



# The role of NGOs in the prevention of crimes against children (Case study: municipalities)

Shahram Mirzanzhad Asl

Department of law Electronic Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

**Abstract:** *Today, the protection of children to prevent their victimization can guarantee the public health of community in the future. Since prevention is always the best and cheapest way to treatment, the use of community potentials in the prevention and protection of children against victimization is also among the factors that could somehow guarantee future of the community in this area. Using the descriptive analytic approach, this study which discusses and examines the role of NGOs in the prevention of crimes against children, seeks to evaluate the victimization of children and its causes and factors in addition to the general explanation of crime and suffered from crime, and in line with the above study, discuss and study the potentials necessary to prevent crimes against children non-criminal support of them using factors such as municipalities as example of non-governmental organizations. Since municipalities are considered as non-governmental organizations by the formation of councils, they can take an important step for the prevention of crimes against children by their particular measures and abilities and in the creation of a healthy future in the community.*

**Key words:** *Prevention of crime - Crimes against children - Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)*

## INTRODUCTION

Crime has always been one of the most important challenges of human social life and dealing with criminals has always devoted an important part of the power of human societies to itself. Approaches of different communities to deal with crime show that the use of repression and the use of intimidating, punishing or debilitating practices are dominant approaches of criminal political regimes in dealing with the criminal phenomenon (Ashouri, 2006: 65). On the other hand, one of the most vulnerable segments of each society are children; children as well as adults may be subject to harassment and persecution of the community criminals. In general when a crime is committed against a child, assuming a child misses his eyes in conflict or to be killed in a car accident, the committed or the offender are treated in the same way that if the victim was adult; in other words, the age of the victim has no effect on the level of the offender punishment (Mansour, 2005: 35).

Of cases where child age is effective in alleviating the punishment is adultery. Also, age of the child in false accusation causes canonically-fixed punishment is not proven. The other crimes which are committed on children by adults and mature is debate of abortion with consent or without consent of the mother that the offender or offenders are causing punishment before the law. Also, the other crimes committed against children and adolescents can be kidnapping that kidnapping and hiding a newborn child in criminal regulations has a specific title and punishment is intended for the perpetrators (Javid Salahi, 2002: 10).

The other offenses in this area could be to abandon children on the streets by their parents or guardians, which offenders will be sentenced to punishment before the Islamic Penal Code. The other crimes against children can be the use of children for begging. Of course, other issues such as beating children especially by parents, sexual harassment of children by different people can be considered among the crimes that children are in exposure to commit to them in the community (Rayjyan Asli, 2005: 18).

Since many of crimes against children will commit due to lack of access or their inability to fulfill their rights for hidden in the community, so the best way to prevent the occurrence of crimes against children is the prevention method according to thinkers. Prevention of crime has various forms which they are divided to criminal and non-criminal preventions. In general, the aim of prevention is to reduce long-term prevalence and incidence and remaining disability of an event which is done at three levels. Primary prevention refers to programs and services which are presented to the general population to prevent the occurrence of an event. Secondary prevention refers to programs and services which are provided in early stages of the incidence of an event and leads to timely recognition and prevent long-term development of it. (Saffari, 2001: 19).

Third prevention encompasses programs and services aimed at reducing the prevalence of effects and disability resulted from occurrence of the event. Criminal prevention predominantly has a criminal nature which is done by the judiciary. The audiences of this type of prevention are offenders. Prevention measures of crime is done by criminalizing behaviors and punishing the perpetrators of this criminal behaviors to prevent reoffending. Non-criminal prevention includes measures which has a non-criminal nature and is adopted more to prevent crime and not its repetition. Social prevention and situational prevention are considered as the newest classification of types of non-criminal prevention (Graham, 1991: 28). Meanwhile, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGO) is undeniable. These organizations which were formed since the early 1970s with the goals of helping women and children, environmental protection, peace, combating environmental pollution sources, etc. was developed in such a way that nowadays they are active in many other social branches. The history of non-governmental organizations activities in Iran goes back to the distant past from association of the Brethren of Purity, which was established to assist people to chivalrous band which their duties was taking care and attention of poor and dispossessed of the society which have traditionally formed and were working (Ebtakar, 1997: 19). Another non-governmental organizations which their activities have been several years in the country are local councils and municipalities that are elected directly by the people and their representatives. For example, councils by resolving the problems of suburbanization in cities, can strive to reduce the criminal population. While municipalities can also use the facilities to remove the begging in cities and preventing the use of child labor in the streets and crossroads and thus prevent crime against children (Shojavndi, 2011: 58). However due to the above, the issue that arises is that municipality as non-governmental organization from what method uses for prevention of crimes against children?

