



## Critical theory and the influence of non-governmental organizations on human rights in Nigeria

Olanrewaju Oluwaseun

Academics Stand Against Poverty, West Africa, Lagos, Nigeria

### Abstract

The concept of human rights officially dates back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. As signatories to international instruments, most countries consented to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, it is disappointing to observe that all over the world, human rights violations remain unabated as a result of non-commitment on the part of governments to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights. The lack of commitment to human rights goals by governments creates the vacuum for Non-Governmental Organizations to intervene on human rights issues. Human rights Non-Governmental Organizations therefore act as watchdogs, monitoring the activities of governments as they affect the human rights of citizens. Consequently, this paper seeks to examine the influence of Non-Governmental Organizations on human rights with a specific focus on Nigeria. This paper adopts a holistic view to enable a deeper understanding of how human rights is constructed. On the other hand, while this paper seeks to assess the influence of Non-Governmental Organizations on human rights in Nigeria, there is the reality that stirs from the impossibility to engage this topic by reviewing the activities of all human rights Non-Governmental Organizations in the country. Having this in mind, what obtains therefore is an analysis of the activities of smaller proportion of human rights Non-Governmental Organizations whose activities have recorded major influence on human rights.

**Keywords:** critical theory, non-governmental organizations, human rights, influence, Nigeria

### Introduction

Over the past 40 years, the concept of human rights has become increasingly relevant in global political affairs. This is added to the fact that human rights are universal rights and as Donnelly (2003, p.1) describes, "if human rights are the rights one has simply because one is a human being, as they are thought to be, then they are held universally by all human beings, they also hold universally against all other persons and institutions". Human rights are fundamental to human existence for they form a significant part of how people interact at different strata of the society. In this regard, respect for human rights is expected to be observed as a guiding principle during human interactions. Conversely, human rights violations occur at different levels of interactions within the society; family, schools, organizations as well as governance. Hence, drawing importance to the need for the global humanitarian community to give more attention to the theme of human rights.

Globally, the struggle for human rights protection necessitated the formation of human rights Non-Governmental Organizations. Nigeria, which this paper focuses on, is not an exception. The struggle against injustice by Non-Governmental Organizations gained prominence during military rule due to massive abuse of power. However, efforts by human rights Non-Governmental Organizations in advocating against human rights abuses has transcended military rule, as human rights violations remain prevalent in democratic Nigeria.

Related to this, when viewed from a theoretical perspective, the struggle against human rights abuses aligns with the emancipatory idea of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory,

(Horkheimer, 1937[1972]; Adorno, 1973) <sup>[16]</sup>. Horkheimer (1937, p.242) <sup>[16]</sup> in distinguishing between two theories: traditional and critical theory, stated that; "the purpose underlining critical as opposed to traditional conceptions of theory is to improve human existence by abolishing all forms of injustice". In effect, a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation. Emancipation connotes freedom from oppression and in this instance, oppression that emanates from breaching and violating the human rights of individuals, members of a particular class or citizens of a country.

In view of the above, this paper seeks to examine and evaluate the influence of Non-Governmental Organizations on human rights in Nigeria. To fulfil this goal, this paper will firstly define the terms that underscore the topic of the paper. These terms are: human rights, Non-Governmental Organization and influence. Since the abolition of injustice is at the centre of critical theory, this paper offers a theoretical framework on how human rights is constructed. Furthermore, this paper explains the link between Non-Governmental Organizations and human rights. In addition, it creates the connection between critical theory and human rights Non-Governmental Organizations.

Ultimately, by critically engaging the above themes, this paper seeks to make propositions on how Non-Governmental Organizations should overcome challenges that confront them in order to be more effective. It therefore proposes a way forward for human rights Non-Governmental Organizations in Nigeria as non-state actors that 'supposedly' have the influence to improve human rights conditions, but are faced with various obstacles which militate against their effectiveness.

## Study Area

Nigeria is a country in West Africa and shares borders with the Republic of Benin in the west, Cameroon in the East, Niger and Chad in the north and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. The total area of Nigeria is 923,768kilometres square. 910,768kms of that is land, while water takes up 13,000kms (Ministry of Environment, 2003, p. 1) <sup>[22]</sup>. With a population of about 170 million people, the country is made up of 36 states; divided into 768 local governments, a federal capital territory, 250 ethnic groups and languages. Despite huge revenue from oil export, there is severe poverty as over 70% of Nigerians are classified poor. The country is plagued by mal-administration, insecurity and in general human rights violations. It is expected that since Nigeria has ratified international and regional human rights instruments, it is obligated to take appropriate steps to protect the rights of its citizens. Nevertheless, human rights violations still occur in large proportion daily.

## Defining human rights

The idea of human rights is fundamental to human existence. They are rights we are entitled to by virtue of being human. Everyone acquires a human rights status at birth irrespective of gender, tribe, nationality or political, economic and social status of parents. Therefore, human rights are unconditional, natural and should be respected, promoted and in no circumstances be infringed. Any form of abuse or discrimination against someone violates that person's right and signifies an attempt to reduce his or her dignity as a human being. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many other documents derived from the Universal Declaration are based on the principle that everyone, no matter who he or she is nor where he or she is, is the subject of rights and is entitled to civil, political as well as economic, social and cultural rights, (Commans *et al*, 2000, p.18) <sup>[9]</sup>. To this end, states have obligations to fulfil human rights principles in accordance with the international standards on human rights and ensure that the rights of citizens are respected, promoted and protected. The fulfilment of human rights principles by states will ensure a just and equitable society, free of oppression and discrimination, where everyone feels the worth of being human.

