Introduction

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.

—Nelson Mandela

Consider the following, seemingly disparate, activities of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs):

- Oxfam International, known for its development, emergency, and global campaigning work, has adopted a rights-based approach as central to its organizational mission. Its "five aims" draw directly on internationally recognized human rights standards to advance the organization's development agenda.
- Save the Children has made the internationally recognized human rights of children the philosophical foundation for its work and the basis for operational decisions about programming and advocacy. Since its adoption in 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child has underpinned the work of the International Save the Children Alliance.
- Amnesty International voted in 2001 to transform the historic focus of the worldwide membership network's advocacy from largely a civil and political rights agenda to a new mission that encompasses economic, social, and cultural rights as well.
- In South Africa, Ghana, Bolivia, India, and dozens of other countries, human rights and constitutional guarantees are being invoked by opponents of privatization of drinking water systems, and international development and human rights

NGOs have joined in support of the human right to water movement.

- The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) expanded its housing rights agenda to include training and education on all economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights and active work on the human right to water.
- Human Rights Watch has begun to apply its investigative and reporting methods to documenting legal and institutional barriers to women's property rights in African countries along with a wider focus on discrimination in economic and social policies.
- The Brazil-based Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST, Landless Rural Workers' Movement) has built an international network of peasant organizations, rural unions, development organizations, and international human rights NGOs, such as the Food Information and Action Network (FIAN), to advocate for agrarian reform as essential to the human right to adequate food.
- The Center for Economic and Social Rights, formed in New York in 1993, advocates for ESC rights in Ecuador, the United States, and the Middle East, and it helped launch a global network of NGOs on ESC rights. In 2003, NGOs from Africa, Latin America, and Asia met in Bangkok to form this new ESC rights network, uniting smaller organizations in the poor countries with a shared commitment to advancing ESC rights.

This book probes the extent, the significance, the limitations, and the interactions among initiatives such as these. These and the other organizations and movements profiled in this book share two central features: a concern for poverty and inequality and their worst symptoms; and a strategic interest in uniting human rights principles, standards, and methods with social and economic development. These examples embody three critical trends in NGO advocacy that are profoundly changing human rights advocacy and offering an alternative approach to economic and social development: (a) the

embrace, sometimes tentative, of human rights–based approaches by influential development NGOs and donor agencies, (b) the adoption of active ESC rights agendas by major international human rights NGOs, and (c) the surge of work on economic and social policy through a human rights lens by specialized human rights NGOs and by NGO alliances and social movement campaigns. Taken together, these make up what we refer to as the "new rights advocacy." These new advocacy trends are also advancing "new rights"—new internationally recognized and increasingly codified human rights. This dual notion of new rights advocacy frames the following analysis.

Where did the human rights–development convergence come from, what drives it, and why did it emerge so rapidly in the late 1990s? What is the nature of change within and across the fields, and what are their implications for human rights and development theory and practice, for social movements, and for our understanding of NGOs and of the state?

To understand this convergence of activity in the development and human rights fields, we draw on perspectives from human rights, international relations, the sociology of social movements and of complex organizations, and development theory. We argue that changes in international systems have altered international NGOs' operating environment, forcing international NGOs to make strategic choices significant and widespread enough to change and reorient not only individual organizations but the fields themselves.

The systemic changes that drive the growing intersection of human rights and development are many and diverse, but at the core is poverty. Poverty and inequality are more acute and widespread in the mid-2000s than they were a generation ago, and they are more widely and prominently discussed. Reducing global poverty is the central goal of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), endorsed at the turn of the millennium by 182 heads of state. Economist Jeffrey Sachs's (2005) bestselling book argues that the "end of poverty" is possible in our lifetimes, and even leaders of the global war on terror see extreme poverty and inequality as a key target in promoting security.

