Title: Rejecting “rights-based” approaches?
New rights strategies for a new era

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INTRODUCTION (ABSTRACT)
Despite the sustained dominance of ‘rights-based approaches’ to development (in both theory and practice), firm rejections of such approaches are increasingly emerging. In particular, copious anti-poverty groups - campaigning on areas that focus primarily on economic and social justice - are deeply concerned by the grave limitations and precincts that such approaches give rise to. Instead new innovations in rights practice are emerging across various NGOs, with the aim of overcoming many of the issues previously experienced.

Drawing on empirical data from a current 10-year research project, I plan to provide a comparative and qualitative analysis of human rights campaign practice and approaches. I especially question why and how activists within anti-poverty NGOs are able to (and, moreover, feel the need to) make statements to the effect of “yes we [practice] rights, but we hate rights-based approaches”. The remainder of the paper is broken down into three main sections. The first introduces the context (in terms of the literature, the research project, and the overall argument). The second provides an overview of some of the key findings. The third proposes three new models of human rights practice. A short conclusion is then provided.
CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Trends & gaps in existing research

For the last two decades the dominant way in which the available literatures have accounted for the merge of human rights with development-orientated practice, has been through the materialization and advancement of rights-based approaches to development (hereafter, RBAs). Over this period a wide variety of actors from the global North and South have incorporated RBAs (including United Nations and multilateral agencies, major donors, international NGOs and local grassroots NGOs and social movements).\(^1\) Due to the prominence and influence of such actors, numerous studies have provided a wealth of research concerning RBAs.

During this time academic debates have shifted from what RBAs are (to which I will return to below), to the more recent focus on advancements in best practice and promotional aspects (inclusive of ‘added value’, ‘potentials’ and ‘successes’) as well as the perceived ‘pitfalls’ and ‘failures’\(^2\). Added to this, are important contributions that seek to address more challenging aspects – for instance, concerning the impact on, and the extent of, ‘real’ organisational change following the formal incorporation of RBAs.\(^3\) There is no doubt that such studies are critical to this wider field of study, and that their contributions lead to a rich RBA analysis.

An issue remains however – and this is where my argument develops - that further research is needed concerning human rights and development-orientated models that sit firmly outside of RBAs. This issue stems from the continuous identification that there is no one-size-fits-all RBA. This understanding has emerged from many findings that state something to the effect of ‘there is no single, coherent rights-based approach, but a range of tentative and highly varied commitments

\(^1\) Actors have included the UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank, the UK’s departments for International Development and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Oxfam, Save the Children, ActionAid and CARE (See Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2004; Gready and Ensor 2005; Hickey and Mitlin 2009; Kindornay, Ron and Carpenter 2012).


\(^3\) For example, Vandenhole & Gready provide important insight into the ‘drivers’, ‘obstacles’ and ‘spoilers’ to organisational change.
among development agencies’. The latter have lead to the promotion of the *plurality* of RBAs, and accordingly the ongoing examination of differing RBAs (both across and within actors). The consequent staging of the plurality of RBAs has lead to the prevailing message; that RBAs cover most (or, at worst, all) human rights approaches across mainstream development practice. As I have previously argued, this rather mistakenly presents RBAs as a ‘broad umbrella concept’, which has been ultimately built on a ‘one-approach-fits-all message’.

**Image 1:** Visual representation of the ‘broad umbrella of RBAs’ spanning the spectrum

![Image 1](image1.png)

Indeed, to illustrate further the extent to which research has become fixated on this concept, one only needs to turn to a key contribution Kindornay et al. in Human Rights Quarterly, which speaks of a ‘rights-based development sector’ or ‘rights-based cascade’. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, there is a growing trend where formal RBAs are being firmly rejected by development-orientated NGOs, whilst a practice of rights is still being clearly advanced (as illustrated by image 2).