## Non-governmental Organizations (NGOS)

The term Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) clearly signifies that they are autonomous and separate from government institutions. Hence, NGOs are not subject to the influence of governments as they are not agents of government. Rather, NGOs seek to influence government policies, actions and decisions that subvert the human rights of citizens, contrary to international human rights standards as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as other charters on human rights. As described by Ikelegbe (2005) <sup>[19]</sup> "NGOs as part of the civil society refers to an essentially participatory, broad based and self-governing formation engaged in shaping public affairs, public policy and governance". NGOs act as agents of change within and across national boundaries. In the light of the above, NGOs advocate for change and influence government decisions by mobilising actions against unpopular policies. It is essential to note that

the activities of NGOs transcend the objectives of influencing government policies as over the years numerous NGOs have emerged with various missions and services ranging from; health care to community services. From this realm, NGOs seek to compliment the efforts of governments, as it becomes obvious that government institutions particularly in developing countries cannot adequately meet the needs of every individual within the society. While NGOs should be viewed holistically as agents of change, the term should not be analysed from the singular notion of advocacy against governments and their agents. Against this backdrop, it would be appropriate to analyse NGOs from a broader view as dynamic and selfless with the vision to affect lives as well as societies positively from diverse perspectives through various and well defined operational strategies.

Having identified the functions of NGOs, it is noteworthy to state that this paper concerns itself with the influence of NGOs on human rights within the geographical context of Nigeria. In this regard, it is therefore apt to give an in-depth explanation of the objectives of human rights NGOs. But firstly, it is important to lay a proper foundation by giving a reasonable definition of influence.

## Influence

In everyday usage, the word influence is widely used but not always clearly defined. Given this understanding, influence can mean different things to different people depending on who is defining and probably based on his or her perception. Scholars such as Parsons (1963) <sup>[27]</sup>; Brocas and Carrico (2007, p.931) <sup>[7]</sup> define influence as the ability to have an effect on the attitudes and opinions of others in order to take actions that align with the interest of the influencer. Perhaps, the Oxford English Dictionary (2010) <sup>[26]</sup> gives a more informative definition of influence as the "capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone, or something, or the effect itself".

Having defined influence, for the purpose of this paper, it is important to give answers to these questions: who is influencing who? How is this influence being effected? And for what purpose? Influence from the perspective of this paper is interpreted to mean the ability of human rights Non-Governmental Organizations to have a positive effect on the attitudes, opinions and decisions of policy makers and stakeholders in government through advocacy in order to promote respect for human rights principles.

The above raises a pointer to three germane questions: what is the relationship between human rights and Non-Governmental Organizations? How do Non-Governmental Organizations influence human rights? And lastly, what level of influence do Non-Governmental Organizations have on human rights? For clarity of purpose, the next section attempts to give answers to these questions by discussing the links between Non-Governmental Organizations and human rights.

## Non-Governmental Organizations and Human Rights

The importance of Non-Governmental Organizations in any society cannot be underestimated. Over the past 50 years, NGOs in one way or the other have been involved in human rights issues. As illustrated by Posner (1997, p.627) <sup>[28]</sup>, "for the first fifteen years after the adoption of the Universal

Declaration, the discussion of human rights issues at the United Nations were largely a discussion among states. However, in the 1960's the debate began to be more inclusive, opening the way for the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations". Human rights NGOs promote human rights through advocacy and challenge states for non-implementation of human rights principles. In propagating the concept of human rights, NGOs adopt certain strategies to hold governments responsible for human rights violations. These strategies include conducting research on human rights abuses and providing research findings through information campaigns, press release, taking court action and instigating public support against dehumanising policies. Dada (2013, p.9) <sup>[11]</sup> points out that NGOs agitate either individually or in collaboration with other civil societies, for the abolition of anti-human rights legislation, policies and programmes. Sometimes, Human rights NGOs work in collaboration with governments to fulfil policies that are favourable towards the entrenchment of human rights norms. The above means that human rights NGOs either work in collaboration with governments or as watch dogs against government policies that are detrimental to the attainment of human rights goals. As Welch (2001, p.3) <sup>[31]</sup> rightly stated, human rights NGOs have "concentrated their efforts on working with or against governments in developing agendas for action; in standard setting, that is establishing international norms for state behaviour set forth in legally binding treaties that have been negotiated and ratified by governments". The fundamental objectives of human rights NGOs are to promote and protect internationally recognised human rights, educate the public on their rights and obligations, and lend support to victims of human rights abuses.

### **Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations in Nigeria**

Although this paper seeks to closely examine the influence of Non-Governmental Organizations on human rights in Nigeria without narrowing it down to specific human rights NGOs. Nonetheless, it will not be out of context to at least give a background of some prominent human rights NGOs in Nigeria. They include; Civil Liberty Organization (CLO), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Legal Defense and Assistance Project (LEDAP), Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW).

The Civil Liberty Organization (CLO) is one of the largest human rights organizations in Nigeria and pioneered contemporary human rights activism in Nigeria. It was founded by a group of lawyers in 1987, after receiving complaints from people who had been victims of abuses of state power (Civil Liberty Organization, 1994, p.121) <sup>[8]</sup>. It was established for the defense and expansion of human rights and civil liberties. Parts of its program include investigating human rights abuses, campaigns, publications and intervening on behalf of people whose rights have been abused by bringing same to the attention of the government.

The Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) was established in 1989 sequel to campaigns for the release of Beko Ransome Kuti and Femi Aborishade in 1985 and 1988 respectively (Mustapha, 2001) <sup>[23]</sup>. It has a wide membership base composed of people from divergent professional

backgrounds. CDHR emphasises on trainings and continuous trainings of its members in its defence of the rights of citizens. The organization has consistently campaigned against issues that basically affect the economic, social and cultural rights of the people.

Legal Defense and Assistance Project (LEDAP) was Founded in 1997 by a group of lawyers working for the release of political prisoners. The organization has grown to over 1700 members across Nigeria with headquarters in Lagos and branch offices in five states (LEDAP, 2010). LEDAP's members are lawyers or persons that have received professional legal training. The organization provides free legal support to poor and vulnerable citizens that suffer human rights violations.

Amnesty International (AI) is an organization that campaigns internationally against human rights abuses. With over 7 million members and subscribers in more than 160 countries, they conduct research and generate action to prevent and end grave abuses of human rights and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated (Amnesty International, 2015) <sup>[4]</sup>. Amnesty international became prominent in Nigeria with the arrest of late musician, Fela Kuti in 1984 by campaigning against his illegal detention until his eventual release in 1986.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is a global organization that protects the human rights of people around the world. The organization challenges governments to respect International human rights norms, investigates and exposes human rights violations and hold abusers accountable (Human rights watch, 2013) <sup>[17]</sup>. In Nigeria, Human rights watch became popular during military rule and its activities gained momentum during the regime of dictatorial ruler Sani Abacha.

