major food items of local consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Period of application and coverage of national policy statement on nutrition and nutrition adequacy norms</td>
<td>• The disposal rate/average time to adjudicate a case registered in a consumer court</td>
<td>• Proportion of female-headed households/other vulnerable groups with legal title to agriculture land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Period of application and coverage of national policy statement on food safety and consumer protection</td>
<td>• Arable irrigated land per person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of registered NGOs working in the area of food safety and consumer protection</td>
<td>• Proportion of farmers availing extension services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Period of application and coverage of national policy statement on agricultural production and food availability</td>
<td>• Share of public budget spent on strengthening domestic agricultural production (e.g. agri-extension, irrigation, credit, marketing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Period of application and coverage of national policy statement on drought, crop failure and disaster management</td>
<td>• Per capita availability of major food items of local consumption</td>
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3. How three INGOs work with impact assessment

This chapter deals with three major INGOs and how they deal with impact assessments in terms of human rights. Each organisation is first presented with a brief historic background to the organisation, their work and the process leading towards the adoption of their RBA. It also deals with what their RBAs include and what principles they claim to work by. Thereafter follows a presentation of their general approach to evaluation and impact assessment, how they deal with impact assessment in relation to the five RBA principles presented in the previous chapter, and human rights, and to what extent they are able to present their impact in human rights terms to the public. Finally follows a description of their work to improve and find methods to measure impact.

It is also important to note that this study does not deal with the impact or outcomes of these three organisations’ work in general, it looks at the extent to which they are able to measure and report impact in human rights terms and based on the principles in their RBA. It should not be interpreted as critique of their work in general although it might raise questions about their ambitious work towards accountability.

3.1 Oxfam

3.1.1 Short background on Oxfam and their RBA

Oxfam (the name comes from Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) was founded in 1942 as a relief organisation by citizens campaigning for letting grain ships pass the allied blockade of Greece. It has worked both to provide direct support for the poor and for the poor to become self-sufficient, but also researched how public policies can better support development. Today it is working over a vast range of issues including relief delivery, campaigns against poverty and powerlessness, developing advice and strategies to end poverty, promotes human rights and works with fair trade. It has been named the world’s most influential international development organisation. Oxfam are one of the signatories of the INGO accountability

78 Or even one of the most influential institutions in the world. Aaronson, Susan Ariel and Zimmerman, Jamie M. (2006), p. 999.
charter where the signatories make commitments and define their obligations on matters of excellence, transparency and accountability towards their stakeholders.79

As a response to the stagnation in the progress of development for poor countries Oxfam begun to rethink their approach in the 80s. Important for this process was the economist Amartya Sen who is honorary President of Oxfam. With his idea of freedom and human rights as the driving force behind development as a foundation, Oxfam decided to address the structural causes of poverty and injustice. Especially important to make it possible for people to exercise their rights, they argue, is that there are opportunities for them to govern their own lives and that they are empowered to do so.80

Oxfam developed a strategy based on what they call a rights-based approach to development. They mean economic and social rights have to be seen in a wider context of human rights and have organised the rights of the UDHR into five basic categories of rights: the right to a sustainable livelihood; the right to basic social services; the right to life and security; the right to be heard and the right to equity.81 They also recognised that they had to change the way their organisation operated and not only help poor people but also lobby for example at the UN and WTO. Finally they realised they had to work in co-operation with others and they decided to underline the message that poor people are actors in their own right and not victims or beneficiaries.82

Recently Aaronson and Zimmerman, researchers in globalisation studies, argue that there has been a shift in the arguments of Oxfam to focus more on power relations and fairness of the trade regime rather than human rights. However the staff they interviewed at Oxfam did not agree on this. Instead they claim rights are violated by un-fair trade rules and that Oxfam’s focus on those issues to ensure peoples rights to basic services. But the staff agreed on the problems with communicating how poverty, development, human rights and trade are linked. Aaronson and Zimmerman claim Oxfam has missed an opportunity to frame trade questions

as human rights issues. They question why Oxfam did not use its systematic approach to try to answer questions about linkages between poverty, development, trade, and human rights.\textsuperscript{83}

3.1.2 Oxfam and impact assessment

General approach

Oxfam values learning and method development very high and has an ongoing process where they try to assess the effectiveness and influence of its approach.\textsuperscript{84} Their goals for this process are to: check progress against objectives and unexpected results; learn from experience and adapt projects to optimise their impact; provide information and learning to stakeholders and be accountable for their actions and the resources they manage. To achieve those goals they work with six inter-linked processes to be able to make comparisons and create a more robust performance and impact assessment. These are: annual impact reporting where the field staff reports on the impact of a selection of projects; facilitated reviews with support from outside of the organisation; programme audits including peer review within the organisation; strategic evaluations carried out at a central level in issues like gender or other central policies; long-term research that look at societal and political changes in relation to Oxfam’s work; and finally undertakes an annual stakeholder survey.\textsuperscript{85}

