

Final Evaluation of the Programme
“Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation (2012/281-633)” funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) for Russia

Final Report

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List of Acronyms

CAC	Civic Assistance Committee for refugees and forced migrants
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FCNM	Framework Convention on National Minorities
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
ILO	International Labor Organization
KAFL	Kola Association of Female Lawyers
MIPs	Minority and indigenous peoples
MRGE	Minority Rights Group Europe
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PHRC	Presidential Human Rights Council
YHRM	Youth Human Rights Movement

Executive Summary

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the programme “Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation” and provide Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE) with an opportunity to learn from the implementation process.

The programme was implemented by MRGE in partnership with the Youth Human Rights Movement in 2013-2015. The programme aimed to achieve the following results:

- Overall objective: To ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia.
- Specific Objective: To strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations working with MIPs to monitor the human rights situation in Russia and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels.
- Result 1: Strengthen capacity of CSOs to monitor the human rights of MIPs in Russia, and conduct advocacy to challenge violations of these rights.
- Result 2: Key decision makers at the local and national levels display an increased awareness of human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia.
- Result 3: Improved coordination and cooperation between civil society actors working with MIPs in Russia.

The evaluation was conducted in May-September 2015. Evidence that served the basis for evaluation findings, conclusion and recommendations was collected through the review of programme documentation, interviews with programme stakeholders and observation at the regional training in Murmansk.

The evaluation has found that the **programme was highly relevant**, as it was consistent with the needs of its beneficiaries. Representatives of human rights NGOs and MIPs activities interviewed in the course of evaluation consistently voiced the need to know how to work and communicate with authorities to advance MIPs rights. MIPs activists also see the need for independent monitoring on the implementation of their rights by Russian authorities. The Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation adopted in 2012 calls for improved cooperation between state and municipal authorities and civil society as a means to ensure implementation of the rights of indigenous people and minorities.

Programme **effectiveness** – the extent of achievement of expected results – **was limited**. The program resulted in the increased knowledge regarding the rights of MIPs, but in most cases this new knowledge did not translate into the activities expected by the programme. The programme promoted networking between human rights and MIPs CSOs, but this networking in most cases did not lead to joint activities. As a result the programme did not manage to reach to authorities and build their awareness of human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia.

The programme effectiveness was undermined by un conducive political situation in Russia. Assumptions about the programme context and ability of MRGE trainers to get Russian visas made at the design stage were not fulfilled. MRGE trainer could not come to Russia to deliver the national advocacy and rights training that was to lay the foundation for the following programme activities. MRGE partners believe that this had a profound negative impact on the programme and led to the loss of the expected strong programme focus on advocacy activities.

The programme implementation was further complicated by barriers set by Russian authorities to stop international funding of Russian NGOs. Active enforcement of the “foreign agent” law by Russian authorities drastically increased the risks for Russian NGOs accepting foreign funding. This increased the effort necessary for contracting with sub-grants recipients as NGOs were very careful about the language used in the contracts. In addition some sub-grantees could contract with MRGE only as individuals or

individual entrepreneurs. To do so MRGE has to go through a complicated negotiations process with the EU Delegation about amendment of contracting rules applied to the programme. The development of sub-grant contracts with participants also were complicated and time consuming.

The **programme was designed to make it highly efficient**, that is to minimize the use of resources to produce expected results. MRGE and YHRM coordinators were working only part time. This limited their ability to quickly address emerging problems due to unfavorable situation in Russia and led to gaps in communication processes within the programme. One of the results of these gaps was that informal partners were not properly informed about the programme launch and did not participate in the programme as planned. This in turn limited programme access to MIPs communities.

The evidence collected in the course of this evaluation indicates that the **programme design** developed by MRGE and its Russian partners **was viable and feasible**. The regional training in Murmansk (conducted in July 2015) that managed to attract the planned mix of MIPs and mainstream human rights CSOs led to an advocacy campaign that involved the majority of training participants and has already reached regional authorities and can potentially contribute to better implementation of the rights of indigenous people in Russia.

There were several cases when the programme worked almost as expected for training participants. In all of these cases programme participants had prior experience of working with MIPs as well as experience with project management. So initial level of their capacity was already high. In addition they were highly motivated to positively contribute to advancement of MIPs rights in their regions.

In the course of the programme Murmansk-based Kola Association of Female Lawyers (KAFL) emerged as an active coordination center promoting cooperation within the network created by the programme and expanding this network. Kola Association has already demonstrated its readiness to put its own resources to advance MIPs rights. In December 2014 it conducted a one-day seminar on MIPs media to meet the urgent needs of local saami community and brought together representatives of saami community and human rights activists and experts from St Petersburg and Voronezh. KAFL is also leading the advocacy campaign that emerged from the Murmansk regional training organized within the framework of the MRGE training as participants decided to develop a set of recommendations for the newly established Russian Agency on national policies. Recommendations were completed in August 2015 and were presented to the representatives of Presidential Human Rights Council (PHRC) and the governor of the Murmansk region during the PHRC delegation visit to Murmansk region in the end of August. As the result of this presentation the governor and PHRC have agreed to conduct a meeting on the implementation of the rights of indigenous people living in the Russian Arctic in Murmansk before the end of 2015. It is highly likely that this organization will remain active within the network after the programme ends and contribute to the **sustainability** of the programme results.

The programme made some small steps towards its expected long-term results (**impact**) - having internationally accepted human rights standards implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia. More people in the human rights and minority/indigenous communities now have knowledge about the international instruments protecting MIPs rights. The advocacy campaign that emerged from the Murmansk seminar in July 2015 has developed recommendations for the newly established Russian Agency on national policy and presented them to the regional authorities of Murmansk region and members of the Presidential Human Rights Council. This led to the agreement to have a national meeting on the rights on indigenous people by the end of 2015. This initiative has a considerable potential for impact, but at present this is only potential.

Evaluation findings suggest that MRGE **programme management practices are likely to emphasize implementation of planned activities over achievement of results**. When major programme assumptions are not met and/or programme activities don't produce expected results, this should be a signal to the programme management that the programme design should be reviewed and possibly changed. Such review did not happen even when MRGE Managing Director Neil Clarke could not get Russian visa and come to deliver the national ARTs training, though assumption that Russian authorities

don't deny visa to MRGE trainer was explicitly articulated in the programme logframe and this assumption was obviously not met. MRGE was considering to redesign the programme after the national training did not work as planned, but preferred to attempt to continue with the original programme plan despite the evidence that it was not producing expected results.

The key lesson learned from the process of programme implementation is that **having strong local partners that have established contacts with programme target beneficiaries is crucial for programme success.** The programme worked as expected when the Kola Association of Female Layers (KAFL) had effectively assumed the role of the MRGE partner and led organization of the regional training in Murmansk, coordinated the advocacy campaign that emerged from that training as well as the preparation of one of the shadow reports. KAFL is a well-established human rights organization that has a history of working with saami and other MIPs communities in the North of Russia. KAFK network enables KAFL to bring the expected mix of participants to the training which created the enabling conditions for launching the joint action. KAFL also had contacts with government structures (the Presidential Human Rights Council) that allowed it reach to regional authorities and advance MIPs rights agenda.

Recommendations were provided on the possible areas of future work, possible adjustments of MRGE programme management practices as well as approaches to working with small fragile Russian NGOs.

1. Introduction: evaluation purpose and scope

The subject of this evaluation is the Programme “Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation (2012/281-633)” implemented by MRGE and YHRM in 2013-2015. The Programme was funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) for Russia. The programme started in February 2013 and was initially scheduled to end in July 2015 but was extended till September 2015. This evaluation was conducted in May-July 2015 and covered all period of the programme implementation.

The objectives of this final evaluation were as follows:

- A. Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the programme in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in “Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation” Programme Document and provide MRGE with an opportunity for ‘structured evaluative learning’, with the aim of learning from the implementation process.
- B. Based on the findings of the evaluation, develop a set of suggestions and key recommendations for future and continued MRGE activities.

The evaluation also had to answer seven groups of specific questions:

1. Referring to the project documentation, did we complete all of the activities as planned to a reasonably high quality? What problems were encountered at this level? How did changes on the ground in Russia affect our plans and was our reaction and changes to plans appropriate and timely? How did any problems affect the activities and to what extent were they overcome?
2. 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 MRGE tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was (or not). 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.
3. Impact level: Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the specific objective 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?
4. What effect has the project had (if any) on the capacities of those trained and supported to represent the rights and interests of their communities through advocacy campaigns? What input have other organisations or individuals had in supporting and developing partners’ and trainees’ capacities in addition to or alongside MRGE’s input?
5. In relation to the advocacy work, what was possible to date in relation to ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia? Were the project objectives realistic given the time frame and the context at the point that the programme was designed?
6. To what extent have grassroots communities benefited from the project? How has the team managed to balance work inside and outside major cities?
7. Were the publications produced in this project timely and relevant? Were they of an appropriate quality? Did they address the issues of importance to the target communities? Were they appropriate for intended audiences?

2. Background and design of the evaluated programme

The programme “Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation” builds on the MRGE three-year online minority rights course that involved about 30 active participants from Russia. Experience with this course prompted MRGE interest to working in Russia where it never worked before. This interest was further stimulated by the informal discussion with representatives of the Council of Europe who indicated their interest in a project that would support the production of the FCNM shadow report for Russia in conjunction with the Russian official FCNM report due in December 2014.

The call for proposals under European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) for Russia provided an opportunity to realize this interest. MRGE contacted several human rights organizations in Russia for possible partnership, and Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM) responded to the offer.

YHRM works in the field of human rights education and awareness building and has a broad network of contacts in Russia. YHRM had no experience with working on minority issues and with minority organizations, but was interested to learn from MRGE expertise and infuse this expertise into the mainstream human rights movement in Russia. YHRM became a formal partner of MRGE for this programme.

MRGE also attracted three other Russian NGOs as informal partners to the programme: the Saint Petersburg's Humanitarian Organization for Assistance to Rwandan Citizens in Need of Asylum (ICUMBI), Karelian Centre for Gender Studies (KCGS) and Regionality of Autonomous of the Saami (RAS).

The programme design was developed by MRGE with inputs from all its partners. The design was based on the MRGE previous experience in other countries. The programme aimed to strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working with minorities and indigenous peoples to monitor the human rights situation in Russia, and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels.