Although, human rights NGOs in Nigeria adopt various operational strategies, they however share certain similar characteristics. Firstly, for human rights NGOs to attain a legal status and gain government recognition, they must be registered at the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) which is a government institution that registers and documents newly established organizations in Nigeria. The organizational structure of these NGOs consists of Trustees that serve as Advisory board, as well as a Coordinator or an Executive Director who serves as Administrator-in-chief of the organization. Secondly, human rights NGOs are established by elites who reside in the cities, as a result, their activities are mostly centred within the cities. Thirdly, human rights NGOs exist independent of the government. They have no participation or representation of government at any level. Lastly, human rights NGOs collaborate on common issues and even form coalitions to ensure that they influence government policies. A good example is a coalition of human rights NGOs that formed an alliance with other civil society groups, known as Campaign for Democracy (CD) in order to challenge the excesses of military rule (Akinrinade, 2002) <sup>[3]</sup>. Their collaborative efforts demonstrate that human rights NGOs have a common objective to promote and protect human rights in Nigeria.

On another note, Human rights NGOs engage in practices that militate against their effectiveness. Most human rights NGOs focus their projects and programs on urban areas (Okafor, 2006) <sup>[24]</sup>. The consequence of this is a neglect of the rural

population, while a large proportion of the urban population benefit from the activities of these organizations. Secondly, human rights NGOs have been criticised for the absence of women in prominent positions within their organizations. It is contradictory that same organizations that campaign for gender equality will suppress women from taking prominent positions within their organizations. Thirdly, there exist within most human rights NGOs autocratic tendencies which makes it difficult for these organizations to function and be governed on democratic values. An undemocratic structure of governance has in some cases led to the diminishing progress or extinction of these NGOs due to the failure of the leaders to value and acknowledge the contributions of other members towards the growth of the organization. Furthermore, human rights NGOs have been criticised for cultivating and adopting a violent style of language. In their pursuit of human rights advocacy, NGOs address government officials using derogative words and unprintable names. The violent style of language among human rights NGOs makes it difficult for the “controversial issues arising between them and stakeholders in government to be easily addressed through dialogue, understanding and consensus” (Balogun, 2011, p.13) <sup>[6]</sup>. The last and a major criticism is predicated on corruption. Just like government officials, human rights NGOs have become vulnerable to corruption. Corruption creates a contradiction between their fundamental objectives and what they actually set out to achieve. The above opposing objectives hamper their reputation and dissolves their will power to confront the government on human rights abuses as it exposes their moral deficiencies. Corruption has become a bane to the effective functioning of human rights NGOs, it affects their fundamental objectives to promote and defend the human rights of the populace.

### **Critical Theory and Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations**

Using critical theory as a theoretical framework for analysing this paper emphasises the connection between critical theory and human rights NGOs. This paper therefore suggests an alternative avenue to explore and potentially to better understand the influence Non-Governmental Organizations have on human rights in Nigeria. Crucially, it is important to give an adequate explanation of what a theory is. Theories help in understanding the world. As articulated by Dunne, Kukri and Smith (2013) “The social world is one in which individuals exist within powerful economic, political, social, gendered, racial, linguistic, and moral structures; and when it comes to explaining actions, we are, whether we like it or not, in the realm of theory”. To this end, theories offer an account of why things happen or why they never happened. Theories give a sense of direction as to why events occur and by virtue of this offer probable solutions on complex issues. If Cox’s (1981, p.128) <sup>[10]</sup> statement that “[t]heory is always for someone and some purpose” is to be considered, then a consensus can be reached that critical theory stands for a purpose. The purpose that underlines critical theory cannot be divorced from its origin. On this note, it is essential to give an historical account of its evolution. Though critical theory existed prior to the 20th century, in the 1930s, it became closely associated with the Frankfurt school. The Frankfurt

school of Critical Theory emerged in response to the horrors of class oppression in the society. Given the above, a major concern of the Frankfurt school was to understand the dominant features of modern society through its historical and social development. Building on Marxian concepts, the school adopted a neo-Marxist philosophy. They envisaged a transition from capitalism to socialism in most European countries and sought to assist the transition by identifying problems which had received inadequate attention in Marxist literature. Soon, the critical ideology gained attention, mostly among students who saw it as a way out from social inequalities that existed at the time. Its leading proponents were Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse who belonged to the first generation. Proponents of critical theory in the later wave, also known as the second generation include Jurgen Habermas and Axel Honneth.

In the introductory section, there was an attempt to create a link between critical theory and the activities of human rights Non-Governmental Organizations. To reiterate, according to Horkheimer (1937, p.242) <sup>[16]</sup> “the purpose underlining critical as opposed to traditional conceptions of theory is to improve human existence by abolishing all forms of injustice”. Critical theory provokes a shift from conventional thoughts and approaches to a radical and non-conformist approach in challenging domineering social forces for emancipatory purposes.

In the context of human rights, critical theory is concerned with the ideology that respect and promotion of human rights will enhance human freedom. Critical theory is therefore practical to the extent that it pursues human emancipation in circumstances of oppression. The practicality of the critical ideology has led to the emergence of a dynamic civil society, to which Non-Governmental Organizations belong. By adopting the critical ideology of freedom and justice, human rights NGOs seek to contribute to individual and societal transformation. Critical theory recognises the fact that theories are mostly embedded in social and political life, specifically this activates an examination of the purposes it serves as a theory in explaining social issues. Utilising the conceptions of critical theory to explain societal issues entails maximizing its essential features; it then becomes important to bring to memory these distinct features that define critical theory. In his 1937 essay titled “Traditional and Critical Theory”, Horkheimer identifies five distinguishing features of critical theory; the subject and object fusion, the world as a social totality, reification, history and most significantly emancipation. While these features are intertwined and cannot be discussed in isolation; it is the theme of emancipation that creates the foundation for critical theory as a theoretical framework in analysing this paper. Emancipation defines the interconnection between critical theory and the activities of human rights NGOs through their end goal of achieving justice for the oppressed, and further creates the space for theory to be tested against reality. Logically, the appropriateness of analysing the activities of human rights NGOs through the theme of emancipation will be justifiable, since critical theory aims at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all forms. For both orientations: critical theory and human rights NGOs, it is the world of humans that matter.