In 2006 they produced a Global Programme Learning Report where they analyse their work and evaluate impact. It is based on a sample of sixty-one (!) evaluations and other assessment documents from the large number of documents that were produced the previous three years and was carried out by an independent consultant.\textsuperscript{86} The report is a part of a current process where Oxfam tries to improve its monitoring and impact assessment processes and explores improved ways of assessing programme impact.\textsuperscript{87}

\textit{How does Oxfam measure impact in relation to RBA and human rights impact?}

The basic questions Oxfam tries to answer with their evaluations are:

1. What significant changes have occurred in the lives of poor women, men and children?

\textsuperscript{83} Aaronson, Susan Ariel and Zimmerman, Jamie M. (2006), pp. 1016-1030.
\textsuperscript{84} Aaronson, Susan Ariel and Zimmerman, Jamie M. (2006), p. 1022.
\textsuperscript{87} Oxfam (2006a), p. 8.
2. How far has greater equity been achieved between women and men and between other groups?
3. What changes in policies, practices, ideas, and beliefs have happened?
4. Have those we hope will benefit and those who support us been appropriately involved at all stages and empowered through the process?
5. Are the changes which have been achieved likely to be sustained?
6. How cost-effective has the intervention been?
7. To what degree have we learned from this experience and shared the learning? 

A study of Oxfam’s annual report for 2005-2006 shows that, although the organisation aims at answering the questions above, little in the report discusses impact of programmes more than at project level and little is also expressed in rights language. It is mirrored in the Global Programme Learning report that found that programmes are not often based on analysis using a human rights framework and that it would improve the organisations work to use international human rights law more.

At the same time the annual report is arranged around their five groups of rights and even if they do not discuss rights specifically on many places the fact that they do so shows they are able to link rights together to some extent. It should be noted that the rights focus is strongest in the fields equity and participation rather than sustainable livelihood, which points to that there still is a division between the traditional fields Oxfam has worked with and the new fields introduced by the RBA. Judging by the reports it seems Oxfam has gone quite far in expressing their work in rights terms, but that does not include legal perspective.

Oxfam in their report gives examples of how their work at project level empower people and communities, although there is no direct references to human rights more than in the title “the right to be heard”. They also deal with how their work empowers people in their Global Programme Learning Report given that it is one of their core principles. However it doesn’t deal with the impact of the organisation’s empowerment strategies or how those are dealt with in the evaluations it is studying. Oxfam include empowerment in the process as one of the

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88 Oxfam *How we monitor and evaluate our work.*
89 Oxfam (2006a), pp. 2-4.
questions that its evaluations aim at answering and puts it at the very foundation, but still it is not showing in the documents studied here.

In relation to right to participation Oxfam goes quite far in its reports, both in relation to its specific participation work and some other projects. In its presentation of the evaluation work Oxfam include people’s right to be heard in the questions at the foundation.\(^\text{92}\) Finally Oxfam reports much on the right to equity that deals with non-discrimination, at least in relation to gender discrimination and empowerment of women, and to some extent indigenous groups, but does not express how its work take into account other groups or make sure they are included.\(^\text{93}\) Gender discrimination, but also other groups, is included in the questions it is focusing on in their evaluation.\(^\text{94}\)

In relation to the impact of a RBA in its agricultural work the organisation writes: “Although the increased impact of this way of working is rarely immediately visible, we believe it will lead to greater sustainability of the changes we are helping to bring about.”\(^\text{95}\) The report presents the involvement in several campaigns like for fair trade or political action on climate change but do not discuss these in terms of the impact they make rather the outcomes. Some examples do exist on where impact is referred to more directly on education and more extensively on the right to be heard and the right to equity.\(^\text{96}\)

The Global Programme Learning Report summarise its findings in relation to impact assessment:

“The difficulty of assessing Oxfam’s contribution to change, for instance through influencing ideas and beliefs, was recognised, as was the complexity of analysis because Oxfam works with and through others. However, the documents reviewed also identified a frequent lack of basic, systematic data collection, and adequate monitoring systems. There were weaknesses in initial analysis, baseline measures, and conceptual frameworks in plans, which would have provided the basis for monitoring. Indicators were sometimes too numerous or difficult to

\(^{92}\) Oxfam *How we monitor and evaluate our work.*
\(^{93}\) Oxfam (2006a).
\(^{94}\) Oxfam *How we monitor and evaluate our work.*
measure, and seldom considered changes in power relations, including gender relations. Poor documentation sometimes hampered continuity of monitoring when staff changed, and reporting was frequently found to be descriptive rather than analytical.  

