



Advancing Human Rights and Promoting Democracy: A Global Endeavour

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ABSTRACT

The pursuit of universal respect for human rights and the flourishing of democratic values remain central aspirations for the international community. This article explores how countries are advancing human rights and promoting democracy abroad. It discusses key strategies employed, including direct assistance, multilateral engagement, and conditionality for human rights promotion, and supporting elections, strengthening institutions, and promoting civil society for democracy promotion. The paper also highlights the challenges and considerations involved in these efforts, such as context specificity, sustainability, and legitimacy. Further, the paper deals with promoting democracy in Developing Countries including some general principles and strategies in fostering democratic development. Finally, it concludes by emphasizing the importance of continued international collaboration and learning to advance human rights and democracy around the world.

Keywords: Civil Society, Democracy Promotion, Development Assistance, Human Rights, Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION:

Pursuing international observance of human rights and the development of democratic ideals continue to be vital components of common goals, representing the shared dedication to equality and fairness. Achieving these objectives, however, is not a straightforward task; it involves navigating a labyrinth of political, social, economic, and cultural complexities. Despite these challenges, many nations have taken up the mantle of fostering human rights and democracy both within their borders and beyond. Their efforts encompass a variety of approaches, including diplomatic advocacy, foreign aid programs, support for civil society initiatives, and leveraging international organizations to champion these causes.

This article delves into the diverse strategies that countries employ in their quest to uphold human rights and bolster democratic governance. It also examines the obstacles they encounter, such as resistance from authoritarian regimes, geopolitical tensions, resource constraints, and the sometimes-fragile nature of democratic institutions themselves. Through this exploration, the article sheds light on the multifaceted efforts and enduring struggles of nations as they work toward creating a world where human dignity and democratic principles are universally upheld.

Strategies for Human Rights Promotion	Strategies for Democracy Promotion
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• Direct Assistance: Countries provide financial and technical assistance to support human rights organizations, independent media, and civil society actors in developing countries. In term of illustration, we can see that human rights and accountability has been promoted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2023).	• Supporting Elections: Countries provide technical assistance to conduct free and fair elections, including voter registration, campaign finance regulations, and independent media access. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) as a crucial institution, offers training and resources to election officials and civil society actors (IFES, n.d.).
• Multilateral Engagement: Countries work collaboratively through international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and regional bodies like the Organization of American States (OAS) to strengthen human rights norms and address specific abuses. The UN Human Rights	• Strengthening Institutions: Countries support the development of democratic institutions like independent judiciaries, legislatures, and anti-corruption agencies. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) provides funds to enhance the role and

Council plays a crucial role in monitoring human rights situations and issuing recommendations to member states (OHCHR, n.d.).	functions of democratic institutions and promote citizen participation (NED, n.d.).
• Conditionality: Some countries link foreign aid or other forms of cooperation to improvements in human rights records. This approach, while potentially effective, can be criticized for being coercive and not giving due recognition to recipient countries' autonomy (Woods, 2019).	• Promoting Civil Society: Countries encourage the growth of a vibrant civil society that can hold governments accountable and advocate for democratic reforms. Freedom House, an NGO, monitors political and civil liberties around the world and advocates for democratic values (Freedom House, n.d.).

Figure: 1 Strategy for Human Rights Promotion & Democracy Promotion

Some of the worst human right violations occur during armed conflicts, not only are civil and political liberties compromised but there is pressing danger on lives of those stuck in such conflicts, many civilians lose their lives in such conflicts, such loss of life is sorrowful and puts a huge responsibility on the international community. Here in is where International

Humanitarian law comes into picture, The International Committee of Red Cross defines humanitarian law as a body of regulations that aim to lessen the effects of armed conflict for humanitarian purposes (Forsythe, 2005). International humanitarian law addresses two topics: it protects individuals who are not or are no longer engaged in hostilities and it limits the tools and tactics of war. First, safeguarding those who are not or are no longer engaged in combat Second, limitations on the tools of war, including weaponry, and the strategies of war, including military tactics (ICRC, undated). Since the right to life is one of the fundamental human rights, this rule is crucial to reducing the number of fatalities during armed conflict.

Heintze contends that although IHL and human rights law have different functions, they work together to provide complete protection for people in armed conflict. In contrast to IHL, which is designed for times of conflict and focuses on limiting harm to individuals not involved in hostilities, human rights law primarily functions during peacetime, ensuring fundamental freedoms. Heintze emphasizes that despite their disparate purviews, both frameworks have the same goal of preserving human dignity, fostering a cooperative partnership during times of armed conflict (Heintze, 2004, p. 790). The successful application of humanitarian law can only take place through multilateral engagement and international cooperation, countries must acknowledge it as well as commit to following its principles, the application of International Humanitarian law is pertinent to protecting the human rights of those in war torn areas.