International agencies and scholars spin the numbers and debate methodologies (Wade 2004; Milanovic 2005; World Bank 2007), but there is general agreement that inequality among nations has grown over the past forty years, as has inequality within most countries, including fast-growing economies such as China and India. Inequality of income and wealth among individuals across the planet is enormous and growing; the incomes of the richest 5 percent of humanity equal those of the poorest 80 percent (Milanovic 2005). The number of people living on the equivalent of US$2 a day or less has stabilized and perhaps diminished in the first years of this century (World Bank 2007), but almost all the reduction is accounted for by employment and income gains in China's rapidly industrializing economy.

Women have fared disproportionately poorly under economic globalization's advance. Neoliberal development policies, advocated by many aid donors and often implemented by governments as a condition for assistance, have had a more severe impact on women and have undervalued women's work, disrupted their access to subsistence resources, privatized basic services, and reduced access to health and education essential for women's empowerment. These changes have decreased the number of women paid for work, increased inequalities in income and property ownership, decreased women's access to decision making, and increased the number of women living beneath poverty levels worldwide (AWID 2006).

For development agencies, the challenge and frustration are obvious: decades of concerted work have produced flashes of local success but a worsening global pattern of poverty, deepening inequalities, marginalization, and indignity. For many human rights activists, the failure to directly and meaningfully address the human rights dimensions of poverty became unjustifiable in the face of such suffering. Increasingly, the human rights field has challenged the human rights violations that fuel conditions of poverty: lack of access to adequate housing, water, and sanitation; poor health, discrimination, and marginalization in society; and patterns of labor, land ownership, and debt that trap individuals and societies alike in extreme inequality.

International NGOs and the national and local organizations and movements with which they work share a commitment to respond-

ing to deep and persistent poverty and inequality, to discrimination and marginalization of women and of disenfranchised populations, and to widespread disregard for existing legal protections in some societies. In the effort to become more effective and to assert greater power in national and international institutions, they are embracing human rights standards, methods, and rhetoric and expanding their human rights commitments to integrate economic and social with civil and political human rights.

Like many of the professionals in human rights and development whose work is the subject of this book, the authors have arrived at this perspective through their own work as scholars and practitioners. Approaching this subject from the perspectives of the two fields—steeped in the human rights movement and in development policy—we have ourselves experienced the movement in the two fields toward an approach to economic and social policy that draws on human rights standards and principles. We are also researchers trained in the social sciences and engaged in research on international development and international affairs, and contemporary theory on international relations, development, human rights, NGOs, and social movements appears unable to capture the changes we have participated in and studied.

Our research and teaching have also led us to explore how the two fields are challenging and changing each other. Over the years, our students in separate courses on human rights and on development and NGO management have pushed us up against the boundaries of the fields, asking why poverty is not a human rights issue or why the human rights to adequate food, to health, or to housing are not taken seriously in setting development priorities.

For the past five years, we have examined and documented changes in key organizations in the fields, scrutinized new programs and campaigns, and sought out the assessments of professionals in the fields. We have weighed the changes against models and theories in the research fields that try to capture and understand the significance of trends in development and human rights.

The changes we analyze here are occurring in diverse organizational settings and are typically studied separately by human rights scholars,

organizational theorists, and international relations and development scholars. We draw on all these perspectives in an effort to account for the trends cutting across the fields. Why frame an inquiry into human rights in this way? We have become convinced that conventional approaches to human rights, NGOs, and development—their visions shaped by disciplinary and professional boundaries—are missing important changes that are most evident at the disciplinary boundaries and the organizational interstices, where human rights organizations, development funders, and social movements are increasingly in contact with each other. Among the significant theoretical and applied issues raised by this study, we highlight and introduce four here: the quest for power by NGOs reflected in their strategic choices, the origins and significance of new rights claims, the changing relationship between international NGOs and states, and the challenge to orthodox development theory and practice.

Power

How do we study power in the NGO sector? NGOs, we argue, rely on effective strategies, with clearly defined visions, to make maximum use of the sources of power they hold and to capture institutional power to advance their objectives. We want to understand more fully how NGOs respond to their environments by making strategic choices and how and where they mobilize sources of power in their efforts to influence larger, more powerful institutions. Scholarship on NGOs has tended to treat them either as principled, independent political agents advancing values-based agendas, or as organizations acting rationally to protect and perpetuate their own organizational lives. We start from the premise that international NGOs are, or can be, both political actors and rational organizations, and that to understand any NGO's behavior requires an integrated perspective that brings together complex efforts to exercise political power with equally complex organizational dynamics.