*How are they working towards improving their impact measurement methods?*

Oxfam is as mentioned above undertaking a process to improve the quality of their reporting and monitoring. They also work together with other organisations and institutions to improve methods for impact assessment like in the UK Inter-Agency Group on Rights Based Approaches.

### 3.2 CARE

#### 3.2.1 Short background on CARE and their RBA

CARE (today it stands for Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc) was founded in 1946 as American organisations joined together to provide food aid to Europe. In the following decades CARE continued to send US surplus food to feed people in the developing world. The work also expanded to include other areas like health care, farming projects and other long-term projects to combat poverty. CARE today works with tackling the underlying causes of poverty so that people can become self-sufficient. They work with emergency aid and help people re-build their lives afterwards. They have not signed the INGO accountability charter.

As a step towards addressing the underlying causes of poverty CARE in the last ten years have started to work more with a RBA. They launched their Human Rights Initiative in 1999 and has since then been working on raising awareness and promoting a shared understanding of what a RBA means to CARE’s work, building staff capacity to work with a RBA in all stages of their programmes, to ensure that their principles, policies and systems facilitate RBA programming and forming alliances with other organisations to enhance mutual learning.

When they adopted their new approach they also started to look at the underlying causes of

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100 INGO Accountability Charter.
poverty and recognised that these were found in many spheres including political factors like poor governance, corruption and political will, economic factors like globalisation and inequitable resource distribution, social factors like norms and discrimination, and environmental factors like natural disasters and availability of natural resources. Based on this analysis CARE has developed six programme principles that should guide its programme: to promote empowerment; to work in partnership with others; to ensure accountability and promote responsibility; to oppose discrimination; to oppose violence and to seek sustainable results.\textsuperscript{102}

Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall note that there are tensions within CARE as officials try to fuse the RBA with income-related perspectives on livelihood. Some staff is comfortable using the new terminology while others refuse and prefer to talk about “self-determination”, “self-provisioning” or “household self-development”. Still Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall draws the conclusion that while CARE still encounter challenges on many levels in relation to existing programme approaches many has used the introduction of the RBA policy as an opportunity to reflect on their work and their role as actors in the development field.\textsuperscript{103}

3.2.2 CARE and impact assessment

*General approach*

The goals for CARE with their evaluation are: strategic and systematic collection, documentation and dissemination of lessons learned and impacts of CARE projects and programmes; opportunities for stakeholders to present their perceptions and assessments of CARE’s activities; opportunities for CARE staff to reflect upon and share experience and learning; transparent sharing of evaluations with all stakeholders in forms and formats amenable to their needs; and examination of progress/set-backs in achieving strategic priorities to achieve better organisational results.\textsuperscript{104}

CARE admits that their evaluations in the past mostly have been conducted only to meet donor requirements, that there has been too much variation in the methodologies and that the


\textsuperscript{103} Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Cornwall, Andrea (2004), p. 42.

reports have not been adequately utilised. They aim for a corporate evaluation policy and strategy where they want to promote a more systematic culture of accountability and reflective practice. Like Oxfam they try to use a multi-layered approach that include evaluation at several levels, including projects, programmes, initiatives, strategic plans, multi-agency evaluations, and metaevaluations.105

Generally according to its programme standards it should among other things: develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan and system that ensures the collection of baseline, monitoring, and final evaluation data; establish a baseline for measuring change in indicators of impact and effect, by conducting a study or survey prior to implementation of project activities; and use indicators that are relevant, measurable, verifiable and reliable. Reference is made to human rights indicators in this document twice but only in connection to needs and with no description of how to work with this more extensively.106

How does CARE measure impact in relation to RBA and human rights impact?
CARE measures impact in relation to their six programming principles mentioned above.107 To comply with the principle which calls for accountability and responsibility CARE in their evaluation policy underline the importance of evaluation and in this include: relevant baseline studies and formative (mid-term) evaluations that help improve the quality of on-going projects and programmes, and, where possible, ex-post evaluations to assess sustainable impact in accordance to their sixth principle. The policy also sets a minimum standard that a final (internal or external) assessment and documentation of achievement and lessons learned for future programming must be made. It requires evaluations to relate the project or programme to CARE’s vision, mission and when relevant the MDGs. Finally the policy stresses the need to include a significant participation and high level of influence of project/programme participants as well as relevant parties external to CARE in the evaluation. It is also underlines in relation to their first programming principle that the voices and views of minority, disenfranchised and other groups with perhaps contrary opinions should also be heard and considered as part of the evaluation processes.108

105 CARE International (2007), pp. 4-5.
The annual report of CARE mentions rights five times.\(^{109}\) They appear to report almost solemnly on development aspects of its work and do not discuss its results in human rights terms. Its evaluation policy does mention the importance of analysing unfulfilled rights in the principles of evaluation but gives no further guidance.\(^{110}\)

