

Final Draft Evaluation:

An external evaluation of the Global Advocacy Project of MRGI

'Aiming high; clearing the bar'

Prepared for
Minority Rights Group International (MRG)

By

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Final evaluation for Minority Rights Group International (henceforth MRG) GAP project:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

I have entitled this report “Aiming high; clearing the bar”. I am convinced that the project overall has been an efficient use of funds; that MRG’s unique niche in minority affairs has been fully employed, that activities have been completed to a high level of quality, and that creative mitigation strategies have been employed to deal with timescale slippages and technological challenges.

There is no doubting the importance or scale of the issues faced by minorities. As shown by the recent MRG report ‘Land, livelihoods and identities: Inter-community conflicts in East Africa’ minorities often face economic perils such as landlessness and multiple discrimination due to their identity.

The choice of the 36 project countries was almost universally accepted by informants; some suggesting that MRG were ‘ahead of the game’ in envisioning trends. The project was truly global, as highlighted in the ECA2 Europe report ‘in preparation of an OHCHR/ UN Network on Racial Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities meeting... ‘MRG was consulted.. to look at current and best practice and... draw on...regional meetings in Bishkek, Vienna and Bangkok... We secured speaking opportunities for MRG’s Executive Director (and)...trainees from Russia, Indonesia, Morocco... The event drew...100 attendees, including many UN agencies and state representatives... to respond to or interact with our trainees.’

The project started slowly – ‘It is difficult to enter a country and just get collaborative networks.. you need time and presence to do that’¹ -employed good quality staff, and slowly enlisted students after a pilot run. Content, length of course and the level of tutor support got overwhelmingly positive approbation from student participants. The course directly guided its participants and students to impressive, concrete outcomes, despite political restrictions occasionally silencing activists for security reasons at public forums.

The strongest statistical validation of the GAP online project was provided by documents of the second GAP Asia Online Training showed that 95% of participants believed that the course had enabled them in their work on five indicators; networking, understanding of UN mechanisms, (sub) regional advocacy, UN advocacy and overall. 49% declared it would help ‘very significantly, with 46% ‘significantly’ and only 5% ‘a little or not at all’. The equivalent figures from the first course were 38%, 62% and 0%, showing progression..

One often expects confidential responses to an clearly-identified independent evaluator to be slightly less impressive, but this report’s Appendix One shows consistency with MRG’s impressive internal evaluations, 90% of students believed that they had ‘gained overall’ 10% had no opinion, and 0% felt they had not gained. A majority in every single category believed that they had gained from the course.

The fact that the result between internal and external evaluation are very similar demonstrates and creates trust between student/participants, MRG and evaluator. Student responses were not only positive but obviously genuine; there was no sense of rote-answering from questionnaire or interview subjects. The issues upon which MRG’s project has focused are almost unanimously believed to be important, and course content extremely good.

In terms of impact, 96% of respondents reported that they had used their knowledge in their organization against one participant (4%) who. had not. Increased advocacy was reported by 68% and 70% reported improved advocacy. One Key Informant MRG staff said ‘It was a course which (spanned) the knowledge gap and (provided) regional mechanisms to genuine activists’; another, more simply, ‘We got good

¹ Member of MRG staff in Europe

outcomes'. Another lauded an 'increase in mutual understanding between different participants from different global regions'.

Putting theoretical learning into practice is of course more difficult. Yet impact indicators were also impressive; mostly 'extremely good' and 'good'. Students tended to create impact in the areas where they were already directly involved (eg media or advocacy) and found some response from policy makers etc, but not commensurate to the changes in their own performance. This naturally lowered positive responses to putting theory into practice ('Advocacy is not really my job' as one fundraiser commented) but the course expectation of student action had clearly been internalized; only two interviewees said that they had taken no action at all with what they had learned².

Context was an extremely important factor, which suggests that MRG is right to be now concentrating on smaller, modular courses in fewer countries. Students in tough political environments such as Sri Lanka could not give high ratings for their work at national level, but they were engaged in communities, a level at which they saw greater potential and less personal risk. Similarly, students from SARC countries did not always see the value of ASEAN examples and vice versa, but students in Turkey felt there were lessons to learn from Bosnia and Serbia.

MRG is working within an intensely competitive field, and facing sometimes unfair competition from less-equipped consultancy companies, which can lead to budget-paring. The report focuses on how donor attentiveness might lead to better support for quality development work. There is also an aspect of MRG's culture – fierce integrity fostered by intensive commitment to outcomes on behalf of minorities – which can lead to cost-cutting and over-loading of responsibilities on existing staff. The project worked best when dedicated staff and tutors were employed³, and grassroots organizations resourced to achieve outcomes.

Another temptation in such a competitive environment is excessive ambition, and this report finds that MRG were overly ambitious in some targets. The project partly aimed for national legislative change and improved/increased advocacy within three years, all of which generally stem from multiple and often national political factors. Students were gloomy about such change in Thailand and Sri Lanka, but optimistic in Georgia and the Philippines; although none of this could be easily attributed to the GAP project. One key informant opined 'I don't think legislation-oriented programs and targets are realistic, It puts pressure on partners to do things they cannot do if you are just starting in a country for the first time... we have always been told this, we are not showing clear impact.. it is not for MRG to change legislation...but to focus on small and vulnerable society.' The project logframe might have usefully aimed a level lower, employing all resources for empowerment of legitimate minority and non-minority actors to create a critical mass of activists, following up concrete outcomes and task-based networking with time, money and encouragement of good practice on MRG's Minority Voices webpage and on existing social media. More accent might also be placed on the publicity and support required to enroll minority representatives living in minority communities, including a greater emphasis on visits, peer promoters, viral video clips etc and a lesser reliance in the course on consistent internet (by using downloadable materials and hard copy materials) and electricity. Involvement of civil servants as course participants, and funding bids to national governments might also create advocacy space with the latter.

The project was also over-ambitious in the number of countries chosen. It produced a diverse range of students and activities, motivated organizations and occasionally coalitions, but it did not fully use these resources to create a global network, national impact or GAP project profile. As one staff member put it 'we are an organization bigger in reputation than resources'; this report finds that MRG could usefully

² One had changed job, one had changed country.

³ From another region, a Director commented 'I totally concur that in Asia it was more focused, without the competing issues for staff (doing other jobs).'

handle much bigger budgets, spend it on fewer countries, focus on profitable mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies and ensure follow-up, financial support to successful actors, lesson-learning and task-based national and global coalition-building at every stage.

The online course content was almost universally acknowledged to be excellent, in each country of each continent and by men and women. Tutor support was also extremely valued⁴, and the question of national or international tutors was not a particularly burning issue; opinion was roughly divided depending on the students' context. There was also little to separate the genders; compared to men, women had used less of the project's 'menu' of activities, but were more impressed with course technology. They felt a little less confident that politicians' attitudes had changed at national level, were slightly more engaged with local government level, said they had gained a little less in media and advocacy, but more from the example of other countries. The evaluator would not claim statistical significance or any particular analysis to the above, but nor were they surprising differences.

The project faced some routine technological glitches, security concerns, delays, visa refusals etc, and found creative ways to overcome them, such as USB memory sticks, live and face-to-face courses, training of trainers etc, all of which can be built upon in a follow-up phase.

MRG has sensibly moved to smaller module-based courses and focused its resources. It does, however, have the capacity to use its considerable learning to scale-up, and to surpass even its high ambitions in a follow-up international program. This might involve rolling out the basic course worldwide, with facilitation and attention to key regions, and a truly global caucus, ensuring that governments are subject to accountability on minority rights, just as they are to the needs of their majority populations. Having cleared the bar at such a high level on the first online jump, and having learned and responded so well to problems, it would be a shame not to edge the bar up higher for a second jump.

(ends)

Acknowledgements

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⁴ For example, all three students in Sri Lanka rated tutor support as positively as was possible.

INTRODUCTION

1. Evaluation Itinerary Summary

(NB: Appendix Two shows a breakdown of numbers of students and key informants by country (but not, for confidentiality, names & contacts). All dates in 2013:

24 January–1 February:	Sri Lanka; Colombo - interviewing key informants and students
2-13 February	Thailand; Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai and Bangkok - interviewing key informants, MRG staff and students
14 February–13 April	Philippines; Manila, Cebu, Panay Island- interviewing key informants and students
14-18 April:	Thailand: Bangkok - interviewing OHCHR and Forum Asia
30 April:	Turkey; Istanbul, interviewing a course participant
1-7 May:	Georgia, Tbilisi, interviewing key informants, MRG staff and students
8-30 May	UK, interviewing key informants, MRG staff and students via email and Skype
1-30 June	Report-writing to First Draft
1-15 July	Final Draft

2. Evaluation methodology

A great emphasis was put on allowing key informants to freely share their GAP experience, and what they know of project in minority rights, whether nationally, regionally or internationally.

Most semi-structured interviews with key informants (numbers are shown against country as Appendix Two) began with a 'Tell me what you know' question, with the emphasis on qualitative data, before narrowing to pre-set questions attempting to gather data against aims in the logical framework.

Interviews with course students (most of whom were also participants in regional events at the UN, ASEAN, Council of Europe etc) were more structured and involved scoring from 1-5, to gather statistical data against targets set in the logical framework. Quantitative answers – and some qualitative examples – are compiled as Appendix One. Where initial answers displayed a wealth of experience and insight, time was given at the end to 'get the story' and where insights were particularly rich, in less than 15% of cases, this part of the student interview was deemed to be a key informant interview.

With three exceptions, attempts to create focus group discussions were fruitless due to the scattered geographical nature of potential participants and the interviews were with individual respondents.

