

**Annual
review
2006**

**A voice
for the
voiceless**

**minority
rights
group
international**



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Front cover: Sudanese refugee, close to the border in Chad, having fled the violence in Darfur. Espen Rasmussen/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 eight 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.

Director's report

A voice for the voiceless

Democracy, first and foremost, means giving people control over the decisions that affect their lives. But in societies all over the world, democratic and undemocratic, developed and developing, it is the voices of only some of the people that get heard. In many countries, disadvantaged ethnic and religious minorities and indigenous peoples are effectively voiceless.

Participating in public life – whether that is through standing for election, voting, or getting a fair chance to work in government – is a human right protected under international law. Yet for minorities it is one of the most widely misunderstood and abused. Under-represented in parliaments and government, frequently almost invisible in the civil service or judiciary, minorities are typically excluded from decision-making. This is bad for democracy, bad for development and bad for stability.

It has long been accepted by international development agencies that sustainable solutions to poverty will only be successful if poor people are involved in their planning and implementation. Yet the Millennium Development Goals, the set of international targets for tackling poverty and deprivation agreed by the world's nations in 2000, make no mention of minorities and indigenous peoples, in many countries the poorest of the poor. Unless minorities can participate in development policies and projects, goals such as universal primary education and halving the number of those living in absolute poverty will remain not just difficult but impossible to attain.

But excluding minorities from political life or the benefits of development has further dangerous consequences. It means that where grievances have

arisen between communities there is little political or civil space for their resolution. Members of minorities who have suffered repression – often violent repression – are not presented with any alternative to conflict.

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) believes that democratic, prosperous and stable societies depend on ensuring that minorities are able to feel that they have a real stake in the society in which they live. Promoting the participation of minorities therefore underpins all our work. Whether it be pushing for better pastoralist representation in parliaments in East Africa, supporting Iraq's endangered communities to publicize their plight, or asserting the rights of Europe's largest and poorest minority, the Roma, we are committed to working with our minority and indigenous partners to win a voice for the voiceless.

Mark Lattimer
Director



**MRG's ground-breaking report
*Electoral Systems and the Protection
and Participation of Minorities* was
"much needed"**

**UN Electoral
Assistance Division,
October 2006**



The political participation of minorities is key to the full realization of their rights. If minorities are marginalized politically, they find it harder to press their claims for equal treatment in other spheres of life. If no-one is speaking up for minority communities in the corridors of power, they are more likely to find themselves sidelined with regard to health, education and legal provision.

MRG is providing legal advice on a case at the European Court of Human Rights, which is challenging Turkish election law. Under this law, a political party must obtain 10 per cent of the national vote in parliamentary elections in order to win seats in the National Assembly – a rule which, in particular, disadvantages political parties from the large Kurdish minority. In the first round of legal proceedings, the court ruled against the challenge – but this judgment is being appealed to the Grand Chamber.

The relationship between minority representation and political power is complex. In 2006, MRG cast more light on it by commissioning a piece of research from an acknowledged expert in the field, US-based academic, Andrew Reynolds. His ground-breaking report, *Electoral Systems and the Protection*

and Participation of Minorities, demonstrates that, although no one system guarantees minority representation, the *exclusion* of minorities can result in conflict. For example, in Iraq, the electoral system used in the first 2005 poll led to a serious under-representation of the Sunni minority. Although this was rectified in the December 2005 election, the damage had been done. MRG's report was well received by Electoral Assistance Division at the UN's Department of Political Affairs, where staff indicated they intended to circulate it to their personnel around the world.

Left: Registering to vote in the presidential election, Afghanistan.

Lana Slezic/
Panos Pictures

Far left: Kurdish women, watched by a squadron of riot police, participate in a protest in Istanbul, Turkey.

Ahikam Seri/
Panos Pictures

Electoral systems



Constitution building

A constitution provides a blueprint for a nation. If a country's constitution entrenches discrimination against minorities, then it is much harder for groups to claim their rights in a court of law. There is also a powerful psychological impact. If some groups are deemed to be second-class citizens in the constitution, this may lay them open to a range of unfair and harmful treatment by other citizens.

Some constitutions do not comply with current international standards on minority rights, anti-discrimination and equality for historical reasons. But problems also beset new constitutions drafted in the wake of bitter conflicts. MRG is concerned that poorly conceived constitutions can entrench segregation and store up insecurity for the future. Hence, MRG is supporting the case of a leader of the Bosnian Jewish community, who has lodged an application to the European Court of Human Rights contesting the constitutional arrangements in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which prohibit members of minority communities, apart from three designated groups (Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats), from contesting the presidency and positions in the Upper House.