The report lists a large number of projects and programmes and, even though the focus is on the content of the programmes rather than their impact, they do exemplify with some impacts on gender but not defined in human rights terms. In relation to East-Africa CARE refers to an on-going strategic impact inquiry where they have measured change of their project to address discrimination and empower women, where they can present impacts in for example number of girls enrolled in schools in areas where they have worked. They can also show impact on food security and money savings.\(^{111}\) CARE also gives examples through their work in various regions on how they have empowered people, and also some examples of impact, but without references to human rights.\(^{112}\)

I have found no references in the evaluation policy of CARE on how the evaluations should relate to the empowerment of people, or how to make sure that people are empowered in relation to the NGOs or to take part in their evaluations. CARE emphasises the participation aspect in its evaluation policy. However they do not expressively define it as a right of stakeholders to participate, although they express the need to ensure voices of discriminated groups and most affected groups are heard.\(^{113}\) CARE deals extensively with gender discrimination and also includes how they work with other marginalised groups in their report, but not with reference to impact. They specifically mentions the importance of that marginalised groups are included in the evaluation process.

CARE is good at reporting on impact but fails to connect it to human rights. It also seems more natural for them to relate human rights to the fields of equality and participation, but they cannot report on how those perspectives are integrated to other programmes. Their


\(^{111}\) CARE USA (2006), p. 6. There is no room within this paper to discuss the quality of indicators any further, see instead Andersen, Erik André and Sano, Hans-Otto (2006), *Human rights indicators at programme and project level – Guidelines for defining indicators, monitoring and evaluation*, Copenhagen: The Danish Institute for Human Rights.

\(^{112}\) CARE USA (2006), p. 10.

evaluation policy aims at solving some of these issues and is strong when it comes to participation, although it does not express it as a right and keeps the power within CARE, and making sure everybody has the right to participate. At the same time it is hard to see the difference from a traditional development approach in their reports.

How are they working towards improving their impact measurement methods?
Like Oxfam, CARE is working actively on improving the evaluation methods and to find a way to measure impact. They take part in national and international networks like the UK Inter-Agency Group on Rights Based Approaches.

3.3 Amnesty
3.3.1 Short background on Amnesty and their RBA
Amnesty International was founded in 1961 as a permanent international movement in defence of freedom of opinion and religion and the same year they started their well known work with adopting prisoners of conscience. In the following years they also launched campaigns on the abolition of capital punishment and torture. A first step towards working more widely with human rights was taken in 1990 when Amnesty changed their mandate to promoting all the rights in the UDHR. Since then they have among other things carried out large campaigns about women’s rights and refugee rights and worked on the issues of business and human rights.¹¹⁴ They have like Oxfam signed the INGO Accountability Charter.¹¹⁵

In the beginning Amnesty was reluctant to join the struggle for economic, social and cultural rights fearing that supporters and donors might conceive that as a dilution of their core mission and vision and that there was much work to be done in the political field. Although they see it as an understandable strategic choice, Offenheiser, President Oxfam America, and Holcombe, visiting professor in development studies and former programme director at Oxfam, note that it perpetuated the Cold War dichotomy between civil and political and social and economic rights in the public consciousness. They claim that Amnesty’s and other human rights NGOs’ reluctance also surprised Oxfam and contributed to their decision to move into

¹¹⁵ See more under Oxfam 3.1.1 above, INGO Accountability Charter.
In 1999 Amnesty raised the issues of how to develop its work on the impact of economic relations on human rights and to work to empower human rights defenders. But it was not until 2001/2002 that Amnesty started to use the language of rights-based approaches to development. In response to globalisation and its consequences Amnesty claimed human rights activists must promote not just legal justice but also social justice. Now Amnesty should not only work civil and political rights but also mobilize to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights are respected. They claim because of the interconnected nature of all human rights violations, engaging with economic, social and cultural rights has enabled them to address complex human rights problems in a more holistic and comprehensive manner. In 2008 Amnesty will launch a “Global Campaign for Human Dignity” that will focus on poverty and human rights. The action plan incorporates (although not all explicitly mentioned) the principles of RBAs presented in chapter 2.

Although Amnesty has claimed to support a rights-based approach it does not have a common publicly presented approach the way Oxfam and CARE have. Amnesty’s section in Ireland works with promoting RBAs towards other organisations and has adopted the definition used by the OHCHR. At the same time another example is the use by the US section where the concept is used to describe how to deal with HIV/AIDS but lacks the central concepts of accountability and political empowerment.

123 Amnesty International, Irish section, What are Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA)?.
3.3.2 Amnesty and impact assessment

*General approach*

I have not found any material on this.

*How does Amnesty measure impact in relation to RBA and human rights impact?*

No information is available on Amnesty’s webpage on how they deal with impact and evaluation. Searching on the words impact, evaluation and assessment gives no hits that deal with Amnesty’s internal evaluation. If nothing else it gives an indication that Amnesty is not very transparent.