Expected programme results were as follows:

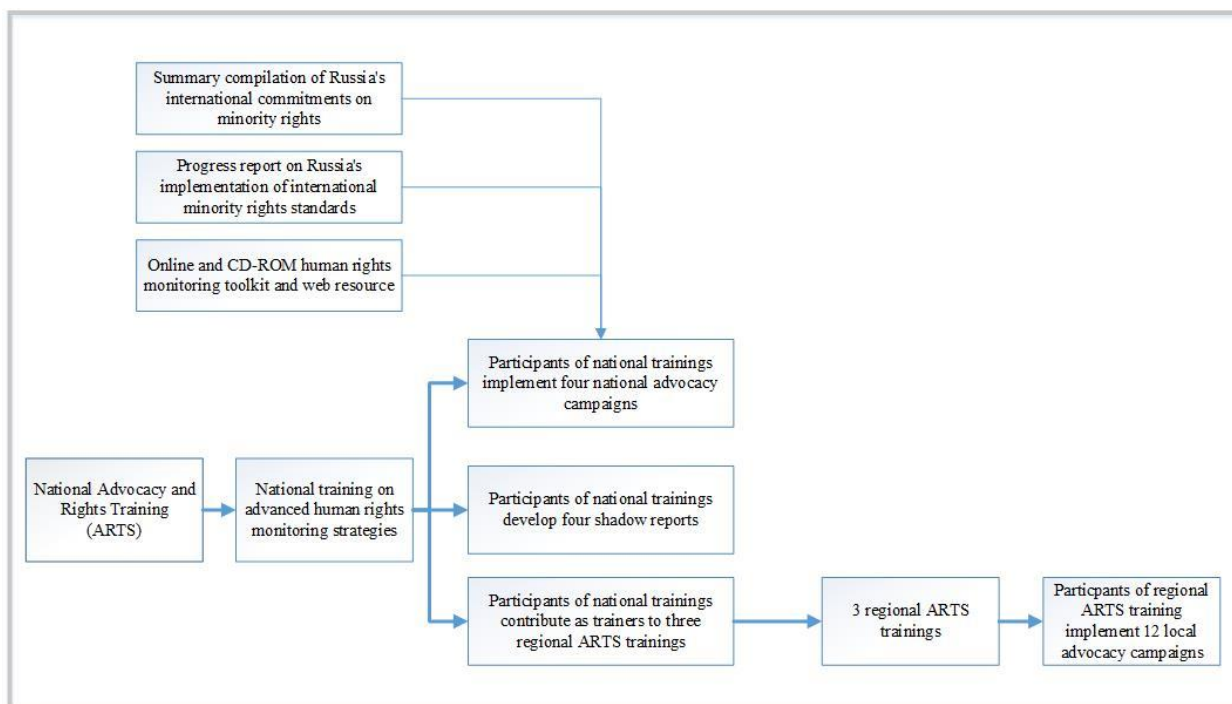
- Overall objective: To ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia.
- Specific Objective: To strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations working with MIPs to monitor the human rights situation in Russia and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels.
- Result 1: Strengthen capacity of CSOs to monitor the human rights of MIPs in Russia, and conduct advocacy to challenge violations of these rights.
- Result 2: Key decision makers at the local and national levels display an increased awareness of human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia.
- Result 3: Improved coordination and cooperation between civil society actors working with MIPs in Russia.

The programme was designed as an integrated intervention with several interlinked chains of activities where outcomes of the earlier activities were to lay the foundation for the subsequent activities (see Fig. 1). MRG partners – the formal one Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM), and three informal ones: the Saint Petersburg's Humanitarian Organization for Assistance to Rwandan Citizens in Need of Asylum (ICUMBI), Karelian Centre for Gender Studies (KCGS) and Regionality of Autonomous of the Sami (RAS) – were expected to play a prominent role in the implementation of the programme.

The core chain of activities/results starts with the National Advocacy and Rights Training (ARTS) on international minority standards. This training is followed by the national training on advanced human

rights monitoring strategies. The project description suggests that the composition of the group for both training should be the same, but it is not clear if they same people were expected to attend both trainings.

Figure 1. Chains of programme activities as per the programme proposal.



Two national trainings were expected to prepare participants to implement the subsequent programme activities:

- Develop four shadow reports (to UPR, CEDAW, FCNM and UNPFII/ILO). CSOs/CBOs that have participated in the two trainings, potentially including formal and informal partners, were to be invited through an application process to apply for organizational grants to coordinate each shadow report.
- Implement four national advocacy campaigns focusing on anti-discrimination legislation, police violence, rights and recognition of migrant communities. Project description says: “Using their new advocacy skills and armed with the evidence collected for the 2 reports and the information collected for the shadow reports, formal and informal partners will implement 4 carefully coordinated national advocacy campaigns to create further awareness and open up dialogue with decision makers”¹. At the same time project description says that grants for implementation of the national advocacy campaigns will be awarded to “CSOs/CBOs who have participated in capacity building trainings to organize the 4 campaigns, potentially including formal and informal partners”².
- Share the new knowledge and skills with participants of three regional ARTS trainings.

The second chain of activities/results starts with the preparation of regional ART trainings. It was expected that there would be three regional trainings, each attended by 12 participants. It was expected that at least half of the participants would be from minority communities.

To enable participants of regional ARTs trainings to put their new knowledge to practice, the programme planned to provide sub-grants to 12 local advocacy campaigns³. The campaigns were expected “to a)

¹ Grant Application Form. Part B. Page 14.

² Grant Application Form. Part B. Page 14.

³ Grant Application Form. Part B. Page 15:

“Our past work clearly shows that follow-up activities undertaken by training participants helps to embed the knowledge provided at the training in a deep way, allowing them to directly implement what they have learnt. During regional ARTS trainings, the final session will be dedicated to designing organisational advocacy plans,

promote minority rights and inter-community advocacy efforts, and b) raise awareness and disseminate knowledge amongst relevant local decision makers with the view to improving cooperation between local authorities and CSOs/CBOs”⁴.

The programme design also included the development of three research/educational publications:

- Summary compilation of Russia's international commitments on minority rights;
- Progress report on Russia's implementation of international minority rights standards;
- Online and CD-ROM human rights monitoring toolkit and web resource.

Development and production of each of these publications was independent from other programme activities, but it was expected that they would be used within the two chains of activities described above.

It was expected that as a result of participation in the training activities, both as participants and as trainers, preparation of shadow reports and implementation of advocacy campaigns, CSOs would strengthen their capacity to monitor the human rights of MIPs in Russia and conduct advocacy to challenge violations of these rights (Result 1⁵); and improve coordination and cooperation between each other (Result 3).

National and local advocacy campaigns were also expected to lead to an increased awareness of key decision makers at the local and national levels about human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia (Result 2).

It was expected that if **Results 1-3** are achieved, the program will achieve its **specific objective**: To strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations working with MIPs to monitor the human rights situation in Russia and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels.

This, in turn, would contribute to the long term **overall objective**: To ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia.

which may also provide the basis of applications for these 12 organisational grants. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss ideas with programme partners and fellow trainees, consultants, invited experts and identify points of synergy. Following on from the regional ARTS trainings, we will have 12 small grants for local advocacy campaigns which the training participants can apply for, grants will range between a maximum and minimum of 750-1500Euro per year. The campaigns will be to a) promote minority rights and inter-community advocacy efforts, and b) raise awareness and disseminate knowledge amongst relevant local decision makers with the view to improving cooperation between local authorities and CSOs/CBOs. Participants may apply for the grants on behalf of their individual organisation, or in collaboration with other CBOs/CSOs from the same federal subject. Up to 12 organisational grants will be awarded.”

⁴ Grant Application Form. Part B. Page 15.

⁵ as per the Description of the Action and LogFrame

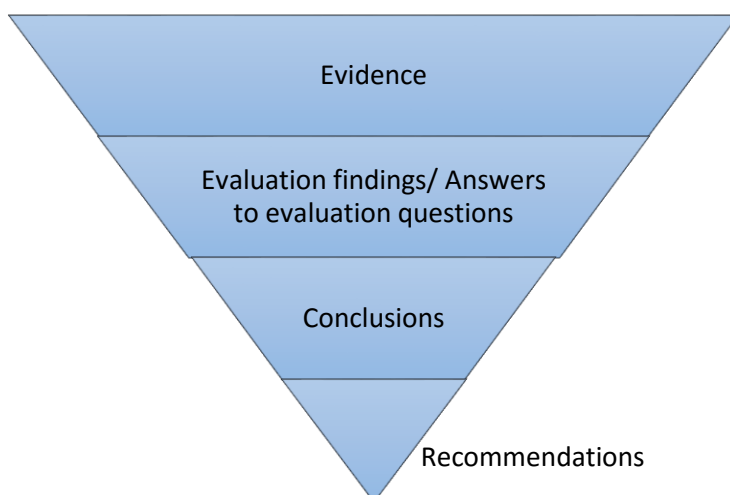
3. Methodology

This chapter describes overall evaluation approach, sources of information, methods used for data collections, as well as challenges and limitations of this evaluation.

Evaluation approach

Inverted pyramid on Fig. 2 illustrates the overall evaluation approach. The sources of information described below provided the body of evidence that was subject to analysis that led to answers to evaluation questions and further extraction of key conclusions and recommendations. Evaluation analysis pyramid also illustrates the sequence and logic of presentation of evaluation results in this report.

Fig. 2. Evaluation analysis pyramid.



Sources of information

The data that formed the body of evidence for this evaluation was collected from several sources:

- Programme documentation

The evaluator reviewed the documents provided by the programme management and additional programme-related documents that was found online, e.g. invitations to training events organized by the programme.

- Programme stakeholders

Evaluator conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with programme managers, participants of training events and coordinators of implemented advocacy projects. The list of people who were interviewed in the course of this evaluation is provided in Annex 2.

Given that MRGE attempted to conduct a survey of programme participants right before the evaluation and did not get any responses, the evaluation did not attempt to do a new survey.

- Observations at the programme regional training

Evaluator participated in the regional training conducted in Murmansk on July 4-5, 2015.

- Follow-up contacts with the organizer of the training in Murmansk.

Evaluator had several follow-up contact with the organizer of the training in Murmansk to track how the initiatives that emerged from this training were unfolding.

- Information about similar programmes

Evaluator searched online for information about programmes aiming to contribute to observation of human rights of MIPS that were implemented in Russia in 2013-2015 to compare approaches and look for possible complementarities and cross-effects.

Challenges and limitations

Programme stakeholders have busy professional schedules, so finding time for interview was difficult for many people. Interviews had to be conducted late in the evening and over the weekend to accommodate the availability of respondents. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, via skype and phone, and in one case in writing. There were several instances when people would agree to contribute and then cancel interviews.

Another limitation of this evaluation was that participants of the training events conducted in 2013 had difficulty recalling what was covered and discussed in the course of training.

Evaluation was commissioned by MRGE, which potentially increased the risk that MRGE interpretation of what happened within the programme may prevail over the perceptions of other stakeholders. To mitigate this risk data analysis used the rules for accessing the strength of evidence established by the guidelines for the evaluation of EU external assistance. According to these rules observed facts and witness statements are the strongest evidence while reported statements by people in charge of programme implementations are the weakest evidence. The stronger evidence was given more weight in the course of analysis and presentation of the evaluation findings.

4. Evaluation Findings

Context and its impact on the programme

At the programme design stage MRGE and its partners made a number of assumptions about the context necessary for successful programme implementation:

- Political climate in Russia remains receptive to the programme.
- Authorities are willing to consult with CSOs on MIP issues.
- No intimidation of CSOs/activists by nationalist elements or authorities.
- Funding climate enables participating CSOs to continue their activities.

