



minority  
rights  
group  
international

**Annual Review 2002**

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Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities.

Our activities are focused on international advocacy, training, publishing and outreach. We are guided by the needs expressed by our worldwide network of partner organizations which represent minorities and indigenous peoples. MRG works with over 150 organizations in over 50 countries. Our governing Council, which meets twice a year, has members from 10 different countries.

MRG has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and observer status with the African Commission For Human and Peoples' Rights. MRG is registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee under English law.

# Director's report: making the greatest impact

As world attention in 2002 focused on the impending war in Iraq, it was often forgotten that some 20 further wars were already underway in other parts of the world. In two-thirds of these armed conflicts, violence was targeted at specific ethnic or religious groups, including in Central Africa and the Horn, and in South and South-East Asia, regions of the world where Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is particularly active. Yet many of these conflicts could have been prevented, if minority and indigenous rights had been respected.

Improving the lives of minorities and indigenous peoples, and fostering cooperation between communities are complex aims, however. Local or national governments, or bodies such as the United Nations (UN) or the European Union (EU), have to be persuaded to act. Their decisions have to be implemented, and the effect on people's lives carefully monitored. For every success we register, many efforts to improve human rights will be in vain.

For a small organization like MRG, with limited resources and tight budgets, it is therefore important to learn which of our activities have the greatest impact. Tracing the causes and effects of improvements in the situation on the ground is not easy, and showing that human rights violations have actually been prevented is harder still, particularly as it can sometimes take years for our efforts to bear fruit. But understandably, donors and supporters increasingly want to see the work of human rights organizations leading to concrete results.

The following pages provide examples of the impact of MRG's work, based on direct feedback from minority and indigenous communities, assessing the growth of minority-led activities, and tracking changes in policy and legislation. First, we feature our work to train and support partner organizations around the world who represent minorities and indigenous peoples, building their capacity to be effective advocates for the rights of their communities. Then we look at how we have been able to contribute to strengthening international standards that protect minority and indigenous rights.

This annual review highlights ways in which our work has made a real difference to people who are excluded or oppressed, or who live poorer, more difficult or more limited lives, simply because of their ethnicity, language or religion.



**Mark Lattimer**  
Director

# Supporting minorities to make their own case

MRG believes that the best advocates for minority rights are minorities and indigenous peoples. But to be effective, they need to improve their advocacy skills, base their claims on human rights law, and understand how government works, whether nationally or internationally. However, as a result of years of discrimination and marginalization, minorities and indigenous peoples have less access to education, fewer roles in public life and may even doubt their own abilities.

'This training significantly influenced the participation of minorities in the ongoing Constitution of Kenya review...one of the outputs being the memorandum that was submitted to the Review Commission in July 2002'

*Participant from Kenya following MRG training on minority rights*

MRG's training programmes therefore aim to build participants' knowledge, skills and confidence. They are often designed to tie in with advocacy opportunities so that participants can immediately put newly-acquired skills to use, for example at the UN or the Council of Europe.

## **Skills, knowledge and confidence**

In 2002, MRG ran six in-depth training courses on advocacy and rights for a total of 163 people, including community leaders, human rights activists and lawyers. Most courses

lasted between three and five days. In addition, we ran a programme that provided mentoring support to 84 young Roma from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in seven countries in Eastern Europe. All of the courses were over-subscribed; in one case there were 132 applicants for a course that had only 25 places. However, during 2002 our partners/trainees went on to run 13 follow-up training events to pass on to others in their community the skills, knowledge and confidence they had gained.

Evaluation of our training programmes produced an extremely positive response. For example, at the regional advocacy and rights training run as part of our programme in South-East Europe, almost 95 per cent of participants indicated that the training had helped them to explore how international standards and mechanisms may be useful for addressing problems in their country either 'very significantly' or 'significantly'. A similar proportion indicated that they would now feel more confident about developing an advocacy strategy.