Realistically, critical theory calls our attention to injustice as it rejects oppression in every form and aims to abolish sufferings by challenging social structures inhibiting human freedom. Adorno contended that the concrete reality of human suffering must not only be made known but should unequivocally be given a voice, and as he maintained; “The need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition for all truth” (Adorno, 1973, pp 17-18) <sup>[1]</sup>. From this dimension, it is easy to come to terms with the fact that NGOs through numerous activities of propagating the entrenchment of human rights initiatives in every area of human life contribute to lending a huge voice to suffering. The forgoing identifies with the commitments of human rights NGOs as demonstrated by their activities and profound attribute of volunteerism. In a similar vein, it expresses the relationship and collaboration among human rights NGOs both locally and internationally, with a monotonous mission to liberate as well as protect humans from circumstances that enslave or may enslave them. As Horkheimer describes (1937, p.244) <sup>[16]</sup> those with critical attitude are those who recognise that society constructs rule for them that ought to be questioned rather than to be followed blindly. As a result, critical theory encourages people not only to critique their circumstances, but to become actively engaged in bringing about change. Change such as the one advocated for by critical theorist and human rights NGOs can only come about through the rational organization of human activity. Significantly, the objective of critical theory is to analyse the underlying social structures which result in abuses, in the realm of this paper human rights abuses and with reference to Horkheimer (1972, p.206) <sup>[16]</sup> the motive of such analysis is done with the intention of overcoming those abuses.

The above features notwithstanding, critical theory has come under intense criticism for its inability to create a link between theory and praxis (Arden, 1958; Wolin 1987, pp43-44). This paper admits that the idea of emancipation based on freedom for all human beings is a near impossibility as the definition as well as interpretation of freedom are subjective, difficult to ascertain and can be viewed from various scopes. Contrarily, it argues that the ideas on which critical theory is conceived cannot be disregarded. The whole inhabitants of the world may not be emancipated; but it is incontestable that critical theory motivates human forces towards ensuring the establishment of unprejudiced institutions that seek to assure freedom and justice in the society. This creates the basis for the intervention of NGOs in human rights issues. In this regard, human rights NGOs advocate for the protection of human rights and on this basis, it is widely acknowledged that they seek freedom and progress for humanity.

### **Critical Theory and the Influence of Non-Governmental Organizations on Human Rights in Nigeria.**

The connection between critical theory and human rights NGOs was established in the last section. Objectively, the rationale for applying critical theory to the influence of human rights NGOs in Nigeria is to propose alternative and supplementary recommendations to existing measures in order to strengthen human rights NGOs to engage positively towards the needs of the Nigerian populace. As highlighted earlier, the features of critical theory are: the fusion between

subjects and objects, the world as a social totality, reification, history and emancipation.

Critical theory does not distinguish between subjects (humans) and objects (social world). In effect, critical theory argues that there is nothing independent of the social world. The social world is full of activities and the society does not exist in nothingness. There is an inevitability of interactions in the social world, as such, it is an encompassing space where activities and events take place. Precisely, the activities of human rights NGOs are conceived, planned and executed within the social world, just as their activities impact the social world. Reasonably therefore, human rights NGOs cannot exist and function without a social world; a country, state or community within which to express their advocacy. On the other hand, the activities of subjects define the social world, and the social world will be meaningless without subjects. Thus, both subjects and objects cannot exist in isolation of each other for the purpose of relevance. To that extent, critical theory requires that human beings become “producers of their social life in its totality” (Horkheimer 1972, p.244) <sup>[16]</sup>. Critical theory uses the society as its object of analysis. NGOs are the subject, while Nigeria serves as the object with reference to the topic of this paper, Critical theory and the influence of Non-Governmental Organizations on human rights in Nigeria. Here, Nigeria as the object is analysed as a social world in which human rights NGOs have an influence. In this analysis, the relevance of NGOs is expressed within their medium of influence in a social world identified as Nigeria. Consequently, laying credence to the interconnectedness between subjects and objects as a feature of critical theory.

Furthermore, critical theory sees the world as a social totality. The resultant effect is that the social world has an effect on human beings because it is a space for relationships and interactions. Horkheimer (1937, p.211) <sup>[16]</sup> emphasized that “critical thinking is the function neither of the isolated individual nor of a sum total of individuals; its subject is a definitive individual in his real relation to other individuals and groups, and in his conflict with a particular class and finally in the resultant web of relationship with social reality”. As people interact, the elements of influence come into force from respect and admiration that people have for others, and for the authority individuals, organizations, institutions as well as the government have over others. Every human being is endowed with rights and as individuals interact, it is expected that they bear in mind respect for the rights of others, just as they are entitled to their own rights. Equally, governments as agent of states should respect, promote and protect the rights of citizens. The violation of individual rights or collective rights of a group of people emanate from social interactions. Positively, human rights NGOs make efforts to protect individuals and the majority of citizens from violations and abuses by other individuals or the government and its agents. From the foregoing, human rights NGOs seek to influence human rights by challenging existing norms that are contrary to the promotion and protection of human rights, including the institutions that create such norms. At various times, human rights NGOs have informed the public of human rights violations in varying degrees emanating from diverse relationships and interactions, between individuals as well as

the government and citizens. Similarly, NGOs canvass against arbitrary government policies that are not only repressive but also inimical to the human rights interest of the people. It is from this view of government falling short of the international standards on human rights of what ought to be, that an allusion should be made to the normativity of critical theory with respect to the objectives of human rights NGOs to ensure that government conforms with globally acceptable human rights standards.