The willingness of Russian authorities to consult with civil society and MIPs on MIP issues is declared in the Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation adopted in 2012. One of the four objectives of this strategy is to ensure implementation of the rights of indigenous people and minorities. One of the priorities set by the Strategy is to improve cooperation between state and municipal authorities and civil society. The data collected in the course of evaluation indicates that the actual willingness of authorities to consult with CSOs on MIP issues varies from region to region and heavily depends upon position of individual public officials and their relations with CSO and MIP leaders.

There are positive examples. For example, human rights ombudsman for Irkutsk region prepared a special report on the implementation of the rights of indigenous people in the region. To collect the data for the report ombudsman and his staff visited all communities of indigenous people in the region. In April 2015 Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East (RAIPON) cooperated with the Duma (Russian Parliament) to conduct parliamentary hearings on the legislation affecting indigenous peoples that resulted in a comprehensive set of recommendations.

At the same time, there are examples when authorities put pressure on MIP CSOs and activists. In 2012 authorities suspended operation of RAIPON on the grounds that its statutes did not meet legal requirements. In 2013 RAIPON resumed its operation, but its presidency went from a civic activist to a member of the Russian Parliament belonging to the ruling United Russia political party. A number of NGO and MIP activists were threatened and even physically abused.

After public protests against the fraud during Duma (Russian Parliament) and presidential election in the end of 2011 – early 2012, Russian authorities were progressively increasing pressure on any independent activity in the country and raising barriers to foreign funding to NGOs and cooperation between Russian and foreign NGOs. One of the laws adopted in 2012 expanded the notion of state treason. Now if a Russian citizen provides any information – not just information that officially constitutes a state secret – to an international or foreign organization, this can be interpreted as a state treason if Russian authorities decide that operation of this organization undermines national security. The definition of national security in this law is very vague and allows for arbitrary and broad interpretation.

In the end of 2012 Russia enacted a law that required NGOs that were engaging in political activities and were funded by foreign grants to register as “foreign agents”. “Political activities” were defined very broadly - as any attempt to influence public opinion and government policy. As the application of this law demonstrated, the key criteria for being identified as a “foreign agent” was the receipt of foreign grants.

This law already had a direct impact on CSOs working on MIP issues. In 2013 the report “Roma, Migrants, Activists: Victims of Police Violence” prepared by NGO Anti-Discrimination Center Memorial for the UN Committee against Torture was recognized by the court as a political activity, and the NGO was put on the list of “foreign agents”. Leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Center Memorial, one of the highly reputable Russian NGOs supporting victims of discriminations, felt that the organization should not accept to operate under the “foreign agent” label and closed.

These two laws had a direct impact on the implementation of the evaluated program by complicating the contracting between MRGE and recipients of sub-grants for implementation of programme activities. In

some cases the only option was to contract with an individual rather than an organization. This required MRGE to engage in extensive negotiations with European Commission Delegation to get the permission to change the contracting process to meet the needs of sub-grant recipients.

Another strategy adopted by the Russian authorities was to limit access to Russia for foreign specialists. There were cases when people coming to Russia to deliver training were denied access to the country on the border or were detained by immigration authorities during events in Russia for alleged violation of immigration laws and deported. This also had a direct impact on the implementation of the evaluated programme. MRGE Managing Director Neil Clarke who was to deliver the national trainings could not come to Russia because his visa was blocked. On several occasions, international trainers invited by MRGE could not get visas to come to Russia.

The reduced access to foreign grants was to some extent compensated by expanding state granting mechanisms. Since 2013 there is a separate programme of presidential grants for human rights organizations. Recipients of presidential grants include reputable human rights NGOs, e.g. Memorial and Moscow Helsinki Group. A number of projects supported by presidential grants were devoted to MIP issues. But there is only one case when presidential grants were awarded to a MIP community organization.

Overall the situation in Russia in 2013-2015 was not receptive to the programme. At the same time some indigenous people and human rights activists who experienced authorities' pressure and even physical abuse saw the programme as an opportunity to build their capacity to protect MIPs rights. Murmansk-based human rights NGO Kola Association of Female Lawyers emerged as an active center of a network of civil society actors working with MIPs in Russia because its leadership felt the need to support saami activists facing the growing pressure of authorities.

Answer to Question 1

Activities level: Referring to the project documentation, did we complete all of the activities as planned to a reasonably high quality? What problems were encountered at this level? How did changes on the ground in Russia affect our plans and was our reaction and changes to plans appropriate and timely? How did any problems affect the activities and to what extent were they overcome?

The degree of control MRGE had over implementation of planned programme activities varied considerably. While MRGE had a relatively high degree of control over implementation of the two national trainings, the following activities actually were outcomes of the two national trainings and MRGE had much less control over their implementation.

National Training

National ARTS training took place in Voronezh on May 24-26, 2013. Initially the plan was that this training would be conducted by MRGE Managing Director Neil Clarke. But Russian authorities blocked his visa and he could not come. MRGE and YHRM have chosen to conduct the training with different trainers which reportedly had implications for the training content. The two-day training was conducted in partnership with the International Human Rights and Civic Activism School⁶, and the first day of training was devoted to the basic course on human rights⁷. The training also covered topics of international and national MIPs instruments and obligation and use of advocacy to advance these rights. But, according to YHRM, because Mr. Clarke was not able to come, the training could not introduce the structured approach to design and implementation of advocacy campaigns as it was planned initially.

⁶ The School is an on-going joint initiative of YHRM, Moscow Helsinki Group and a number of other human rights organizations.

⁷ As per the announcement of the training: <http://inthrschool.org/news/24-26>

According to the text of the announcement, the training was open to civic and human rights activists and representatives of MIPS, that is to individuals rather than organizations. The geographic focus of the training was on Central Russia, Volga region, North-Western and Southern Russia.

Information about the training was disseminated through YHRM network and through MRGE's informal network including a number of minority groups⁸. MRGE network includes participants of its online minority rights course. MRGE expected that course graduates would get involved with this programme.

MRGE had very specific and detailed plans regarding the composition of the group for this training (as well as for all the following ones). The actual mix of participants was different (see Table 1). Only two participants were from CSOs explicitly working with MIPS. None of the informal partners sent their representatives to the training. (In the course of the evaluation one of the informal partners said that they were not informed about any of the national trainings, another partner said that they were not informed that the programme started, the third partner was not available for interview.)

Only one graduate of the MRGE three-year online minority rights course. This can possibly be attributed to the content of the training which was very basic. The person who participated both in the MRGE course and the training said in the interview that she did not get any new information from the training and was sharing the knowledge gained from the course with other training participants. She came to the training because she saw it as an entry point for the following activities.

Table 1. National ARTS (Advocacy and Rights Training) training on international minority standards - Composition of participants (trainees).

Expected	Actual
<p>15 participants, including: 8 representatives of MRG partners (2 representatives of YHRM, 2 representatives of ICUMBI, 2 representatives of KCGS, 2 representatives of RAS). 7 participants from non-partner CBOs working on MIP issues. At least 50% of participants are from minority communities; 66% are from outside Moscow and St Petersburg; there is a demographic balance in terms of gender, communities and regions</p>	<p>17 participants (trainees), including: 4 representatives of YHRM only. There were no representatives of other three MRG partners. 2 representatives (12%) of CSOs explicitly working with MIPS. 1 representative (6%) of an CSOs focused on providing support to migrants. The list of participants provided to evaluator does not include information about locations the participants came from. But judging by the names of CSOs, at least 11 (66%) people were from outside Moscow and St Petersburg. Gender ratio: 40% female, 60% male.</p>

According to the program proposal, the national ARTS training was to “provide opportunities for both formal and informal partners to develop follow-up actions (training, campaigns and shadow reports)”. That is, it was expected that plans for these activities would be developed in the course of the training. In reality YHRM did not plan to do any activities, it saw its role only as a coordinator. Informal partners did not come to the training. And reportedly in the course of the training people were not asked to design activities they would actually implement. So the training did not result in any specific plans for further training, campaigns and shadow reports, which influenced the following implementation of the programme.

⁸ The network includes organizations representing the following minorities: Jewish (national organisation), Buryat (Zabaikalsky krai), Old Believers (Tomsk oblast), Tatar (national organisation), Armenian (national organisation), Turkic Sakha (Sakha Republic), Nanai and Nivki (Khabarovsk krai), Veps (Karelia Republic), Telengit (Altai Republic), Pomor (Arkhangelsk), Muslim (Chechnya), Roma (St Petersburg).

“Russian authorities will not deny visa to MRG trainer” – this is one of the assumptions for implementation of the national ARTS training in the programme Logframe. This assumption was not met, and it resulted in considerable deviations in the implementation of the first – and foundational – programme activity that was expected to enable the following advocacy campaigns. The evaluation of the first training events conducted by MRGE in the end of the first year of the programme found that “participants need practical knowledge on how to use international instruments for national advocacy. For many of the participants this is the blank field where they need lots of trainings and assistance in order to be able start using these instruments”.

National training on advanced human rights monitoring strategies was held in Moscow on August 9-11, 2013. This time MRGE representative, programme manager Daria Alexeeva, was able to come and contribute to the training.

The wording of the announcement again positioned the training as the event for individuals rather than organizations. Participants of the first national training had a priority. The geographic focus of the training was on Central Russia, the Volga region, North-Western and Southern Russia.

This training again did not manage to attract the expected mix on participants (see Table 2). Again there were no representatives of informal partners.

Table 2. National training on advanced human rights monitoring strategies - Composition of participants (trainees).

Expected	Actual
<p>15 participants, including: 8 representatives of MRG partners (2 representatives of YHRM, 2 representatives of ICUMBI, 2 representatives of KCGS, 2 representatives of RAS). 7 participants from non-partner CBOs working on MIP issues. At least 50% of participants are from minority communities; 66% are from outside Moscow and St Petersburg; there is a demographic balance in terms of gender, communities and regions</p>	<p>16 participants (trainees), including: 4 representatives of YHRM only. There were no representatives of other three MRG partners. 2 representatives (12%) of CSOs explicitly working with MIPS. 3 representatives (19%) of CSOs focused on providing support to migrants. The list of participants provided to evaluator does not include information about locations the participants came from. But judging by the names of CSOs, at least 10 (63%) people were from outside Moscow and St Petersburg. Gender ratio: 44% female, 56% male.</p> <p>7 participants attended National ARTS training conducted earlier.</p>

Participants of national training events interviewed in the course of this evaluation were very positive about their experience. Most people said that they learned a lot of new information and made new contacts. At the same time most people did not use this new knowledge and did not participate in the programme activities after the training.

Due to difficulties and deviations in the programme implementation in 2013 MRGE management was considering to stop the programme and ask the donor to cancel the programme agreement, but the surge of interest from Russian CSOs associated with the regional training in St Petersburg persuaded MRGE management to proceed with the programme without revising the programme design.

Regional Training

Participants of the national trainings were expected to share their new knowledge and skills with participants of three regional ARTS trainings. This transfer to some extent happened. Three participants of national training contributed to regional trainings as organizers/trainers/experts.