**Image 2:** Visual representation of RBAs and emerging approaches located across the spectrum

![Image 2](image2.png)

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4 Nelson and Dorsey 2008: 93.
5 See Miller 2010: 918.
7 Ibid. Emphasis my own
In order to provide a basis for the analysis in this contribution, it is important to turn briefly to the definition of RBAs to development. As inferred above, there is no single definition of RBAs, however key dimensions have been identified. At the most basic level, RBAs are grounded in human rights, and so typically start from or draw upon legal human rights standards (as codified in international and regional treaties, national law, or through the work of human rights bodies and courts). Such a rights-based starting point impacts the way in which development work is carried out, and what the overall goal should be, or - as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) identifies - the process and the outcome. That is, a normative grounding in human rights commonly explicates how development-orientated work should be done (process), whilst the realisation of a full range of rights is identified as fundamental to achieving the end goals of development (outcomes). Further to this *basing* (of process and outcomes) on human rights concepts and standards, key RBA dimensions include the prioritization of ‘non-discrimination’, ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’, and for some, ‘good governance’.

At this point it is also imperative to acknowledge that whilst most scholarly research has been focused on the various RBA theories, policies and practices, a few have investigated areas similar to this present contribution. The similarity lies in the focus of human rights approaches outside of RBAs, but from the viewpoint of bilateral and multilateral donor and aid agencies (rather than NGOs, as in the case here). Uvin (2004) is notable for this – through his ‘rhetorical incorporation’,

8 Hamm and Vandenhole & Gready, 2014: 293-294. Also, a number of scholars identify a concern as to whether development actors are discussing (and implementing) “rights-based” or “human rights-based” approaches, or whether they are one and the same thing. This distinction proves problematic when some development actors are inconsistent in their usage of the terms, whilst others see a distinct difference between the two. For some, emphasis of the ‘human’ suggests an eminence of the legal implications and normative quality of human rights as defined within international law (as demonstrated in Hamm’s analysis), whilst ‘rights-based approaches’ can imply a certain distance from the international human rights system, with an increased association with citizen rights. For others, the label ‘rights-based approaches’ represents shorthand for ‘human rights-based approaches’ (as in this discussion). Accordingly Piron’s additional RBA distinction provides a further useful point of reference, which in part addresses the issue of the ‘human rights/rights-based’ divide. In essence, she argues that RBAs (used as the ‘shorthand’ for both approaches) can be more precisely identified by either an ‘empowerment’ or a ‘legalistic’ emphasis. She draws the basis of this from Alston’s suggestion of the two strengths of the human rights discourse: (1) ‘as an inspirational, mobilising force in support of a particular agenda’, and (2) ‘facilitat[ing] access to a range of legal norms and enforcement mechanisms’. She concludes that such distinctions do not imply oppositional approaches, but rather that most RBAs will employ both dimensions, however with an emphasis on one.

9 OHCHR See also Vandenhole & Gready, 2014: 293

10 Hamm, B. (2001). "A Human Rights Approach to Development." Human Rights Quarterly 23: 1005 - 1031. add also some further definitions – maybe Mitlin and Hickley’s (2009) survey of RBA research has also led to the identification of RBA ‘packages’. From this perspective, ‘packages’ (dependant on RBA ‘interpretations’) are likely to be inclusive of the following rights dimensions: (Pressure for) formal rights as laid down within some legal systems, stipulations, rules, or regulations; The implementation of such rights through legal campaigns and stronger links with the legal profession; A more complete system of interconnected rights, rather than single rights; Adherence to international rights and a hierarchy of rights at local, national and international scales; The explicit acknowledgement that engaging with rights requires an overtly political approach. (Mitlin and Hickey 2009: 8)
‘political conditionality’, ‘positive support’ and ‘rights-based approaches’ categories. For him, there is an assumption (or, at least, a desire) of a linear movement towards RBAs. Likewise Piron and O’Neil and WB/OECD-Compendium also provide insight into different donor approaches – through their ‘Human rights-based approaches’; ‘Human rights mainstreaming’; ‘Human rights Dialogue’; ‘Human rights projects’ and ‘Implicit human rights work’ categories. Such categories identify where rights have been fully integrated (through RBAs) and also where wider approaches lean towards a more rhetorical or implicit incorporation. The significance and limitations of these studies are outside the realms of this paper, but can be addressed in the Q&A time, if required.