Amnesty is as mentioned above just starting its work on poverty issues and economic, social and cultural rights. In their report 2007 they therefore partly report on plans rather than direct work on those issues although they list several activities. They do not report much on impact on those issues. Still the report differs from Oxfam and CARE in that it specifically reports on the issues with a clear human rights focus linking development to human rights. They also try to show impact of their work and their campaigns, for example they report results from a global coalition campaign where they got the UN to start working on an arms control treaty. In their campaign on violence against women they report abuse and how they work with highlighting the violence, and a few examples of results, but not impact of their campaign. Nowhere in the report they show how they make sure they empower people or give people the right to participate. They work with issues of gender and discrimination as mentioned above, although they do not discuss how they prioritise most affected groups.\(^{125}\)

In their plans for their global campaign they point out the lack of possibilities of legal enforcement of economic, social and cultural rights, that development programmes do not promote universal access to rights, and that people are often voiceless in the development process. They also point out that impacts of development programmes are seldom measured. In their objectives they among other things aim at holding governments and other actors accountable, and make sure they measure their human rights impact. Overall the campaign aims at influencing governments and international institutions. They define their role in relation to other actors and claim they will work in partnership with others but contribute with

a legal perspective. Finally they claim they will involve people affected by the campaign in their evaluations.126

How are they working towards improving their impact measurement methods?

Amnesty also participates in various networks and conferences about impact assessment like in the UK Inter-Agency Group on Rights Based Approaches and some conferences. They also use the INGO Accountability Charter and the Global Reporting Initiative as tools to improve their reporting.127

4. Analysis

This chapter will analyse the approach of the three INGOs and the models and frameworks being developed to measure impact in order to evaluate their compliance with the RBA principles they have adopted. The first part will discuss how their reporting and impact assessment methods comply with the five principles of Linking development work with human rights, Accountability, Empowerment, Participation and Non-discrimination and attention to most affected groups. This will be done firstly on the basis if they report about their work with issues relating to the RBA principles at all. Secondly, if they report impact of their work in those fields (in general) and thirdly, can they express that impact in human rights terms. Then the way these principles are included in their evaluation policies or equivalent documents will be analysed. This way of analysing the material tries to capture the function of a RBA as an approach that is at the same time methodology, a process and a goal, demanding to be both a goal and result, but also a methodology in the evaluation and impact assessment. One such example is the right to participation at all stages. The second part will try to answer the two first research questions asked in this study and bring together the threads from the theoretical answers proposed with the empirical findings in this study. The third part will discuss what a framework that can help NGOs create a common set of indicators and methods to evaluate impact could look like to incorporate the normative principles of RBAs.

4.1 Incorporating RBA principles in evaluation and impact assessment

4.1.1 Linking development work with human rights

The organisations differ in how far they have come in being able to report on this aspect. They report on their RBA work but CARE almost does not report on rights issues or changes in rights at all, while Amnesty are very good at using rights language but does not deals with poverty in a development perspective or holistic way. The organisation that seem to have started to report in a somewhat integrated manner is Oxfam while it still could be argued that even they doesn’t succeed in linking human rights and development through their language.

In their evaluation plans they do not include a holistic approach or describe how human rights should be linked to development. Oxfam and CARE report on their RBAs but not on changes
in terms of human rights and almost no connections to legal aspects of rights. They also do not include rights aspects or indicators connected to specific rights in their evaluation policies or stated evaluation strategies, at least not as mandatory aspects, although such indicators could be included at a programme or project level.

It seems much need to be done in linking development with human rights for all organisations. The organisations report on their RBA but no organisation can show any strategy on measuring change in human rights terms or based on human rights indicators. They claim that they aim at adopting human rights principles but it has to be asked how sincere they are. In CARE’s case it could be asked if there are really any changes within the organisation, or if human rights are just a new label put on old ways of operating. What does it really mean to talk about a rights based approach, could anything go in that concept? Is it really human rights in the traditional way?

Oxfam has a clear ideology behind their work seem to have the ambition to include rights within their work although they have transformed the UDHR rights into different categories. Even in Oxfam’s case it has to be discussed why they are not looking more into ways of holding governments legally accountable at a national level for their acts in relation to economic, social and cultural rights. They focus on global campaigns and empowering people, but do they really include the legal responsibilities of governments?

Amnesty faces problems from the other direction. They are in a phase were their traditional position of focusing narrowly on civil and political rights are being put to question from both the outside and the inside. At the same time I have not found any process indicating that they are really starting to address issues like participation and empowerment towards their own organisation. Being a global organisation of activists they will have to ask themselves what their role can be in relation to these issues and what they mean by a RBA. Their ambition to launch a global campaign putting holding other actors accountable could be an answer to that.