2. Establishing a Relation between Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

Human rights are essential to achieve sustainable development since it ensure an inclusive participation of individuals regardless of race, class, sex, gender, region or any other base. Further, it is central argued, that is related to all its three dimensions – social, environmental, and economic (OHCHR and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, n.d.). The 17 SDGs are ambitious in nature and have a universal goal of global upliftment through various ways like ending hunger, ending all forms of poverty, combating gender inequality, and so on, the seventeen goals that have been adopted by the United Nations in 2015 address urgent issues which are of global importance and provide a framework sort of to work within as well as to facilitate action. The SDGs have set the target year as 2030 by which they aim to achieve their targets.

There are many ways in which human rights are associated with SGDS one of the ways is they co-relate with larger Human Rights, according to OHCHR there are various ways through which SDGS relate with human rights found in various declarations like UNHCR, ICESCR, and CRC. One example of this highlights, how SDG 1 which is to End poverty in all its forms everywhere and it relates to various rights like the Right to an adequate standard of living (UDHR art. 25; ICESCR art. 11; CRC art. 27), Right to social security (UDHR art. 22; ICESCR art. 9; CRPD art. 28; CRC art. 26), Equal rights of women in economic life [CEDAW arts. 11, 13, 14(2)(g), 15(2), 16(1)]. The human right to zero hunger as stated in international human rights frameworks is strongly aligned with SDG 2, which focuses on eradicating hunger, attaining food security, enhancing nutrition, and advancing sustainable agriculture. These include the right to food, which is expressly guaranteed by Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the right

to a sufficient quality of living, which is emphasized by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Furthermore, the duty to prevent child malnutrition is emphasized in Article 24(2)(c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Mechanisms for international collaboration that support the fair distribution of the world's food resources support efforts to achieve SDG 2. Article 28 of the UDHR and Articles 2(1) and 11(2) of the ICESCR, which urge states to work together to guarantee food security for all, support this idea. Financial and technical support, capacity-building for sustainable farming methods, and tackling structural problems like trade disparities and the effects of climate change on food systems are all common components of this kind of collaboration. These actions highlight the universal obligation to end hunger while upholding the values of sustainability and justice.

The integration of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 with the human rights framework highlights both potential and problems while emphasizing collaborations for the goals. In order to advance human rights principles like equality and non-discrimination, the paper contends that SDG 17 presents a special opportunity to fortify international collaboration, especially through inclusive partnerships comprising states, civil society, and commercial actors. However, Dulume also points out important obstacles that can compromise these collaborations' ability to advance human rights, such as disparities in power between stakeholders and a dearth of accountability systems. To guarantee that partnerships significantly contribute to the attainment of sustainable development and basic freedoms, the author highlights the necessity of coordinating SDG 17's implementation strategies

with international human rights commitments (Dulume, 2019, pp. 60-65).

There are many more instances where in the SDGS coincides with the larger picture of human rights that exist globally, what can be inferred from this is that SDGS are interwoven with human rights. Their adoption by the UN can be seen as a multilateral attempt to advance human rights, the realization of SDGS will go a long way in the battle of achieving human rights both on global as well as national levels.

Inequalities in the world today can take many different forms, such as food insecurity, gender-based violence, poverty, climate change, and so forth. To promote human rights, these issues must be resolved since they give rise to a lot of human rights abuses. Many contemporary challenges are addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals. Particularly, Food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, and inclusive economic growth for poverty eradication are the three sectoral areas in which the SDG fund works in 22 countries to test integrated approaches to sustainable development. Sustainability, gender equality, and public-private partnerships are three cross-cutting concerns that are equally significant to all of these projects (sdgfund.n.d.). The fund helps build projects that benefit a number of countries worldwide. Through tackling different types of inequality, these initiatives promote human rights and make a substantial contribution to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

3. Challenges and Considerations:

- **Context Specificity:** Applying universal human rights principles and democratic ideals needs to be adapted to the specific contexts and cultural norms of different countries. A

"one-size-fits-all" approach can be counterproductive (Tschirhart, 2019) therefore it is required to have a context specific study. In "The Paradox of Context-Sensitivity in Promoting Human Rights," Tschirhart (2019) explores the conflict between the necessity of context-sensitive implementation strategies and universal human rights principles. According to the article, effective human rights promotion requires attention to local cultural, political, and social settings, but doing so runs the risk of weakening the universality of these rights. This paradox makes it difficult to strike a balance between upholding international standards and respecting local autonomy. Tschirhart emphasizes the necessity for nuanced frameworks in tackling this complexity and stresses the significance of creating solutions that respect diversity without compromising fundamental human rights (Tschirhart, 2019).