The Research project
Conceptually the project drew on the emerging (yet significant) contributions of the sociology of rights, and also political sociology and social movement theory more broadly. Specifically it utilised a social constructionist perspective of the practice of human rights. This recognises the significance of social interaction in the production and advancements of rights (as a concept and as a practice). It also acknowledges that the discourses and practices of rights (as they emerge from social interaction) should be scrutinized, rather than necessarily being accredited as beneficial to the very individuals and communities they seek to defend. As part of this, the project focused on the ‘social life of rights’. Wilson explains, this relates to ‘how people speak about [human rights] norms, or aspire to expand or interpret them in new ways’. With this in mind, a key concern of the project has been to establish:

- how development campaigners understand and interpret various claims articulated in the language of human rights

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13 Wilson (2006: 77-83), in his analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, identified ways in which the concept of human rights enables a broad range of social and political actors to come together often with ‘openly contradictory’ political claims. This, he observes, builds further to the ‘plural and fragment nature of the international rights regime and the ideological promiscuity of rights talk’ (2006: 77). The latter was critical to the project.

The project specifically focused on the campaign strategies of nine UK-based development-orientated NGOs (namely: ActionAid UK, Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK, War on Want, Global Justice Now, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Christian Aid, CAFOD and Tearfund). Between 2007 and 2016 over eighty in-depth interviews, six focus groups and one five-month ethnographic study were conducted. Research participants included Chief Executives, Campaign Directors, Senior Campaigners, Senior Policy Advisors and Lead Activists. Alongside this, in-depth documentary analysis was conducted (of campaign material and NGO strategy papers). The data presented here derive from the most recent round of (twenty-four interviews) conducted during 2015-2016 together with documentary analysis from the same period. A few points also briefly reflect back on changes identified over the duration of the project.

**FINDINGS**

One of the central findings of the research project has been that *basing* an approach on human rights is not the only way to incorporate a practice of rights. That is, by contrast to rights-based approaches, there are approaches that:

1. **compliment and balance** a rights-based approach with a completely different model – using both, together, at the same time;  
2. incorporate a human rights discourse and practice instrumentally, through the strategic used of rights framing, and;  
3. invoke a more nuanced use of rights talk through the very deliberate embedding of rights referencing.  

As I will go on to explain, these findings provide significant insight to the issue raised above (and as illustrated in image 2). Before this however, I will briefly provide an overview of some important findings that led to the second and third of those distinctions (the framing and referencing

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15 As previously noted (Miller 2010) these questions in part reflect those suggested by Wilson, ‘Afterword To “Anthropology and Human Rights in a New Key”: The Social Life of Human Rights’, 78. Wilson proposes studies should ask: ‘what sort of social practices are rights claims embedded in? How do various social actors understand the various claims, immunities, privileges, and liberties articulated in the language of human rights? How do they apply them or reject them? And what do they hope to achieve in so doing?’

16 Prior to 2015 Global Justice Now were known as the World Development Movement (WDM)

17 The project draws on social movement theory, where *frames* are understood to be a vital tool utilised by activists for the purpose of ‘transform[ing] the terms and nature of the debate’, with the aim of influencing policy outcomes (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Frames do not represent ideas *per se*, but are instead ways of repackaging, interpreting and fashioning ideas, generating shared beliefs in order to appeal to others (Snow and Benford 1988). Frames constitute an evolving and contested process, involving various social actors from within a social movement or NGO (Hilhorst 2003). By contrast, *referencing* is less concerned with re-packaging or transforming debates and instead aims to draw attention to established concerns, ideas or aspects. Referencing is frequently used as a vehicle to locate a source or basis of an idea or argument, and in so doing will typically allude to, speak of or moot direct attention to key concerns.
approaches). These findings emerge from the six NGOs within the project that explicitly reject RBAs, and instead self-identify with the models proposed below. All findings relate to where and how a human rights discourse and practice has been incorporated.

