

and undermine each other (Natsios 1997b, 144). This causes chaos in the field and reduces everyone's capacity to achieve their objectives. For example, as Andrew Natsios suggests, during a food emergency crisis it is very possible that one NGO will be trying to set up feeding centres that bring people away from their homes while at the same time, another NGO is trying to bring them back to their towns in order to resettle them (ibid). Therefore, co-ordination of action between NGOs and other agencies operating in the field is necessary to avoid working at cross-purposes. The international community urgently needs to consider how to co-ordinate the donor community. Perhaps instead of placing the responsibility of co-ordination in the hands of the head of the multinational peacekeeping operations it would be preferable to develop an independent co-ordinating committee.

The second area where NGOs can play a significant role in conflict and humanitarian efforts is in the monitoring of human rights. Human rights organisations commonly identify their primary goals as monitoring and reporting government behaviour on human rights, particularly violations, in order to build pressure and create international machinery to end the violations and to hold the governments accountable (Gaer 1996, 56). There has been a proliferation of human rights NGOs since the mid-1980s and they often pursue aims that depend on their formal mandates, geographical location and preferred means of action (1996, 57). Many national human rights NGOs link with international human rights NGOs in order to broaden their support network. NGOs that work exclusively in the realm of human rights, such as Amnesty International, have found that their ability to reduce violations is enhanced because they can stay focused solely on international norms, treaties and specific legal obligations rather than taking on the complex causes of political and inequality. Overall, human rights organisations try to be independent of both the government and partisan groups who seek to gain political power (Wiseberg 1992, 372-82). As suggested by Felice Gaer, there are three key ways that NGOs can promote human rights:

By exposing and advocating the end of the abuses. The media can be useful in this regard.

By communicating with decision-makers at the national and international levels so that they can help set their agendas for action.

By delivering services – such as, legal training and broad education so that individuals will be aware of their rights and know how to act should these rights be violated (1996, 57-58).

In the post-Cold War period, new challenges face human rights NGOs in their advocacy efforts at and through the United Nations system. These challenges are occurring despite the growth in procedures and mechanisms and the expansion of human rights into peacekeeping. The tasks facing NGOs due to the changing nature of conflict are simply more complex and require greater skills. In order to illustrate the complexity, it is useful to look at the concept of impartiality.