

Annual Review 2003

minority
rights
group
international



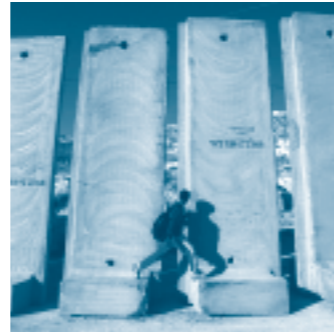
Cover: Hazara girl in Afghanistan.
Iva Zimova/Panos Pictures
Below: Palestinian boy walking along
concrete barricades in the West Bank
village of Sawachra.
Ahikam Seri/Panos Pictures



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 on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). MRG is registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee under English law.



Much of the urgent work of a human rights organization is to expose abuses of rights wherever they occur, and to push for them to be stopped. The appalling treatment of Haitian migrants in the Caribbean, the threat to the intellectual property rights of indigenous and tribal peoples in Asia, and the grave situation faced by the Batwa people of Central Africa are just three of the issues which Minority Rights Group International (MRG) publicized in 2003.

But an equally important part of our work is to promote cooperation and understanding between communities. If there is a base of mutual cooperation between different ethnic or religious groups, conflict is less likely to develop. If

Promoting cooperation between communities

majority populations understand the needs and concerns of minorities, abuses will decrease. And preventing violations of human rights is a lot better than publicizing violations after they occur.

Although politicians and governments often talk about promoting harmony, they rarely appreciate what is needed to translate fine words into genuine cooperation on the ground. This may include technical issues, such as designing the constitutional structures that can enable the public participation of all groups in society or achieve an appropriate balance between national unity and local autonomy. Last year MRG sought to address these questions in the complex processes of building new

societies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

No two societies are the same, and each will have its own pattern of ethnic, religious and linguistic traditions. The Constitution and laws of each country need to reflect and manage that diversity. But common to all is the need to ensure protection for minorities. That includes implementing safeguards for the lives, freedoms and identities of minorities and establishing effective means of redress if their rights are violated. This is a particularly difficult task in societies with recent experience of inter-ethnic conflict – as our work in the former Yugoslavia demonstrates – but one that is absolutely essential for reconciliation and future stability.

MRG works all over the world with partner organizations representing minorities and indigenous peoples who are anxious to play a fuller part in the societies in which they live. Yet too often, through poverty or through prejudice, they are excluded from the institutions of government, the media and the economy. This annual review highlights our efforts to overcome these barriers and our work in tandem with international development agencies to promote genuine cooperation between communities. If minorities are able to feel a valued part of society, then mutual understanding and cooperation will flourish. The benefits in terms of peace, democracy and development are those in which all society can share.

Mark Lattimer
Director

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Building new societies in Iraq and Afghanistan



Right: Young girl with traditional flat bread in a village near Kabul, Afghanistan.
Karen Robinson/Panos Pictures

In the first part of 2003 international headlines were dominated by the impending war in Iraq. As the war became increasingly likely, MRG thought it essential to consider the requirements for preventing inter-communal conflict and protecting minority rights, both in the months to follow and in the longer-term. We interviewed a panel of internationally-renowned experts in conflict prevention, human rights and constitutional law, to help draw up ground rules for building democracy in post-totalitarian Iraq.

Five weeks before the start of the war, we published the report *Building Democracy in Iraq*. It presented the first detailed analysis of the options for a constitutional process and the mechanisms for establishing inclusive democracy. It considered the need to entrench those features that are essential to a genuinely democratic society, including fair representation, cooperation between communities, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In particular, it analysed the risk posed by inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflict, and the action necessary to try and avoid it.

English and Arabic language versions of the report reached some 10,000 people, including key decision-makers at the United Nations (UN), in the US State Department and Department of Defense, in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of International Development, as well as other major advocacy targets at national and international level. MRG held detailed discussions with individual members of the task forces established by the UN and its agencies to plan the humanitarian response to the situation in Iraq. Our technical input came at a time when little other guidance was available, but there was a real risk of Coalition policy exacerbating tensions between the country's different communities.

In February MRG submitted written evidence to a UK parliamentary inquiry held by the International Development Committee on the humanitarian consequences of military action against Iraq. MRG's analysis and recommendations were taken account of in the Committee's conclusions and our evidence reprinted in the official report. Following the decision by the UN Commission on Human Rights not to hold a special

session on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Iraq, MRG convened a public meeting on this subject at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in April, with the UN Special Rapporteur on Iraq.