More importantly, over half of a sample of participants contacted six months after completing their respective training programmes explained how they had applied what they had learnt by representing their communities. One used materials on minority rights in a course for teachers of secondary school pupils in the Kurdish region of Iraq, another organization was invited to participate in consultations on the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Serbia, and an organization in Russia ran a training course to pass on to others knowledge and skills for the international protection of minority rights.



British Muslim women in Birmingham, UK. Karen Robinson/Panos Pictures

San woman in Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Botswana. Paul Weinberg/Panos Pictures



Over three-quarters of those responding believed that their advocacy had improved 'very significantly' or 'significantly'. More than half said they had had more contact with decision-makers since attending the training.

'Minority Rights Group International has been working relentlessly for the protection of minority rights all over the world through its intensive training seminars'

*Islamic Voice*

We believe, therefore, that what people gain from the training courses leads to increased participation and better-designed policies and programmes affecting minorities. Moreover, it makes the trainees and their organizations feel empowered, and reduces their sense of exclusion and related frustration; in the long term, this may significantly lessen the potential for inter-ethnic conflict.

### **Making minority voices heard**

MRG also works with minority partners to increase their participation in decisions affecting their communities. In the case of some of the most excluded groups, participation in national policy-making is often the first step. For example, a roundtable meeting in Albania brought together Roma organizations and government officials, and agreement was reached to work on a joint strategy for improving the situation of the Roma. One of MRG's partners in Serbia has been asked to contribute to a national education reform programme. Another partner was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to carry out research on the marginalization of minorities in Somalia. These are examples of MRG's partners increasingly being taken seriously by key decision-makers.

But some governments are unwilling even to meet with minority and indigenous peoples. MRG can then use its knowledge of, and access to, inter-governmental organizations to enable our partners to raise their concerns internationally, including at the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Working Group on Minorities, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the

UN committees that monitor compliance with human rights treaties. In 2002, MRG brought minority and indigenous leaders to Brussels, Geneva, Johannesburg, New York and Strasbourg to meet the international policy-makers, and we supported them in their advocacy.

It is unrealistic to expect that such advocacy will always result in changes in policy or improvements on the ground, but sometimes it can. Following a session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, to which our Mauritanian partner organization submitted an alternative report, UNICEF and the Mauritanian government are considering introducing first-language teaching for children from minorities. In some cases, UN and government officials who meet our partners or agree to give presentations on MRG training courses, are clearly affected by the experience and become minority advocates within their respective institutions.

'We now are able to make the government and policy-makers understand that indigenous peoples have equal rights. The media are giving importance to our issues and organization'

*Participant from Bangladesh following MRG training on UN mechanisms*

We try to learn continually from evaluating our work, particularly in assessing our partners' needs accurately, identifying barriers to them applying their advocacy skills, and considering where their capacity needs to be built. In 2002, MRG was able to assist in the formation of a regional network of Pastoralist members of parliament (MPs) to tackle problems their communities faced across East Africa and the Horn. One Ugandan participant at MRG's regional advocacy training in August subsequently reported that their organization had been able to hold discussions with internally displaced groups on the merits of taking the government to court to seek their land rights, had held meetings with government officials and MPs, had used materials from the training to develop a sensitization and lobbying programme for Pastoralist groups in the Nybushozi area, and prepared a paper for the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing.

'Minority Rights Group International helped win a UN ruling on caste discrimination that has extended legal protection for the 250 million low caste Dalits across India and Asia' *The Guardian*



# Minority rights: from paper to practice

There are many international laws and standards that could protect minorities from the worst abuses and help to tackle discrimination. Some states acknowledge these yet fail to implement them; other states simply ignore them. And all too often few people notice and even fewer people speak out. Therefore, MRG works to ensure that those laws that already exist on paper are put into practice. We also seek to influence the debate on improving international standards and monitoring mechanisms, and press for them to be strengthened.