(Not) Orientation
The most fervent and impassioned reason for rejecting RBAs was related to orientation. Essentially every participant – across all six NGOs – was concerned with where an approach based on human rights leads an NGO. Due to the reliance on rights at the conceptual and ideological level of an NGO, RBAs were identified to be: too liberal (Global Justice Now); too legal or technocratic (Global Justice Now, Jubilee Debt Campaign); too focused on the individual (CAFOD, Tearfund, Christian Aid); too constraining and restrictive (Christian Aid, War on Want), and for some; certainly not political enough (War on Want, Global Justice Now, Jubilee Debt Campaign). Indeed many spoke of the de-politicised nature of RBAs, that a human rights analysis per se, simply ‘did not go far enough’ (War on Want, Global Justice Now, Jubilee Debt Campaign). A Chief Executive spoke of human rights as providing ‘a two rather than three-dimensional analysis of power’ (War on Want). Likewise, RBAs were also seen to be symptomatic of ‘fair-handed absolutism’ (War on Want). By contrast orientation instead came from faith-based teachings, a ‘social justice analysis’ or (leftist) political ideologies.

(Not) Justification
Of equal tension was the notion of justification. A human rights discourse or practice was not utilised as a basis to substantiate or justify approaches or positions. Indeed, it was deemed neither necessary nor desirable. Many participants spoke of the western bias of rights as being highly problematic for a western-based NGO (Global Justice Now, Jubilee Debt Campaign, CAFOD, Tearfund, Christian Aid) (i.e. ‘you are applying western ideals in a context that does not want to align itself with the West’). Some also pointed to instances where human rights violations had been seen to justify international humanitarian intervention in particular conflict zones. Consequently,

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18 It is not possible to cover all three approaches within the time slot available for this paper. The first approach (‘with rights’) can be discussed in the Q&A session if required.
19 War on Want, global Justice Now, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Tearfund, Christian Aid, CAFOD
20 Liked to a ‘bible’ or a ‘straightjacket’ (War on Want, Global Justice Now)
21 War on Want predominantly observed many RBA NGOs reporting human rights violations from both sides of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. While this in itself did not necessarily appear to present an issue for WoW, the absence of a political analysis did. A Senior Campaigner frequently referred to this as, “fair-handed absolutism”. That is, “fair-handed” towards both the Palestinian people and the state of Israel, and based on “absolutes”, due to a normative interpretation of the UDHR and other human rights standards.
the idea that pulling on a rights discourse to provide legitimacy to campaign practice was seen to be unappealing especially when contrasted against the preferred practice of ‘solidarity’ (War on Want, Global Justice Now, Tearfund) (i.e. ‘we stand in solidarity with X peoples’).

(Sometimes) Mobilisation

Engaging with your audiences and inspiring them to actively bring forward change is obviously critical to any successful campaign. At this most fundamental level, a discourse and practice of rights was not always considered to be inspiring. For many, rights were not seen to motivate or enthuse people to take action. This was in part due to some of the more technocratic approaches observed across the sector (Jubilee Debt Campaign), and in part due to alternate frames (faith-based/global justice/solidarity) that were seen to be far more inspirational (War on Want, Global Justice Now, Jubilee Debt Campaign, CAFOD, Tearfund, Christian Aid). One Senior Campaigner notes,

‘When you talk about “justice”, “equality”, “solidarity” there is a sense of a fight and a movement that people are inspired to be part of. When you talk about rights, is there more a sense of big NGOs coming in, with big philanthropic endeavors.’