In this narrative, the concrete existence of Nigeria is brought to reality. Through an analysis of the activities of human rights NGOs, Nigeria gains significance as it represents the object of analysis, without which the activities of human rights NGOs would become insignificant. An examination of the activities of Human rights NGOs therefore reifies Nigeria as a descriptive entity with a past, present and future as though it were human. By placing emphasis on history, critical theory seeks to understand the origin and essence of a social process. It also examines the process to see if there is any possibility for change that might be implicit in it. To that extent, critical theory is descriptive and seeks to analyse the state of affairs that confronts human beings by understanding the root causes. The history of human rights in Nigeria dates back to its creation as a nation in 1914 upon the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates during colonial rule. Colonialism represented the subjugation of a peoples' will and freedom to determine their identity in obvious contradiction to human rights principles. Regardless of the above, the historical conception of human rights in this paper will be limited to post-colonial rule in Nigeria, as it is expected that an independent Nigeria, governed by Nigerians will embrace and promote the principles of equity, social inclusion and human rights as the foundation of justice. In this vein, a comparative assessment of how human rights fared under two separate systems of government: military rule and civilian rule shall be evaluated.

On January 15, 1966 Nigeria witnessed its first military intervention in government. Although the coup was not successful, the military regime of Aguyi Ironsi that seized power upon the failure of the coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu suspended most articles of the constitution and replaced them with decrees promulgated to cement the authoritarian character of military regimes. Subsequent military regimes from 1966-1979 and 1983-1999 in no nominal measure contributed to the alarming scale of human rights abuses that occurred within these periods. During military rule, human rights defenders were targeted, arrested and imprisoned for confronting the legitimacy and dictatorship of military regimes that had obvious negative impacts on the political development of Nigeria. Majority of citizens lived in perpetual fear without the courage to express their fundamental rights due to the authoritative character of the military rulers. According to Dada (2013, p.84) <sup>[11]</sup> Military rule was "characterized by arbitrariness, impunity, lengthy detention without trial and other egregious human rights violations". In 1993, the Babangida regime (1985-1993) abused the electoral rights of Nigerians with the annulment of the presidential election of June 12 that has been adjudged by political observers as the freest and fairest in the annals of elections in Nigeria. On its part, the Abacha government

(1993-1998) was reputable for its suppression of the rule of law and human rights. Activist that opposed his military government were jailed or murdered. Nigeria was suspended in 1995 from the Commonwealth of Nations for the murder of author and human rights activist Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others in their agitation to liberate their Ogoni community in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria from political, economic and social exploitations. Without doubt, military rule undermined the freedom of the Nigerian people as obnoxious decrees were promulgated to subvert human rights and justice. The return to civilian rule created the opportunity for the principles of human rights that were hitherto suppressed and undermined during the dark years of military rule to be enforced. On the contrary, violation of human rights has continued to plague the Nigerian society. Since the inception of democracy, Nigerians have witnessed a disturbing increase in the spate of human rights violations in diverse forms; military massacres, communal infractions, infrastructural challenges, religious conflicts, environmental despoliation as well as electoral violence. The most disturbing is the state of insecurity in the nation. It is a general notion that human rights principles thrive in a democratic environment of peace and security. Disappointingly, Nigeria has witnessed a number of security challenges associated with kidnapping, armed robbery, police brutality, arms proliferation, militancy and Boko Haram insurgency. Worst still, human rights violations are perpetrated by security forces against unarmed civilians and authorities do not hold them accountable for these violations. A plethora of human rights violations have been recorded under Nigeria's democratic dispensation from the Obasanjo administration which ushered democratic rule in 1999 to the present administration of president Buhari. It is however impracticable to give a detailed account of human rights violations from 1999 till this very present time, as they are numerous and an attempt to delve into same will require more space than this paper can accommodate. Irrespective of the above, it would be appropriate to refresh our memories on certain human rights violations in Nigeria's democracy as their gravity implies that efforts should be made to resist their future occurrence. During Obasanjo's administration, there were military reprisal attacks against civilians in Odi, Bayelsa state, following the murder of twelve members of the Nigeria Police Force by a militant group as well as in Zaki Biam, Benue state for the murder of nineteen soldiers during conflicts between the Tiv and Jukun ethnic groups in Benue and Taraba states (Osa, 2008, p.51). In 2008, violence erupted following local government elections in Jos, Plateau state which led to the death of scores of people when it degenerated into inter-communal violence. Corruption was the bane under the administration of Goodluck Jonathan as it gained enormous propensity, thus, affecting the civil, social and economic rights of Nigerians. Security chiefs diverted and appropriated for personal gains, security funds in millions of dollars disbursed by the government to combat the Boko Haram menace in the North East of the country. Their callous and insensitive dispositions towards the lives and safety of citizens resident in the North East increased the number of casualties as the army lacked the weaponry to defeat the militant group, Boko Haram. In the present dispensation of president Buhari, the army massacred over 300 members of

the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, Shiites in Zaria, Kaduna State in December 2015, destroyed their worship centres and captured their leader Shiek Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and his wife after killing his sons. The government has refused to release Shiek Ibrahim El-Zakzaky in spite of the order given by an Abuja High Court on December 2, 2016 that the Shiek and his wife be released within forty-five days of the judgment (Ajayi, 2017). Apparently, the government has failed in its primary responsibility of protecting the human rights of the citizens raising concerns on the influence of human rights NGOs in Nigeria.

The history of NGOs in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial era. As Falola and Heaton (2008, p.209) <sup>[14]</sup> opined ‘‘Prior to independence in 1960, NGOs existed as part of civil society organization and in collaboration with nationalists against the colonialist’’. After independence but before the advent of military into politics, NGOs remained effective but greater parts of their activities were not directed towards political and social activism. The struggle against injustice by NGOs gained prominence during military rule in the 1980’s when the actions of the military government became intolerable. The draconian character of military rule led to the formation of numerous human rights NGOs to serve as opposition to the prevalent oppression of the military and to force them to relinquish power for democracy to be restored. It was expected that democracy as a governing system would provide the space for individuals to influence their political, economic as well as social life. Therefore, removing the military from political power was the fundamental goal of human rights NGOs within this era. The restoration of democracy served as a launch pad for human rights NGOs to ensure the emancipation of citizens from the dominant forces of oppression and to contribute assiduously to the promotion of human rights in order to create social equilibrium. On this foundation, human rights NGOs have remained active, initiating various programs and projects with the aim to promote and protect the human rights of citizens in democratic Nigeria. Sadly, human rights abuses remain unabated in every facet of human life despite the promises that ushered in democracy.