'Non-respect of minorities is a basic defect of democracy. Efforts to promote minority rights should be taken into consideration in all development cooperation instruments'

*Marc Franco, Deputy Director-General, EuropeAid, European Commission, speaking at an MRG event*

## Governments under scrutiny

Many international human rights treaties require states to report periodically on their compliance. Usually it is possible for NGOs and others to submit shadow reports which give an alternative view of governments' reports. The experts who monitor states' compliance pay attention to well-argued shadow reports that include evidence to back up allegations that a government has failed to live up to its treaty obligations. In 2002, MRG supported partners in a range of countries to gather information for shadow reports to address their governments' record on minority rights.

We worked closely with partners in Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro on shadow reports at a critical time: a commitment to minority rights protection is a requirement for states in Eastern Europe who wish to become members of the European Union. Governments are therefore under pressure to show that they are addressing minority rights concerns raised in a shadow report quickly and effectively. This year, the government of Fiji was pressured into submitting its first report since 1982 on compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), following the submission of a shadow report and briefing at the UN committee by MRG's partner, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF). MRG's support for CCF has helped ensure that Fijian officials are aware that their actions – or inaction – concerning discrimination, including against the Indian community, are now under international scrutiny.

'The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women will use your report in its work'

*UN Division for the Advancement of Women*

At the same time, it is important to build constructive relationships with government officials, for example in MRG's work to mainstream minority rights in development policy. In 2002, we began a programme of work with the European Commission to brief and train European development donors in the needs and problems faced by minorities and indigenous peoples. MRG was also commissioned by the UN

Development Programme to prepare a draft policy note on minorities – making UNDP the first multi-lateral development agency to elaborate a distinct policy on minorities.

## Closing loopholes

States sometimes try to limit their obligations under international law by arguing that a particular human rights issue is not covered by a treaty. Some Asian states, for example, have always asserted that ICERD does not cover caste, including discrimination against Dalits (so-called 'untouchables').

'The concern that you have taken in explaining to me each and every incident at the UN in Geneva is unforgettable. I shall further work for my people with much more strength and energy with all your inspiration and love'

*Dalit partner from India supported by MRG*

MRG has collaborated for several years with a coalition of NGOs working on caste and descent-based discrimination. We lobbied in support of a special session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on this issue, and helped coordinate NGO events and input, funding representatives of affected groups from India, Sri Lanka and Africa to attend the session.

The final result was that the Committee unanimously adopted a General Recommendation which concluded that caste discrimination, as a form of descent-based discrimination, is prohibited by ICERD. Sensitivity to international criticism may induce states such as India and Sri Lanka to take action to tackle the deep-rooted and devastating discrimination against Dalits. The lesser-known but severe discrimination suffered by peoples such as the Osu in Nigeria and the Buraku in Japan will also be under the spotlight for the first time. An independent evaluation of our advocacy work concluded that the ruling would not have been obtained without the work of MRG and its partner NGOs.

'Thank you for the excellent report on Afro-Brazilians...this document will prove enormously helpful in my work'

*Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Brazil*

Another loophole exists in respect of UN action to prevent genocide and inter-ethnic conflict, demonstrated notoriously in the case of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. MRG has worked for the creation of a new UN office to undertake preventive diplomacy in cases of potential conflict involving minorities, enabling human rights intelligence to be acted on at an early stage. Following extensive MRG briefing, the UN Commission on Human Rights called in 2002 for an official analysis of existing loopholes in the field of conflict prevention and minorities, and both the UN Working Group on Minorities and the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights agreed Resolutions calling for a specific new mechanism to address this grave threat to minority rights.



MRG Council member Edward Mortimer discusses inter-communal cooperation with Druze leader Walid Jumblatt in Lebanon, October 2002.