(Global Justice Now AD Campaigns and Policy Officer, Interview, 05 November 2015) 22

This finding was however unique to the most recent round of data collection (2015-2016), and consequently identifies a shift in approaches (by contrast to 2007-2013). That is, where previously three of the NGOs (War on Want, Global Justice Now, Tearfund) had very consciously and deliberately centralised rights talk in their campaign activities through the process of framing (to motivate and mobilise shared action), today this simply is not the case. Instead, currently, rights talk is purely referenced as part of a wider narrative. The following statement provides further insight to this trend,

‘If we are speaking to a group of ardent lefties, we would very very rarely use the language of human rights. Although, you know, if we were to talk about workers rights, they would be totally happy of course. And they don’t mind it. You know no one is bothered by it. It’s just that it no longer gets anyone out of bed, whereas the prospect of the “new international”, or [laughing] the “new Jerusalem” is something which is more inspiring! And that’s maybe it for us, there’s a lack of inspiration! That’s perhaps the biggest shortcoming. That’s maybe

22 Similarly, the Chief Executive of War on Want noted, ‘[Human rights] is such a tangible, solid, well-documented, well-categorized structured thing to hold on to. Whereas when you get into the world of politics it is a much more fluid, and for us, much more vibrant. And this is by comparison to the human rights discourse which is much more stale, tie-bound and in certain areas, really problematic’ (War on Want - Chief Executive, Interview, 13 October 2015)
the biggest thing. There is a lack of inspiration in the framing of human rights. It’s not a clarion call in the same way that justice is a call! You know, something that really calls people out, to take action.’
(War on Want - Chief Executive, Interview, 13 October 2015, my emphasis)

**Explanation and Argumentation**

The most persistent finding across the whole of the project was that rights talk was used as part of the explanation and argumentation of key campaigns. This was done frequently, through either rights framing, or rights referencing. The strategic choice to use the former or the latter provides further insight into each NGOs’ particular form. Some NGOs opted to embed rights talk more frequently (War on Want, Jubilee Debt Campaign), whilst others embedded it slightly more selectively (Tearfund, Global Justice Now, CAFOD). Either way, it was used strategically and at particular moments of campaign cycles. Participants frequently spoke of the need to be instrumental in how they sought to appeal to different and wider audiences. For all, the utilisation of rights framing or referencing could be accredited with potential power, influence, and/or authority, but critically only at key moments. Further to this, a discourse of rights was described as a: ‘trump card’, ‘solid article of faith’, ‘touch stone’, ‘holding line’ and a ‘gateway drug’. The following comments provide further detail,

‘Human rights is helpful as a starting point, in establishing why the structures of debate are unjust, but it doesn’t help any further when you need to talk about what needs to happen. So, we are talking about systemic economic change. ... Rights are helpful in giving a reason as to why things need to change.’
(Jubilee Debt Campaign - Director, Interview, 22 February 2016)

‘... we very rarely appeal to rights to the expense of our core argument, we just add it on. So, it is kind of a gateway drug almost, to our deeper, more radical ideas. So, if we say, if you agree that this is a breach of rights, that this is bad, then, how about these [X, Y, and Z] reasons that are bad as well! It is kind of a gateway drug to a more radical argument.’
(Global Justice Now -Policy Officer, Interview, 05 November 2015)

‘For us, it comes down to using it when it is useful, as a little thing in our pocket, that we can pull out as a trump card, and we can say to people, “oh but there is a right to free education”... And so, when we use rights, it is as an argumentative trump card. And so that is where we would reference it. As and when it is useful!
(Global Justice Now - Campaigns and Policy Officer, Interview, 05 November 2015)

‘[We would use rights] as a trump card to people who aren’t anti-capitalist, who aren’t even skeptical about capitalism, but do believe in rights. If we are honest, it is about broadening our audience.’
(Global Justice Now - Campaigns and Policy Officer, Interview, 05 November 2015)
‘[One of the] areas where we do use rights, [is] in a lot of the argumentation for our work – whether in advocacy and policy, or general education – [that] is around the impact that public debt has on access to essential public services. So, although we rarely use the word “right to...” the argument that we make is that it is a right! You know, “that everyone has a right to a good standard of affordable education, healthcare, housing, water, and that unjust public debt is undermining that, and that that is what we should be tackling.” That is quite a central argument that we use.’