### **Municipalities and prevention of crime**

When speaking of urbanization and effective governmental institutions in urban management, the first and most influential institution which unconsciously comes to mind is the institution of the municipality. The feature population is the most important for the formation of municipalities which the minimum of it is different in different countries, so that the formation scale in France, Germany and Turkey 2000 people, in the US and Mexico 2500 people, in Netherlands and Greece 5000people, and in Ireland is 1500 people. According to Article one municipal law enacted in 1955 and its provision one, the formation of municipalities in Iran is carried out based on population index and sometimes based on specific position or importance (Hojjati Ashrafi, 2008: 44).

According to the first law of municipality which was approved as the "Municipality Law" in the year 1283 AD, the main purpose of the establishment of the "municipality" is to protect the interests of cities and fulfil the needs of urbanization residents. It also can be deducted from assessing the current municipal law Article 55 which stated responsibilities of the municipality. Perhaps if municipalities in the not too distant past, i.e. during the development of this law, were cut in duties, it did not lead to tangible results, but nowadays due to urban expansion, a significant increase in population and the emergence of suburbanization, any failure to perform duties, in addition to confusion in the face of the city, irreversible consequences have followed, including crimes and appropriate and scientifically based planning can prevent these events which some of them are mentioned below:

1. In accordance with Article 2 municipal reform law, suburbanization and criminal consequences, range areas of the city and its suburbs shall be determined separately by the municipality with the approval of the City Council and any development efforts and housing and creating public institutions on behalf of owners and residents are subject to obtaining the consent.

On the other hand, upon Article 2 of the Law amending the Law on the development of roads, the municipality is required to prepare detailed map of the city in the development of the city and submit for approval to the Ministry of Interior. Looking at the margins of the cities and observing aerial photographs, we find that a confluence of neighborhoods and lack of discipline and order in the streets and crossroads and alleys are manifested in offensive form. There is no doubt that negligence of municipalities in preparing a comprehensive map of the city and the lack of adequate special attention in order to prevent the unauthorized construction caused such sights and forms of the cities which follows harmful and damaging effects. Effects such as population density of in marginal neighborhoods, lack of predicting the establishment of supervisory and regulatory institutions, the tendency of criminals to reside in this area of the city, establishing families without guardians and dozens of other cases are among items which are emerged caused by the weaknesses of municipalities in the management of the construction of the suburban areas. Statistics show that about seventy percent of the crimes happened in Great Khorasan province occurred in the city of Mashad and half of these crimes occurred in marginal areas of the city (Hojjati Ashrafi, 2008: 48). Therefore, proper monitoring tasks on development and prosperity of the suburban areas and preventing the night creation of unplanned constructed building can remarkably prevent to accumulate the criminals in these neighborhoods. Although many residents of these neighborhoods reside in these areas because of low real estate prices, however, if these areas to be built according to the principles of urban planning and at least crossing and placement of educational, monitoring and control centers to be predetermined and designed, we can largely prevent the growth and crystallization of potential offenders, because society undoubtedly will have important influence on individual behavior and according to some criminologists, human behavior through social and physical environments of people and not their genetic structure, develops and changes. (Ardebili, 2008: 101). Although theft is done more in predominantly affluent neighborhoods, most of the defendants of these cases reside in suburban areas and moreover, these neighborhoods are considered the best place for concealing stolen property. On the other hand, given that these neighborhoods are constructed without compliance with municipal regulations, they have been lacking the civil service for a long time and thus, theft of electricity and water is common in different ways. Also intentional murder and mass conflicts are among the crimes that occur in these areas due to cultural conflicts and subcultures or location of the murderer is in these neighborhoods. Threats against public health due to lacking urban infrastructure and delivery of domestic water sewage in the streets and unauthorized killing of livestock in houses are the consequences of residency in these neighborhoods. Due to the structure of marginal neighborhoods, length of alleys is short, narrow with numerous zigzag and so the buying and selling of drugs and alcoholic drinks by residents is carried out with convenience and children living in these areas become familiar with the aspects of buying and selling these materials from early adolescence. Honor harassment, creating brothels and the perfect place for hiding criminals, all and all are obvious traces of these areas and thus, it is necessary for municipalities to prevent the formation of marginalized neighborhoods with the assistance of other government institutions and avoid the grounds for the emergence of these crimes (Frank P., 2007: 38).

2. Unjust possessing and playing role of the municipality and increasing population growth in recent years and rapid growth of urbanization are the most important factors for the expansion of urban space and have spawned interest of land applicants toward the lands in margins of cities and therefore led to uncontrolled increase in prices of these lands. Lands that have been abandoned over the years and were remoted, suddenly attracted the attention of owners and also profiteers and due to the loss of natural effects that are the main distinguishing of old documents, recognizing the limits of it is problematic and is associated with severe disputes. Unjust possessing, selling another person's property and illegal constructions are the most obvious crimes resulting from this turmoil. In Buying & Selling Property business, there is sometimes a trading that the subject of the transaction does not exist or a property is sold in multiple times to numerous people (Hojjati Ashrafi, 2008: 52).