Regional training in St Petersburg (December 14-15, 2013) was jointly organized by MRGE, YHRM and informal programme partner the Saint Petersburg's Humanitarian Organization for Assistance to Rwandan Citizens in Need of Asylum (ICUMBI). (This was the only programme activity where ICUMBI was involved.) MRGE representative, programme manager Daria Alexeeva, was able to come and contribute to the training.

YHRM and ICUMBI disseminated information about training through their networks. ICHUMBI brought to the training representatives of NGOs representing communities of Africans, Afghans, Syrians and Tajiks living in St Petersburg.

Three of regional training participants earlier attended the programme national training. One of these people served as an expert/trainer and co-led one of the sessions in St Petersburg.

The content of the training was close to the description in the programme proposal (see Table 3), but the representatives of minority CBOs were still a minority among training participants (see Table 4).

Table 3. Regional ARTS training in St Petersburg - Content.

Expected	Actual
<p>Specific content of the regional ARTS will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority rights, covering UN, CoE, OSCE, with special attention paid to include economic and social rights • Practical sessions on advocacy, such as preparing outlines for annual reports, working in small groups on advocacy campaigns, or preparing interventions for meetings with local decision makers • Case studies by participants on issues and experiences relevant to their locality and community 	<p>Training program included the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights and minority rights • Human rights monitoring • Use of the results of human rights monitoring for advocacy on national and international levels • Examples of use of monitoring and advocacy to solve problems of minorities • Situation of minorities in the North-Western Russia (participants' cases) • Group discussion to plan activities to monitor minority rights

Table 4. Regional ARTS training in St Petersburg - Composition of participants (trainees).

Expected	Actual
<p>12 participants (trainees) At least half the participants are from minority communities, more than half are from outside the host region, and there is a gender balance and a balance and diversity of communities.</p>	<p>23 participants (trainees), Including 7 representatives of (30%) of 6 CSOs representing MIPs communities. Gender ratio: 26% female, 74% male.</p> <p>The list of participants provided to evaluator does not include information about locations the participants came from.</p>

Participants of the training in St Petersburg came with an idea for a joint project – to conduct a seminar on MIPs rights in Murmansk. It was agreed that representative of ICHUMBI and Afghani community

would participate in this training. But though the training in Murmansk eventually took place, representative of ICHUMBI and Afghani community were not invited.

Regional training in Krasnodar (October 18-19, 2014) was organized by YHRM representative in the Southern Russia. The training targeted participants from the Southern Russia. Information about the training was disseminated with YHRM network. Interestingly a number of regional newspapers and news websites picked the announcement and republished it.

The training met the target in terms of the number of participants, but – similarly to the national trainings – the number of participants from minority communities did not reach the target (see Table 5). Review of the training programme revealed another deviation from the initial plan – no training on advocacy was provided (see Table 6).

Table 5. Regional ARTS training in Krasnodar - Composition of participants (trainees).

Expected	Actual
<p>12 participants (trainees) At least half the participants are from minority communities, more than half are from outside the host region, and there is a gender balance and a balance and diversity of communities.</p>	<p>15 participants (trainees), including 14 people from NGOs and one person from public oversight commission. 2 representatives of (13%) of CSOs explicitly working with MIPS. 2 representatives of (13%) of CSOs CSOs focused on providing support to migrants. Gender ratio: 27% female, 73% male.</p> <p>The list of participants provided to evaluator does not include information about locations the participants came from. Judging by the tickets included in the financial report, at least 5 (33%) people were from outside host (Krasnodar) region.</p>

Table 6. Regional ARTS training in Krasnodar - Content.

Expected	Actual
<p>Specific content of the regional ARTS will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority rights, covering UN, CoE, OSCE, with special attention paid to include economic and social rights • Practical sessions on advocacy, such as preparing outlines for annual reports, working in small groups on advocacy campaigns, or preparing interventions for meetings with local decision makers • Case studies by participants on issues and experiences relevant to their locality and community 	<p>Training program included the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory course on human rights • Rights of ethnic minorities and their violation: international practice • Monitoring of the rights of ethnic minorities • Protection of MIP rights in the Southern Russia and Caucasus – case study • Case studies of participants

The seminar was organized by the new YHRM programme coordinator who assumed this position in the middle of the programme implementation. Organizer attended the national training on advanced human rights monitoring strategies in Moscow, and used its programme as the template for the training in Krasnodar. There were no MRGE representatives at this training.

Regional training in Murmansk was initially planned for November or December 2014. Training was organized in cooperation with the Kola Association of Female Lawyers. Leader of this organization participated in both national trainings and in the regional training in St Petersburg. The training was focusing on the rights of indigenous people. MRGE tried to bring international experts on the indigenous peoples rights, but these experts were either unavailable or could not get Russian visa, so MRGE cancelled this training in the end of 2014.

Still the training took Murmansk took place on July 4-5, 2015. (The evaluator was able to attend it as an observer.) The training format was more of a working meeting. There were four experts, and three of them were from organizations representing indigenous people (and indigenous people themselves). All experts not just presented on their topics, but were fully engaged in the discussion as participants (because of this they were counted as training participants).

In terms of composition of participants this was the only regional training that met the targets set in the programme design (see Table 7). Majority of participants were from organizations representing indigenous communities. The rest of participants were from mainstream human rights organizations. All experts and training participants were personally identified and invited by the organizer.

Table 7. Regional ARTS training in Murmansk - Composition of participants (trainees).

Expected	Actual
<p>12 participants (trainees) At least half the participants are from minority communities, more than half are from outside the host region, and there is a gender balance and a balance and diversity of communities.</p>	<p>12 participants, 8 representatives of (67%) of CSOs representing indigenous people. Gender ratio: 50% female, 50% male. 6 (50%) people were from outside the host (Murmansk) region.</p>

The training opened with an introductory session where participants shared their experiences with observation/violation of the rights of their people. The second session was devoted to the presentation of the UN mechanisms of protection of the rights of indigenous people. (Handouts provided to participants included the text of the ILO Convention #169, but there was not discussion of the content during the training.) Then the groups decided on the priority issues that should be further discussed. Four themes emerged:

- presentation of the indigenous people and their participation in decision-making processes;
- land rights;
- possible recommendations to the newly established Federal Agency in charge of ethnic policy;
- protection of minority activists against pressure and defamation.

The plan was to define the priority activities to be taken in each of these areas, but actual discussion was mostly about existing problems and to a less extent – about good practices. The need to know how to communicate with authorities to advance indigenous rights was a recurring theme throughout the discussion, which indicates the need to advocacy skills. Several interesting advocacy practices were mentioned (e.g. one of experts shared that he presented an analytical report to the human rights ombudsman for Karelia to promote the idea of creating a position of indigenous rights ombudsman for Karelia), but they were not picked by the participants. A number of ideas emerged that could be potentially developed into local and national advocacy campaigns (e.g. working with the association of human rights ombudsmen to build there awareness of indigenous rights), but again participants did not take note of them.

One of the experts volunteered to draft a text of recommendation to the newly established Agency in charge of ethnic policy based on what came up in the discussion and share it with other participants for review, but no specific dates were set during the training.

In the course of the training people were invited to participate in preparation of the shadow report, and a majority of participants agreed to contribute.

Overall, all three regional training foreseen in the programme proposal took place. In all cases participants of national trainings contributed as organizers/trainers/experts which indicates that the programme worked as expected.

In Krasnodar and Murmansk the theme of advocacy was not included in the training agenda which runs counter to the programme design. Organizers of both trainings felt that they did not receive enough support and guidance from MRGE.

MRGE efforts to support regional trainings with international expertise were hampered by the situation in Russia – Russian authorities did not issue visa to an international trainer who was supposed to come to Murmansk.

National Advocacy Campaigns

The programme expected to support four national advocacy campaigns. It was expected that these national advocacy campaigns would have the following properties:

- Designed and implemented by CSOs/CBOs that have participated in national capacity building trainings, potentially including formal and informal partners.
- Focus on anti-discrimination legislation, police violence, identify rights and recognition of migrant communities.
- The contents of the campaigns may vary depending on the targets and the objectives, but it is likely to consist of face-to-face meetings, consultations and seminars with decision makers. There may be additional actions which would support the advocacy, such as the production of certain awareness-raising materials, possibly through media channels, the sensitisation of other actors who may act as interlocutors, such as IGOs, parliamentarians and other CSOs.

At the national trainings participants were informed that later they will have an opportunity to apply for grants to implement national advocacy campaigns. The call for proposals was disseminated via YHRM network. But none of the national training participants applied – which is in line with the MRGE earlier finding that most participants of the national training would not be able to develop national advocacy campaigns without additional training.

At this stage YHRM approached Civic Assistance Committee for refugees and forced migrants (CAC) and invited it to submit a proposal for a national advocacy campaign. CAC is one of the leading Russian NGOs working with migrants. CAC was involved in preparation of the FCNM shadow report submitted in the second monitoring cycle.

CAC came with a campaign aimed to build awareness of citizens of Russia and Europe on the situation of refugees that left Chechnya because of Chechen war in the 1990s. Campaign was implemented in June-October 2014 and included:

- Presentation and dissemination of the book “Last to know” produced by another CAC project. The book is made of stories of refugees from Chechnya who moved to other regions of Russia as well as to Germany, France, Poland, Sweden and Finland.
- Production and dissemination of materials (video, postcards, brochures presenting the stories of Chechen refugees).
- Events for general public in Moscow, St Petersburg and Yoshkar-Ola.

As a spin off from this campaign CAC – with financial support of the programme – developed and published a report on the situation with human rights in Chechnya (in Russian and English) and organized its presentation.

In the fall of 2014 the programme supported another national advocacy campaign developed by CAC – development and launch of the hate crime map for Russia: an interactive online map that collects and presents reports about crimes driven by ethnic and religious prejudice. YHRM representative who attended the regional training in Murmansk shared information about the hate crime map with other participants and invited them to contribute and spread the work further which indicates that YHRM was trying to promote linkages between programme activities as foreseen by the programme design.

Yet another activity that was supported by the programme as a national advocacy campaign was a round table organized in Moscow to start the preparation of the FCNM shadow report. The round table was jointly organized by MRGE and YHRM with support of one of CAC staff members. Four of round table participants had earlier attended the national training events organized by the programme.

Local Advocacy Campaigns

Sub-grants for local advocacy campaigns were expected to allow participants of the regional ARTs trainings “to directly implement what they have learnt”. But the call for proposals for local advocacy campaigns was not linked to any of the regional trainings.

Information about the opportunity to apply for local advocacy campaign sub-grants was disseminated through the YHRM site and e-mailing list. Many training participants interviewed in the course of the evaluation reported that they were unaware of the opportunity. People who actually developed local advocacy campaigns were usually telling in interviews that they learned about an opportunity to apply for a sub-grant when YHRM programme coordinator contacted them personally.

The programme planned by support 12 local advocacy campaigns. But due to the few number of applications this target was not met. At the time of evaluation three local advocacy campaigns were completed and another two were about to start. Two of the supported local advocacy campaigns were developed by organizations where representatives participated in national trainings. None of the participants of regional trainings applied for a local advocacy campaign sub-grant.