Fundamentally, critical theory calls for social change through its emancipatory ideology. From a panoramic view, critical theory is a practical and transformatory theory that instigates radical social change. As explained by Horkheimer (1972, p.244) <sup>[16]</sup> ‘‘critical theory does not simply present an expression of concrete historical situation, it also acts as a force within that situation to stimulate a change’’. Critical theory therefore allows for intervention of humans in making their history as it goes beyond the historical narrative of a particular social process to instigate a change from oppression and injustice. Importantly, critical theory confronts the irrationality entrenched in a social process with the purpose to emancipate the subjugated. Horkheimer (1972) <sup>[16]</sup> realized that anti-democratic trends, such as human rights abuses gradually undermine the realisation of an expressive whole, with the consequence that ‘‘the situation of the individual is hopeless’’. By rejecting the existing bad society and calling for a more humane society, human rights NGOs seek for societal transformation by challenging existing norms and institutional structures contrary to international standards on human rights

and the entrenchment of democratic principles in Nigeria. In seeking for the entrenchment of human rights principles, human rights NGOs adopt various operational strategies to achieve their objectives. However, in assessing the fulfilment of human rights obligations by the government, human rights NGOs adhere to the international standards on human rights as contained in the documents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other charters on human rights. These are; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These rights will be examined vis-a-vis the activities of human rights NGOs in order to examine their influence on human rights in Nigeria.

### **Civil and political rights**

Civil rights are a set of rights that ensure the peaceful cohabitation of individuals within a society without any form of infringement from government and other individuals. Political rights enable individuals to participate in the political life of a state to which they belong without any form of discrimination. These rights include; right to life, right to raise a family, protection of individual freedom, right to assemble, freedom of expression, protection against torture, freedom from arbitrary detention and the right to vote. While human rights NGOs in Nigeria have engaged in civil and political rights advocacy, the influence of these NGOs have been limited to democratization of Nigeria, human rights litigation, media rights, human rights monitoring and documentation, as well as administration of justice.

Human Rights NGOs such as Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), The Campaign for Democracy (CD), The Movement for National Reformation (MNR), Constitutional Rights Projects (CRP), Committee for The Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and Democratic Alternative (DA) played a crucial role in restoring Nigeria to democracy after long years of military intervention in governance (Mustapha, 2001) <sup>[23]</sup>. These NGOs boldly condemned military intervention in politics having realized that respect for the rule of law, constitutionalism and human rights can only be achieved under a democratic system of government that guarantees the freedom and liberty of every citizen. Through the aid of international governments as well as support from international NGOs, human rights NGOs in Nigeria actively canvassed against military regimes. On May 29, 1999 democracy was restored in Nigeria after long years of arbitrary military rule. In terms of human rights litigation, some NGOs such as Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP), Lift Above Poverty Organization (LAPO), BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) and Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS) have provided free legal services to poor citizens through legal aid as well as access to justice programs. Human rights NGOs have also influenced media rights in Nigeria. Some NGOs provide legal assistance to journalists whose rights have been violated in the course of their professional responsibilities, especially in relation to freedom of expression. Even though there is a huge gap as to its implementation, human rights NGOs influenced the passage of the Freedom of information bill into law by the

National Assembly on May 24, 2011 and same received the assent of former president, Good luck Jonathan on May 28, 2011. Additionally, a host of human rights NGOs monitor and document human rights abuses with the objective to critically assess and analyse the nature of human rights violations. One of such NGOs is the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL). An important reason for documenting human rights abuses is to create an appropriate historical record of human rights violations in Nigeria. Given the fact that history provides a deep insight towards understanding and resolving complex issues, it would be inappropriate not to admit the impact of Human Rights NGOs through documentation of human rights abuses. In the area of administration of justice, Human Rights NGOs have made consequential impact, for instance, Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP) has as one of its core objectives to improve human rights conditions through the administration justice system in the country by organising consultative forum for judges, prosecutors and lawyers. By mid-2004, LEDAP had trained between 400 and 500 Shari'a court judges in Kano, Katsina, Bauchi and Jigawa states, and about 10 percent of prosecutors from these states (Tertsakian, 2004, p.72). Similarly, The Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) collaborated with the Danish Centre for Human Rights, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Judicial Institute, in training over 200 lower court judges in human rights jurisprudence under its Administration of Justice Programme (Ibhawoh, 2001, p.56) <sup>[18]</sup>. As a result of their efforts, these NGOs have informed judicial thoughts, indirectly shaped judicial decisions and redirected the focus of judges on the importance of enforcing human rights principles through the courts. Progressively, this has impacted on judicial judgements, influenced the modification of the legal system, improved public confidence in the judiciary and appealed to the conscience of government, the need to enact and implement laws that will safeguard the human rights of citizens.

Human rights NGOs have yet to exert influence on civil and political rights such as, children's right, disabled rights, gender rights, freedom of information act, electoral rights and minority rights despite the above contributions to the entrenchment of human rights in Nigeria. These aspects of human rights are discussed below.

### **Children's rights**

Generally, in most societies children are often described as the leaders of tomorrow. In effect, it means that children should be nurtured with care and attention as they represent the future of the nation. In Nigeria, the government does not duly protect the rights of children. Although, the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2003 adopted the Child's Rights Act. Nonetheless, only 24 out of 36 states have passed the Child Rights Act into law. The failure of human rights NGOs to influence the implementation of the Child Rights Act in all the 36 states of the federation enhances the vulnerability of the Nigerian child to societal ills, which include; early marriage, street begging, hawking, crime, including rape to mention but few. In states where the Child Rights Acts have been domesticated, there is either no awareness or a low level of awareness among indigenes. Among those aware of the Child's Rights Act, only

few have a knowledge of what it entails. This can be attributed to the fact that human rights NGOs have yet to effectively engage in public enlightenment about the Act.

### **Disability rights**

Apart from been physically challenged, disabled people in Nigeria face several limitations owing to negative social construction and perception of their challenges. The government is yet to enact a legislation to protect the disabled despite signing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on March 30, 2007. Without a legislation to protect the rights of the disabled, their sense of social belonging to the society will be prejudiced. Human rights NGOs have not been able to influence the rights of the disabled through the instrument of law. To give a sense of belonging to the disabled in the society, NGOs need to influence the passage of the disability discrimination bill into law and further ensure its implementation across the nation.