An attempt was made to contact all 173 email addresses supplied by MRG, plus 64 people known to the consultant. In some cases, it took a huge amount of email contact to get a response (the record being 27 emails - 17 from the consultant plus 10 from the key informant - which ended in absolutely no information for a potential key informant). In the case of ASEAN, the person closest to the project refused to make any contribution, and in SAARC no current staff member email addresses were available. Some students and key informants had completed their involvement with the project more than two years previously, and most had already been requested for feedback by MRG. The original attempt to target three decision makers in each country to confirm that advocacy on behalf of minorities had increased and/or improved

was found to be over-ambitious. A total of 47 key informants - of whom 28 female and 19 male – and 34 students – 15 female and 19 male - were interviewed.

Travel to two continents and five countries, plus write-up was ambitious for an evaluation of 30 days. It was, however, a reminder of how diverse the contexts are: In Georgia, the evaluator had access to very senior Government officials and a strong impression of a centralised system which rather naively seems to wish to do things FOR minorities, without much research or engagement with them. In the Philippines, a National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) reports directly to a new reformist President, and a strong civil society uses creative methods to chip away at feudalist structures. In Sri Lanka, where language divides the information people receive, and politicians claim that they have no power to address minority rights or anything else in the context of a populist Presidential family. Turkey and its accession issues ebbing and flowing, its troops on the streets and its 1923 Lausanne Treaty still restricting its very concept of minority rights, And Thailand, still divided politically but very controlling of space for discussion. And naturally, this led to a report which is supportive of MRG's move towards atomized, more context-based projects, and attempts to access major funds to produce the basic materials at high quality, using a range of media and languages to the hard-to-reach inaccessible minority peoples' representatives.

What is presented here is a learning evaluation, with activity and outcome mapping from two distinct groups (i) students, who in the eyes of the evaluator gave the most telling feedback from the perspective of activists aware both of the issues and the project. For obvious reasons, those students who had not completed the course were most difficult to track down, but five full answers were obtained, all of which gave a very positive impression of MRG and the project. (ii) key informants who mostly did not know MRG or the project, but did know about minority rights in their countries, and what could be expected of projects such as GAP.

Given that MRG had both well-organised internal evaluation findings and notes of a multi-stakeholder evaluation meeting whose results were very similar to the findings of the external evaluator, the latter felt confident that his conclusions were satisfactorily evidenced.

3. Project Objectives

In the log frame for the project the purpose/specific objective was:

'Increased amount and quality of advocacy on behalf of minority communities nationally in 36 states and internationally in 3 regions and at the UN.'

Indicators for this objective were:

a) Survey of state representatives and secretariat staff at the UN/Council of Europe/African Commission and ASEAN/SAARC reveals that 75% of those surveyed believe that advocacy by and/or on behalf of minority communities has both increased and improved

b) At least 3 senior decision makers or independent senior and reliable sources in each of at least 30 of the 36 target states report that advocacy on minority issues at the national level has increased and improved.

As outlined fully below, the objective was felt to be both over-ambitious and over-reliant on attribution. The indicators were also of little help. For indicator (a) responses were received from UN sources in two regions and from the Africa Commission, but none from either ASEAN or SAARC. For (b) the temptation was avoided to dig out informants who would rubber-stamp a positivist statement. The increase / improvement of national minority advocacy depends very heavily on environmental political factors, rather than on one NGO project. What can be stated with very great confidence is that the project has empowered legitimate minority rights activists to achieve concrete outcomes relevant to the project's logical framework.

B: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS:

Draft Hypotheses/Responses to Evaluation Questions for consideration and comment by MRG

NB: to skip between recommendation, use the 'Find' function and search for ' Recommendation: '

NNB: student responses are either quantified as positive / neutral / negative by the numbers of 'votes' for each (eg 15/4/7) or as a ratio of positive to negative (eg 14:2) where that gives a more meaningful statistic

Key evaluation questions:

Referring to the logical framework, did we complete all of the activities as planned to a reasonably high quality? What problems were encountered at this level? How foreseeable were they? Did they affect the activities and to what extent were they overcome?

NB: In each subsequent section, the relevant bundled questions in the Terms of Reference - reproduced in full (as directly above) – are split up and answered by individual question (as directly below), to maintain coherence of response.

Referring to the logical framework...

MRG's latest internal check on its logical framework activities is included at Appendix Three. It is beyond the scope of a short evaluation of a complex and diverse project to verify every assertion, but all evidence gathered suggests that it is a satisfactory account of progress; any small deviations are reported below against the various levels of the project. The logical framework itself is included as Appendix Four. A critique is made elsewhere at the level of ambition shown; another area for improvement might be editing out of assumptions which are: way beyond the project scope (eg the collapse of the world wide web, conflict in any single country, denial of any single visa etc), part of the project's internal task (eg. to attract sufficiently high quality candidates, to put together convincing campaigns) or unfeasible within budgets (eg. gathering views from 405 participants in 36 countries, state representatives etc) .

Referring to the logical framework, did we complete all of the activities as planned to a reasonably high quality?

As far as the evaluator is aware, almost all planned activities were 'completed at a reasonably high quality'.

The choice of the 36 project countries was almost universally accepted as a good one by informants; The criteria were the recalcitrance of the specific governments towards minority rights, for the need of activists to learn about international mechanisms, and the potential that this may make impact with governments. Overwhelmingly, student participants regarded 'their' country as a good choice, with only 7 dissenting voices (5 of them unsure of 'impact on government') as opposed to 53 approving. A Forum Asia informant was amongst a number who commented that MRG may have been 'ahead of the game' in its ability, in 2008, to choose countries such as Turkey, Burma, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan (where the minority rights situation deteriorated and/or problems were exacerbated during the programme).

The only main activity that was not fully implemented from the MRG's headquarters was the online resource (Activity 2). Some materials were posted and then the UNDM 20th anniversary guide was published to high quality in a number of languages and launched at the 2012 Minorities Forum. This was not the intended 'comprehensive collection' because IT support was absorbed by the unintended off-line/USB version of the course plus the uploading of the different language versions; this, and

technology/translation issues also delayed – but did not de-rail - the translation of OHCHR’s Arabic language minorities fellows project.

Appendix Three shows a compilation of results against specific numbers of activities in the logframe; half of activities were surpassed or met. Of the other half, 80% were met at a level of 80% or above. Only one, activity, ‘In-country campaigns met only 55% of its target [11 out of 20 planned campaigns]. This can be explained by a number of factors. The evaluator feels that it was unrealistic to make significant changes or co-ordinated campaigns at a national level with inadequate time and resourcing. NGOs collaborate when they see the need and the interest, AND have the capacity to do so. It is also true that many students’ activities were at a community level within their NGO, rather than at a national campaigning level.

Amongst over 600 student participants, a high dropout rate of around 45% was experienced. Reasons included unreliable internet access, pre-existing busy work schedules, unforeseen personal incidents, and difficulties with English as the language of instruction. Benchmarking these rates with those of the Open University Global Development Management Course and other similar distance-learning courses might be useful, and realistic targets set for future courses (which would be higher than the aforementioned course, given the environments within which GAP students study). Multiple mitigation strategies are now in place to mitigate such high dropout rates, and comparative data should be closely analysed to ensure progress.

There were good reasons voluntarily provided by MRG for the few events which did not take place (eg a campaign to bring greater unity between NGOs working on issues of hate crimes, which was cancelled for lack of funds; Kyrgyzstan’s campaigns held off for potential insecurity; Botswana coalition not funded due to its ‘disintegration’ over staff changes, and its inadequate financial structures). Many unplanned or additional events were provided, such as the live on-line training (Georgia, Kyrgystan) alumni events, support for coalition-building, multiple study visits from all three continents etc which created their own unplanned positive outcomes.

Key informants who were not aware of the MRG project tended to show optimism or pessimism of their country’s situation which was similar to that of students. Some countries are in periods of net-advancement for minority rights – such as Burma/Myanmar, the Philippines and Georgia – and others such as Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Turkey are not. Neither the positive nor the negative can be attributed to – or expected of – one important and largely successful NGO intervention.

What problems were encountered at this level? How foreseeable were they? Did they affect the activities and to what extent were they overcome?

Key problems included:

Slow-starting/Time/Budget constraints: The project was extremely ambitious in scope, involving heavy recruitment of co-ordinators, tutors and headquarter staff and then course participants – mostly in new areas of countries in which MRG worked or of new countries entirely. As one senior MRG staff member in the regions reported ‘The first year was spent rolling out recruitment...looking at models of distance learning and in-house drafting of the modules’. This meant in Africa that ‘in terms of building the network, the time factor was an issue. We did online and then brought them together for regional events and then created networks from that.. at the end, and not much resource and attention was given. From the group taken to Gambia several times, there was intervention but not the money to bring them together. They came up with Facebook pages’.

In Europe, ‘some regional staff and some national projects started a year after the course started’.

Some cash flow problems with their origin in the London Headquarters were experienced from the two of the three Regions, who stated that in some months – mainly in the crucial third year - they could not access sufficient money for activities, putting pressure on the project. This resulted from the fact that some MRG donors who contribute per calendar year do not actually transfer funds for that year until the

3rd or even 4th quarter of the year). As MRG advanced money to partners to spend on campaigns and follow up activities, and was unable to reclaim that money until partners have reported, cash flow problems have proved a perennial problem. Nonetheless, conversations with MRG staff have indicated that they feel the problem could have been better managed.

In Asia, where staff management positions were less divided and diverted by existing work, the course was set up for purpose, and was acknowledged by the other regions to have quickly progressed. Through the online training, MRG created a network of participating organizations, with 10 organizations having more than one staff member participating and some having more than two participants. This led to the creation of knowledge partner organizations with higher capacity to implement activities

The problems – but not their scope – appear to have been foreseen. They delayed course-start and created a no-cost extension, but they do not appear to have prevented activities (or outcomes).