The campaigns were expected “to a) promote minority rights and inter-community advocacy efforts, and b) raise awareness and disseminate knowledge amongst relevant local decision makers with the view to improving cooperation between local authorities and CSOs/CBOs”.

Table 8 presents a content of the projects that were supported as local advocacy campaigns. While these projects provide some contributions to promotion of minority rights, none of them directly targets local decision makers. Only one project intends to produce a report that can be used to reach out to decision makers.

Table 8. Content of local advocacy campaigns supported by the programme.

Implementer	Content
Public Oversight Commission of Kaluga region (correspondent of YHRM)*	Members of the Public Oversight Commission visited the most remote prison settlement in Kaluga region and provided legal consultations to 5 inmates without citizenship belonging to ethnic minorities.
Discovery, St Petersburg	Training for 20 trainers on the use of Discovery Program who will adapt the program to working with MIPs.
Interregional Human Rights Group (member of YHRM), Voronezh	Production of an information leaflet to migrants (3000 copies) on the rights of foreign migrants in Russia and ways to protect these rights. The leaflet will be disseminated to migrant support post in several Russian cities.

Southern Human Rights Center (member of YHRM), Sochi, Krasnodar region	Inspection visit to Sochi penitentiary facilities by human rights experts from Krasnodar serving the Public Oversight Commission for Krasnodar region to assess the situation of foreign inmates. To disseminate the results of this inspections the project will produce a report. The project also includes public awareness campaign: film shows, production and dissemination of leaflets and a brochure on MIPs rights and FCNM, putting stands with information on human rights in public libraries and museums.
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*This advocacy campaign was developed and led by a person who participated in programme training.

Sub-grant Management

The programme proposal indicates that MRGE expected that Russian CSOs might have problems with financial management. It was planned that during the national ART training “there will also be some time spent on project management training, specifically in relation to implementing EC funded projects, in particular as CSOs implementing actions through sub-granting will have to be strong on financial management. Building operational capacity of fragile minority CSOs is important if the impact of the action is to be sustained longer term”⁹. But as MRGE trainer could not come, this foreseen training was not provided.

As a result contracting with Russian recipients of sub-grants for conducting regional trainings, local advocacy campaigns and experts contributing to the programme was one of the major challenges faced by MRGE in the course of programme implementation. Some recipient organizations were resistant to accept funds from a foreign organization because of the law on “foreign agents” and wanted the money to be sent to individuals registered as individual entrepreneurs. Some of the sub-grant recipients were initiative groups rather than officially registered entities and did not have bank accounts, so again the contracts were to be made with individuals. Some people did not have bank accounts in Euro and we were unaware that Russian banking rules did not allow to enter Euro transfers into accounts held in Russian rubles. People were regularly making mistakes when providing their banking details. When NGOs were accepting funds, they were very careful about the language which increased the time necessary to finalize contracts.

To be able to contract with individuals and individual entrepreneurs as implementers of sub-grants, MRGE had to go through a complicated negotiations process with EU Delegation. Unfortunately this fact was not properly communicated to programme stakeholders in Russia, so they did not appreciate MRGE efforts. A number of people interviewed in the course of this evaluation complained that there were delays with the preparation of contracts and transfer of funds.

Still some of the problems with contract management cannot be attributed to the need to negotiate with EU Delegation. For example, MRGE sent the money to the organization in Murmansk that was organizing a regional training. But MRGE did not send the signed contract, so it was impossible to access the money sitting in the bank. And without the money the organization could not purchase tickets for training participants. The contract was sent only 3 days before the scheduled date of the training. As a result some of the participants received the confirmation of attendance and tickets just several hours before they had to depart. Similarly MRGE sent money to one of the local advocacy campaigns, but did not send the signed contract, so the implementation of the project was delayed as the money was blocked by the bank.

⁹ Grant Application Form. Part B. Page 10.

Shadow Reports

In December 2014 MRGE used information collected through the programme to make a contribution to the Seventh session of the Forum on Minority Issues on "Preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities" to draw the attention to the increase in ethnically motivated violence targeted towards persons of Central Asian origin in the Russian Federation.

MRGE played the leading role in preparation of the FCNM shadow report – with support of YHRM programme coordinator and one of the CAC staff members. The programme organized a round table on FCNM to prepare the preparation of the shadow reports. The round table brought together 21 participants representing human rights and minority NGOs. A number of participants agreed to prepared contributions to the report, but only three people actually did. Also there were two contributions from people who could not attend the round table. Two people who planned to contribute but eventually did not explained this by the lack of time due to family situation. Actually the timeline for report preparation was quite tight – people had about a month and a half to prepare their contributions. MRGE was responsible for collating the overall FCNM shadow report.

The Kola Association of Female Lawyers agreed to coordinate the preparation the report on implementation of the ILO Convention #169 on indigenous and tribal peoples. Participants of the regional training in Murmansk were invited and agreed to contribute to the report. The report was completed in September 2015.

The programme proposal envisaged that shadow reports would inform national advocacy campaigns, but this did not happen and actually could not happen because the production of reports was delayed. So this programme component was implemented with deviations from the initial plan.

Research and Publications

Progress report on Russia's implementation of international minority rights standards was produced, though later than expected. The report is based on 24 interviews with respondent based in Moscow and St Petersburg. Respondents included representatives of NGOs working to protect the rights of MIPs, researchers, public officials and other stakeholders. Report was published in English and Russian. MRGE disseminated the information about this report in English in November 2014. The information about the report was also presented at the Seventh session of the Forum on Minority Issues in Geneva. People in Russia interviewed in the course of this evaluation were not aware of the report.

Summary compilation of Russia's international commitments on minority rights ('Pocket book') was developed in March-May 2015 in consultation with Russian experts. The pocket book gives short introduction to international standards and the short summary of their use. It is in Russian only. Electronic version and 100 printed copies will be disseminated in September 2015. The pocket book will be disseminated together with the CD ROM in September 2015 to civil society organization in Russia by the MRGE programme management and YHRM.

The programme proposal states: "Using their new advocacy skills and armed with the evidence collected for the **2 reports** [*referring to report on Russia's implementation of international minority rights standards and report presenting the summary complication of Russia's international commitments on minority rights*] and the information collected for the shadow reports, formal and informal partners will implement 4 carefully coordinated national advocacy campaigns to create further awareness and open up dialogue with decision makers".¹⁰ This statement indicates that the publications were expected to be used within the programme. As the publications were delayed, the possible use will take place after the programme completion.

¹⁰ Programm proposal. Annex A, page 14.

Activities stimulated by the programme

The evaluation has discovered a number of events that emerged from the programme but were implemented without programme financial support. One is the seminar in Murmansk on the right of MIPs to have their own media in December 2014. When MRGE had to cancel the regional training in Murmansk because international expert could not get Russian visa, the local organizer used its own resources and contacts to conduct a one-day seminar to meet the urgent needs of local saami community. Participants of this seminar included representatives of saami as well as human rights activists and experts from St Petersburg and Voronezh. The seminar discussed the approaches to protecting the rights of indigenous people to have their own media. In addition participants went through all FCNM clauses and identified case of their violation in Murmansk region.

Another initiative emerged from the programme regional training in Murmansk in July 2015. Participants decided to develop a set of recommendations for the newly established Russian Agency on national policies. The draft list of recommendations was developed during one of the sessions during the training, and one of the experts volunteered to finalize the text and collect and process comments from other participants of the training.

Recommendations were completed in August 2015 and were presented to the representatives of Presidential Human Rights Council (PHRC) and the governor of the Murmansk region during the PHRC delegation visit to Murmansk region in the end of August. As the result of this presentation the governor and PHRC have agreed to conduct a meeting on the implementation of the rights of indigenous people living in the Russian Arctic in Murmansk before the end of 2015.

In addition, at the seminar in Murmansk the Russian expert of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples agreed with saami participants that they would contribute information to the UN Expert Mechanism research on cultural rights of indigenous people.

Conclusions on Question 1

The evidence collected in the course of this evaluation indicates that the programme design developed by MRGE and its partners in Russia was viable and feasible. The training in Murmansk that managed to attract the planned mix of MIPs and mainstream human rights CSOs led to an advocacy campaign that has already reached authorities and can potentially contribute to better implementation of the rights of indigenous people in Russia.

At the same time all programme activities were implemented with deviations from the initial plan set forth in the programme proposal document. These deviations were to be expected given that all major assumptions about the context made at the programme design stage were not met.

Key external factors that had immediate effect on implementation of the programme activities were as follows:

- Russian authorities denied visas to MRGE trainers.

The transfer of international and specifically MRGE expertise in the area of MIPs rights and advocacy to Russian programme participants was at the heart of the original programme design. The transfer process was designed with the assumption that Russian authorities would not deny visas to MRGE trainers. This assumption failed as the very beginning of the programme. MRGE Managing Director Neil Clarke could not come to deliver the national ARTS training and present the structured approach to design and implementation of advocacy campaigns because his Russian visa was blocked. The national ARTS training was to lay foundations for the implementation of the rest of the programme. YHRM representatives believe that deviations in how the national ARTS training was conducted led to further

deviations from programme initial design, including the fact that participants of the national ARTS training did not develop their advocacy campaigns.

The problems with obtaining Russian visas by international experts forced MRGE to cancel the regional training in Murmansk in the end of 2014. Eventually the training took place in July 2015, but without participation of experts brought by MRGE from abroad.

- Barriers to international funding for Russian NGOs set by Russian government.

Active enforcement of the “foreign agent” law by Russian authorities drastically increased the risks for Russian NGOs accepting foreign funding. This increased the effort necessary for contracting with sub-grants recipients as NGOs were very careful about the language used in the contracts. In addition some sub-grantees could contract with MRGE only as individuals or individual entrepreneurs. To do so MRGE has to go through a complicated negotiations process with the EU Delegation about amendment of contracting rules applied to the programme.

Programme implementation was also affected by a number of internal factors:

- Informal partners did not participate in the programme.

Two of the three programme informal partners who were available for interviews in the course of evaluation said that they were involved in the development of the programme proposal and planned to participate, but were never informed that the programme actually started. The head of the Karelian Centre for Gender Studies said that she learned that MRGE was awarded a grant to implement the programme only from the evaluator. MRGE programme manager said that she called this partner in the beginning of the programme, but it was not ready to participate without being paid for its services.

- Deficiencies of communication process within the programme.

The situation with informal partners signals problems with communications within the programme. To some extent these problems can be attributed to difficulty of communication without on-going face-to-face contacts and to the lack of pre-established personal contact between programme partners and the programme manager hired by MRGE after the programme started. In addition, the programme manager worked for MRGE only part time (2 days a week) while spending the rest of the time working for another organization. This is a standard arrangement in programme management, but in this case it did not work well because it limited the speed of reaction to arising problems.

- Lack of access to MIPs communities.