To understand these strategic choices and their collective effects requires understanding both the quest for power on the part of some

international NGOs and the changes in their operating environments that necessitate new strategies. Especially in alliances and campaigns with social movements and activist NGOs from the poor countries, international NGOs' strategies are often designed to assert power in an effort to restrain corporate behavior or to support the demands of local or national movements in opposition to or support of state policy. At the same time, strategic choices have to be understood from the perspective of the organization and of its imperatives to survive, grow, and manage risk and uncertainty.

New Human Rights

Second, we know far too little about where new rights claims come from, how they arise and gain legitimacy and authority, and how the social and political dynamics of human rights claims really interact with the formal, legal life of human rights standards and principles. Our research focuses on the political and organizational life of international NGOs—major development and human rights actors based in the wealthy industrial countries—that influence the two fields at the global level. But we study international NGOs not only because of their own influence and significance, but because of what they can reveal about the exercise of power and the assertion of rights claims by social movements and by NGOs based in the poor countries. This idea that "new rights" are being created engages the second meaning of our title: fundamentally new rights are being advanced by human rights advocacy, arising out of struggles over social and economic conditions and policies.

Beyond the Violating State

Third, relationships between NGOs and the state in poor countries are changing in ways that scholarship on international relations and on NGOs has not yet captured. "Nongovernmental" has often been perceived as "antigovernmental," not only by suspicious government leaders and functionaries, but also by scholars and strategists who

observe the effectiveness of NGOs' invoking the authority of powerful states and international organizations to win compliance with human rights standards. As international NGOs involved in policy campaigns draw on economic and social human rights more systematically, they often find themselves in more complex and varied relationships with governments, often supporting governments' prerogatives in setting social policy while working to limit the authority of international financial institutions and transnational corporations. Yet they simultaneously maintain an oversight, monitoring, and dissenting role with governments.

These questions are of theoretical, conceptual, and applied significance. Theoretically, the complexity of these interactions presents a challenge to existing models of NGO-state relations. For human rights professionals, they raise challenges as well. Can an international standard of accountability for ESC rights be operationalized, holding both rich countries and nonstate economic actors accountable for violations in specific third countries? Can NGOs simultaneously work in tandem with and in opposition to states without undermining their own moral legitimacy? We argue that the ESC rights experience compels us to create a more complex paradigm of state-NGO relations that moves "beyond the violating state."

Challenging Neoliberal Development

Finally, the rise of human rights–based development approaches appears to challenge current and longstanding orthodoxy in development, and our study of development NGOs explores the nature and significance of this challenge. Market forces' central role in development and the importance of limiting government interference with the market have been features of development orthodoxy since the early 1980s. Promoted by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and some bilateral aid agencies, market-driven approaches have been challenged by advocates of environmentally sustainable development and human development, but these critics' concerns have been integrated into a development orthodoxy that remains market-driven.

A human rights–based approach to development, on the face of it, is more difficult to integrate with market-driven development. Unlike other countercurrents and slogans by development dissenters through the decades, rights-based development is grounded in a set of internationally accepted standards and principles that are in turn encoded in treaties, covenants, and international law. We want to understand how this countercurrent is being articulated among development professionals and how and whether it is shifting prevailing norms and practices to augment the influence of human rights. Conversely, we have investigated how the development industry is responding to rights-based initiatives and the risk that these initiatives could weaken the rigor and integrity with which human rights standards have been developed and promoted.

Adopting a broad, crosscutting, integrated perspective on human rights and development, the state, social movements, and international NGOs means embracing a subject that may seem hopelessly broad. Moreover, we are studying trends that are very much in process and the results of which are unpredictable and not yet determined. As a result, we cannot capture all the important evidence of trends among human rights and development NGOs and the social movements, international organizations, and government agencies with which they interact. We will instead highlight key developments that shed new light on the theory and practice of NGOs as political actors and as organizations, on the theory and practice of human rights, and on the theory and sometimes embattled practice of promoting economic and social development.