Internet Access/Speed: Internet access and electricity were a challenge throughout the world, but especially to African participants, and in Burma. This is not only a technical issue, but a key strategic issue, as it was not only a significant reason for high drop-out rates but also affected the ability to target minority communities as participants. The use of moodle provided a robust, stable system, justifying the longer than anticipated start-up time (which were partly caused by an incorrect MRG assumption that it could find and amend fully-online models (eg from the Open University, who still rely heavily on posted materials)) Changes in Windows OS Software were probably the reason that whereas MRG's first batch of USB sticks successfully overcame the 'offline problem', but the second batch did not; this was regarded as an unforeseeable problem.

It was clear in discussions with MRG staff that many problems – if not their full-scope – had been anticipated and judgments had been sound with available knowledge at the time; the online project was a 'step into the dark', and there was a willingness to steer and tweak in the light of evidence; as the primary IT manager mentioned 'The addition of tutors (after our pilot stage) gave students a human contact point beyond me.' Dedicated tutors (instead of adding responsibilities to existing staff) might possibly have been organized earlier and their high turnover in some regions (eg Europe and Central Asia) led to some loss of capacity and 'some confusion from students about who would grade their work'. Although the pages were designed it to be light (in page load terms), with few images and basic HTML, course loading was slow for many participants; the course text was very long and detailed (12 topics with 2-5 sections each, totalling approximately 500 web pages per course). This rendered translation slow. In isolated cases, the course relied on external websites which weren't always available in multiple languages, which made translation to languages beyond the English original tricky/implausible. The inevitable broken links, or outdated content or the need to respond to new Treaties etc were also encountered and largely dealt with in a timely manner.

Challenge of success: student numbers: Some problems were those of success; the course was mentioned in a newsletter and generated interest from people outside GAP target countries. While MRG did offer an open-access public version of the course, many people inquired about joining the tutor-facilitated version instead, It is not problematic that MRG did not have capacity to handle potential students outside the project parameters, but it would be a future management issue for strategy and resource allocation.

Translation: This problem is largely a sub-set of technology, because translation had to be uploaded line by line, which was slow, time-intensive and created delays. Elsewhere, some translation eg into Russian was found to be inadequate; a minor glitch which was soon overcome. Where participation has been 'disappointing', such as in the Western Balkans Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, MRG's own reflection has sometimes attributed it to a lack of local language option⁵. In the same region, the use of multipliers alongside a second 'lingua franca', Russian, has given 'positive' results.

⁵ EIDHR Final Narrative Report, 2013, ECA2

Complexity of the materials: This relates to the degree to which the project attempted to target hard-to-reach minority students, and suitable amendments were made as follows: 'in order to...enable the students to complete the project, the team decided to offer them extra time to complete the course and extended the deadline... re-run the course in all the countries during phase three, for those students needing more time... in Georgia...a live training'⁶

Security situation: As is common in human rights work, participants had to choose whether to take on personal risk by submissions publicly challenging repressive governments; one participant in Nigeria lost her job by her fearful NGO employer for speaking out, and other situations of personal mistrust created small blocks to progress: ' in Azerbaijan.. the Russian language course was... overseen by Georgia based platforms students. Participants refused to respond to the tutor and there was distrust of the ethnic origin (Kurdish) of one tutor'. In another case, a Zimbabwean was reported to have changed his challenging intervention at a Minorities Forum to one supporting the Mugabe regime after receiving threats at his airport of departure. In a select few cases, trainees at the UN Forum on Minority Issues felt insecure to make public statements in plenary sessions, although they were still able to benefit from the training and other less visible advocacy opportunities

MRG mitigated such risks by permitting pseudonyms and followed up on participants returning from UN or Regional meetings to sensitive countries. In some cases in 2012⁷, solidarity produced by networking allowed some less vulnerable participants to vocalize messages on behalf of more threatened participants. Overall, however, such oppression is difficult to eradicate entirely, and is indeed often an indicator of genuine human rights work.

Visas/Exchange Visits: A small number of visas were refused to participants – mostly from Africa - in the numerous exchange visits, which were an area where cost : benefit should be closely considered. Without money and time for follow-up, they are unlikely to produce sustainable impact, notwithstanding the enthusiasm generated (for example of Kenyans wishing to visit Georgia to view the Council of Minorities' work)

As shown in its logical framework, the project involved an enormous amount of planning, implementation, monitoring, and amendments to deal with new realities thrown up by MRG's robust monitoring and evaluation processes.

At the level of organizing activities, MRG can consider GAP as a successful first engagement in online learning, spreading MRG's approach and knowledge to new, and satisfied audiences, and having continued successful implementation of other regional and UN advocacy activities.

MRG appear to have already drawn conclusions from problems,, leading to smaller, more targeted, more modular training projects, a wider range of media, and more generous technical support/system administrative labour time. Many recommendations below are, in whole and part, already in process, and the list can be treated as a checklist.

Activities Recommendations:

That MRG prioritise student access and retention over the course's complexity, comprehensiveness and visual appeal. This means beginning with a basic course with some hard copy material in students' own language (as GAP did in Russian) and downloadable material which requires little/slow-speed online access. Once the basic course is perfected, to allow remote minority representatives to participate, steps can be made to make enhanced packages for those with better internet, with the courses made more visually appealing. Any major intervention into regions with very low internet speed might also usefully

⁶ EIDHR Final Narrative Report, 2013, ECA2

⁷ Final Narrative Report, 2013 (Activity 5 UN Forum)

generate some research into technical solutions, such as install firewalls with built in monitoring of internet connections on a central system, with individuals setting up an account and linking in.

That courses are written not only as downloadable (for internet connection problems) but with a shorter attention span and shorter individual engagement in mind. MRG's dedicated IT staff member recommends 'self-study courses that students can complete in a few hours/days. This makes it easier to offer more targeted trainings, and by combining several smaller courses, still provide a good overview (e.g., 'Now that you've completed our course on UN human rights treaties, why not take our course on advocating at UN meetings? Ask for Booklet GAP7 or click here to start that course''

That MRG continue to be conscious of the extensive administrative, editorial and technical support required for any complex courses it runs, and that wherever possible dedicated staff posts are created, and the time-cost, timeline-slippage and budget-cost of every layer of complexity (such as right-to-left scripts) are fully considered. Online systems are complex systems with much user interaction, and thus require constant maintenance and support;

That MRG carefully consider the recommendation of its IT specialist that for an enhanced higher-tech course it should be 'building on a newer version of Moodle. An upgrade of GAP's 1.9 to a newer version remains risky, given many core changes in the code with the jump to Moodle 2.x'.

That MRG continue to take contextually-appropriate opportunities to engage some students in face-to-face meetings/trainings, live versions of the online course, students running their own courses and/or tutoring themselves and 'Skype Classrooms' to follow up on learning, and integrate involvement with other MRG activities, like the Minority Voices website.

There are resonances of all of the above in MRG's current direction; all of them might be expected to counter drop-out rates, which should be both carefully monitored and benchmarked against other online courses.

Outcome level

Where completed as planned, did the activities contribute to the planned results? Where this was so, refer to evidence. Where not so, what factors intervened and explain how they impacted. Suggest ways that MRG tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was

The outcome level of the logical framework (under 'Expected Results') is about the 'capacity' of 'activists representing minority communities' to carry out advocacy and campaign together on minority rights.

Student participants in regional and UN events were asked to give quantifiable responses for 35 questions regarding 8 aspects of their experience; involvement, course criteria, course characteristics, their use of the course, knowledge/awareness, impact, advocacy and media. Their responses are attached as Appendix One.

This section of capacity treats the first five aspects (leaving impact, advocacy and media for the impact section). All five aspects returned a majority of positively affirmations of the course objectives. All 20 out of 20 questions also received a majority of positive affirmations; most of them very heavily affirmative.

Student level of involvement in the course was rated highly; for Regional Activities the ratios of positively / average / negatively involved were 17 / 1 / 0; for UN Activities 12 / 1 / 0 and for online training 22 / 5 / 2.

For those declaring that they 'gained overall in Skills and Knowledge, the scores were 28 / 3 / 0. As a whole, the multiple Regional, UN and National interventions received even greater participant approval than the online training, and multiple comments stressed the complementary nature of the two.

Overall then, student participants have very clearly benefited from the course and activities.

There is one crucial issue which does not appear at all in the project's logical framework, however. "Enrolling of minority community representatives and activists" might be expected to appear as an 'Activity', leading to the 'Outcome' of 'capacity of activists representing minority communities to carry out advocacy and campaign together on minority rights'. The central questions of development such as 'Who gains?' 'Who loses?' 'Whose reality counts⁸?' and this case 'Who represents?' have therefore remained implicit, and in danger of being overlooked. Even when writing supportively about minority communities, this evaluator could never be said to 'represent' them; that would require a long period of sharing their lives, campaigning on their issues and, most crucially, broad-based support and explicit requests from those communities to do so. Naturally, people of the same nationality, working in capital cities on minority issues might have a stronger claim to 'represent'; but there is also the issue of consent. Individuals from minority peoples working in capital cities are one step closer; only people living and sharing⁹ the reality of the problems faced by minority peoples, working on them and 'self-representing' might classically be said to 'represent'¹⁰. There are nuances to this; in most African countries, MRG staff report that NGOs are based in peri-urban areas from which they interact on a daily basis with the communities where most participants are based. In Europe, the problem is recognized in some areas; mitigation and live components and training-of-trainers are being employed in mitigation. And in Asia, trainees were mostly in large capitals with NGOs reaching out to rural areas, the obstacles to direct participation from communities being mostly attributed to an inability to rely on internet and English language for some remote communities.

