

Bridging the Gap: The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Facilitating Victim Compensation

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ABSTRACT

The court system's response to crime includes giving money to victims. It pays victims money that can aid them immediately away, pay for medical and mental health care, and help them get well over time. But many victims can't achieve full retribution because statutory compensation schemes often have problems, such as being hard to get to, not being timely, not being enough, or not being fair. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have become important middlemen around the world, filling these gaps by providing legal help, advocacy, evidence collection, case management, psychosocial support, and direct financial relief. This paper synthesises the literature and policy reports concerning the role of NGOs in facilitating victim compensation, analyses representative case studies from India, the United Kingdom, and the United States, identifies structural and operational challenges encountered by NGOs, and offers policy and practice recommendations to improve public-NGO partnerships and guarantee that victims receive timely and adequate compensation. The analysis employs reports and studies from international organisations, national programs, and NGO networks to demonstrate that, when sufficiently funded and formally integrated into compensation frameworks, NGOs significantly improve access to compensation and enhance the quality of redress for victims.

Keywords: Rape, Victim, Compensation, Legal, Crime, NGO, Barriers, NALSA, Rape Survivors.

INTRODUCTION:

Paying crime victims helps the government reach many of its goals. It helps victims get back on their feet, recognises their sorrow, and can even motivate them to work with the criminal justice system (UNODC; World Bank). But in real life, formal compensation systems, whether they are controlled by governments, courts, or insurance firms, don't operate as effectively as they should. Some of the problems include that the application procedure is hard, the evidence requirements are high, the payments are late, the awards are not always the same, and they don't reach out to groups that are already on the outside. Many qualified victims don't file for or get compensation because of these obstacles, or they get amounts that don't genuinely benefit them.

In this setting, NGOs including community groups, charities that help victims, legal aid clinics, survivor groups, and human rights groups accomplish a lot of different activities. They offer direct assistance, help victims deal with red tape, fight for changes to laws and procedures, keep an eye on how they are being carried out, generate money for urgent relief, and help frontline service workers get better at their jobs. This article analyses the bridging roles of NGOs, evaluates their effectiveness, presents illustrative country case studies, and explores potential policy adjustments to enhance NGO capacities for improving compensation results.

The goal of compensation schemes for victims is to do more than just pay their expenditures. They are ways for society to indicate that it cares about people who have been affected by crime and to assist victims get their lives back on track and feel good about themselves again. International advice (UNODC and associated protocols) considers victim support, including compensation, vital for facilitating access to justice and promoting victim-centered criminal justice solutions. But the way laws are developed and implemented in real life is what will help us attain those goals.

Problems that happen a lot when you want to receive compensated

Recent surveys and evaluations of the program have shown that there are a lot of concerns that keep coming up. Some of these problems are that victims don't know enough about the programs, they have to deal with a lot of paperwork and evidence requirements, they can't reach out to marginalised groups, the adjudication process takes a long time, the agencies in charge don't have enough resources, and the funding is limited, which makes it harder to give out awards. Research done in different places shows that even strong laws might fail when there aren't enough resources to help victims or when there aren't enough resources to help victims. These issues give NGOs a chance to help.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Why compensation is important (policy goals)

Different roles that NGOs might play as middlemen

The literature categorises the responsibilities of NGOs in victim compensation into distinct groups:

1. Information and Outreach: helping people learn more about their rights to compensation and how to get it.
2. Legal and Administrative Help: helping victims fill out forms, gather proof, and speak for them at hearings.
3. Psychosocial and Case Management Support: helping victims get back on their feet while they look for compensation by giving them counselling and services that work together.
4. Advocacy and policy reform entail working to make the government better by getting better laws, more money, and fairer ways of doing things.
5. Monitoring and Accountability—keeping track of payments, pointing out delays or prejudice, and suing when things go wrong in the system.
6. Direct Financial Assistance and Fundraising: Giving people money in an emergency when the state isn't paying them enough or on time.