MRG has also continued to monitor developments in post-conflict Afghanistan, and in December published a briefing highlighting the growing threats to democracy in Afghanistan and the need to ensure ethnic and religious minority protection in the new Constitution.

MRG's work on Iraq and Afghanistan was covered extensively in the media, including CNN, BBC World Service, BBC Radio 4 Today, Voice of America, *The Economist*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Al-Hayat* and *Al-Quds*.

“The most important step towards the development of a common national identity would be a constitution-drafting process that involved all Iraq's different communities”

MRG writing in *The Economist*



“...good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law are not optional when it comes to rebuilding a country, but an intrinsic part of reconstruction”

MRG writing in *The Guardian*

Above: Iraqi women pass the scene of an attack against US troops in Baghdad.
Farah Nosh/Panos Pictures

“...an excellent and very useful report...”

senior advisor to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Minorities as partners in development



Above: Sibundoy Indian man, Colombia.
Jeremy Horner/Panos Pictures

Right: Twa men playing a traditional game. Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of Congo.
Chris Keulen/Panos Pictures

It is now accepted that development cooperation is best conducted as a partnership between donors and less-developed countries. However, it is a partnership from which minorities and indigenous peoples are often excluded, threatening the success of development initiatives and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Development programmes may attempt to follow a strategic approach to poverty reduction, but they can have the effect of increasing inequality unless minorities are able to participate and their rights are protected. In many cases, minorities find themselves left out when development programmes are implemented at national level, or they may

lose their jobs or livelihoods as a consequence of economic change. In other cases, indigenous peoples are forced off their land to make way for big infrastructure projects. So-called 'development' can thus lead to social division – or even violent conflict.

Since 1999 MRG has worked with minority partner organizations in some 20 countries to publicize their experiences of development policies and to ensure that they can genuinely participate in the development process.

The Ogiek are a hunter-gatherer people from Kenya. For 70 years they have progressively been displaced from their ancestral lands, first by colonial settlement and more recently in the name of conservation and



Above: Pastoralist Karamojong woman collecting firewood in Uganda.
Crispin Hughes/Panos Pictures

“This study is really important ... [it] has the potential to influence other development and funding agencies”

World Bank staff commenting on MRG's study on Afro-descendants in Latin America

development. Last year MRG and its partner, the Centre for Minority Rights in Development (CEMIRIDE) in Nairobi published *Kenya's Castaways*, highlighting the situation of the Ogiek in Kenya's national development process. At the launch of the study, the Kenyan minister for lands and settlement finally pledged a review of the policy on land for marginalized groups.

Other action-oriented research published last year focused on the experiences of the Kihals in Pakistan, the Ogoni in Nigeria, Batwa in Rwanda, Roma children in Serbian primary schools, and on Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples in Latin America.

A number of leading international development agencies have acknowledged the importance of ensuring minorities are included in development policies, and are working with MRG to put this into practice. MRG has now been commissioned by the UN Development Programme to provide policy advice. We have also provided expert training to two major government development agencies, and to some 40 staff at the European Commission in Brussels.

“Your case is similar to that of the Australian Aborigines and, for this reason, I will ensure that your land problem is solved”

Amos Kimunya, Kenyan minister for lands and settlement, speaking to Ogiek representatives at an MRG event

The wars that tore apart the former Yugoslavia left a legacy of bitterness and fear between communities, and the threat of further instability throughout South-East Europe. Many refugees and displaced people have tried to return to their homes, only to find they are no longer there or are occupied by others. Those returning find that they have

no access to employment, health care, pensions or education for their children. And people continue the wait to see the perpetrators of grave crimes brought to justice.

Inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation are essential to enable such societies to heal, and to prevent future conflict.

MRG works with 20 partner organizations in South-East Europe to protect and promote minority rights and enhance inter-community understanding. We bring together members of minority communities from across the region to work on the implementation of international minority rights standards and domestic legislation. The focus countries

are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Kosovo.

In 2003 MRG conducted a regional advocacy and rights training seminar and a training of trainers event. Seven in-country training seminars were organized by partners, including a regional event on gender and

Right: Muslim refugee girl in Croatia.
Mark Hakansson/Panos Pictures

minority issues. The seminars, which had structured follow-up activities, aimed to increase awareness of minority rights standards domestically, and to boost public participation and advocacy by minority representatives. Three partner organizations from Serbia and Montenegro and one from Bulgaria prepared shadow reports on the implementation of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on National Minorities.