Part of the problem is simply the logframe's use of 'represent'; it could have used 'advocating for'. And none of this is to suggest that 'outsiders' cannot achieve extremely positive results for minority peoples; they often do, and they might in some circumstances be the sole actors doing this. Nor is it to impugn their commitment or quality; on the contrary, one GAP trainer observed 'The people who studied with MRG are young and active. They know a lot. UDHR, human dignity and discrimination, equality etc'. It is also true that minority people 'representatives' from within communities can also produce progressive or regressive outcomes in their work, or at worst, manipulate and exploit the people for whom they claim to work.

The main point of raising the issue here – in the outcome section, since it did not appear under activities – is that participants at all levels are aware of it, and MRG might usefully find a way to use the networks and media to attract minority activists, tighten its monitoring of who it is enrolling, and that year-on-year it is moving towards more 'self representation' and less 'representation of others'.

Targeting of Participants: Getting to the grassroots, and to self-representation:

The most senior manager interviewed in OHCHR Bangkok commented at length on the unsatisfactory nature of minorities being represented consistently by non-minority intermediaries, and by metropolitan professional minority intermediaries who do not share their lives and experiences. This was not a comment aimed at the GAP programme, which informed that a small majority¹¹ of its participants at the UN Forum came from minority communities, given that he confessed 'We don't have much knowledge of this work; I have not been closely associated'. However, his general comments about the sector found resonances from others in the GAP project. 'For human rights defenders in particular, they do not use the UN human rights mechanisms. It will only be people in Bangkok or whichever capital... there might be some exception in countries like Indonesia where you have the Papua or other Indigenous Peoples (IPs) who might be more organized; even then I didn't see much. Maybe they go with Amnesty International or

⁸ After Robert Chambers, 'Whose Reality Counts' 'Putting the Last First' etc

⁹ Or having recently left communities but maintaining contact with them.

¹⁰ See Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation'

¹¹ (34 out of 60)

Human Rights Watch, but I didn't see much, not through the UN'.... How do we make (improve) the capacity of these groups? for human rights defenders in general, not only minority rights. We have more and more problems related to economic and social rights; dams etc...' they need to be briefed. Something very practical – not just about knowledge. It is not easy to apply. (We could liaise) twice a year, asking people to bring their cases and help them to put it together; you help them to do it. You can tell the theory. We have to go out, to see these people. To learn, and to meet them. The problem here (at OHCHR) is lack of capacity...'

An MRG staff member in Africa spoke of the initial difficulties: 'We could not get to ground-level activists. It compromised us in getting numbers and losing quality of activists. We had to be flexible' and felt that only later in the project and in some countries had this been possible. In Europe, there was an attempt (frustrated, at least for now) to include visible minorities in the Framework for National Minorities, despite some successful engagement with African organizations in Russia, and similarly difficult attempts to engage with Roma peoples. The frustration at these thwarted attempts was that without representation from minority peoples' themselves 'international coalitions, the mainstream, take an anti-discrimination angle' rather than rights-based supportive positions which could potentially lead to minority peoples accessing the agency due to them. This is an issue common to all who advocate on minority rights, and perhaps particularly in Europe / Central Asia, where the GAP project made progress in the number of numerically inferior and sometimes highly marginalized communities represented in Russia, Kyrgyzstan¹², and Georgia, including Yezifids and Meskehtians, who regular took part in international activities.

It is difficult – but would be worthwhile - to quantify what success would look like in enrolling the hard-to reach activists from the more disadvantaged minority peoples. A good example has been provided recently by MRG campaigns around Ogiek peoples at the African Court on Human Rights. Such work enhances visibility, broadens MRG's funding base, and allows for active advocacy collaboration with other rights-based organizations

A key informant with close knowledge of the project in Georgia concurred 'The number one priority is community based organization'. Another commented 'Although... students have almost exclusively been diligent, and have produced concrete results through the project, there has been weak representation of the more marginalized ethnic minorities – which could only have been achieved through much more concerted advertising and recruitment'.

Data collected in this evaluation showed that a majority of respondents (11 / 4 / 4) identified themselves as excluded by their minority status. This can be regarded as a creditable ratio of minority involvement. The majority of those made some qualification, however, about the fact that their class, or metropolitan location, lessened this exclusion, and several talked of their ethnicity being a link to excluded people, rather than an exclusion in itself.

This was echoed in other 'exclusions'; only one person felt that her social class was an exclusion, and a minority of women (5 / 2 / 7) respondents regarded their gender as an excluding factor, several mentioning that their privileged backgrounds precluded this.

In any follow-on project, year-on-year progress might be sought regarding the proportion of self-representing community-based minority students. .

In project implementation, this would require decreasing the reliance on internet, as treated under 'Activities'. One important tool for reaching people in IT-poor environments is the production of hard-copy booklets, as used in GAP with Russian-language students – 'it was a stretch to for the project to promise the course over fax, CD-ROM, etc' according to the IT manager.

¹² Including the Shibin, a community of 16 people, who attended the UNMFI

It would also mean expanding the methods of publicity and enrollment. As the OHCHR informant advised 'We have to go out, to see these people. To learn, and to meet them'. This is task which MRG recognizes; in Russia, for example it was reported that contact was made with 185 community organisations and leaders. It is also ever-present; some of my research was conducted with the Ayta of Panay Island in the Philippines who have consciousness of and interest in their own, marginalized, existence, but not the education, resources and technology to get on the bottom rung of a GAP or similar project. Attempts to reach out to such peoples require time-intensive work with existing coalitions, identification of role models, grants, peer support etc; all of which have heavy budgetary implications. Other minorities in the Philippines— principally the Cordilleran peoples – do possess the agency to participate in national life, and are heavily represented at the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples; these are easier-to-reach, but with a lower potential for societal change. There are no clear, easy answers to such dilemmas for using limited time and resources, but the challenge deserves consideration.

Two of the evaluation's key-informants were founders of the Philippines' 'Black and White movement' - with links to the 'Artist's Revolution. They have agreed that their email contacts can be forwarded to MRG and to share their knowledge around creating viral YouTube videos, their initial method of tackling power abuse through comic animation¹³, acting¹⁴ and street demonstration¹⁵. They have tackled important but dense subjects such as politicians' appropriation of public services and buildings for populist election campaigns. They are confident that such media can tackle minority rights issues: 'The message just needs to stand out... you can use whatever media'

'Of course, these methods can be used. We did it for 'dull' topics... some IPs show our viral videos to gather their groups', and training in such technologies has been requested by several GAP students, including from DRC: 'Technology counts in training... we don't totally master Facebook and Twitter, but we could produce short videos if resourced with knowledge and money'. Viral videos offer a complementary medium to UPR submissions and shadow reports, according to an actress in the movement, in that they are not too academic; it has to be shown in a way which interests. We aim to be – honest, biting, entertaining.

They are also only medium in the 'populist' armoury;; internet-based campaigns and reliance on news stations are intrinsically exclusive for both MRG and the Black and White movement: 'We thought of expanding our audience to the movie-going public who don't like to watch the news'¹⁶. Their latest venture is a bawdy, populist comedy big-screen movie¹⁷ around lead character 'Juana Change' who plays a young indigenous woman passing naively through – and then exposing - urban vice and corruption, with themes around indigenous rights¹⁸, anti-mining and environment, Freedom of Information Bill, and anti-political dynasties and anti-mining. Critical acclaim (see footnote 15) has been favorable; 'the movie was never made to rake it in at the Box Office'¹⁹, and its protagonists are satisfied that their messages will continue to be heard as long as the political space is available: 'If I had done this during the Marcos time, I would be dead by now'.

¹³ (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfNr7AUD_Cs on greed and the ex-President's impeachment

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMWi3cPqhtA> on impeachment

¹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55qGU7Axw5c&NR=1&feature=endscreen> comedy at demonstration

¹⁶ <http://entertainment.inquirer.net/91747/juana-change-movie-tackles-heavy-issues>

¹⁷ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_5UCh_RK4

¹⁸ 'Because the Badjao and Aytas etc really have nothing, no representation.'

¹⁹ <http://www.kristn.com/index.php/movies/article/1602/juana-c-the-movie-is-the-filipino-movie-industry-ready-for-change> and <http://www.spot.ph/cut-me-some-slacks/53411/be-the-change-you-juana-c>

Targeting of Participants: Civil Servants:

In all areas, but particularly in Africa, it proved difficult to make significant inroads into Government networks. One obvious way to do this is by encouraging participation from civil servants as participating students. The logic for not doing this seems simply to have been that they are not (the targeted group) activists

Recommendations on targeting participants:

MRG should expand its efforts to reach the difficult-to-reach grassroots minority peoples, organizations and activists. It should try to enlist donors in the extra effort and budget this entails, and expand to the community or organization, visits, face-to-face meetings and populist media required for successful recruitment, and a consideration of the grants peer-support etc which may be necessary for some students to become models in their communities. A target should be set for the self-defined minority participants in communities who express that they feel marginalized from society. From a low base (to prevent an artificial push towards artificial claims of marginalization, or the acceptance of student participants unlikely to succeed), a gradual year-on-year increase should be sought.

MRG might also broaden its advocacy base by entering into further collaboration with rights based organizations representing minority peoples.

UN mechanisms – and especially the UPR - should continue to be promoted amongst others; minority peoples, groups and individuals will choose those that they feel best meet their needs.

To conduct an internal good-practice review into lessons to be learned from the carefully crafted advocacy work done around the Enderois, and the Ogiek peoples at the African Court on Human Rights.

To expand the criteria to allow civil servants to study online courses, at the discretion of the relevant MRG Regional Director

That MRG keep itself updated on new media tools with which activists can work and link.

Document any changes in the external environment that may have helped or hindered the project. If there were any unplanned results (positive or negative) explain what these were and how they came about.