These functions work together: outreach and information boost applications; legal help makes applications better and more likely to be accepted; psychosocial support helps victims finish processes even though they are traumatised; advocacy fills in gaps in the system; monitoring encourages openness; and emergency funding keeps people from going broke while their claims are being processed. Studies like those done by the World Bank that look at more than one country demonstrate that partnering with NGOs makes it easier for victims to receive services and makes them more adaptable.

METHODOLOGY

This work synthesises peer-reviewed papers, reports from international organisations, guidance from national governments, resources from NGOs, and contemporary investigative journalism to identify patterns and derive policy implications. UNODC publications, World Bank thematic reports on civil society and victims' rights, national studies (like those from India and the UK), and research from independent policy institutes (like NORC) are also important documentation sources. The method is qualitative and comparative, using case studies to explain how NGOs operate in various legal and administrative contexts, while also examining existing evidence of outcomes.

Roles and Mechanisms: How NGOs Help People Get Money

1. Getting the word out and getting in touch

For compensation systems to work, victims need to know what their rights are and how to get them. NGOs often interact with individuals in their communities, utilising outreach strategies that are respectful of the cultures of the people they are seeking to help, such as migrants, informal labourers, survivors of sexual abuse, and children. NGOs run helplines and community seminars. They also work with local media and social networks to get the word out about who can apply, when

they need to, and what documentation they need. Research shows that NGOs that focus their outreach efforts can get more people to apply and cut down on the time it takes to do so.

2. Help with legal and business issues

Many victims are scared away by forms that are hard to fill out, evidence that is hard to find, and procedural traps. Some NGOs that know about the law help people collect the medical records, police reports, and other documents that compensation bodies need. Examples of these NGOs are legal aid clinics, victim law centres, and pro bono programs. In some regions, NGOs can help people at hearings or appeals, which makes it far more likely that they will win and obtain more money. The Windrush compensation case in the UK highlights how not being able to get free legal help can lead to under-awarding. Many victims got a lot more money during later reassessments thanks to independent legal aid. This indicates that seeking legal aid can change how much money you get.

3. Case management and assistance with mental health concerns

Trauma can make it challenging for a victim to deal with government systems. NGOs help victims navigate through the application process by arranging for medical treatment, counselling, temporary lodging, and legal matters. Case managers help victims remember deadlines, set up appointments, ensure sure papers are sent in on time, and talk to the people in charge of compensation. This kind of help makes applications better and keeps more kids in school. UNODC recommendations and research from several countries suggest that integrated victim services work successfully when NGOs are the main providers.

4. Help with money right away and money to get by

When governmental compensation is late, which can happen for months or even years, NGOs step in with emergency grants, crowdsourcing, or collaborations with charitable funds to offer victims cash immediately now for medical care, travel, or basic needs. These things help victims stay stable and avoid becoming homeless while their formal claims are being handled. Studies on compensation systems in the United States show that NGOs and other non-governmental service providers are important for filling the gaps between immediate demands and official payouts.

5. Advocacy, changes to the law, and litigation that are planned

NGOs work for systemic change by gathering proof of delays or unfair practices, asking lawmakers to make more people eligible and make the rules clearer, and advocating improvements to the way things are done, such making forms easier to fill out and deadlines shorter. When it makes sense, NGOs utilise strategic lawsuits to stop unfair or discriminatory practices in government. The World Bank looked at a number of European countries and found that civil society helped make laws and procedures better, which made it simpler for victims to receive support and improved services.

6. Responsibility, keeping an eye on things, and being open

You need to gather data and have someone else look it over to see how well the pay programs are working. NGOs undertake research, issue reports, and put pressure on authorities to make sure that claims and awards are broken down by kind. This kind of transparency can highlight patterns, such how long people have to wait or how different groups of individuals are, and it can lead to improvements that remedy the problems. The NORC/NIJ study in the US shows how helpful independent program assessment is for detecting problems and fixing them.