The only active Russian partner of MRGE for this programme was YHRM. YHRM consistently used its network to attract participants to the programme, but it did not have established contacts with organizations representing MIPs communities. Actually YHRM expected that MRGE would connect it with MIPs communities through MRGE network in Russia, but this did not happen. The programme managed to attract the considerable number of training participants representing MIPs community organizations only when training was organized in cooperation with partners that had established contacts with MIPs communities, like ICHUMBI in St Petersburg and the Kola Association of Female Layers in Murmansk.

- High degree of programme management inertia.

When major programme assumptions are not met and/or programme activities don't produce expected results, this should be a signal to the programme management that the programme design should be reviewed and possibly changed. MRGE did consider redesigning the programme after the problems encountered with the implementation of the national training events. But the success of the regional training in St Petersburg that was implemented close to the original design was interpreted as a signal that the programme might get back on track, and MRGE and YHRM attempted to stick to the initial plan of

activities despite any difficulties encountered. As a result the focus on advocacy and connection between training and sub-grants as related tools for capacity development was lost.

Answer to Question 2

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 MRGE tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was (or not).

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.

On the outcome level the programme was expected to achieve three results:

- **Result 1:** Strengthen capacity of CSOs to monitor the human rights of MIPs in Russia, and conduct advocacy to challenge violations of these rights.
- **Result 2:** Key decision makers at the local and national levels display an increased awareness of human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia.
- **Result 3:** Improved coordination and cooperation between civil society actors working with MIPs in Russia.

CSOs capacity

According to the indicators described in the programme proposal and the logframe the CSO capacity is defined as skills and knowledge gains followed by their practical application for MIPs rights monitoring and advocacy¹¹.

Evidence collected in the course of this evaluation indicates that majority of training participants have learned a lot and many people used this knowledge and find it useful (see Table 9 and 10). But cases when people used the knowledge gained through programm training for advocacy and monitoring on MIPs rights are few.

Table 9. Quotes on new knowledge gained through training provided by the programme and its use.

	The quote indicates that a person gained knowledge.
	The quote indicates that a person used this knowledge, but not for advocacy and monitoring of MIP rights.
	The quote indicates that a person used this knowledge for advocacy and monitoring of MIP rights.

Quotes	Knowledge	Use
I have finally figured out the concept of human rights. This helps with my work with authorities – they see that I’m competent now.		
I attended the training out of curiosity and because I have indigenous roots. But I don’t work on minority rights issues. The information on the training was new for me. But I did not use this information in practice.		
I’m just starting to work in the field of human rights, so it was interesting to learn the basics.		

¹¹ The indicators for CSO capacity are as follows: 1. At least 75% of representatives of CSOs participating in national and regional trainings report that they have gained increased skills and knowledge regarding the rights of MIPS. (50% of them being women). 2. By the end of the programme, at least 60% of the participants to the trainings and the CSOs they represent report that they have undertaken monitoring activities related to the rights of MIPS using skills gained from, and materials produced by the programme. 3. By the end of thre programme, at least 33% of participants and the CSOs they represent state that dialogue has improved with federal and federal-subject authorities as a result of programme activities.

I used the knowledge from the training to organize social media campaigns to attract attention to migrant worker cases and to survey migrants.		
When I applied for the training, I just started to look into what human rights work was about. The topic of minority rights was completely new to me. At present I'm working as a members of Public Oversight Commission and have to help minority inmates. So I'm actually starting to use the knowledge gained in the training two year ago.		
The training was very useful. This is the first time that I had a structured description of minority rights and practice of minority rights monitoring. I tried to participate in the development of a collective report on minority rights, but I did manage to contribute.		
Training was interesting due to experts. I learned a lot of interesting things from Dubrovsky at Voronezh training and now keep following him on social media. During training in Moscow I learned a lot about monitoring from Igor Sazhin*.		
I learned a lot of new things, especially in the sessions led by Mikhail Savva.		
We got new information, learned about new approaches.		
Due to the knowledge gained through the programme we have developed a plan for the regional report on MIPs rights, but we did not have enough resources to produce the actual report.		
I did not learn anything new but shared what I knew with other participants*.		

*This respondent was involved in one of the local advocacy campaigns.

Table 10. Assessment of Murmansk training by participants.

(Based on 9 filled assessment forms (67% of participants)).

Indicator	Average score	Median score
Overall assessment of the seminar (0 – bad, 10 – excellent)	9,0	9
New knowledge (How new the material was to you? 0 – no new material, 10 – absolutely new material)		
International instruments of IP rights protection	8,7	10
Representation	8,3	10
Land rights	8,6	9
Institutional development (recommendations to new Federal Agency)	8,3	9
Security of activists	7,7	8
Usefulness of knowledge (How likely is that you will use the knowledge gained at the training? 0 – absolutely unlikely, 10 – will definitely use)		
International instruments of IP rights protection	8,7	10
Representation	8,2	10
Land rights	8,4	10
Institutional development (recommendations to new Federal Agency on ethnic policy)	7,4	10
Security of activists	7,2	10

Evaluation has found only three cases when the programme worked almost as expected for training participants. In one case a leader of an organization protecting rights of inmates in the Kaluga region attended both national trainings, developed and implemented a local advocacy campaign targeting stateless inmates and contributed to preparation of FCNM shadow report. In the second case a leader of the human rights NGO based in Murmansk participated in both national trainings, contributed as a trainer to regional training in St Petersburg, organized a regional training in Murmansk, led the development of one of the shadow reports and an advocacy campaign that emerged from the regional training in Murmansk. She also used resources of her organization to conduct a seminar on minority rights and FCNM in December 2014. In the third case human rights activist from Sochi attended a national training on human rights monitoring strategies, organized regional training in Krasnodar (in the capacity of YHRM coordinator for this programme) and initiated two local advocacy campaigns in Sochi. In all three cases programme participants had prior experience of working with MIPs as well as experience of project management. So initial level of their capacity was already high. In addition they were highly motivated to positively contribute to advancement of MIPs rights in their regions.

Still majority of participants did not get involved in monitoring and advocacy activities after the training. The evaluation of the first training events already indicated that “participants need practical knowledge on how to use international instruments for national advocacy. For many of the participants this is the blank filed where they need lots of trainings and assistance in order to be able start using these instruments”.

The evidence indicates that the programme increased the knowledge on minority rights, their monitoring and advocacy. But in most cases these knowledge gains were not enough enable participants to actually engage in monitoring and advocacy and did not lead to action.

Coordination and cooperation between civil society actors

Improvement in coordination and cooperation between civil society actors working with MIPs in Russia was defined as increased contacts between CSOs, exchange of information within the network and contribution to joint activities¹².

Trainings promoted networking between participants (see Tables 11 and 12). And there is evidence that people use the new contacts, though mostly for consultations. Less than a third of training participants contributed information for Shadow report.

Table 11. Quotes on new contacts with other training participants and their use.

Quotes
I already know people who came to the training. There are few human rights activists in Russia, just about a thousand, and we know each other.
I communicate with some of the people whom I met at the training online. We have not done anything together yet, but may do it on some point.
I met people from Public Oversight Commission (POC), and decided to join POC myself.
I met interesting people and now I'm able to consult with them.
I stay in touch with trainers.
I communication with some people who work on similar issues.
We did not maintain any contact with other training participants.

¹² The indicators for this result are as follows: 1. At least 60% of training participants and the CSOs they represent are involved in the submission of and sharing of information to be included in Shadow Reports to HR treaty Monitoring Bodies 2. At least 75% of training participants state their contacts with CSOs working on the protection of the rights of MIPS has increased. 3. At least 60% of participants and the CSOs they represent report they have used recommendations and examples of best practice from other regions in their own advocacy work.

Table 12. Assessment of networking between participants of Murmansk training.
(Based on 9 filled assessment forms (67% of participants)).

Indicator	Average score	Median score
Have established new contacts (Share of respondents who answered “yes”)	100%	-
Probability of the use of new contacts (0 – definitely won’t use; 10 – will definitely use)	9,3	10

In the course of the programme Murmansk-based Kola Association of Female Layers emerged as an active coordination center promoting cooperation within the network created by the programme and expanding this network. It is highly likely that this organization will remain active within the network after the programme ends.

Key decision makers

The programme description suggests that Result 2: “Key decision makers at the local and national levels display an increased awareness of human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia” can be achieved only once the other two expected results of the programme are achieved and increased capacity and improved cooperation result in advocacy activities targeting decision makers.

The achievement of Results 1 and 3 was limited. This conclusion is supported by the fact that all but one of the advocacy campaigns developed within the programme framework did not directly target decision makers. Only the initiative that did emerge from the Murmansk training and aims to influence the newly established Russian Agency on national policy by developing a set of recommendations jointly developed by MIP and human rights NGOs.

The latter initiative emerged in July 2015, and by September 2015 has already proved promising. But as of September 2015 the actual influence of the programme on the level of awareness of decision makers on MIPs rights standards was marginal.

Answer to Question 3

Impact level: Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the specific objective 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?

Programme specific objective is to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations working with MIPs to monitor the human rights situation in Russia and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels. Programme long term objective is to ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia. The assumption is that if CSOs have capacity to reach to decision makers and build their awareness about international standards on MIPs rights, decision makers would implement these standards.

Evaluation has found cases when Russian CSOs were able to reach out to public executives and even influence their attitudes to towards implementation of MIPs rights which supports the assumption made by the programme. For example, in 2014 by the Moscow-based NGO Center for Interethnic Cooperation (CIC) implemented the project «Joint training sessions for representative of authorities, police and leaders of ethnic communities for the purpose of prevention of interethnic conflicts and protection of the rights of ethnic minorities”. Project was financially supported by presidential grant programme for Russian human rights NGOs described above. CIC project combined training to MIPs activists and advocacy to

authorities thorough face-to-face meeting into joint seminar for MIPs leaders, regional government executives and police officers.

According to the project report and interview with CIC representative, the project worked as planned. Seminars were conducted in Samara, Ekaterinburg, Orenburg, Krasnodar and Yaroslavl, and were attended by more than 200 leaders of local minority CBOs, police officers and regional government executives in charge of working with minority communities, as well as representative of CSOs from Moscow, St Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Astrakhan, Smolensk, Volgograd and Perm regions.

Seminars included presentation of the provisions of the Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation adopted in 2012 that specifically calls for the protection of MIP rights. Participants learned about mechanisms of protection of MIPs rights. The focus was on ways for prevention of rights violations rather than exposing existing violations. According to CIC, seminars were well received by leaders of minority communities and police officers, while reaction of government executives varied from very negative to very positive.

One of the conclusions that emerged from discussions at the seminars was the need for independent monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and the implementation of MIPs rights, and that this monitoring should be conducted by independent NGOs. (This finding actually proves the high relevance of the evaluated programme.)

The advocacy campaign that emerged from the regional training in Murmansk conducted within the framework of this programme in July 2015 has already managed to reach to the governor and regional authorities of Murmansk regional and to the Presidential Human Rights Council that agreed to convene a meeting to discuss the implementation of the indigenous people in Russia. So in the long term the contribution of the programme may lead to some significant positive changes.