4.1.2 Accountability
Accountability seems to be a very important concept for all three organisations and it is also where impact assessments become so crucial. The INGO accountability charter is one interesting aspect of this, not the least since it seems the two signatories in this study have
taken different approaches where Amnesty express that it use the document in its evaluations while Oxfam seem to rely on its already extensive evaluation policies. CARE also takes accountability as the foundation of their evaluations.

Interestingly as seen in the description of the organisations’ reporting above, very little is presented as impacts, rather outcomes or in some cases impact of single projects. Amnesty is successful when they can report on individual cases, or a single country that has abolished capital punishment, but does not extensively do so on campaigns and projects. One interesting impact to show for Amnesty would be that their work with prisoners of conscience actually improves the situation of political and civil rights at a country level rather than just individual cases. Both CARE and Oxfam do make references to impact at community level, but not country or long-term, especially in the fields of equity/gender and participation.

It can be discussed why it seems more natural for organisations to report on impact on those issues than on more traditional development themes like livelihoods, especially since they have been working with impact for a much longer time on those issues. One explanation can be that it is easier to include a new concept on a new field of activities and their traditional development work. Their policies stress the importance of focusing on impact and seem to be based on an effort by the organisations to use evaluations to provide accountability.

The value of presenting impact at a macro level can of course be discussed; Oxfam for instance gives several examples on how its programmes have had positive impact on community level. The problem still is however that the value of RBAs has to be proved and questions about the long-term impact of NGOs in a society have to be discussed. Finally it has to be discussed why these Anglo-Saxon organisations focus so much on accountability, is it really for their partners and beneficiaries in the south or just a new way of convincing donors in the north?

4.1.3 Empowerment
Amnesty does not report on or discuss empowerment aspects although it in relation to its planned work on poverty underlines its importance. CARE does report on empowerment in its projects, and in some cases on impact, and having empowerment as one of its main principles it is at the centre of its evaluation policy. Still they do not discuss how the evaluations should
relate to the empowerment of people, or how to make sure that people are empowered in relation to the NGOs or to take part in their evaluations. There is also no reference to how it should evaluate to what extent people are empowered through the organisations work.

Oxfam also puts empowerment in one of the basic questions of its evaluations. It might not be surprising when one of its basic rights is the right to be heard, but they also fail to analyse the right and its evaluation any further, although it is discussed at length in its Global Programme Learning Report.

It is not easy to draw any conclusions from the material in this paper on to what extent the organisations really include an empowerment perspective in their reporting and evaluations. Oxfam and CARE seem to have gone further in this respect but it is clearly an ambition among all the organisations.

4.1.4 Participation
It seems that in respect to participation Oxfam and CARE have gone quite far in relation to both evaluation policies and in their reporting. This might not be surprising as participation is not a new idea for development NGOs. It might also indicate that it has been easier to incorporate a RBA perspective into those principles that were already in use within the organisations.

The right to participation is according the theory one of the challenges for organisations if they are sincere about their RBAs. Still no organisation can yet report on participation on any other aspects than project level. How do they evaluate participation not only in projects aiming at participation but other projects? And even more important, how do they transform power relations within their own organisations?

4.1.5 Non-discrimination and attention to most affected groups.
All three organisations deal extensively with issues of discrimination on the grounds of gender in their reports. They are able to show impact in some cases and adress the issues in the evaluation documents studied here. Still focus seems to be mostly on issues of gender and discrimination on other grounds like age, ethnicity or religion is not discussed extensively. They also do not deal much with how to ensure most marginalised groups are included.
Still the fact that they can report on one area of discrimination could be seen as an indicator that they have methods of measuring impact on discrimination more generally or that such methods could be developed. It seems to be a field where the organisations have come quite far.

4.2 How does leading NGOs evaluate human rights impact and why is it so difficult?

Looking at how the five principles are internalised in the organisations shows the organisations are trying to adhere to the principles or in Amnesty’s case have a process aiming at it. However there seems to be two almost empty spots in reporting and evaluations: linking human rights to development and showing impact in relation to human rights.

The fact that human rights and development still seem to be divided, where Amnesty aims at a legal approach leaving out other aspects while Oxfam and CARE miss the legal aspect in their development work, shows that RBAs still have much to prove in merging those fields. It is also a difference between using human rights as a method when it is beneficial for a certain project than linking project and programme goals and aims to human rights. And it is crucial to have the goals defined in human rights terms when it comes to being able to value impact in human rights terms.\(^{128}\)

The other principles of empowerment, participation and non-discrimination appear easier to adopt, or at least include in reports, even though it might be a challenge for Amnesty coming from a traditional rights perspective that might not have paid as much attention to those issues in an internal process change. And of course much more work can be done by all organisations.