Following the publication of our report *Minorities in Croatia* in September, MRG was asked by the European Commission to comment on which steps the government should take to ensure minority protection, within the context of the European Union (EU) accession process. At a meeting on 'Emerging Frameworks of Power-Sharing in South-East Europe', co-organized by MRG and the Association for Democratic Initiatives in Macedonia, agreement was reached to establish a human rights centre within the University of South-East Europe at Tetovo, a university which has now been recognized as a public institution with funding from state budgets.



Right: Serb women are escorted to a refugee centre in Mitrovica, Kosovo.
A.Ilic/Exile Images



“An innovatory and ambitious project... Numerous examples show how local partners have used the knowledge, skills and support acquired to bring about change... The project is likely to be an important contributor to providing minority rights and inter-community cooperation to enable sustainable conflict prevention and resolution in the region”

Independent evaluation of MRG's work in South-East Europe commissioned by DFID

International networking for change



Above: Bangladeshi garment workers protesting over working conditions and police repression in Narayanganj. Fernando Molerres/Panos Pictures

MRG's work to promote cooperation between communities often begins by establishing dialogue between minorities and governments, or between minority representatives on a regional level.

In Asia MRG organizes roundtable events which bring indigenous and tribal peoples' representatives together with policy-makers, academics, lawyers and the media. Over 155 million of the world's estimated 205 million indigenous people live in Asia, where they are at the bottom of social indicators in almost every country, placing them among the poorest groups. In September, MRG held a roundtable meeting in Sarawak, Malaysia on the key issues of globalization and

“When I came back from the training, the peace talks in Sudan were going on. I gave my intervention to the governor of Nuba mountains, so that he could distribute it to the others ... and some of my issues were discussed in the peace talks”

MRG training participant from the Delibaya Nuba Women Development Organization, Sudan

security. The outcome of an earlier meeting in India was the formation of Forum 21, a new network of tribal peoples. This network successfully lobbied the Indian government to withdraw proposed amendments to the Indian Constitution which would have adversely affected the rights of scheduled tribes. It also lobbied the government to set up the National Commission on Tribal Issues in 2002.

Pastoralist communities in the Horn and Eastern Africa are among the most neglected. Scarcity of natural resources and the lack of consultation with Pastoralists on decisions that affect them remain the main causes of violent inter-communal and cross-border conflicts. MRG works with Pastoralists to protect their

rights and improve their participation in decision-making. Pastoralist parliamentary groups have been established by our partner organizations in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, and agreement was reached last year to establish one in Tanzania. MPs now regularly attend MRG roundtables and training events. The formation of networks of Pastoralist parliamentarians across the region has enabled MPs from different countries to learn from each other's experiences, and to begin to work together. Specific outcomes include a chapter on Pastoralists in Ethiopia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan and successful submissions to the Kenyan Constitutional Review Commission.

As our work with Asian indigenous and tribal peoples and Pastoralists in Africa shows, MRG believes that the creation of strategic networks, backed by appropriate training and support activities, can lead to improved cooperation between communities and positive change for people on the ground.



Above: MRG training event in Geneva.

“We felt empowered. Once we had said these things at the UN, it was easier to say them in India. We spoke at the [UN] to ask for Tamils who were in pre-trial detention to either be tried or released. Finally, the Justice Sadashiva Committee was set up to review their situation. Ninety per cent were released”

Participant from the South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring at an MRG training programme in Geneva

Financial report 2003

These summarised financial statements contain information from both the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 December 2003, but are not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 17 April 2004, and subsequently submitted to the Charity Commission and to Companies House. They received an unqualified audit report and copies may be obtained from MRG's London office.