The evaluator believes that – within its time and budgetary constraints - the project was written with excessive ambition in certain areas, such as impact with decision makers and legislative change, and the assumption that initiatives would develop from participants without significant financial support or project direction at regional and international levels.

One regional director describing it as ‘one of the most ambitious projects I have ever implemented. It shook me, when I looked at all the activities and the range of countries including new countries... (we) had to figure out how the activities were going to be implemented in a practical way.... struggled a lot to attract people... significant limitations in online access... (and) getting to ground-level activists. It compromised us in getting numbers and losing quality of activists... Nothing much was done in the first few months....it all took shape in 2011; in 2012, we got the people we wanted; the UPRs the Shadow Report (but).. the budget was not much, spread amongst... (many)... countries, resources were reduced. We lost out on follow-up and considerable impact. We should work in a reduced number of countries... (half the number)... would have done’.

A major part of the problem was a flawed logical framework giving an unrealistic picture of what one project could achieve within three years on a national legislative level. MRG itself sees attribution is a difficult issue in human development; ‘we tend to step away from (it, we want to say...) ‘we made a

contribution²⁰, and at all levels and from all stakeholders there was a similar reluctance. Most informants were very confident that they felt the course had made concrete contributions. Some were highly nuanced, such as this from the Council of Europe around improvement of advocacy on behalf of minorities: 'I think in general minorities are more vocal and can fight better for their interests; whether it is a direct result of this project is another question. It may be a result of all efforts made in this field thanks to various projects. I think that the improvement in advocacy thanks to this project may be better measured in other regions than in the European context'. One or two, whilst applauding the importance of the project, were blunt in dismissing the question, such as in Turkey "The rights of Kurdish people have been raised in the Parliament. But, it is not a result of the training. This is a result of a very long term advocacy and battle'

External environment clearly played the major role as to whether minority rights ebbed or flowed in particular countries over the project period. This is inevitable for every country, but an example from each continent: the extent to which the Turkish Government believed in its possible accession to the European Union (before which possibility, minorities reportedly had no access to government channels²¹ and after which, an ebbing and flowing of the extent to which it felt it was important to be seen to support minority and human rights); a new President in the Philippines prepared to publicly support that countries' National Commission of Indigenous Peoples' focus on free and prior informed consent; and continued religious polarization and violence in Nigeria causing reduced space for minority activists.

MRG must take some share of responsibility for the excessive goals and claims, but I have advisedly put my comments under the 'environmental' section of the report. It is, in part, a product of a distorted funding environment in which 'innovative' 'ambitious' and 'cost-effective' bids often win out over bids from small-scale NGOs with a track record of commitment to the issues, presence in the relevant locations and a history of effective development work. One senior MRG staff member with responsibility for both project and fundraising described the inherent tension 'fund-raising (departments) know what gets the money... Donors should think carefully to push the levels of ambition unfeasibly high... bidders should be marked down for fantastical, non-plausible targets '

Neither is the emerging donor trend for "payment by results" – which may encourage realism in development projects in certain sectors (infrastructure, health, job creation or micro finance) – likely to be relevant for projects involving human rights, governance, conflict prevention or other forms of very complex, contested and fluid social change.

One constraint on impact, very clear in this project, is the total time frame allowed for a project. If donors including the EU, wish to see stronger impact, they may need to allow longer maximum project time frames, rather than the current situation of projects 'left hanging' after three years. If this project had run for 48 or 60 months, the follow-through in terms of national campaigns and legislation would likely have been much better. An alternative would be to externally evaluate a 3 year project after two years with the express intention of evaluating the pros and cons of continuation for a further 2-3 years.

A kind of competition exists, particularly between NGOs and consultancy companies, which does not always appear equitable to NGOs. Another senior MRG staff member told of losing a bid on the second round to a commercial competitor with no sectoral or geographical expertise which undercut and outbid MRG by slashing all staffing costs from its revised proposal (which is possible for commercial outfits, by offsetting them to other budgets but impossible for NGOs under their mandates) and creating a 'loss leader' to expand its business portfolio into a new area. Another example routinely experienced by freelance evaluators²² is requests from commercial consultancy companies to use their curriculum vitae in bids despite knowing that they are uninterested in, and unavailable for, the actual work. An informant opined 'It is very common to see professional consultancies lying, using other people's cv s ... it is a kind of corruption'. The above can pressure NGOs to create unrealistic targets in order to outbid companies

²⁰ A senior MRG staff member in its headquarters

²¹ As related by a senior MRG staff member who has long followed the issue

²² Including this one

who may have less potential to deliver significant results. There is also an issue of MRG's compatibility with new funding mechanisms; one staff member commented, 'Bigger grants go to consultant firms.. we are too big for a local group, too small for an EU Regional Group ... an organization bigger in reputation than resources... we haven't been able to adapt to donor environment... where management structures have been allowed to take priority over change for marginalized people'. MRG's culture appears extremely hard-working, cost-effective²³, committed, experienced and knowledgeable, but vulnerable to changing fundraising mechanisms.

MRG nonetheless won this bid, harmonized its existing work and experience, and used it to good effect both for beneficiaries and the organization 'GAP was globalising the activities we already did ... training on UN system, giving grants for Shadow Reports etc... using a new tool of online training... (in Europe), it worked using pre-accession to put pressure on Government.. it is always empowering for participants and can enhance their security, open a dialogue minority-to-Government... can raise credibility... greater change because more organizations are doing minority rights through GAP... now we have a GAP 2, with a network for advocacy and a platform for minority rights, funding and organization using in-country feedback'.

Some outcomes were surpassed, for example the planned interactive training course in English was also translated into French and Russian, UN training materials in 2011 into Arabic and Russian, and – in the last years of GAP and for future use – the whole online course has been translated into Arabic and uploaded. The production of multiplier training materials was not completed, being de-prioritized in an attempt to meet the project's ambitious activities and targets and but facilitation was provided to students who took on this role. This provided models for a future more student-centered approach.

Other imbalances are implicit to working within political structures. Governments and regional mechanisms may well have a self-protecting tendency towards a less politicized, anti-discrimination, rather than a rights-based approach. OHCHR, for example, did not agree to the formation of a caucus of minority rights groups – following previous successful caucuses of IP groups - during regional visits to Geneva. Fund allocation might also be heavily influenced by borders; for example ENAR (European Network Against Racism) receives 1M euros of EU money per year, with generous running costs. UNITED²⁴, the largest European anti-racist network with 1020 member organisations, operates on a shoestring with minimal paid staff for lack of administrative funds. In Europe in particular, the EU division in terms of both policy and funding between EU member states and others is deemed unhelpful in trying to achieve any region wide advocacy efforts (e.g. linked to the OSCE or Council of Europe member states as a whole.)Although the outcome of the project has been extremely positive, processes can be improved. Donors have a responsibility to ensure that their processes encourage optimal positive development change. Likewise, MRG has the potential to play an even more important role in influencing donor priorities and the structure and administration of grants.

Other Recommendations for Outcome Level:

That the European Union consider how it might – in practical terms – 'mark down' bidders submitting implausibly ambitious targets and using excessive attribution, and evaluate its portfolio of recipient agencies for the proportion of consultancy companies. It should also consider how it can build in longer project periods for complex social change projects and/or allow for the smooth continuation of successful projects that will reap a much greater harvest if supported to run for a longer period. That MRG use this recommendation to try and create a dialogue with relevant departments of the EU and other donors to promote funding of organizations and projects facilitating consistent, positive, sustainable change in the lives of minority peoples, groups and individuals.

²³ As commented elsewhere, budget paring can be a handicap at times.

²⁴ UNITED for Inter-Cultural Action

That MRG keep attempting to forge links with donors which encourage involvement and visits to projects, eschews excessive attribution in project activities and notes rather than targets legislative change²⁵ over short project periods, make their case as a high-quality niche organization but look for strategic responses to the ever-changing donor environment.

That MRG continue its progression towards a more student-centered approach, for example by building on its successful multiplier training experience through creating specific resource materials and tutor support.

Impact level

If at all possible, make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the purpose of the project. If it is unlikely that all or part of the purpose will be achieved, why is this and is this something that could have been foreseen or overcome?

The overall purpose was 'Increased amount and quality of advocacy on behalf of minority communities nationally in 36 states and internationally in 3 regions and at the UN'.

Student Participants: Appendix One shows the views of student participants, who are the informant group best able to assess the extent to which gains in quantity and quality of advocacy can be attributed to the GAP project. Their responses show a high degree of belief in impact stemming from the course. This confidence predictably lessens a little with each link of the chain from theory to practice and from community level to national level, but it remains strong at all levels as follows: .

In Appendix One's sections on impact, media and advocacy, 12 out of 15 questions received affirmation from student participants, including all of the questions regarding impact and media. Only 3 out of 8 questions, in one aspect, advocacy, received a very slight minority (each time by one 'vote') of positive affirmations as follows:

The experience:

... has 'changed any legislation or policies?' 9 'below average' responses and 8 'above average'

... is 'likely to change any legislation or policies?' 12 'below average' responses and 11 'above average'

... has changed 'the attitude of politicians?' 13 'below average' responses and 12 'above average'

This evaluation suggests that not all participants are involved at the level of national legislation, and that the project design was unrealistic to suggest that interventions mostly at individual level could lead to wide-ranging legislative change at national level over a three year period. Without very restrictive recruitment criteria, it is difficult for a project to plan or control at which level participants will operate, either individually in their countries or within their organizations.

It should also be noted that on the majority of Advocacy questions – organizations doing more advocacy, of better quality; with greater access to, and response from, decision makers; at local government level regarding issues directly faced by communities – the responses showed strongly positive and positive results.