At the same time the evidence indicates that while the programme increased the knowledge of participating NGO representative about international standards in the field of MIPs rights, it did not build advocacy capacity of these NGOs. And until this advocacy capacity is strengthened, the transfer of legal knowledge created by the programme from CSOs to decision makers cannot happen.

The evaluation of the results of the first three training events (two national and one regional) found that “Participants need practical knowledge on how to use international instruments for national advocacy. For many of the participants this is the blank filed where they need lots of trainings and assistance in order to be able start using these instruments”¹³. This means that before the end of the first year of programme MRGE and YHRM were informed that trainings were not building enough capacity to do advocacy, but did not act on this knowledge.

Answer to Question 4

What effect has the project had (if any) on the capacities of those trained and supported to represent the rights and interests of their communities through advocacy campaigns? What input have other organisations or individuals had in supporting and developing partners’ and trainees’ capacities in addition to or alongside MRG’s input?

The issue of changes in capacity of people trained and supported by the programme has been already addressed under Question 2 on achievement of expected programme outcomes.

The data collected in the course of this evaluation indicates that options for capacity developed similar to those offered by the MRGE were rare. Representatives of indigenous communities could apply for the Indigenous Fellowship Programme (IFP) offered by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human

¹³ Evaluation results (analysis of three trainings conducted in May-December 2013)

Rights (OHCHR). Since 2005 the IFP is available in Russian. IFP includes a four-week theoretical course delivered in Moscow at the People's Friendship University of Russia and a four-week practical training at the OHCHR in Geneva. In 2015 Russian IFP had accepted six fellows. No overlap or synergy between Russian IFP and the MRGE programme were found.

The programme of presidential grants for human rights NGOs mentioned earlier supported projects working with migrants, minorities and indigenous people. The evaluation found one case where an NGO which representative attended the training offered by the MRGE programme was the recipient of the presidential grant. The project supported by the presidential grant worked with migrant workers. The knowledge gained through the MRGE programme was used in the course of the project implementation. So there was some mutual enforcement between the programmes: the project benefited from the capacity created by the MRGE programme, while the project enable the application of this capacity and contributed to better implementation of the rights of migrant workers belonging to minority communities.

Answer to Question 5

In relation to the advocacy work, what was possible to date in relation to ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia? Were the project objectives realistic given the time frame and the context at the point that the programme was designed?

The programme made some small steps towards having internationally accepted human rights standards implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia. More people in the human rights and minority/indigenous communities are now familiar with the international instruments protecting MIPs rights. Due to one of the sub-grants five representatives of minorities were put on contact with organizations that provides them qualified legal support and intends to provide it well beyond the programme. The advocacy campaign that emerged from the Murmansk seminar in July 2015 has developed recommendations for the newly established Russian Agency on national policy and presented them to the regional authorities of Murmansk region and members of the Presidential Human Rights Council. This led to the agreement to have a national meeting on the rights on indigenous people by the end of 2015. This initiative has a considerable potential for impact, but at present this is only potential.

Evaluation evidence suggests that the programme made a over-optimistic assumption that two days of training on advocacy combined with two days of training on international MIPs rights instruments and rights monitoring (or even just two days of training on these issues in case of regional training) would be enough to enable participants to design and implement effective advocacy campaigns without any support from the programme other than financial. This assumption worked only for participants who already had a relatively high level of capacity in the areas of human rights and project management.

I collected some of the ideas about what should be done to ensure implementation of international standards related to the rights of indigenous people that emerged in the course of the discussion at the training in Murmansk:

- Majority of human rights ombudsmen in Russia have little knowledge about international indigenous rights instruments – thus they should be trained on this matter, and then involved in recurrent training and knowledge sharing activities to collect and disseminate emerging good practices. Russia has 85 regions, which means that a minimum of 85 people should be trained. This is about the number of people trained by the programme over its lifetime.
- All CSOs representing indigenous people should be trained.
- Courts are not aware of indigenous peoples rights, there is a need to educate judges.

These ideas indicate that the actual scope of work that has to be done just to increase awareness about international indigenous rights standards in Russia is enormous. 16 advocacy campaigns with the

cumulative budget of EURO 24,000 foreseen in the programme could potentially do something useful, but their impact could be only incremental.

Answer to Question 6

To what extent have grassroots communities benefited from the project? How has the team managed to balance work inside and outside major cities?

Overall the programme did not really reach to grassroots communities because neither MRGE nor YHRM had well established relations with minority and indigenous communities, and informal partners that supposedly had them withdraw from the programme.

Due to the programme people from saami communities who participated in the training in Murmansk met with the Russian expert of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Observation in the course of the discussion during the training suggests that saami representatives picked several ideas shared by this expert and agreed with him to continue interaction after the training. And this is actually happening – the expert has already participated in saami festival in August 2015. In the long term this interaction may be beneficial for saami communities.

Answer to Question 7

Were the publications produced in this project timely and relevant? Were they of an appropriate quality? Did they address the issues of importance to the target communities? Were they appropriate for intended audiences?

The evaluation has found that CSOs and MIPs CBOs feel a great need for information on MIPs rights and mechanisms on their implementation. So the publications produced by the programme – despite the fact that they were produced later than expected and were not used as the source of information for national and local advocacy campaigns – are still timely and relevant for civil society and MIPs communities activists.

Publications are well researched and well organized. There are some minor problems with the language in the Russian versions of the publications resulting from the fact that MRGE was working with English texts that than were translated into Russian. For example, the report “Protecting the Rights of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in the Russian Federation: Challenges and Ways Forward” reports to a number of Russian legal documents. The titles were initially translated into English and then back to Russian, and a results the titles of the documents in the report were somewhat distorted.

Intended audiences for the report on Russia's implementation of international minority rights standards and compilation of Russia's international commitments on minority rights are CSOs, decision-makers and MIPs communities¹⁴. Publications can serve as reference materials for people trained by the programme and help them further build their capacity.

¹⁴ Programme proposal. Annex A, page 12.

5. Conclusions

The programme “Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation (2012/281-633)” has aimed to ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia by strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations working with MIPs to monitor the human rights situation in Russia and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels. The programme was targeting human rights and MIPs CSOs as well as government authorities.

The evaluation has found that the **programme was highly relevant**, as it was consistent with the needs of its beneficiaries. Representatives of human rights NGOs and MIPs activities interviewed in the course of evaluation consistently voiced the need to know how to work and communicate with authorities to advance MIPs rights. MIPs activists also see the need for independent monitoring on the implementation of their rights by Russian authorities. The Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation adopted in 2012 calls for improved cooperation between state and municipal authorities and civil society as a means to ensure implementation of the rights of indigenous people and minorities.

Programme **effectiveness** – the extent of achievement of expected results – **was limited**. The program resulted in the increased knowledge regarding the rights of MIPs, but in most cases this new knowledge did not translate into the activities expected by the programme. The programme promoted networking between human rights and MIPs CSOs, but this networking in most cases did not lead to joint activities. As a result the programme did not manage to reach to authorities and build their awareness of human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia.

The programme effectiveness was undermined by un conducive political situation in Russia. Assumptions about the programme context and ability of MRGE trainers to get Russian visas made at the design stage were not fulfilled. MRGE trainer could not come to Russia to deliver the national advocacy and rights training that was to lay the foundation for the following programme activities. MRGE partners believe that this had a profound negative impact on the programme and led to the loss of the expected strong programme focus on advocacy activities.

The programme implementation was further complicated by barriers set by Russian authorities to stop international funding of Russian NGOs. Active enforcement of the “foreign agent” law by Russian authorities drastically increased the risks for Russian NGOs accepting foreign funding. This increased the effort necessary for contracting with sub-grants recipients as NGOs were very careful about the language used in the contracts. In addition some sub-grantees could contract with MRGE only as individuals or individual entrepreneurs. To do so MRGE has to go through a complicated negotiations process with the EU Delegation about amendment of contracting rules applied to the programme. The development of sub-grant contracts with participants also were complicated and time consuming.

The **programme was designed to make it highly efficient**, that is to minimize the use of resources to produce expected results. MRGE and YHRM coordinators were working only part time. This limited their ability to quickly address emerging problems due to unfavorable situation in Russia and led to gaps in communication processes within the programme. One of the results of these gaps was that informal partners were not properly informed about the programme launch and did not participate in the programme as planned. This in turn limited programme access to MIPs communities.

The evidence collected in the course of this evaluation indicates that the **programme design** developed by MRGE and its Russian partners **was viable and feasible**. The regional training in Murmansk (conducted in July 2015) that managed to attract the planned mix of MIPs and mainstream human rights CSOs led to an advocacy campaign that involved the majority of training participants and has already reached regional authorities and can potentially contribute to better implementation of the rights of indigenous people in Russia.

There were several cases when the programme worked almost as expected for training participants. In all of these cases programme participants had prior experience of working with MIPs as well as experience with project management. So initial level of their capacity was already high. In addition they were highly motivated to positively contribute to advancement of MIPs rights in their regions.

In the course of the programme Murmansk-based Kola Association of Female Layers (KAFL) emerged as an active coordination center promoting cooperation within the network created by the programme and expanding this network. Kola Association has already demonstrated its readiness to put its own resources to advance MIPs rights. In December 2014 it conducted a one-day seminar on MIPs media to meet the urgent needs of local saami community and brought together representatives of saami community and human rights activists and experts from St Petersburg and Voronezh. KAFL is also leading the advocacy campaign that emerged from the Murmansk regional training organized within the framework of the MRGE training as participants decided to develop a set of recommendations for the newly established Russian Agency on national policies. Recommendations were completed in August 2015 and were presented to the representatives of Presidential Human Rights Council (PHRC) and the governor of the Murmansk region during the PHRC delegation visit to Murmansk region in the end of August. As the result of this presentation the governor and PHRC have agreed to conduct a meeting on the implementation of the rights of indigenous people living in the Russian Arctic in Murmansk before the end of 2015. It is highly likely that this organization will remain active within the network after the programme ends and contribute to the **sustainability** of the programme results.

The programme made some small steps towards its expected long-term results (**impact**) - having internationally accepted human rights standards implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia. More people in the human rights and minority/indigenous communities now have knowledge about the international instruments protecting MIPs rights. The advocacy campaign that emerged from the Murmansk seminar in July 2015 has developed recommendations for the newly established Russian Agency on national policy and presented them to the regional authorities of Murmansk region and members of the Presidential Human Rights Council. This led to the agreement to have a national meeting on the rights on indigenous people by the end of 2015. This initiative has a considerable potential for impact, but at present this is only potential.

Evaluation findings suggest that MRGE **programme management practices are likely to emphasize implementation of planned activities over achievement of results**. When major programme assumptions are not met and/or programme activities don't produce expected results, this should be a signal to the programme management that the programme design should be reviewed and possibly changed. Such review did not happen even when MRGE Managing Director Neil Clarke could not get Russian visa and come to deliver the national ARTs training, though assumption that Russian authorities don't deny visa to MRGE trainer was explicitly articulated in the programme logframe and this assumption was obviously not met. MRGE was considering to redesign the programme after the national training did not work as planned, but preferred to attempt to continue with the original programme plan despite the evidence that it was not producing expected results.