Therefore, settling the status of the property is necessary and requirements or timely encouragement of owners and distinguishing and separating the lands of each owner from others as recognizable wall fence and subsequently modification of boundary of registration documents from natural effects of new pathways and crossing can significantly help to prevent the above-mentioned crimes and reduce relatively significant volume of cases filed in the court. However, the people who desire to determine the limits of their property and protecting it through wall fence, if they want to exert legal channels, they should primarily pay a large sums of money to municipalities to obtain the permission for issuance of wall fence. But instead we see

people who illegally and nightly attempt for wall fence of their lands and not only they do not pay money to municipality, but also caused the numerous crimes and thereby density of cases in the courts by seizing the property of others. So it seems that facilitating the issuance of wall fence for owners of suburban lands is an effective step in preventing crimes like this.

3. The design of public spaces and prevention and a safe environment to live alongside the other human needs and necessities are the main concerns of Iranian today families.

The popularity of apartment living and the growing tendency of urban residents to use public spaces and gardens and spending leisure time children there turned these places as a market for buying and selling drugs and an conducive environment for begging, theft, pickpocketing and concentrations of thugs. Most gardens in the country, especially constructed parks in big cities with large area have been designed in which tall trees with dense vegetation coverage rate are used. Moreover, some of these parks have natural effects and severe ups and downs due to being in mountainous areas (Such as Jamshidieh Park and Saei Park in Tehran or Vakil Abad Park in Mashhad) and minimize field of view with the growth of trees and despite the use of suitable lighting fixtures, created many problems for the supervising task of responsible authorities (Nazeri, 2008: 66).

So, these places are transformed into a social environment conducive to crime. When playing in the corners of these parks, children may face with indecent and immoral scene in addition to the lack of safety which being happening in their views. It seems that the design of these parks is not compatible with Iranian customs and cultures and is specific to western countries with specific interests and purposes. So it is necessary that required attention in designing and locating the gardens to be considered, and flat lands with low height trees, as well as adequate lighting fixtures to be used so that control operations shall be undertaken by regulatory bodies with fewer errors rate in addition to carrying out their duty of supervision by parents and consequently prevent the conversion of these places to a hangout for delinquents (Hojjati Ashrafi, 2008: 55). In fact, one needs to expand the mastery on environment and conditions surrounding crime and control of it by adopting the necessary measures and actions and disrupt the transition from criminal thought to action by reducing conditions before the delinquency which makes favorable occurrence of crime, as well as an increased risk of identification and arrest potential offenders. Another issue raised in this topic is attention to religious beliefs and crime prevention incompatible with chastity through compliance the legal restrictions of constructing a building and apartment building.

Safety of living environment and remaining immune family members, especially girls and wives from vision of unrelated and unmarried men are among the important issues that always involve thinking of families, especially the religious class to themselves. Expanding the construction of apartments, regardless of cultural and Islamic values and the surrounding of these buildings on the front and neighboring houses, non-compliance with legal permits by municipalities regarding payment the penalties of Commission under Article 100 lead to the crimes which largely stem from the subject. The behavior of municipality with these violations which mainly begins by complaints of bystanders, is such that regulation of compliance with limits and boundaries of buildings and rate of constructed density has been done in order to finance and revenue source of municipalities and rights of bystanders and religious and cultural bonds had no a role in the codification of rules. However, it seems that the strict observance of regulations by municipalities and attention to local and religious cultures and beliefs can have a significant role in crime prevention.

## Result

Children, as the most vulnerable segment of society, have always been the most oppressed and most downtrodden of people. Date of emergence of child abuse dates back to the times the human has known himself. In ancient times, children were traded as commodities and had no right to protest for their lost rights. With the passage of time and civilizing the societies, more attention was given to child rights and domestic and international societies dealt with to restore the rights of children. Due to specific physical and psychological, children need to different policies than the adults. Vulnerability of individual in terms of pathological criteria age, not only has a special place in some branches of criminal sciences (such as criminology and specific or technical criminal law - tendency of children and adolescents), but also is one of the branches of the differential criminal policy. In children and adolescents criminal law, a child is a human being that is different from adults in terms of physical and psychological characteristics. This difference makes him more vulnerable to delinquency and criminality than the adults. From criminologists' point of view, range of psychological and social measures for intervention in the prevention of delinquent behaviors

by ending factors that puts person in the eve of the risk from childhood contains the vulnerable ones that there is always the possibility of their delinquency in the future. So in addition to the governments, non-governmental organizations are trying to oppose to the victimization of children due to various reasons and take step in this way by performing actions. Being independent of government agencies, the performance of these organizations in some countries is as much as they also have the ability to put pressure on the government and provide grounds for the removal of victimization of children by their actions.

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