Similarly, in Iraq, MRG has been concerned that, as the violence continues, the country should have a constitution that protects the interests of the country's religious and ethnic

minorities. While the Constitution that was passed in 2006 was in many ways progressive, MRG and its partners believe that it could be improved. In July 2006, MRG co-hosted a meeting with the Iraq Minorities Council which made recommendations on possible amendments to the Constitution. For example, the delegates agreed that the new Iraqi Constitution should stipulate that international treaties to which Iraq is party – especially those concerning human rights law – are binding in Iraq, and national legislation and policies should comply with these policies. This was also one of the key recommendations in MRG's report, *Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq's Minority Communities Since 2003*, published in early 2007. The report's main finding – that some of Iraq's minorities are on the verge of being wiped out, and its recommendations to prevent this – were widely disseminated through the international and regional media.

In Nepal, King Gyanendra's relinquishing of authority, and the peace talks between the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists, provided an opening for minority and indigenous groups to contribute to the political process. MRG supported its partners, the Indigenous Nationalities Peace Commission (INPC) to organize a conference in 2006. Over 700 representatives from indigenous and minority communities, civil society and political parties, as well as

Left: Nepalese pro-democracy protesters cheer at a rally the morning after King Gyanendra announced that he was giving up power and restoring the parliament.
Thomas van Houtryve/
Panos Pictures

Below: Dalit women carry a red cross at the 2006 Vanangana gender conference in Chitrakoot, India.
Ami Vitale/
Panos Pictures

journalists and lawyers, attended. The draft declaration which resulted made recommendations on the greater inclusion of indigenous nationalities, Dalits and Madhesis in the electoral process, and better representation of indigenous peoples and minorities in the drafting of a new constitution. The conference was widely covered in the national press. Subsequently, Nepal partners successfully lobbied for the inclusion of indigenous representatives in the interim constitution drafting committee. This work is ongoing and there is a long way to go. Violence in the south of the country, where Madhesis feel left out of the peace process, reinforced another of MRG's themes – that exclusion of minorities from political processes can lead to instability and conflict.



Thank you for providing support to my participation at the United Nations. Coming in contact with [other] indigenous peoples and increasing my knowledge on the functioning of the UN was a big learning opportunity for me and will help me work in a much more effective way. Indigenous activist in India sponsored by MRG to attend the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, August 2006



Minority communities are often denied access to the skills they need to transform their lives. MRG believes that education and training are tools that can substantially increase minority and indigenous peoples' access to economic and social justice.

Minority communities seldom have the chance to share experiences and be inspired by the examples of others. Such sharing gives a sense of togetherness and determination in the struggle for recognition of minority rights. MRG encourages cooperation between minority communities facing similar persecution and discrimination.

MRG works to strengthen the capacity of minority communities to advocate for their rights using the available regional and international mechanisms. In May 2006, MRG held a training session in Banjul, The Gambia, on African regional human rights standards. The training was centred around the 39th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the 25 participants were also able to attend an NGO forum and part of the Session.

MRG was also involved in a five-day course in November 2006 to train minority groups in Georgia, including those engaged in issues of the youth and women, on improving their relations with international bodies monitoring human rights. The participants, who represented



almost all of the ethnic groups in Georgia, will use their skills to monitor the ethnic minority rights situation in their respective regions and groups, and to identify and report on violations of rights and gender discrimination.

MRG also published an advocacy briefing, *Substantive Equality, Positive Action and Roma Rights in the European Union*.

The Endorois, semi-nomadic pastoralists who have lived for centuries in the Lake Bogoria region in Kenya, were forced by the Kenyan government in the 1970s to vacate their traditional lands to create a game reserve. This violated the community's property rights and severed spiritual, cultural and economic ties to the land. With its partner in Kenya, the Centre for

Minority Rights Development (CEMIRIDE), MRG succeeded in obtaining provisional measures for the Endorois from the ACHPR in 2004. After pressure from the Endorois' elected council, the Kenyan government complied with these in 2006. Mining activities polluting the water where the community now lives were stopped. MRG's work in Kenya is about the multiplying effect of capacity-building – the Endorois community has been empowered and CEMIRIDE, the first Kenyan organization to take a case before the ACHPR, has since taken two new cases before the Commission without MRG's involvement.