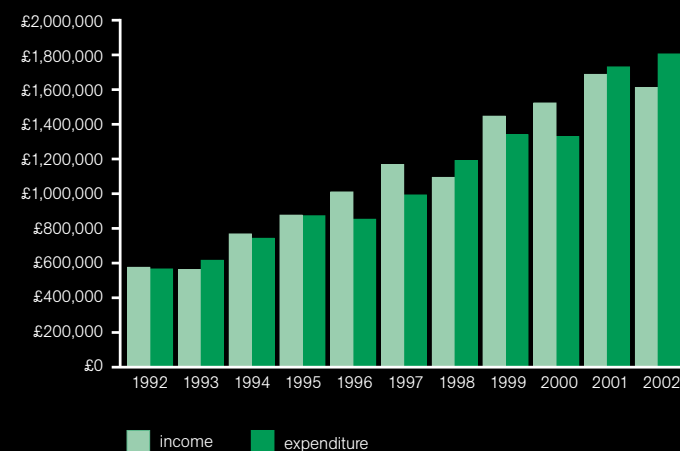
# Financial report 2002

These accounts are a summary of information extracted from our audited accounts. The full report and accounts were approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee for recommendation to the Council. The full accounts can be obtained from MRG at 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE, UK, and from [www.minorityrights.org](http://www.minorityrights.org)

## Balance sheet as at 31 December 2002

	2002	2001
	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	11,057	11,822
Investments	113,868	134,549
	<u>124,925</u>	<u>146,371</u>
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash at bank and in hand	195,822	433,661
Stocks	21,725	21,886
Debtors	386,268	287,932
	<u>603,815</u>	<u>743,479</u>
Creditors: amounts due within 1 year	(105,858)	(52,636)
	<u>622,882</u>	<u>837,214</u>
<b>Net assets/liabilities</b>		
	<u>622,882</u>	<u>837,214</u>
<b>Reserves</b>		
Unrestricted funds		
General funds	291,451	316,406
Designated funds	8,819	8,819
Restricted funds	322,612	511,989
	<u>622,882</u>	<u>837,214</u>

## Income/expenditure growth



## Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 December 2002

	Restricted funds	Unrestricted funds	Total 2002 funds	Total 2001 funds
	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming resources</b>				
Donations, legacies & similar incoming resources	–	500,422	500,422	448,006
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects</i>				
Projects	1,068,853	–	1,068,853	1,156,809
Publications	–	27,122	27,122	33,156
Consultancy	–	2,968	2,968	31,604
<i>Activities to generate funds</i>				
Copyrights and literacy fees	–	886	886	34
Investment income	–	10,919	10,919	17,084
	<u>1,068,853</u>	<u>542,317</u>	<u>1,611,170</u>	<u>1,686,693</u>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
<i>Costs of generating funds:</i>				
Fundraising	–	72,519	72,519	56,396
<i>Charitable expenditure</i>				
Projects	1,258,230	136,184	1,394,414	1,352,637
Advocacy	–	104,368	104,368	90,893
Publications	–	142,815	142,815	133,337
Consultancy	–	47	47	9,323
Support costs	–	64,346	64,346	66,996
Management & administration	–	26,312	26,312	20,378
	<u>1,258,230</u>	<u>546,591</u>	<u>1,804,821</u>	<u>1,729,960</u>
<b>Net incoming resources before gains &amp; transfers</b>	<b>(189,377)</b>	<b>(4,274)</b>	<b>(193,651)</b>	<b>(43,267)</b>
Unrealised investment losses	–	(20,681)	(20,681)	(10,027)
	<u>(189,377)</u>	<u>(24,955)</u>	<u>(214,332)</u>	<u>(53,294)</u>
Net movement in funds	(189,377)	(24,955)	(214,332)	(53,294)
Funds at the start of the year	511,989	325,225	837,214	890,508
Funds at the end of the year	<u>322,612</u>	<u>300,270</u>	<u>622,882</u>	<u>837,214</u>