(Jubilee Debt Campaign - Director, Interview, 22 February 2016)

‘[we would make reference to human rights] if we want to help people to understand things, in ways that are generally accepted. And it’s quite nice to be able to ground our analysis in the stuff that is going to be acceptable to people. Without us having to say, right, here is something completely different. … What we are trying to say is look, here is something that everyone agrees on, people’s access to human rights therefore here are the consequences.’

(War on Want - Chief Executive, Interview, 13 October 2015)

‘human rights represent the truth that doesn’t need to be unpicked. The solid article of faith that you start from.’

(War on Want - Chief Executive, Interview, 13 October 2015)

(Re)location

An earlier, but important, finding in the project was that rights talk was also incorporated as a means to (re)locate an NGO. This was consistent with the archetypical use of ‘framing’, whereby activists classically utilise frames in order to “fit” with favourable institutional venues. Contrary to what might be imagined, data did not indicate such institutions to be that of donors or funders (i.e. ‘we appealed to a rights discourse because that is what EU funders were promoting at the time’) but rather institutions like that of the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Rights referencing was not used for this purpose.

De-mobilisation

For the more (‘leftist’) political NGOs covered in the project (War on Want, Global Justice Now) rights framing and referencing was intermittently, yet powerfully, used as a basis to respond to (and de-mobilise) antagonists. For War on Want this was considered to be both a vital and a valuable tool, particularly underpinning its solidarity campaigns with the Palestinian Peoples – as this was

23 Keck and Sikkink 1998
24 For further detail regarding this, see Miller 2012
where it challenged most frequently. Most notably, during the course of the research project (2007-2016) War on Want also shifted its approach to rights in this area. That is, where it had previously *framed* various campaign messaging through a rights discourse, more recently (2015-2016) it made the deliberate choice to locate various positions through an explicit *reference* to ideas of universal rights. Upon reflection, the Chief Executive notes,

‘... the acceptability of human rights as a discourse is a useful bulwark against further restrictions that are on our work. It’s almost as if we are trying to push the envelope, or push the agenda forward. But, we still need to have defense mechanisms to make sure we don’t get pulled backwards.’

(War on Want - Chief Executive, Interview, 13 October 2015)

With a slightly different focus, a participant from Global Justice Now notes,

‘When we are challenged on our position we would see rights as something that we could pull out ... it would only be referenced, if it was needed.’

(Global Justice Now Campaigns and Policy Officer, Focus Group, 05 November 2015)

**Expansion and transformation**

By contrast to the other uses of rights talk (and, certainly by contrast to RBA NGOs – who primarily seek to defend, protect and promote existing rights) four of the NGOs (War on Want, Jubilee Debt Campaign and Global Justice Now, Tearfund) also pulled on the discourse of rights as a means to expand and/or transform the terms and the nature of the debate (at local, national, regional and international levels). In essence, participants strategically utilizing key political moments, to stand with others to call for an established ‘right to water’/ ‘right to self-determination’/ ‘right to food’, as a basis to challenge mainstream and internationalized debates and policy outcomes. This was done through either rights referencing or rights framing, with both being used as a tool to push the debate. Various participants noted the significant value of incorporating rights talk for this purpose. 

‘[We] would talk about the expansion of the realms of rights. So, we would talk about, “why isn’t there the established right to food?” “why isn’t there a democratic control of a

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25 It is in the context of War on Want’s Palestine campaign, where the Charity Commission for England and Wales has received the most complaints (due to the campaign being perceived as: ‘too political’ and ‘too radical’). Previously campaign aims and messaging were framed through a discourses of rights to counter such attacks. More recently, rights referencing has replaced the use of frames.