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2003

	2003 £	2002 £
Tangible fixed assets	20,328	11,057
Investments	138,292	113,868
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	220,844	195,822
Stocks	12,139	21,725
Debtors	342,523	386,268
	575,506	603,815
Creditors: amounts due within 1 year	(97,337)	(105,858)
Net assets/liabilities	636,789	622,882
Reserves		
Unrestricted funds		
General funds	293,120	291,451
Designated funds	8,819	8,819
Restricted funds	334,850	322,612
	636,789	622,882

Income/expenditure growth



Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 December 2003

	Restricted funds £	Unrestricted funds £	2003 Total funds £	2002 Total funds £
Incoming resources				
Donations, legacies and similar incoming resources	–	543,277	543,277	500,422
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects</i>				
Projects	1,293,102	–	1,293,102	1,068,853
Publications	–	23,696	23,696	27,122
Consultancy	–	600	600	2,968
Cost recovery	–	644	644	2,968
<i>Activities to generate funds</i>				
Copyrights and literary fees	–	1,312	1,312	886
Investment income	–	8,401	8,401	10,919
	1,293,102	577,930	1,871,032	1,611,170
Resources expended				
<i>Costs of generating funds</i>				
Fundraising	–	80,324	80,324	72,519
<i>Charitable expenditure</i>				
Projects	1,298,873	146,658	1,445,531	1,394,414
Advocacy	–	106,575	106,575	104,368
Publications	–	135,754	135,754	142,815
Support costs	–	90,018	90,018	64,393
Management and administration	–	23,347	23,347	26,312
Total resources expended	1,298,873	582,676	1,881,549	1,804,821
Net outgoing resources before gains and transfers	(5,771)	(4,746)	(10,517)	(193,651)
Unrealised investment gains	–	24,424	24,424	(20,681)
Transfers between funds	18,009	(18,009)	–	–
Net movement in funds	12,238	1,669	13,907	(214,332)
Funds at the start of the year	322,612	300,270	622,882	837,214
Funds at the end of the year	334,850	301,939	636,789	622,882

MRG's donors in 2003

Council and staff

Council members*

Chaloka Beyani
Radhika
Coomaraswamy
Maja Daruwala (Chair)
Paul Divakar
Kristina Hedlund Thulin
Miriam Hooker
Wim Jacobs
(Treasurer)
Asma Jahangir
Chibli Mallat
Edward Mortimer
Klara Orgovanova
John Packer
Martin Pick

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Steven Burkeman
Lekha Klouda
Kate Phillips
Philip Rudge
Patrick Thornberry

MRG staff*

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Fiona Godfrey
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Marcia Hansen
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Tadesse Tafesse
Shelina Thawer
Claire Thomas
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Regional officers*

Hungary
Anna-Maria Bíró
Snježana Bokulić
Monika Raffael
Philippines
Minnie Degawan
Uganda
Juliet Muwanga

Volunteers and interns 1 January – 31 December 2003

Fatima Geele
Said Shehata
Nirmal Meettook
Ilkem Altinas
Caroline Waterman
Pusa Nastase
Gundula Muller
Jennifer Pongen
Miranda Sikkens

Staff leaving in 2003

Frances Carlisle
Francisca Kellet
Christophe Morvan
Catherine Woollard
Mukta Lama Tamang
(Nepal)

* As at 31 March 2004

A & B Sainsbury Fund
ACT Netherlands
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Allen Lane Foundation
Bryan Guinness Trust
C.S. Mott Foundation
CAFOD
Christian Aid
Community Fund
Cordaid
Council of Europe
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Danida
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European Commission
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Lee Foundation
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
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Oxfam Central America
Philanthropic Trust
Rowan Charitable Trust
Royal Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs
SCIAF
SIDA
Sigrid Rausing Trust
Staples Trust
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TBH Brunner Charitable Trust
The Bromley Trust
Trócaire
UK Department for International Development
UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office
United Nations Development Programme

Right: Farmer harvesting crops in an Uighur settlement in China.
Rhodri Jones/Panos Pictures

Getting our message across



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, information and opinion on minority and indigenous rights issues worldwide, and new perspectives on international issues and their impact on minorities and indigenous peoples. Last year, media coverage of our work – including interviews with partners and staff – appeared in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. We reached international audiences via global media, including the BBC, CNN and *The Economist*. Our concerns have been reported in national newspapers, including *The Guardian* and *The Independent*.

MRG publishes reports, training manuals, workshop reports, macro and micro studies and issues papers. These are available on subscription and through our library scheme. All new MRG publications can be accessed online, enabling us to communicate with a large and diverse international audience. We also publish a monthly e-bulletin – an electronic newsletter which keeps its subscribers up-to-date with the latest news, developments and opinion in the field of minority and indigenous rights.

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 or contact our London office.

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Quechua Indian boy, Ecuador.
Jeremy Horner/Panos Pictures

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