### **Gender and equality opportunities bill**

In 2016, the gender and equality bill could not pass a second reading at the senate as same was perceived as an attack on religious beliefs by some law makers. The bill sought to protect Nigerian women from inhumane and degrading treatment and to accord them the same marital rights as men, including having the rights to inherit their husband's property as widows. It was expected that human rights NGOs should have influenced the passage of the bill at the National Assembly or protested massively against its rejection by the law makers. More so, considering that the bill endorsed the full participation of women in political activities without any form of discrimination.

### **Freedom of Information Act**

Although, human rights NGOs influenced the passage of the Freedom of information bill into law. However, the implementation of the legislation has faced certain challenges due to lack of transparency and openness in public institutions. Lamentably, most citizens remain unaware of the enactment of the Freedom of information (FOI) law. The failure of these NGOs to ensure the implementation of the FOI law through public enlightenment as well as in putting the attitude of secrecy familiar among public servants to check through the process of litigation has affected their influence on human rights, as the law was enacted to ensure transparency and accountability in governance.

### **Electoral Rights**

Election is a characteristic of democracy and in a democratic society, the human rights of the citizens to exercise their right to vote ought to be guaranteed. In contrast, elections in Nigeria have been marred by violence, which threatens the human rights of the citizens. Violence is most often carried out by gangs whose members are recruited by politicians to attack opposing candidates and their supporters, harass members of the public, snatch ballot boxes, cause mayhem and rig elections. Violence and rigging of elections do more than undermine democratic consolidation and have denied citizens their freedom to elect a candidate of their choice. Regrettably, members of the political class who instigate this



litany of violence as well as their agents that carry out these violent acts are never prosecuted.

### **Minority rights**

Since independence, there exist a form of marginalization in Nigeria based on ethnicity. Ethnic marginalization favours indigenes from the majority tribes over those from the minority tribes. The challenges of discrimination faced by the minority not only promote social exclusion and injustice against them, but also have direct negative consequences on their political, social and economic rights. Politically, the major political parties in the country undermine the rights of the minority to aspire to become the president of Nigeria. Although, in principle they operate a zoning formula based on the six Geopolitical Zones in the country, however, in practice, they endorse two major tribes, Hausa and Yoruba for the presidency. Not even the third largest tribe in Nigeria, the Ibo is considered leadership worthy to rule Nigeria. Yet, efforts by human rights NGOs to influence the government in protecting the rights of the minority have not yielded any positive results. At present, there is no enacted legislation to protect and assure the full integration of minority groups into the public sphere of the Nigerian society. For Nigeria to maximise its potentials and attain development, its leaders must suppress every form of tribal orientations and the minorities must be fully integrated into the society in every sphere of human endeavour.

### **Economic, Social and cultural rights**

These rights guarantee that every person be afforded conditions under which they are able to meet their basic needs. Economic and social rights include right to medical care, right to shelter, right to food, right to education, right to infrastructure, right to work, right to social security and protection, and the right to adequate standard of living. On the other hand, cultural rights create the path for an individual to develop his or her personality and identity. At the same time, the protection of culture entails safeguarding the individual's ability to form, to maintain, to reinterpret, and to leave a cultural group (Irina, 2011, p.31) <sup>[20]</sup>. For this reason, respect for individual differences involves a respect for cultural differences and a right to express one's cultural identity.

Some Human rights NGOs, Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR), Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC), Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Foundation for Environmental Rights Advocacy and Development (FENRAD) as well as Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) have over the years focused on issues related to the advancement of economic, social and environmental rights of the populace. SERAP has on several occasions drawn the attention of the international community to the violation of economic and social rights in Nigeria by campaigning against antagonising government policies and actions. In August 2017, SERAP petitioned the International Criminal Court (ICC) over allegations of widespread corruption in the power sector under preceding administrations of Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan. SERAP wanted the Nigerian government to release all accused persons for trial by

ICC should the allegations be considered a crime against humanity (SERAP, 2013). Before the above petition to ICC, SERAP appealed to UN Special Rapporteurs to influence members of the National Assembly to withdraw a bill that seeks to establish a commission to monitor, pre-approve and de-register civil society groups as well as the media in Nigeria. Likewise, ERA, FENRAD and CEHRD have actively been engaged in enlightening Nigerians on the adverse effects of oil spillage, land degradation and other similar activities on the environment and for these reasons, advocate for the protection of the rights to a clean environment. These Human rights NGOs have brought attention to government on the need to fulfil the social and economic rights of Nigerians through their activities. Regardless of the activities of these NGOs, majority of the citizens suffer from violations of economic and social rights as a result of government actions or inactions that lean towards suppression and neglect of these rights. To a very large extent, the denial of these rights is connected to the endemic corruption at all levels of government in Nigeria.

Corruption and the lack of transparency in governance are seen as human rights issues as they make it impossible for government to adequately promote and protect the basic economic and social rights of the people. Gathi (2009, p.126) <sup>[15]</sup> made the effort to explain this correlation when he wrote, "corruption by high level government officials can siphon millions of dollars of the country's wealth, which in turn handicaps the government from fulfilling its duty to protect, ensure, and respect the rights guaranteed to its people". In Nigeria, corruption unceasingly persists among government officials. Although, the law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government has failed to implement the law effectively. Corruption cases against several politicians have either been left unprosecuted or stalled in courts through injunctions. Clearly, this has done more harm to the anti-corruption crusade and has without measure created the grounds for human rights of the populace to be violated.

Human rights NGOs in Nigeria have focused on the issues of corruption and accountability in governance from a human rights perspective. Human rights NGOs were actively involved in lobbying for the passage of the Anti-corruption bill into law in 2002. Efforts by human rights NGOs to influence the passage of the Anti-corruption bill is commendable. But as it stands today, a huge gap still exists between the passage of the bill into law and its implementation. The enactment of the law which should serve as a deterrence against corruption seems non-existent due to its lack of enforcement in prosecuting corrupt government officials. The effect is the diversion of funds meant to facilitate the economic and social rights of the citizens for personal indulgence. This explains the level of poverty in Nigeria, as 70% of the population live below poverty line. Agreeably, where there is poverty, there is bound to be poor standard of living. Poor standard of living is attributable to the denial of economic and social rights such as right to work, right to education, right to food, right to shelter, right to medical care, right to infrastructure, right to security and numerous others.