'Have you used this knowledge in the work of your organisation?' was answered 22 / 7 / 1

²⁵ Although such targets may fit well, for example, in MRG's long-term strategic planning

Increased quantity of advocacy was 15 / 6 / 7

Improved quality of advocacy was 14 / 4 / 6

'Has it changed any, legislation or policies?': 12 / 15 / 13

'The attitude of the politicians has positively changed': 10 / 6 / 11

Key Informants: Of the 34 key informants asked the question about increase in the quantity / improvement in the quality of advocacy, all but two (who answered 'Don't Know') answered in the affirmative. One activist working at grassroots level with some of the most disadvantaged groups²⁶ in the Philippines, confirmed, 'I think there has been an increase in advocacy and also an improvement, and there has been an increase in international solidarity, which contributes...I think there is more focus on the importance of networking; one issue connects to another.. I think groups have realized that it works'.

Respondents within OHCHR concurred: 'from the Geneva perspective, I feel that there has been an increased presence of minority rights advocates at the Forum on minority issues as a result of GAP'. Another Geneva based employee who had been involved in the inception of the project commented ' I am pretty sure that (it) has strengthened advocacy in the field of minority rights based on its quality and geographical broad based approach'.

From the Africa Commission, a representative responded to the question 'Do you feel that since 2008 there has been increased advocacy on minority rights as a result of the project?' as follows: ' I believe so. There is an increase in advocacy work by minority groups particularly with the boost by the historic ruling of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) on the Endorois case. The Endorois case was presented partly to the ACHPR by MRG which in turn enhanced MRG's visibility and the tendency by minority organizations to work with MRG'.

Legislation: One outstanding example reported during this evaluation research was a student participant showing how she had persuaded both Government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front negotiators in the Philippines to accept the precise definitions of the course 'minority' and 'indigenous', into the text of the Bangsamoro Framework Peace Agreement. The student exemplified the full potential of the course, making four submissions (instead of the suggested one) to a UN Forum during a visit to Geneva, and attaining a promising position in her country's Foreign Service, within which she is determined to advocate for change. She described her role, and that of the MRG GAP course, as follows: ' I am the head of the Government side for drafting the negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front....When I joined MRG GAP, there were no signed documents (in the negotiations)...The course was extremely helpful. I was insecure about this idea of minority rights... To approach it correctly, I needed the framework provided by MRG and how they packaged minority rights in international law... The definition ... MRG developed... useful dealing with the notion of Bangsamoro. I was...confident of discussing it with government.., all drafts and positions from the government side go through me, or start with my team... We tried to frame it. 'Right of women to meaningful political participation and protection from all forms of violence' ... the definition of Bangsamoro.... is the first ever recognition in the Philippines of a national minority. Before this, Bangsa Moro appeared in a law; Public Act 9054. The identity was tied down to religion, not a national minority. In the framework agreement 'The parties recognize Bangsamoro. Those who at the time of conquest and colonialism were considered natives or original inhabitants of Mindanao [etc]... and their descendants whether of mixed or of full blood shall have the right to identify themselves as Bangsamoro by ascription or self-ascription.' I insisted on this ascription because of the MRG definition which insists on the objective element – numerically less in ethnicity, religion, language, national and cultural etc; and also the ascription, that members identify themselves as members of that group. Islam is not mentioned, and we end with a non-threatening definition. Some may not identify themselves as Bangsamoro. It is history, geography, ethnicity and relationship... I asked them 'What are IPs indigenous

²⁶ Such as the Badjao and the Ate

to?’ Many advocates don’t know the answer to that question; it is LAND. I know that because of MRG. With minorities, that is not exactly the case; they can move from their land and retain their identities; hence the paragraph about Bangsamoro who have left the Bangsamoro area. They have rights as members of minorities, which they can exercise individually or collectively. They have rights as minorities and as IPs. That is the value of the MRG course to me.’

Another student participant achieved great impact working on Burma ‘from Feb 2012, we brought together 17 ceasefire groups for discussions (to)... form a Working Group for Ethnic Co-ordination... sharing, facilitation of what could be proposed to Government. We then worked with MPC, the Myanmar Peace Centre...and could organize our training in Yangon.... Each ceasefire group supported the Office... a short training using MRG course material... .. a project achievement strategy... the first time they reviewed after the ceasefire... If the government continues to allow such facilitation, the peace will be enduring’.

MRG’s own reporting listed many national-level achievements, for example, as a result of post-GAP advocacy “the government of Bangladesh allocated 10 crore Taka (\$130K) to develop housing facilities of Dalit in urban (areas)... the finance minister also briefly mentioned (it) in his Budget Speech²⁷ Other achievements included a new draft law on Untouchability in Bangladesh and a new policy on minority language assessments as part of the University application process in Georgia to which this project made an important contribution.”

Such achievements are often important opportunities taken and processes already in place rather than directly and solely attributable to online learning and events. They do not therefore make realistic targets for a project of this nature.

Media: Although comparatively meager to other areas such as submissions to minority rights bodies, the attention given by the course to media nonetheless helped provoke important coverage. Vietnamese media, for example, rarely use the terms “rights” or “human rights”, but three examples, including <http://www.baotintuc.vn/151N20120831110658548T0/khac-phuc-tro-ngai-day-tre-em-vung-dan-toc-thieu-so-khai-thac-gia-tri-van-hoa-dan-toc-ban-dia.htm> were given – including in Communist Party organs – where ethnic minorities are represented as more than people with basic needs to be met. The introduction of UNDM and UNDRIP, the knowledge that Vietnam was among the first nations to endorse them, together with meetings, trainings and field trip, have therefore stimulated the interest of journalists in ethnic minority issues. This is not to say that MRG should necessarily focus more resources on media – use of the Minority Voices Newsroom is a good and relatively low-cost example used as part of the course in Asia²⁸, where activists can upload their stories and bring them to the attention of media outlets. Media, however, may be usefully covered more comprehensively in the online courses.

Other concrete impact from the project: MRG’s own internal reporting includes multiple instances of impact, such as: successful workshops on minority rights around Thailand, the creation of a UN Human Rights Mechanisms Manual, a new advocacy organization formed from the course in Georgia which has access to senior levels of government, a comprehensive online resource produced on UN and regional minority rights and standards, production of shadow reports and implementation of country campaigns.

At the level of individual students, one was selected as the Deputy Director of Human Rights for the Pakistan Government, another as a Commissioner of the Minority Commission in Rajasthan and yet another was nominated by Batwa MPs in Burundi to represent the Batwa in the East Africa

²⁷ GAP Asia Final Narrative Report

²⁸ A glitch was reported that tutors needed to be aware of the numbers of submissions and accepted articles.

community parliament; he attributed his acceptance in this role to the GAP course. An example of the latter reaching difficult-to-reach targets is as follows: 'Uganda: on-line course graduates (1 male and 4 females) organized an in-country campaign targeting the Ik minority... shared with the... media... meetings with.. local district councils, production of a brief video.. to lobby and influence... to extend basic services... several organizations such as Care Uganda have come... to work with the Ik.. (who) have been more keen in participating in...National Ethnic Minority Forum'.

Other impact has been submitted from Asia: 'Partner shadow reports have been successful in yielding very specific, concrete concluding observations, but we have also seen, such as in the recent case of Thailand's CERD review, that they have triggered well-received action on the ground, engaging local stakeholders as well as Ministries and security officials. In terms of the UPR process, we have seen some excellent cases of well-coordinated follow-up, such as in the organised and collaborative way in which civil society.. (has)... formed to create time-specific action plans and annual reviews of progress in achieving UPR recommendations. MRG reports provide multiple quotations about such outcomes from regional events eg 'I've just finished another workshop/training on UN Human Rights Mechanisms and UPR Follow-up. Guess what? I wrote a booklet for local organizations on how to engage with the UN. It's not a perfect one but I tried my best to at least spread this knowledge to grassroots level.'

Key Informants who knew the MRG project were even more positive than students, for example from DR: 'It is visible that things are changing step by step...with... sensibilization, pygmy's (Batwa) know their rights and are thus accepted by other ethnic groups...some pygmy leaders have attended high school or university ...from 2008 the support received from MRG gender has help us to discuss with local provincial authorities regarding the pygmy girls education.

The evaluator's judgment is that this group are more likely to be aware and realistic about the compromises of power, and the possibilities of making significant change on low budgets over short periods of time.

Appendix One shows that a minority of 10 to 13 felt that the 'attitude of politicians had changed' from meetings under the GAP umbrella, and a small minority also reported change – or envisaged change- at national legislative level. However, a majority of 22 to 2 reported meeting local government officials. For those who had been involved in campaigns, however, there was continued interest to submit to Regional mechanisms, and the Universal Periodic Review, as a European informant put it: " if 36 submit to UPR, then we are in a better position to advocate in future... UPR is less important than the Forum on Minority Issues in the long run, but as a means to an end it is the...strongest... most important mechanism. In Europe, regional mechanisms are more important than UN.. the declaration of persons belonging to minorities... is not legally binding.. at the UN... we would like it in a treaty.. Every time Rita Ihzak's mandate comes up it is questioned... we need minority issues to be regularized.. Through events, the visibility of issues and of NGOs has increased,,, 24 participants in Strasbourg... EC now doing policy/advocacy... at networking level... that has been the most consistent result for GAP in Europe'

A respondent at the Council of Europe commented 'There are clearly increased numbers of young lawyers, law students, rights defenders in some of the countries from the Caucasus who are engaged in minority rights protection and promotion. (I'm) not sure whether this is only because of this project but would say that it has definitely added. The fact that minority rights are included in an overall rights advocacy project is very good.. the general issue of minority rights as part of human rights and as part of member states' overall international obligation has been flagged. This is not to be underestimated as there was often no awareness at all before and minority issues were seen as bilateral matter between 'kin-states'. Advocacy is improved in that more knowledge is available also about the monitoring process and the possibility for NGOs to contribute to our monitoring by providing information is more widely known/used.' A process has also begun to multiply these outcomes: 'the project is supporting students to run the course themselves. Three graduates of the Europe and Central Asia regional training session in Strasbourg have been authorised to act as tutors themselves and are starting running their own courses. ... We are hoping that this enthusiasm can bode well for the future sustainability of the course.