CASE STUDIES

India: NALSA, DISHA, and the random way that pay schemes are set up

A great example of the functioning of the laws and NGOs is India. India has a Legal Services Authority (NALSA) that assists with compensation schemes and individual states also have their own victim compensation funds, although they are applied differently across the states. Non-governmental organizations such as DISHA among others have been of immense assistance in accessing money to victims particularly women and children as well as struggling to ensure that victim-centered procedures are used. NGO networks also considered the way traffic survivor would get money at the national level. The studies reflect the problems such as the absence of the right papers, the late receiving of certificates and receiving help which is not always the same at the police stations. In order to cure these challenges, NGOs are cooperating with state authorities, establishing legal assistance camps, and conducting documentation drives.

NGOs take part in India by assisting victims to get the records they require through organizing medical-legal camps and enabling them to obtain the credentials they require (such as FIRs and medical reports) and expedite up applications with the state tribunals. NGOs also attempt to ensure that payments are made on a timely basis by obtaining regular procedures and separate and ring-fenced funds. Such programs have simplified the commuter routine in certain states though the system has its loopholes.

The UK: NGOs, legal support, and what we learnt from the Windrush case

The Windrush compensation case highlights what may happen when people don't have enough legal support and the people in charge don't believe the applicants. Investigators found that many claimants didn't win much or any money because they didn't have a lawyer to help them gather evidence or contest erroneous choices. Independent studies showed that instances that got legal help later received substantially bigger awards. This shows how crucial it is to receive help from a lawyer and an NGO to get proper compensation. Because of what happened in the UK, individuals are asking that

compensation plans include money for legal counsel so that everyone has an equal chance of winning.

NGOs in the UK also help people apply for benefits through a range of compensation programs, such as those for victims of modern slavery and criminal injuries. They also work with the government to make it easier to apply. Some programs have changed how they work because of their reports and monitoring.

Programmatic assessments and NGOs working together in the US

State-run U.S. victim compensation programs have given out hundreds of millions of dollars in relief, but they still don't support all of the victims who are qualified. National studies (NORC/NIJ) demonstrate that there are problems with the way things are run, and that NGOs and victim service providers are crucial partners in reaching out to people, helping them apply for services, and organising services. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) gives NGOs money to pay for services that go along with compensation, like case management and legal help. This shows how public funds can help NGOs do their jobs. These findings demonstrate that compensation administrators and community partners need to work together better to reach more individuals and make things more equitable.

Evidence of Effect

There is less quantitative data directly correlating NGO efforts with increased compensation awards, although this is expanding. Evaluations and case audits consistently demonstrate:

- ❖ Legal help increases the number and amount of awards in individual instances, as evidenced by UK Windrush reviews.
- ❖ Targeted outreach and case management assist people finish their applications and cut down on the time it takes to apply (as evidenced by reviews from the World Bank and UNODC in different countries).
- ❖ Studies of programs in the U.S. suggest that NGOs and service providers are needed to make sure that compensation programs help victims who are on the outskirts of society. Program administrators' surveys reveal that collaborating with NGOs can assist stop low take-up.

There are not many rigorous randomised evaluations because of big ethical and practical problems, but most observational and programmatic evidence shows that NGO involvement makes it easier to get help, speeds up processes, and can even increase financial compensation when legal help is available.

Challenges and limitations of NGO involvement

1. Money and prosperity in the long run

Grants, donations, and short-term contracts are some of the unstable sources of revenue that NGOs typically use. This makes it tougher for them to deliver reliable, long-term aid with complicated compensation processes that can take months or years. People are less willing to

invest in building up the capacity of institutions if they rely on project funds.

2. Absence of co-operation and disintegration.

different NGOs with different agendas may create service topographies that do not fit very well. In case of the lack of effective coordination strategies or formal contacts with the agencies dealing with compensation, referrals might not be accomplished, and victims might become lost or forced to repeat the same thing many times. Both UNODC and the world bank assert that it is highly important to have memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and protocols that enable all parties to understand their role.

3. Restrictions in the legislation and in business.

At some places, compensation laws restrict representation by anyone and give little opportunity to even informed applicants to observe strict standards of evidence. NGOs might not be granted the legal authority to access some of the information and take part in legal proceedings, which reduces their efficiency. Strategic litigation and policy lobbying are vital and time consuming and costly.