The key lesson learned from the process of programme implementation is that **having strong local partners that have established contacts with programme target beneficiaries is crucial for programme success.** The programme worked as expected when the Kola Association of Female Layers (KAFL) had effectively assumed the role of the MRGE partner and led organization of the regional training in Murmansk, coordinated the advocacy campaign that emerged from that training as well as the preparation of one of the shadow reports. KAFL is a well-established human rights organization that has a history of working with saami and other MIPs communities in the North of Russia. KAFK network enables KAFL to bring the expected mix of participants to the training which created the enabling conditions for launching the joint action. KAFL also had contacts with government structures (the Presidential Human Rights Council) that allowed it reach to regional authorities and advance MIPs rights agenda.

6. Recommendations

Possible areas for future work

- The need of Russian CSOs for advocacy knowledge and skills remains high. MRGE has a number of English-language materials on advocating for MIPs rights using international standards (e.g. “Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Opportunities for NGOs and Minorities” by Magdalena Syposz (2006)). Translating these documents into Russian would contribute to the body of knowledge on advocacy available for Russian NGOs.
- Russian CSOs need a lot of training and assistance in order to be able start using international instruments for advocacy. Given the current political context in Russia, bringing international expert to deliver training in Russian will most likely remain problematic. The possible solution is to provide training on advocacy outside of Russia for a group of people from stronger NGOs who that could act as trainers and coaches for smaller NGOs and MIPs activists.
- Under the current political situation Russian authorities are very unreceptive to any criticism. And this situation is likely to continue for a while. At the same time public executives are accountable to country leadership for the implementation of Russian national/ethnic policy that calls for implementation of minority rights and minority rights education. This opens space for advocacy projects that offer practical and tested solutions to existing problems rather than request authorities to look for solutions themselves. The approach could be to identify practices that already exist in Russia and contribute to implementation of MIPs rights like having an indigenous rights ombudsmen, regional reports on minority issues developed by human rights ombudsmen, joint training on minority rights for leaders of minority communities and police officers, etc. Identified practices could be turned into cases (including suggestions on how to present each case to decision makers) and disseminated. Russian NGOs representing MIPs communities would be able to use these cases for advocacy purposes.

Programme management practices

- Having a part-time programme manager contributes to higher efficiency, but increases the risk that communication processes within the programme will be slow and patchy and gaps in communication may emerge. If this type of management arrangement is chosen, it is important to ensure that the part-time programme manager has the flexibility to regulate her/his work load to be able to devote all of her/his time during critical periods or that someone at MRGE office can provide necessary additional support.
- Review existing programme management practices to make sure that management is focused on attainment of results rather than implementation of activities. It is important to closely monitor the chain of results and to what extent the programme assumptions are met. This will enable to see if the programme is implemented according to the design and to decide if the corrective measures should be taken or the original programme design should be revised.
- Make sure that the forms used to collect performance data, e.g. registration form for training participants, are coordinated with expected results, so that the primary data gives clear picture of results attainment.
- Consider tracking the processes started by this programme, especially what happens to recommendations to the Russian Agency on national policy (an agency in charge of working with MIPs) developed by participants of the regional training in Murmansk. This would allow MRGE track the impact of the programme.

Approaches to working with small fragile CSOs

- E-mail and web site announcements are not the best way of communication with small Russian CSOs. In many cases these CSOs are run by volunteers who have full-time jobs and often are too busy to review and respond to e-mails. Direct phone contacts, especially when they are made by people whom NGO leaders already know, is a more effective way of communication and should be used as much as possible.
- The level of mutual trust within Russian society is low. As a result people prefer to stay within the network of already existing contacts. This fully applies to NGOs, especially small ones. To get access to these NGOs, it is necessary to work with partners that already have established contacts with the programme target groups. The same applies to contacts with Russian authorities – it is easier to reach them through NGOs that are already working in some consultative bodies established by authorities.
- Because of the low capacity of MIPs CBOs, coming up with a viable project proposal is a big challenge for them. This means that grant completion is not the best way of stimulating their activity. A better option would be to offer them a combination of training, coaching and funding as a means of solving some problem that their community faces. The application for such support problems would have to describe the specific problem the community represented by the CBO faces. Implemented projects can be turned into cases and made available online. This approach would require building in the opportunity for long timelines for design and implementation of the projects by small NGOs to accommodate the reality that activists have full-time jobs.
- Welcome failure as the natural part of the working process and opportunity for learning. In addition don't expect advocacy efforts to bring quick results. Changing attitudes takes a long time and a lot of effort.

Annex 1.

Evaluation Terms of Reference

Final Evaluation – Terms of Reference and call for Expressions of Interest

Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation (2012/281-633) funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) for Russia

Deadline for application: 1st May 2015

1. Background of the project

Country: The Russian Federation.

Regions: Republic of Karelia and Murmansk Oblast; Khabarovsk Krai; St Petersburg; and Voronezh and Krasnodar Krai Project goals/objectives/strategies

The project aimed to strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working with minorities and indigenous peoples to monitor the human rights situation in Russia, and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels. This project focuses on the Council of Europe Framework Convention on National Minorities (FCNM), which the Russian Federation ratified in 1998. The FCNM is the most comprehensive document on minority rights in the international treaty body system and it provides the best systematic monitoring of minority rights in state parties, and provides the most comprehensive platform for accountability. For this reason, the programme was run in tandem with the reporting cycle of the FCNM. See more about the project and Minority Rights Group [here](#)

The results originally foreseen for the project were as follows:

Overall objective: To ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia.

Specific Objective: To strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations working with MIPs to monitor the human rights situation in Russia and to effectively engage with government stakeholders at the local and national levels.

Result 1. Strengthen capacity of CSOs to monitor the human rights of MIPs in Russia, and conduct advocacy to challenge violations of these rights

Result 2. Key decision makers at the local and national levels display an increased awareness of human rights standards and of their obligations toward minorities and indigenous peoples in Russia.

Result 3. Improved coordination and cooperation between civil society actors working with MIPs in Russia.

2. Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the Final Evaluation are:

A. Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in 'Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation' Programme Document and furthermore, provide MRGE with an opportunity for 'structured evaluative learning', with the aim of learning from the implementation process.

B. Based on the findings of the evaluation, develop a set of suggestions and key recommendations for future and continued MRGE activities.



Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation (2012/281-633) Project supported by the European Commission



. The evaluator will need to be independent of MRGE, its donors, the project targets and participants and will need to demonstrate that no perceived or actual conflict of interests would arise during the evaluation. The evaluator will need to work within the time frames outlined above. The evaluation will need to satisfy all the requirements of the European Union and evaluation guidelines issued by them.

3. Key evaluation questions

Referring to the project documentation, did we complete all of the activities as planned to a reasonably high quality? What problems were encountered at this level? How did changes on the ground in Russia affect our plans and was our reaction and changes to plans appropriate and timely? How did any problems affect the activities and to what extent were they overcome?

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 MRGE tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was (or not). 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.

Impact level

Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the specific objective 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?

Additional evaluation questions:

1. What effect has the project had (if any) on the capacities of those trained and supported to represent the rights and interests of their communities through advocacy campaigns? What input have other organisations or individuals had in supporting and developing partners' and trainees' capacities in addition to or alongside MRGE's input?
2. In relation to the advocacy work, what was possible to date in relation to ensure that internationally accepted human rights standards are implemented in the treatment of minority and indigenous peoples (MIPs) across Russia? Were the project objectives realistic given the time frame and the context at the point that the programme was designed?
3. To what extent have grassroots communities benefited from the project? How has the team managed to balance work inside and outside major cities?
4. Were the publications produced in this project timely and relevant? Were they of an appropriate quality? Did they address the issues of importance to the target communities? Were they appropriate for intended audiences?

4. Key deliverables

1. Evaluation workplan/inception report
2. Preliminary findings (max. 5 pages) at mid-term of the evaluation period
3. Final evaluation report (max 30 pages excluding annexes)



Strengthening basic human rights of minority and indigenous groups in the Russian Federation (2012/281-633) Project supported by the European Commission



4. Experience and Expertise required

- extensive knowledge and experience of working on minority rights, gender,
- good knowledge of Russian Federation
- experience of comparable evaluations and strong track record of evaluations carried out on similar projects
- familiar with and able to comply with all EU evaluation requirements
- speak, read and write both Russian and English
- experience of training, capacity building, advocacy and work with smaller NGOs in difficult contexts would also be helpful

5. Report submission, timetable and budget

The evaluation should be carried out between May-June 2015. Final evaluation report submitted by 30 June 2015. On 15-16 May 2015, a training event will take place in Murmansk, if possible the evaluator should be available to attend either in person or by skype at least one of the sessions of that event

The budget for this piece of work including the evaluators' fee, all travel, communication and other costs is in the region of €4000.

6. How to apply

If you are interested in being considered for this opportunity, please send the following to zsafia.farkas@mrgmail.org by 1st May 2015.

- CV
- Cover letter – indicating relevant experience and knowledge and how you meet the candidate requirements
- Workplan including methodology, timetable, budget for the evaluation including brief assessment of security context and plans for country visit.

Annex 2.

List of programme stakeholders interviewed in the course of evaluation

MRGE and programme partners

Neil Clarke, Minority Rights Group Europe

Daria Alexeeva, Minority Rights Group Europe

Anastasia Nikitina, Youth Human Rights Movement, Voronezh

Semen Simonov, Youth Human Rights Movement, Sochi

Valence Maniragena, Humanitarian Organization for Assistance to Rwandan Citizens in Need of Asylum (ICHUMBI)

Larisa Boichenko, Karelian Centre for Gender Studies

Participants of training events and advocacy campaigns

Irina Paikacheva, Kola Association of Female Lawyers

Liubov Moseeva-Helier, Migration and Law Network

Evgeniy Popov, Support to Social and Economic Development of the peoples of the Caucasus

Roman Boyarkov, Youth Human Rights Movement, St Petersburg

Roman Lyubimov, Youth Human Rights Movement

Zariyat Akbaeva, North Caucasus Anti-corruption Center

Leila Gamzatova, Future of Dagestan

Tatiana Ukolova, Memorial, Sochi

Irina Ilyina, Civic Assistance

Alexey Limanzo, RAIPON

Valentina Sovkina, Saami Parliament of Kola Peninsula

Andrey Danilov, Saami Parliament of Kola Peninsula

Alexey Tsykarev, UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Leonid Agafonov, Public Oversight Commission of St Petersburg

Alexander Gorbachev, Soldiers' Mothers - St Petersburg

Farukh Satorov, Center for Observation of Human Rights ERDAM

Tatiana Shkred, RAIPON

Vaddakh Al-Dzhundi, Society of People of Syrian Origin

Other stakeholders

Tatiana Bokareva, European Union Delegation in the Russian Federation

Ashot Hayrapetyan, Center for Interethnic Cooperation