26 Utilizing a frame as a means to *transform the terms and nature of debate* is of course a well documented strategy of activists more broadly (Keck and Sikkink 1998)
“certain place?” ... We consider the realm of rights as set out by international institutions to be too narrow. And, you know, some organizations are about defending the rights that have already been recognized, whereas we are more about expanding the number of rights that people have. So, the “right to food” is a very good example of one that we would talk about.’

(Global Justice Now – Global Justice Now Policy Officer, Focus Group, 05 November 2015)

PROPOSALS

Data across the whole of the research project has led to the identification and proposal of three new human rights models:

• ‘with rights’ approaches (WRs)\(^{27}\)
• ‘rights-framed approaches’ (RFAs)
• ‘rights-referenced approaches’ (RRAs)

The second and third are neither based on a human rights discourse or practice, nor do they inform the conceptual level of the development-orientated NGO. Instead, they inform the operational side of development-orientated NGOs. Table 1 provides a summary of the key findings.

\(^{27}\) It is not possible to cover all three approaches within the time slot available for this paper. The first approach (‘with rights’) can be discussed in the Q&A session if required.
Table 1: Contrasting RBAs with the proposed three new approaches to development campaigning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights-Based Approaches(^28) (RBAs)</th>
<th>With Rights Approaches (WRs)</th>
<th>Rights-Framed Approaches (RFAs)</th>
<th>Rights-Referenced Approaches (RRAs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The official approach</td>
<td>Forms part of the official approach, together with another (for instance, faith-based/community centered approaches)</td>
<td>Used as a tool to serve the official approach</td>
<td>Used as a tool to serve the official approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drives NGO policy</td>
<td>Drives NGO policy together with parallel approach</td>
<td>Is driven by NGO policy</td>
<td>Is driven by NGO policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starts from and make reference to human rights. Distinctions can be identified between an ‘empowerment’ and ‘legalistic’ emphasis(^29)</td>
<td>Human rights are incorporated into the foundational base (for e.g. faith-based teaching) in order to strengthen overall understandings and parallel approach. Rights concepts (as defined by various standards) are compatible with the parallel approach</td>
<td>Starts from ideological base of the NGO (for e.g. socialist ideology). Then on strategic occasions will repackage beliefs and ideas through a human rights frame, to potentially: motivate and mobilise collective actions; demobilise antagonists; legitimate action; advance own belief and aspirations; transform the terms and nature of debate and “fit” with favourable institutional venues</td>
<td>Starts from ideological base of the NGO (for e.g. socialist ideology/ faith-based teaching). Will repackage beliefs and ideas through an alternate frame (for e.g. social justice/ solidarity). Then on strategic occasions will utilise rights referencing for argumentation and explanation, demobilisation (of antagonists) and to potentially expand and transform the terms and the nature of the debate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualises poverty based on absence of human rights</td>
<td>Conceptualises poverty based on absence of human rights and further concerns (for e.g. absence of human community)</td>
<td>Conceptualises poverty based on ideological base (for e.g. inequality)</td>
<td>Conceptualises poverty based on ideological base (for e.g. inequality, injustice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End goals are frequently human rights goals, however some are poverty eradication goals, or a combination of both</td>
<td>End goals are frequently a combination of human rights goals and others (e.g. ‘community-centered human rights’ goals)</td>
<td>End goals are frequently poverty eradication goals, however they can be framed as human rights goals</td>
<td>End goals are frequently poverty eradication goals, however they can be framed as other goals (e.g. social justice/equality goals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic priorities are either based on and defined by international standards, or make reference to these through the language</td>
<td>Strategic priorities are either based on and defined by international standards, or make reference to these through the language of rights</td>
<td>Strategic priorities may make reference to ideas of human rights (and less frequently international standards), but this is not required</td>
<td>It is highly unlikely that strategic priorities will make reference to ideas of human rights, but this is not impossible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{28}\) The findings for RBAs are taken from the voices of the three RBA NGOs covered in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Commonly motivated by the power of the idea of universal human rights, and will simultaneously use this to motivate others (activists and campaign targets)</th>