With the strongly positive view from activists themselves, the short answer to the question is 'Yes; one might expect an increased amount and quality of advocacy as a result of GAP'.

Learning evaluations look particularly for the areas of stretch required for improvements. Within the 'Yes', there is the sub-theme outlined under 'Outcomes' of targeting minority activists living in minority communities, which presents an ongoing challenge to MRG, donors, and all who work on rights issues.

Additional evaluation questions:

The views of the partners (OHCHR, FA, CoE) with regard to the project and how they were integrated into it.

Partner staff who knew about the course were all positive about it. OHCHR in Bangkok felt that there was much more scope for minorities' involvement in Treaty Bodies and Conventions, and called for much greater direct contact between minorities themselves (as opposed to representing/mediating NGOs) to contact the UN directly in Geneva. OHCHR in Geneva felt that both the quantity and quality of minority advocacy had increased, and that the project had correctly targeted key countries for intervention.

Two Forum Asia staff described this MRG targeting as 'forward thinking', were similarly impressed by MRG's organization of activities and comfortable with the partnership; 'I think we are quite aware of what each other are about... we know when to reach out to them and them to us' With regard to direct minority involvement, they referred to 'positive experiences in India.. they are broadening a Human Rights Defender network.. very active.. every two weeks there is an appeal to the Special Procedures, from remote areas also... a sustained type of one-person Secretariat... not resource-intensive' and 'in Philippines there has been a national network of Human Rights Defenders, we could see a replication of what is happening in India'.

The Council of Europe interviewee described MRG as 'an important NGO player in the field of minority rights', study visits as 'positive' where 'participants seemed quite motivated and asked good questions', that the project had 'definitely added' to the quantity of advocacy and that 'advocacy is improved in that more knowledge is available also about the monitoring process and the possibility for NGOs to contribute'

Recommendation: MRG can feel comfortable with the partnerships created on the basis of mutual interest. There is willingness at OHCHR Bangkok for more inter-action, and Forum Asia are comfortable with the partnership but feel their new strategy may diverge from that of MRG. There does not seem to be a need to focus on partnership for its own sake; where agendas match, MRG should continue to invest in the partnerships. .

Whether the course design, content and length were suitable. Any ways that the course could be improved.

The judgment of the evaluator is that the course design was too ambitious and over-focused - unrealistically and unnecessarily - on legislative change within three years. The course was, however, extremely successful at empowering a well-targeted group of mainly 'representing NGOs' to produce concrete results on behalf of minority peoples. MRG's reports to the EU from all three regions have numerous examples of concrete outcomes.

Both content and length were overwhelmingly regarded by student participants as suitable with approval : disapproval ratios of 25 :0 and 30:0 respectively. The 18 votes for content as 'extremely good' were the highest approval of any of the questionnaire categories about course characteristics. Suggested improvements for length were mostly for shorter, but also for longer courses, depending on the student participant's particular life situation. Giving more space for assignments was a popular request.

Recommendations:

The content is clearly excellent, and can be updated and built upon, maintaining at its current high quality..

That course length be shortened by splitting material into more digestible modules.

Future alternative project design might aim – in consultation with donors – to omit targets at a national legislative level and focus on follow-up with successful interventions, organizations, networking and coalition-building: Instances of new laws might be recognized as sub-sections of more realistic aims, such as – over a 10 year period – ‘evidence of stronger accountability shown by a particular government over minority rights’

That agreement can be made with potential donors not to over-exaggerate attribution of change to individual projects, whilst allowing space for positive examples of change which are directly attributable to be highlighted.

That future work strongly encourage networking globally through existing providers/social media. All GAP Asia graduates of the online course are added to a Google group email list-serve which is a functioning network of minority rights issues and opportunities (gapasia@googlegroups.com). MRG’s attempts to set up a ‘Forum’ for interaction and discussion of students met with limited usage; this maybe because it was introduced late into the project, but more likely because it requires a dedicated conscious decision and action to enter. In many countries, students used social media which is mainstreamed into their daily lives, such as Facebook. This might be encouraged, with MRG could provide guidance for both anonymous and declared²⁹ identities, and lightly moderate through its existing media and external relations to encouraging participation, opportunistic interventions, coalition building and submission to other fora, including its Minority Voices page. A review of the work should be built in to existing management structures, perhaps every six months, to ensure levels of participation, effect on co-operation between different civil societies, whether the media used are still optimal etc . This review may be as quick as an agenda point on an existing one-to-one management discussion.

Feedback from trainees on the tutoring support during the course. What lessons MRG can learn from this e.g. whether it would be more effective in future to use local tutors and why.

Tutoring support was overwhelming seen as positive (23 to 2); with support and positive feedback received unanimously from interviewed students who had to drop out of the course.

Opinion was split regarding whether using local tutors would be more effective in future, with marginally more (13) in favour than against (10); this was one of the few questions where gender appeared to play a role with marginally more females being against exclusively national trainers, and more males in favour.

The obvious advantages and disadvantages were brought up in the discussion; some minority respondents were more in favour of international tutors than those from ‘rival’ minorities; others remarked upon issues of language – particularly the role of Russian in the Caucasus – some called for a balance, and others said that international themes called for international trainers, whereas national campaigns were better conducted by national trainers. Overall, the issue did not appear to be a fiercely polarizing matter; it was never raised voluntarily but received a response when the question was put. MRG might feel free to follow its instincts based on the local context and the make-up of participants.

²⁹ These are preferable, because the defender’s work is then integrated into her/his ‘normal life’; in some national contexts this is unrealistic and unsafe, and even where it is not, the instinct of the individual defender for their own safety must be paramount.

Recommendations:

Tutor accompaniment was highly valued by student participants and should be retained: as a Congolese partner commented 'Advocacy was done in a short time-scale and needed support for realisation'. Context - including subject matter and language - should govern the ratios of national to international tutors..

Feedback from trainees on technical and other difficulties that made it more difficult for them to complete the course.

Complications were mostly reported around workloads, technology and internet/electricity, As stated elsewhere a range of offline, USB, 'live courses' etc were organized to mitigate these issues. Drop-out from the course, across the board, was at an early stage and related to assignments.

Recommendation:

To benchmark and encourage ongoing brainstorming on how to reduce dropout rates. TO add initial follow-up from tutors in the first two weeks of the course to their list of responsibilities, and encourage flexibility on teething issues.

To what extent the online resource was used by trainees and if so, how?

The extent of online material use appeared to be directly linked to ease of internet access. Chat and other networking was used by a majority of participant respondents (14:11), but the evaluator was repeatedly told that students had networked on Facebook when technology had failed, or when fellow participants were not entering chat rooms.

Recommendation: That MRG create a global group within Facebook and/or extend the googlegroup, and rely on it for the creation of smaller thematic or national online groups.

Whether the "menu" of e.g. campaigns, shadow reports and study visits met the needs of the participants.

The 'menu' received very strong approval of 20 : 5, and the 'actions' were consistently referred to as complementary to the study. Student participants took great pride in their campaigns and shadow reports, and could point to impact. Study visits were overwhelmingly enjoyed and provided valuable experience and networking opportunities.

Recommendation:

That MRG also respond to requests for accompaniment on production of video clips

Whether those who participated only in the online training still gained skills and knowledge which they have or are putting into practice. Whether those who also participated in face to face training sessions gained skills and knowledge which they have or are putting into practice. How these participants reflect on the difference between following the online course and attending a face to face training event.

With only one exception³⁰, all 'online-only' participants gave concrete examples of how they were using the knowledge they had gained, even those who had dropped out early from the course. Face-to-face training events received overwhelming support. They were regarded as a step further, and complementary to the study. Two participants voluntarily quantified the extent of that 'step': 'all (online activities) would be 90%; 95% for Regional and UN' and 'Regional in Bangkok added maybe 80%; Geneva added 50%'. Others commented that the events were 'a lot more effective as a learning experience'.

Whether the networks that were created as a result of the courses, regional and Geneva trainings are likely to be sustained and how useful they have been.

The events certainly created stronger networks than online (which had to face not only the difficulties of anonymous linking, but also the suspicion in many places such as Sri Lanka, Thailand and Nigeria that the networks would be infiltrated by state agents). It has not been possible to come to a view about how sustainable or useful such networking will prove to be; comments suggest that in busy lives, it will take specific practical problems to trigger active networks, and this may be the optimal outcome. As above, the use of the googlegroup system employed in Asia, and social networking, might encourage this.

How well did MRG and partners manage to mainstream gender into the project?

Students answered strongly in the affirmative that gender had been mainstreamed in the project's content.. It did not stand out as an area of involvement, possibly because gender mainstream is now so common that only its absence is noted. Key informants similarly did not comment in any great detail; the following were typical comments (i) from the Council of Europe was a typical comment 'Gender issues are generally mainstreamed in the FCNM and of course play a particular role in accessing education or participation, etc. But again, we did not go into as much detail on specific clusters of rights but remained broader on the FCNM generally and the monitoring process. (ii) 'It is always included as a cross-cutting issue in the Philippines... on paper it is there, but the implementation is oftentimes lacking, it is in the plans'.

Demonstrable efforts were made in all three continents for gender parity in numbers, which was more difficult to reach in Africa than Asia or Europe. Overall, with the incomplete gender disaggregated information provided, male students outnumbered females by 116 to 107, and tutors by 34 to 24, but for UN training participants women outnumbered men by 37 to 23. This evaluation targeted all email addresses provided, and received a similar gender ratio of responses 19 male to 15 female. Where the evaluator had personal jurisdiction, the 47 key informants composed 19 males and 28 females.