It is the fact that human rights NGOs raise awareness of the

violation of civil, political, economic and social rights of the citizens. However, raising awareness about human rights violations cannot be ascribed as major influence, if the root causes and social structures that create such violations are not challenged and addressed as emphasised by proponents of critical theory. To be sure, NGOs have a clear understanding of the root causes of human rights violations in Nigeria, from military rule to the present democratic dispensation. Critically, human rights NGOs in Nigeria need to have more than an understanding of the root causes of human rights violations in order to contribute to the political, economic as well as social transformation of Nigeria. The lacuna is evident in their weaknesses to influence action and effect a change against the root causes of human rights abuses such as corruption, marginalisation, ethnicity, poverty, suppression of the rule of law, illiteracy as well as the structural imbalance in governance that permits the political and economic exploitation of the populace. As it appears, human rights NGOs in Nigeria adopt strategies that focus on tackling the consequences and not the causes of human rights violations. Preemptively, human rights NGOs embark on workshops, seminars, conferences, public enlightenment and campaigns to create awareness of human rights issues in Nigeria. The Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) and the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) have produced radio programmes to educate the public and promote awareness of human rights issues (Ibhawoh, 2001, p.55) <sup>[18]</sup>. Their above activities, however lack concrete impact, as most citizens remain unaware of their rights due to illiteracy. Those who are literate are preoccupied with meeting the basic needs of life and to overcome the challenges of poverty. They therefore pay less attention to issues of human rights as it remains secondary or a non-priority to them. Poverty exposes the poor to human rights abuses and also hinders them from confronting the abusers of their rights as they lack the means to institute an action in court when necessary. A detailed examination of the major areas these NGOs have exerted influence; democratisation of Nigeria, Human rights litigation as well as documentation of human rights abuses depict a reactive nature of dealing with the effects of human rights abuses and not tackling the fundamental issues that breed human rights violations. If Human rights NGOs are to serve as agents of change and their objectives contextualised in the notion of critical theory as a theory of social and political change, they need to adopt a radical approach based on addressing social and political deficits from their foundation. Evidently, human rights NGOs are yet to maximise their potentials with the objective to influence the perception of the state and the ordinary citizen on the entrenchment of human rights principles. In view of the forgoing, human rights NGOs need to identify and overcome certain challenges such as lack of internal democracy, lack of clear-cut operational strategies, lack of required skills, concentration of activities in the cities, financial constraints as well as corruption that serve as impediments against their effective functioning.

### Conclusions

The objectives of human rights NGOs the world over has shown that while governments have the responsibility to promote and protect the rights of the citizens, they are neither

the most effective agents nor the sole agents for the protection of human rights. In many cases, governments have violated rather than protect the rights of the citizens. Hence, the need for the intervention of human rights NGOs in promoting human rights. Using Nigeria as a case study and applying critical theory as a theoretical framework for its analysis, this paper justified the intervention of Non-Governmental Organizations on human rights issues.

Assessing the influence of NGOs on human rights exposes the fact that these NGOs have made some positive impacts on human rights in the country. However, there is still a lot to be done for them to achieve their maximum potentials in their aspirations to have a significant influence on human rights in Nigeria. Just as critical theory has been criticised for a failure to establish the link between theory and praxis, human rights NGOs have also failed to establish a positive connection between rhetorics and their actions to influence human rights in the country. The failure of these NGOs to have a huge influence on human rights can be ascribed to the challenges that confront them; which are externally driven on the one hand, and the ineptitude of these NGOs which are internally motivated on the other hand. For NGOs to gain the respect of both members of the public as well as government and ultimately have an influence on human rights, they need to overcome these obstacles that act as a clog in the wheel of their progress. This paper therefore suggests the following recommendations as explained below for the effective functioning of human rights NGOs in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

Human rights NGOs in Nigeria must take certain steps if they are to have a huge influence on human rights. Firstly, to be more effective, it is crucial for NGOs to embrace the principle of internal democracy. To achieve this, they need to have an organised structure of hierarchy with respect for the principles of fairness, equity and justice. Secondly, it is strongly recommended that NGOs engage the services of professionals who have the expertise that NGOs require to monitor, report and act effectively on human rights abuses. Furthermore, most programs and projects of these NGOs must be directed towards vulnerable and poor citizens and should extend beyond urban areas to rural areas. Through this, they will gain public membership and strengthen grassroots support for their activities. By strengthening grassroots support for their activities, they will create the space for more citizens to participate in human rights activism. When more citizens participate in human rights activism, there is bound to be more pressure on the government to respect, promote and protect human rights. More importantly, human rights NGOs should promote the legislation of laws that would make it possible to enforce human rights through the courts, given the fact that existing human rights laws are neither implemented nor enforced by the government. Lastly, if human rights NGOs are to play their advocacy role effectively, they need to overcome the challenge of corruption by imbibing the culture of accountability and transparency. Allegations of corruption among members of the NGO community must be investigated and if found to be true, such persons must be prosecuted in court.

### Issues for further research

Many questions in need for further research have emerged over the course of writing this paper. Firstly, there will be the need for a broader based study that will look into a possible collaboration between human rights NGOs and the private sector in order to confront human rights issues in the country; since financial constraints serve as a challenge to human rights NGOs in achieving their objectives. Secondly, given that NGOs are mostly concentrated in urban areas, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to explore how the spread of NGOs to rural areas will affect cultural practices that remain dominant in those areas and equally violate human rights. Thirdly, further work is also needed to determine if the formation of human rights NGOs solely committed to the promotion of human rights at community levels will give a lift to the efforts of these NGOs in influencing human rights in the country. Notwithstanding the above, this research is significant as it serves as a medium to reawaken Non-Governmental Organizations, desirous of having a positive influence on human rights in Nigeria but have however been blighted by several obstacles. It therefore raised and gave answers to several questions which will be beneficial to human rights NGOs in fulfilling their mandates.

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