- **Sustainability:** Promoting democracy and human rights necessitates a steadfast, enduring commitment and ongoing engagement over the long term. Short-term interventions, while they may offer immediate results, often lack the depth and sustainability required to effect lasting change. Therefore, a continuous and dedicated effort is imperative to foster genuine democratic practices and uphold human rights standards effectively (Carothers, 2017).
- **Legitimacy and Accountability:** Soguk (2019) highlights the issues created by external players supporting democracy and human rights in other countries. Such attempts, while frequently well-intentioned, can be regarded as intervention in domestic matters, triggering allegations of neo-colonialism. These issues come up when programs undermine the sovereignty of the receiving nations by putting external agendas

ahead of their own needs and preferences. According to Soguk, these kinds of interventions need to be open, responsible, and based on respect for one another in order to be morally and practically sound. External actors can assist lasting change and prevent the continuation of power inequalities by emphasizing collaboration and coordinating efforts with local conditions and ambitions (Soguk, 2019).

- **Shortcomings of SDG:** The SDGs disregard the structural changes that are desperately needed to make national and supranational institutional arrangements less biased towards the interests of small global power elite, as well as the underlying causes of the enormous and ongoing human rights deficit associated with poverty. The SDGs fail to consider the impartial monitoring required to accurately ascertain the scope, geographical and demographic distribution, as well as the patterns of deprivations relevant to human rights. Allowing fragile and politically exposed international organizations to monopolize this monitoring exacerbates the issue (Pogge & Sengupta, 2016).

4. A Framework for Promoting Democracy in Developing Nations

Promoting democracy in developing countries is a multifaceted challenge with no single, universally applicable solution. The historical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts of each nation significantly influence the effectiveness of different approaches. However, some general principles and strategies have shown promise in fostering democratic development

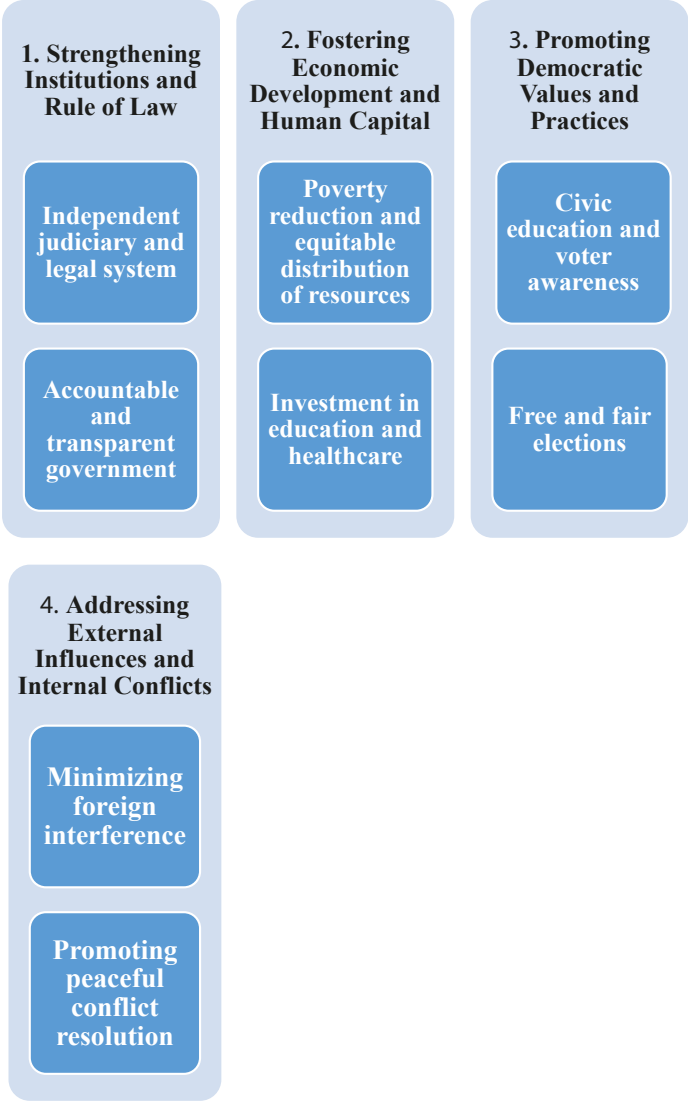


Figure: 2 A Frameworks for Promoting Democracy in Developing Nations

From the above figure, it can be observed that an impartial legal system helps in enforcing the rule of law that protects individual rights and fosters public trust in government (Diamond, 1999; Huntington, 1991). Again, the mechanisms for public oversight and holding officials accountable for their