Some events were planned specifically by MRG around women's themes with women participants to redress some of this imbalance. Opportunities were also taken to support gender activists such as 'Equality' who were supported to compile a publication of recommendations from international and regional human rights monitoring bodies (UN, CoE, OSCE) on minority women in Moldova, alongside the respective international rights standards of those bodies. The publication was designed as a tool for women's organizations across Moldova as an immediate reference point for local and national advocacy. To support the publication, a series of seminars and advocacy events were held.

³⁰ Who had entered the online course as a learning experience to broaden his horizons and advance his career, had taken on a challenging new job, and who questioned himself as to whether he would go back and use the study.

Other recommendations:

Comparison with indigenous networks: Included in the original project application to the EU and echoed by three separate key informants within MRG, an eventual aim was to encourage minority intervention to follow the comparative success of indigenous peoples' (IPs) representation in international fora: 'Indigenous movements have created this worldwide movement; they have forged ahead but I don't always see that from minorities. Maybe by doing that we could create minority-friendly policies³¹'. This has led to a unnecessary and regrettable sense that the loose, unresourced coalitions formed by GAP participants on Facebook and email have fallen short; as a key African informant posited 'people get in touch with others when they need to. That loose connection is important'. One can only talk in rather simplistic broad-brush strokes about the comparison itself, given the vibrant, diverse, context-based reality of both indigenous and minority peoples, but as a generality, in the opinion of the evaluator, it has limited validity. IPs often share a history of dispossession, expulsion, eroded culture – and often, geographically, a historical enemy, often the dominant and/or majority settler culture. Minority peoples' struggles for agency may be much more nuanced, and do not necessarily coalesce around land. Their very identity may be disputed [one key informant asked 'Who are the minorities in Africa? If I was to look at groups, it would be IPs. Maybe the pastoralists, but they also have connections to their lands'], including by their own members, and they are more likely to be in competition against each other, as well as within and as well as the majority. National and regional lobbying for minorities is equally important to that of IPs, and it may build on some of the successes. Indeed in Europe/Central Asia numerous ongoing networks and coalitions have been established through GAP, including the UNITED working group and Initiative Group, which are now working independently of MRG, and an OSI Europe solidarity platform, which had no need of MRG involvement. Nonetheless, it may be an unfair and counter-productive target to expect the same amount of cohesion, or even solidarity, could be achieved with the same levels of intervention and resources.

Recommendation: MRG should reflect internally and discuss this issue. Whilst it may be useful for minority representatives to learn from the efforts, successes as well as set backs of other groups, it may be that comparisons between the agency achieved by IPs and minority peoples should not be encouraged or entertained. A year-on-year progress, which is also actively sought by MRG through its plans, could be a more useful measure.

Sustainability of the project as a whole:

As stated above, MRG took a step into the dark with the online course, and is continually gathering lessons for future use. Without any doubt, there is a valid purpose, a well-earned niche and plenty of opportunity for this course to morph into multiple useful projects. Many methods and tools are up and running, and expansion to be welcomed, for example, the eventual Arabic translation of the OHCHR Fellows project creates sustainability, as MRG rolls out the course in Egypt and more widely in the Middle East. There is also the understanding of where small amounts of money could make major differences. A staff member said 'If we had put 5,000 euro into an internet resource for all our students' and solved the mis-match by which' at the regional level there was not the activities and at national level there were not the resources...'

The European Union has put a large amount of money into the project; with the successful results and considerable learning, it would be logical for the EU to be in touch with MRG for the best way to follow up. Partner organizations might benefit from early assessment of follow-on grants ['Donor grants are not linked...] and support for sustainable organizations, and not 'people working on one issue for one grant'.

Recommendations: MRG should pitch to donors for more money, to work in fewer countries, conducting more on links with students' NGOs and providing respectful resourcing including running costs, using live components alongside training, getting further involved in training of trainers, with national coalition-

³¹ A key informant from Africa

building and advocacy where this fits the context, and some encouragement of a loosely-knit global caucus using existing social media.

A future project to improve?

Level of Intervention: As stated above, predicting legislative changes is considered over-ambitious, and the intervention at individual level – enhanced by networking – is largely supported. However there is more that can be done: 'We focused on the individual. We need to build the institutional element. The minority organizations... Sustainability... (we) missed (this)...in Africa'.

Organisational glitches: Both the online course and particularly the regional lobbying activities were so highly regarded that it can feel pedantic to focus on the rare exceptions. This testimony from one participant stems from a single example of oversight between HQ and one region during one year – within an overall extremely positive assessment of GAP and of MRG. It highlights the need for constant vigilance, the organizational challenges of a frantic multi-activity project and the high standards rightly sought by participants.

'The main idea and structure in the project were good to strengthen our advocacy knowledge in terms of international level and also provided a good opportunity for networking.. (but) ... a couple of problems due to lack of organization and communication. It was a very unique opportunity to attend a forum at UN level and finding a recognized platform to raise the problem that our communities are facing. But, most of the participants were unaware that we can do a statement at the forum as we were informed with a very short notice- only 1 day before we arrived to Geneva. That cannot be unacceptable when I think about the time we spent to learn all these tools, their importance and also the importance of reflecting a common point from the community in the statement. Most of us wrote our statement a day before the presentation and this creates a question in term of the objectivity and consistency.... a statement... requires media work before-during-after the day to create a media impact... a consultation with community leaders, organization policy consultants to form a piece to create an impactful result. I cannot say that this happened... (nonetheless)... the training is a value to strengthen my knowledge and provided me wider perception in the field that I have been working while it provided a network at UN level.

Modification of assumptions: Experience showed that the project component for building local coalitions, based on a presumption of conflict, was unnecessary; the project did not need to facilitate negotiation or reconciliation between communities, and the focus shifted to national coalitions instead. In Africa, staff felt that an overly-homogenous view had been taken, whereas there were extremely diverse issues encountered. This was less to do with the classical categories of civil space, government response etc, and more to do with the momentum created where the first activity worked well, as in Nigeria, but less in North Africa, where there was no structure in place, and more slowly in Uganda, Tanzania or Botswana where work was conducted with new groups and/or students in the interior without online access

Limited Resources: It is important to note the very real concerns of participants, partners staff and the consultant about opportunities missed due to lack of time and money. These comments fit together with the view expressed elsewhere that the project could usefully have been more concentrated on less countries with the same funding levels, or have used greater funding with the same scope. Regarding opportunities missed, an MRG staff member covering the Europe project noted 'The budget was not much, spread amongst 12 countries, resources were reduced. We lost out on follow-up and considerable impact. We should work in a reduced number of countries, 6 or 7 would have done' and provided a specific example: 'MRG sponsored participants.. to establish a European Minority Rights Network (EMRN)... The meeting was ... hosted by the UNITED network, a Europe-wide network working on... anti-racism... The first conference... was slightly mixed, in that a lot of potential members felt that it was difficult for them to take leadership roles, due to [lack of] resources'. Much was achieved in Europe/Central Asia regarding networking, as noted above; additional marginal funding globally, and an additional two years timescale, might have produced considerably more.

Lack of debrief on detailed case studies (expectation of overworked tutors) Students were generally very supportive of tutors' work but commented that on detailed case studies 'there was lack of debrief. After we provided a very significant experiences and advocacy practices/tools in the case studies, we did not get any feedback about which part could be done differently to achieve a better result or how the international advocacy tools could be used more effectively'.

Staffing budget: A restricted budget may have led to part-time work and delays in recruitment (and therefore project activities) ; it may also limit opportunities for (relatively expensive) staff from target countries to bring their expertise and experience to work in the MRG Headquarters, and a reliance on younger and less expensive home-based staff and interns.

Evaluation budget: The original budgeted figure of 9,000 euro was incompatible with the stated requirement for the consultant to visit four countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. Travel and living expenses would have consumed well over half the budget, with work conducted at little over minimum wage. A compromise was reached, resulting in five countries visited in Asia and Europe with online interviews to countries and continents not visited. Even with the very satisfactory policy including expenses within total budget – which prevents many wasted hours collecting scraps of receipts for small sums and allows evaluators choice, at their own cost, as to the level of comfort they require - expenses for long periods of time in five countries amounted to 4,300 euro and a fee rate of less than 30 euros per hour. Although satisfactory in this instance, such future budget levels risk compromising the quality of work. MRG's internal evaluation methods, questionnaires, meetings and level of reflection was found to be of an excellent quality; edited minutes from a multi-stakeholder evaluation held in Budapest are provided as Appendix Five, which come up, mostly³², with similar recommendations to this evaluation . This evaluator has raised with two MRG staff member whether an external evaluation was at all necessary; both felt it added credibility for MRG to always conduct and publish external evaluation on its websites: 'I would go for the external evaluation. There is a level of seriousness with which it is taken. We have shared internally, I am sure that external evaluation will add value'.

Recommendations:

That opportunities to build networks with minority institutions and networks are maximized.

That – notwithstanding late visa granting – maximum preparation time is given to student participants at forums.

Regarding evaluations, that either the budget is increased or that MRG relies more heavily on its credible internal evaluation methods, investing time in learning between regions and restricting any external evaluation to a desk-based survey of participant and staff feedback, a spot-check comparison between externally and internally-produced results gathered, and any learning observations.

That resources for project budgets, including staffing budgets, are increased wherever possible. This evaluation should be seen as a vote of confidence in MRG's approach which leads to renewed requests to donors for support of this important program for strengthening minority rights.

(ends)

³² With some nuances; for example I prefer the option of short modules to splitting the course in two, but the analysis of the problem is the same and the recommendation similar, and a matter of individual preference.