So why is it difficult to measure impact? It appears there are many answers to that question. First one has to ask if the change towards a RBA is taking place at any higher level than project/programme. There is clearly a connection to RBA principles in the activities the organisations present in their reports and there is a change in the new principles or agenda the organisations has adopted since the mid 90s. At the same time this study has showed there seems to be a division when it comes to how organisations view rights. The development organisations try to empower rights-holders to claim their rights from duty-bearers. But they

speak of rights in a non-legalistic and quite general way, not connecting their work to actual human rights treaties. This can be rooted in their history as organisations but also put the whole concept of human rights in the development field into question. In their work human rights become principles and goals rather than international legal duties of states and other actors.

At the same time Amnesty, as a human rights NGO, seem to focus only on the duty-bearers and miss the empowerment aspect working from a rights-holder perspective. The point of linking rights to development and issues like rights to participation can be lost. Because of the lack of material in this study of their ways of measuring impact can not be analysed any further.

Secondly, as Raine has pointed out there is a long list of other challenges. Donors’ demands are one challenge that is important for NGOs not the least to avoid having to make double reports, one for internal use and one for donors. They need to create a culture that values evaluations and measurement and see it as an important way to contribute to change, although it is important that such a culture does not become exclusive or too formalistic. Managing scarce resources might make it almost impossible for small organisations like the DIHR to measure change because of the costs of doing research. For large organisations like the INGOs in this study it might be possible to make comprehensive impact studies in some cases, but even they might lack the resources to do research everywhere. Importantly also the collaborative nature of advocacy need to be dealt with, as seen for instance in Amnestys report when they are one of many actors in a campaign. Or the large INGOs can have contributed to change through a local partner that has had a success in advocacy and might be the ones that should take credit. Finally, how could the organisations really attribute a change to their own acts in a long term perspective where of course a large number of factors have played a role?

In the last section of this analysis I will try to bring these threads together to proposing a framework for how change can be measured in a more integrated manner and where NGOs might not have to be so afraid of these obstacles.

4.3 A common impact assessment framework

As the empirical study in this paper has showed the current process where organisations has adopted a RBA and tries to measure its impact is very complex and meet many obstacles. It has also showed that different organisations depending on their background has different strengths when it comes to addressing, and measuring changes in the relationship between the duty-bearer and the rights-holder. The organisations with their background in the development field focus on empowering rights-holders while the human rights NGO studied instead focus on the obligations of the state.

This rise the question if human rights impact assessment is really a problem that the organisations should tackle alone or whether they could co-operate more than in just sharing experiences. Since they all seem to agree on the over all goal of realising all human rights they should also be able to map problems together the way Raine has proposed. But why stop there?

Few if any of the tools being developed by the NGOs today aim at country level. And it might be true as discussed in this paper that it is not possible for a single NGO to show impact there or to measure impact in a long-term perspective. But for a community of NGOs and other actors it would be possible to measure change (if it exists) at country level.

The human rights indicators paper developed by the OHCHR opens up an opportunity, in that it is the first tools that really aim at measuring change at a country level. What is especially important is the ambition in that paper to deal not only with the single rights but also with the overarching human rights principles. All the RBA principles could be included in measuring change. By linking their projects and programmes to the realisation of specific rights and indicators of change in those rights NGOs could perhaps also overcome the obstacle of reporting back to their donors in a clear and understandably manner.

In a common approach INGOs would have to be able to see their own role in relation to other NGOs when measuring impact, not the least to partners. If goals are set together, NGOs will also have to report together. They have to link their work back to specific rights, at the same time as their activities has to be evaluated in relation to other actors. They will have to justify themselves by the contribution they make to partners abilities to make impact rather than
trying to claim responsibilities for all change themselves. That work is strongly linked to the process goals about empowerment and a strong civil society proposed by the OHCHR. As showed above this could be a natural step for NGOs that focus on strengthening the right-holders in their ability to claim their rights, like Oxfam and CARE.

Also traditional human rights NGOs, like Amnesty, could play an important role through their strengths in human rights monitoring and campaigning. They are strong in measuring the human rights compliance of states when it comes to civil and political rights and could contribute with that experience to the field of economic, social and cultural rights. In a common campaign like the one on an arms control treaty, reporting together should become more natural.

One important reason for working this way is the issue of accountability. For organisations to be legitimate in the communities in which they work they have to be able to explain their role in relation to others, especially in relation to local partner NGOs. If the change is measured in accordance to a common framework it could empower local communities and NGOs to question the way the INGOs work. The right to participate in forming both how a country should achieve change and how that process should be evaluated have to be the foundation.

Together organisations have much more resources than a single NGO can have to evaluate why change has or has not happened in a specific country. Another advantage would be that the system would be directly linked to the UN system and the treaty monitoring bodies. This could give NGOs possibilities to use those mechanisms far more by reporting rights violations based on their own work at a grass root level.