We have also narrowed the inquiry by focusing primarily on international NGOs, headquartered in the wealthy industrial countries and operating in three or more countries. (We refer to these as "international NGOs" and use other modifiers at times, including "southern NGOs" or "NGOs based in the poor countries," in an effort to be explicit about the kind of organization being discussed in a particular context.) Some scholars, particularly in development, have singled out international NGOs as innovators and have focused on them strategically because of their trend-setting roles (Lindenberg and Bryant 2001; Fowler 1997). We do find instances of such innovation,

but in the movement toward an integrated approach to human rights and development, the lead has more often come from social movements and smaller NGOs based in the global South, where the promotion of human rights and social and economic development has for decades been more conceptually and organizationally integrated. International NGOs are important not as innovators but as globalizers, sources of support and legitimacy that adopt and convey new rights strategies among larger-scale transnational actors. Moreover, international NGOs have direct access to significant public constituencies in the wealthy industrial countries whose governments' activities in the global South are enormously influential.

The remainder of the book consists of four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical significance of the new rights advocacy and traces its origins. Beginning with an analysis of organizational fields, which establishes the professional, social, and organizational dimensions of the historic separation of human rights practice and development practice, we trace some of the movements and interactions in the 1980s and 1990s that led human rights NGOs and development NGOs toward closer cooperation. With the prehistory of the new rights advocacy in place, the remainder of the chapters explain the theoretical and practical significance of the three trends that constitute the new rights advocacy and the four central questions these trends raise.

Chapters 2 and 3 trace the changes and trends of new rights advocacy through the human rights and development fields, respectively. Some of the most familiar names in development and human rights—CARE, Oxfam, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch—are among the principals in the changes that are the focus of these chapters. There are important parallels between the trends analyzed in the two chapters, and each seeks to break down the elements of strategic and organizational change among international NGOs in the fields. But the differences between the patterns of change are equally important. NGOs in the two fields work in strikingly different organizational and professional cultures, display contrasting attitudes toward power, and build relationships with states that are based on sharply divergent working and political arrangements.

Chapter 4 turns to the political and organizational work occurring at the nexus of the human rights and development fields, where international NGOs interact with social movements and the state. It traces the interactions among international human rights, development, and environmental NGOs, community-based organizations, social movements, and grassroots campaigns on social and economic policy issues, beginning in the 1980s. We find that the number and intensity of exchanges and of changes in agenda and methodology grew as NGOs deepened their interaction across the human rights–development boundary. The implications of these changes are traced through the creation of new organizations, launching of new interorganizational initiatives across traditional divides, formation of alliances that involve leading NGOs in cooperation and dialogue, and the development of new rights campaigns in the late 1990s, in which human rights and development activists freely adopted and modified each other's methods and tactics.

We conclude in chapter 5 by revisiting the themes posed in this introduction: power and the strategies of NGOs, the rise of new rights claims, the changing relationship of international NGOs and the state, and the challenge to orthodox development theory and practice. To the longer-term questions of durability of the changes and their impact on the success of human rights and development strategies, we are able to provide partial answers. Durability is a subject we will return to in the conclusion.

The trends analyzed here are new, and they require rigorous conceptual treatments to categorize seemingly disparate activities in organizational fields with very different traditions. They also demand careful empirical research that creates baseline data to allow for tracking of impact over time. Our efforts here are first steps, characterizing the new trends themselves, identifying new theoretical frameworks for analyzing these trends, and analyzing their potential benefits and risks, while raising key questions for future research. But the fact that this early effort to clarify the human rights–development interaction is necessarily modest in scope does not diminish the profound significance of what has been happening in the two fields. The obvious significance lies in the changes

adopted by the NGOs themselves, often requiring fundamentally new approaches and understanding for staff members, volunteers, and donors. But its greatest significance lies in the potential for success and risk of failure. The global challenge of meeting social and economic needs has grown in unprecedented ways. Changing strategies is risky business but perhaps essential.