<th>Will strategically utilise the power of the idea of universal human rights to motivate others (activists and campaign targets)</th>
<th>Will very occasionally utilise the power of the idea of universal human rights to motivate others (activists and campaign targets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent appeals to ideas of rights across all campaign contexts</td>
<td>Frequently appeals to ideas of rights across all campaign contexts</td>
<td>Only appeals to ideas of rights when considered to be strategically advantageous to specific campaign contexts</td>
<td>Makes reference to ideas of rights in argumentation and explanation when considered to be strategically advantageous to specific campaign contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threateningly cites specific human rights language, covenants or agreements</td>
<td>Frequently cites specific human rights language, covenants or agreements</td>
<td>On occasions, and only when beneficial, will cite specific human rights language, covenants or agreements. Will utilise critical moments to critique or push the boundaries of existing rights standards</td>
<td>Will cite a loose discourse of rights, but rarely covenants or agreements. Will utilise critical moments to critique or push the boundaries of existing rights standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of universal human rights is used as the basis for legitimacy in most contexts</td>
<td>Concept of universal human rights is used as the basis for legitimacy in certain contexts, however this is normally positioned alongside parallel approach</td>
<td>Concept of universal human rights is used as the basis for legitimacy in precise contexts, and only when considered to be strategically advantageous to specific campaign</td>
<td>It is highly unlikely that the concept of universal human rights is used as the basis for legitimacy, although not impossible (subject to extremely specific campaign contexts and needs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May invoke political neutrality through the defence of all human rights of all peoples (regardless of political leanings). Accordingly ‘human rights advocacy’ is most appropriate</td>
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<td>Allows for ideological base to identify and defend human rights of ‘just cause’. Accordingly ‘solidarity campaign’ strategies have the most to gain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes takes advantage of the ideological promiscuity of rights talk (as observed by Wilson 2006: 77)</td>
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<td>Takes advantage of (and thus adds legitimacy to) the ideological promiscuity of rights talk (as observed by Wilson 2006: 77)</td>
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<td>Various backstage voices of rights talk</td>
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30 As defined by Keck and Sikkink (1998:95)
31 As defined by Keck and Sikkink (1998:95)
CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the research project identify that for too long the existing literatures have been preoccupied by the dominance of the broad umbrella concept of RBAs. Hence researchers have not always seen the extent to which alternative expressions of rights talk have emerged, and will continue to emerge outside of RBAs. If existing research is to move on, and indeed catch up with such developments, the time is ripe for voices located outside of RBAs to be listened to. The intention of the research project was always to provide a platform for different voices to be heard. Central to this was also the aim of actively encouraging more approaches to be considered and developed beyond the confines of the project.

At this stage the classification of ‘with rights’, ‘rights-framed’ and ‘rights-referenced’ approaches is intended to be the first step towards establishing a fully integrated set of approaches in both theory and practice (least of all because the NGOs covered in the research self-identify with these approaches). It is therefore hoped that such models will develop beyond the embryonic dimensions proposed today. With this in mind, future research could advance the findings established here through the development of further case studies. In particular, these should include the analysis of a wider range of development NGOs – with particular reference to NGOs located within the global South. Added to this, for ‘with rights’, ‘rights-framed’ and ‘rights-referenced’ approaches to become firmly established within the policies of development-orientated NGOs, it is also necessary to establish the extent to which they can materialise beyond the activity of campaigning, in the broader operational activities of such NGOs.32

32 For instance, this might include activities such as: grassroots capacity-building; employment co-operatives; agricultural training; forestry management; education reform; or even public health programmes.
Bibliography (indicative – see footnotes for some further references)