As showed by the OHCHR paper human rights indicators could also be linked to the MDGs. If the UN should choose to drive that process on it could bridge the gap Alston has seen between the development and human rights communities. It is as he underlines however important that the creation of accountability mechanisms and an appropriate legal framework is not forgotten.

Human rights as common goals for development could be a way to keep NGOs accountable – perhaps in combination with commitments like the INGO Accountability Charter. At the same
time it is important that partner organisations and communities participate in strategies to achieve the goals. People should be empowered to transform the power relations and the INGOs can play a role as facilitators or enablers that empower people to act. Otherwise there is a risk that commonly set goals and evaluations risk making people feel they don’t have ownership of the indicators or measurement.

And this is why a common set of indicators might bring with it the same risk as the label of RBA. If NGOs and other actors are not really sincere about empowering the rights-holders and transform the power relationships in the development communities, the new label of RBA, or a rigid and institutionalised system of indicators, might only reinforce the old power structures. If the transformation is not driven from below, and with the involvement of southern NGOs, it could even be used as a tool by northern NGOs to strengthen their position through their skills in measurement and research.

If NGOs and actors, like the World Bank can use such a system of indicators as they like, it might bring no change at all. It becomes a label where any action could be argued to improve the loosely defined human rights principles. Instead it has to be firmly rooted in the international law, and the NGOs that are aspiring to measure the change of their RBA work need to do some home work on the international legal system. This is also where increased co-operation and common impact assessment becomes important because of the various experiences development and human right’s NGO could bring to such an approach.

Still, as Raine pointed out, the promise of a transformed development community could be worth some work with indicators and measurement. It is not only desirable but a necessity. If the NGOs can not take the necessary steps to create an external tool to keep them accountable, they will be put to test to standards they can not live up to. And the question will be asked, what right do they have to be there at all?
5. Conclusions

5.1 A common impact assessment framework

This study has showed that RBAs have a complex history and that their emergence could be attributed to different factors. It is also a concept that is unclear and where actors change its definition to match their own needs. Although its focus is on changing power relations it is not clear if it succeeds and it might instead reinforce the existing structures. Even though the main principles of a RBA are agreed upon Amnesty as a NGO focusing on human rights emphasise duty-bearers’ responsibilities while Oxfam and CARE focus on empowerment and participation, strengthening right-holders. But there is a tendency where the organisations learn from each other and get into each other’s fields.

There is also an increasing pressure on the organisations to show impact in relation to human rights although they have serious obstacles to overcome to be able to do that. In their reports they to a large extent focus on activities and outputs of those activities rather than the impact they have had. One important aspect is the absence of tools and several attempts are being made, mainly by NGOs themselves, to create such impact assessment tools. Other attempts are made by the OHCHR that aims at creating indicators for measuring state compliance with human right treaties and the framework proposed by Raine that claims organisations must define goals together, design impact assessment frameworks at an organisational level and create networks.

This study has showed that the initiatives by the NGOs raise many questions. It argues that instead of solitary initiatives NGOs should co-operate in order to measure change at a country level or be able to prove sustainable change. It could be founded in international law through the indicators the OHCHR is developing to monitor state compliance to the human rights treaties. To create such a system it is important to empower people in the south to be able to use it as a tool not only to hold governments accountable but NGOs themselves. Organisations with different backgrounds, as human rights NGOs or development NGOs, could play different roles in this process.
At the same time this study has showed that the concept of a RBA has spread among actors in the development field and even institutions like the World Bank has adopted them while still claiming to be un-political. The risk is that the concept becomes a way to claim to adhere to human rights principles, while not defining them or changing the way the organisation operates. A framework for common impact assessment would risk the same fate, becoming a checklist for organisations to show their work contribute to human rights change without really linking it to more than principles. Still, if such a system could be created, it could also be the tool to create true accountability in the field. And that possibility should be enough for NGOs to stop looking narcissistically on their own organisations and instead start seeing impact assessment as a way to improve their workings and create a NGO community that is working together instead of competing.

5.2 Further research
This study has raised many questions. Generally the ideas proposed here need to be more examined and developed further on several levels.

More empirical research is needed on how NGOs are working on these issues, not the least on a country or programme level. But also on a strategic level more research can be done of why the organisations have chosen to adopt their RBA and what they really aim at with their impact assessment, in whose interest are they done?

At the more constructive level this paper has just sketched at a framework where organisations can work together to measure impact. Although the practical work will have to be done by the organisations themselves, more research can be done on the principles that should guide that work and link it to the human rights principles at the foundation of the RBA.

The tool that is being created by the OHCHR need to be further discussed and analysed. Even if it can really be useful to the human rights treaty bodies it will need to be in a form that makes sense to other actors. More research is also needed on the link between such a framework and goals and indicators at a project level. The whole issue of large scale impact assessment in social science will have to be analysed from a methodological perspective.
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