## MRG's donors in 2002

Alan & Babette Sainsbury Charitable Fund	Community Fund Cordaid	Harbinson Trust ICCO	Open Society Institute Oxfam	Staples Trust Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust	Council of Europe Danchurch Aid	Ireland Aid Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	Philanthropic Trust Ruben & Elisabeth Rausing Trust	Department of Foreign Affairs TBH Brunner Charitable Trust
Allen Lane Foundation	Department for International Development (UK)	Lee Foundation	Rowan Charitable Trust	Trócaire
ACT Netherlands	European Union	Methodist Church – World Church Office	Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	TUUT Charitable Trust
Bromley Trust	Eva Reckitt Trust	Misereor	Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	UIA Charitable Foundation
Bryan Guinness Trust	Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs	SCIAF	United Nations Development Programme
CAFOD	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)	Novib	SIDA	
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation		Nuffield Foundation		
Christian Aid				

## Council and staff

### Council members\*

Chaloka Beyani  
Kalina Bozeva  
Radhika Coomaraswamy  
Maja Daruwala (Chair)  
Paul Divakar  
Kristina Hedlund Thulin  
Wim Jacobs (Treasurer)  
Asma Jahangir  
Chibli Mallat  
Edward Mortimer  
Benedict Ole Nangoro  
Klara Orgovanova  
Martin Pick

### Committee members\*

Sarah Archer  
Steven Burkeman  
Lekha Klouda  
Kate Phillips  
Philip Rudge  
Patrick Thornberry  
**MRG staff\***  
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Clive Baldwin  
Frances Carlisle  
Chris Chapman  
Saskia Chilcott  
Graham Fox  
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Marusca Perazzi  
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Tadesse Tafesse  
Shelina Thawer

Claire Thomas  
Angela Warren  
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Snježana Bokulić  
Monika Raffael  
**Nepal**  
Mukta Lama Tamang  
**Philippines**  
Minnie Degawan  
**Uganda**  
Juliet Muwanga

### Volunteers and interns 1 January – 31 December 2002

Vivienne Lamaro  
Said Shehata  
Carlos Suarez  
Neha Vahali  
Torunn Wimpleman  
**Staff leaving in 2002**  
Trevor Brown  
Seema Kazi (India)  
David Lundqvist  
Krishna Maharaj  
Veena Meetoo  
Lucy Mulvagh  
Samantha Sharples

\* As at 31 March 2003

# Getting involved

MRG communicates with minorities and indigenous peoples, governments and policy-makers, students and academics, the media, international inter-governmental organizations, and development and human rights groups.

We provide research and information which is an important resource for those who need to know about current issues on the international agenda and their impact on minorities and indigenous peoples. Media interviews with our partners and staff were broadcast in Africa, Asia and Europe, and we reached international audiences via global media, including the BBC and CNN. Our issues were picked up by many national newspapers – including *The Independent* and *The Times*.

MRG publishes reports, training manuals, workshop reports, macro and micro studies, and issues papers. These are available on subscription and through our library scheme. We launched a bi-monthly e-bulletin in 2002 designed to provide the latest information on minority and indigenous rights, and on MRG's work.

**If you would like to know more about MRG, how to support us and how to collaborate with us, please visit our website [www.minorityrights.org](http://www.minorityrights.org) or contact our London office.**

## What they said about our reports

'For thirty years MRG reports have provided authoritative and unbiased background information on minorities worldwide'

*Peace Matters*

'I read [them] with great interest'

*Guy Verhofstadt, Belgian Prime Minister*

'...informative and extremely useful...'

*World Bank Special Projects staff*

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[www.minorityrights.org](http://www.minorityrights.org)

Registered as Minority Rights Group  
Charity No. 282305  
Company No. 1544957

Design by Texture +44 (0)20 7739 7123  
Printed in the UK



Minority Rights Group International  
379 Brixton Road  
London  
SW9 7DE  
UK

**Tel** +44(0)20 7978 9498

**Fax** +44(0)20 7738 6265

**Email** [minority.rights@mrgmail.org](mailto:minority.rights@mrgmail.org)

[www.minorityrights.org](http://www.minorityrights.org)

# minority rights group international