actions are crucial for preventing corruption and abuse of power (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2006). According to Sen (1999), a thriving civil society is essential for promoting democracy and raising levels of public participation. Diverse groups' active participation guarantees that different viewpoints are heard during decision-making, which increases the inclusivity and representation of government. Communities and individuals are empowered to fight for their rights, hold authorities responsible, and participate in the creation of policies when civil society is robust. Civil society organizations develop a more engaged and resilient democratic culture by encouraging communication, trust, and group action. They also foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens, strengthening democratic processes (Sen, 1999). However, addressing economic inequalities and improving living standards can create a more fertile ground for democratic values to take root (Przeworski, 2000). Educating citizens and ensuring access to basic healthcare empowers individuals and fosters critical thinking skills necessary for democratic participation. It also helps them about their rights and responsibilities as participants in a democracy and strengthens the foundation for democratic processes. In any democratic system, the cornerstone lies in the conduct of competitive and inclusive elections that offer genuine choices for voters. These elections serve as a fundamental mechanism not only for the selection of representatives but also for upholding the legitimacy and fostering the accountability of the government. By providing citizens with meaningful opportunities to participate in the political process and make informed decisions, such elections uphold the principles of democracy and ensure that governance remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of the populace. Thus, the integrity and inclusivity of electoral processes are indispensable in safeguarding the

foundations of democratic governance and preserving the trust between the government and its citizens. Therefore, open access to information and diverse perspectives allows for public scrutiny and informed debate, vital components of a healthy democracy. It also helps in avoiding interventions that favour specific regimes or undermine democratic processes which is crucial for fostering organic democratic development. Pogge and Sengupta (2016) critically examine the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the lens of human rights, emphasizing their potential to address global inequalities and promote social justice. They argue that while the SDGs represent a significant step forward from the Millennium Development Goals, they fall short in explicitly integrating human rights principles into their framework. The authors highlight gaps in accountability mechanisms and the lack of focus on structural factors perpetuating poverty and inequality. By aligning the SDGs more closely with human rights standards, they suggest, the international community can create a more effective and equitable framework for sustainable development. Here, SDGs plays an important role in furthering democracy, many of its goals such as judicious use of resources, ensuring gender equality, reducing inequalities, access to water, decent work and economic growth, zero hunger, no poverty, etc. are pertinent to a democratic country, the goals promote inclusive growth an important factor for any democratic government (Pogge, & Sengupta, 2016). Just as the SDGs would flourish in a democratic country, a nation's dedication to the SDGs will enhance its democratic institutions.

5. Conclusion:

The pursuit of human rights and democracy globally is a complex and ongoing process. While challenges remain, numerous countries are actively engaged in promoting these

values through various strategies. Recognizing the need for context-specificity, sustainability, and legitimacy is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness and ethicality of these efforts. By working collaboratively and learning from each other, the international community can continue to advance human rights and democracy around the world. The rise of authoritarian regimes that suppress freedoms and silence dissent makes it difficult to establish democratic values. Poverty and lack of resources can hinder people's full participation in civic life and hold their governments accountable. Navigating the intricacies of cultural norms and universal human rights requires a nuanced approach that considers historical contexts and societal values. While respecting cultural diversity, it's imperative to uphold fundamental principles of human dignity and equality. This balance involves engaging in dialogue, education, and advocacy to promote awareness and understanding of human rights across diverse communities. Moreover, fostering cooperation and collaboration among nations can strengthen the enforcement of international humanitarian laws, ensuring the protection of vulnerable populations during times of conflict. Ultimately, achieving a harmonious equilibrium between cultural sensitivity and human rights promotion is essential for fostering a more just and inclusive global society. This fosters a more just and secure global order. The international community needs to work together to promote human rights and democracy. Efforts will be more effective if seen as legitimate by the targeted countries. This means avoiding double standards and respecting the sovereignty of nations.

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