4. Problems getting in, trust and stigma.

Outside people like refugees, ethnic minorities and victims of sexual violence might not trust the official practices or fear of falling victimized in the future. NGOs are more likely to believe in the community, though they are not able to reach all the victims because of language, culture, and transportation issues. We should do targeted outreach keeping culture in mind.

5. Capability and getting things more business-like

You need experienced experts to provide legal, psychological, and case management services. Many NGOs do not effectively train their staff members, hence resigning or becoming exhaustive. Spending money on training and professional development is important to ensure that services operate as expected.

Recommendations in Policy and Practice

The following recommendations are practical based on the review of the research, program evaluation, and case studies. They are expected to aid NGOs to do more to help the victims gather money:

1. Formalise the partnership between the government and NGOs using MOUs. These must define roles, referral procedures, data-sharing rules (with privacy standards), and collaborative performance indicators. Formal associations simplify things and provide clear paths to be taken by the victims.
2. Fund legal and case management: Public compensation programs must reserve funds to pay legal advice and case management, either by special grants, or by VOCA-like funds, or by contract. The case of Windrush in UK shows that it makes the awards more just when one pays to hire a lawyer.
3. Bring NGOs on board with you to formulate forms and procedures to ensure that they are

trauma-informed, bilingual and contain minimum red tape. It will simplify the application process. The activities of the NGOs at the field level enable individuals to know how to perform their tasks more efficiently.

4. Establish emergency bridging funds: Establish small, fast-acting funds run by NGOs (with checks and balances) to help people in need in the short run as their formal claims are underway. This prevents the occurrence of problems and accelerates the completion of claims.
5. Develop capacity by providing funds to NGOs to educate people on forensic documentation, legal advocacy, psychosocial treatment and data collection. Greater capacity implies the reduced exodus and quality service.
6. Sharing information and watching together: Establish secure, anonymous data-sharing systems where NGOs and compensation administrators would be able to watch the statistics of the applicants, the time of the payouts, and other information. Citizens have a greater responsibility when they get to view the publicly displayed dashboards and they assist in reforms that are evidence-based.
7. Reach out to under-represented populations: Provide funds to local nongovernmental organizations to ensure they establish mobile legal clinics, culturally competent campaigns, and documentation drives to assist the most isolated victims in getting the necessary support. According to national studies, it is easier to reach this type of targeting.
8. Fund litigation and policy campaigns: NGOs should have a base of income to initiate strategic litigation or policy campaigns that can result in system change when necessary.

Considerations that you should think about before undertaking it and the dangers that may arise.

- Responsibility and control: There should be a way of ensuring that people are held accountable when using public money to provide services of NGOs to ensure that it does not find its way into mismanagement without creating too much red tape that hinders the distribution of aid. Independent audits, outcome indicators, and survivors involved in monitoring can all assist in the process to resolve such objectives.
- Protecting the privacy of the victims: Privacy and consent should be a priority when the data is shared. Laws should be in place to ensure that people do not fall victim to the same person people due to negligence with their information.
- Failing to over trust the NGOs: Governments should not bestow too much power to the NGOs. The state continues to be in the responsible of managing and financing fair

compensation programs. NGOs do not replace each other but are partners.

- Sustainability: Donors and governments are advised to stop providing money to projects that take a few months to complete and begin providing money to grants that take several years and continue to provide NGO programs that support compensation processes regular.

CONCLUSION

NGOs are also very crucial as they make the legal systems that pay victims to be related to the real life of the victims. With the aid of NGOs, the compensation programs become easier to approach, quicker and more equitable because they offer such things as outreach, legal assistance, case management, emergency funding, advocacy, and monitoring. The research, while primarily programmatic and observational, consistently demonstrates enhanced outcomes when NGOs are successfully integrated and sufficiently resourced. To make this potential genuine change, authorities should make partnerships official, pay for legal and case management services, make it easier for people to follow the rules with the support of frontline groups, and set up methods for everyone to keep an eye on things and be held accountable. Not only will this make compensation claims more likely to succeed, but it will also make the whole legal system more responsive to victims.

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