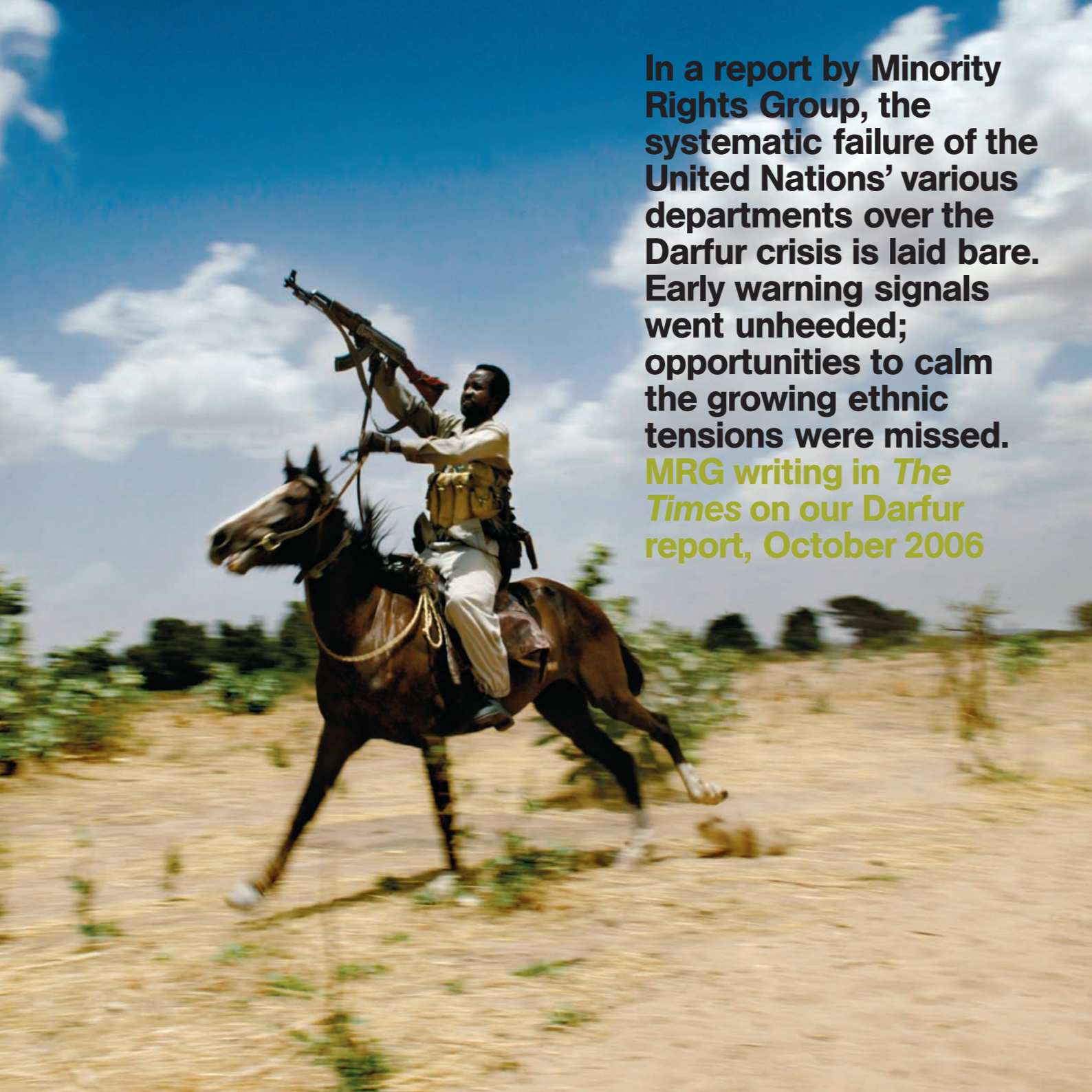
There are around 20 million pastoralists in Africa. They are among the most marginalized communities and pastoralist women face double discrimination: although they play a vital role in their societies, tradition dictates that they take second place to men. However, if pastoralist women can participate in decisions at constituency and district level, they can make a direct contribution.

In October 2006, MRG supported the first-ever meeting of pastoralist women from all over Kenya, bringing together women who would normally never meet. They discussed ways of improving their participation in political and economic decision-making. They described the experience as 'empowering'.

Left: Indigenous Birhor man inside his house in Jharkhand State, India. Robert Wallis/Panos Pictures

Above: Karamojong pastoralist girl in Karamoja, Uganda. Crispin Hughes/Panos Pictures

Empowering minorities



In a report by Minority Rights Group, the systematic failure of the United Nations' various departments over the Darfur crisis is laid bare. Early warning signals went unheeded; opportunities to calm the growing ethnic tensions were missed. MRG writing in *The Times* on our Darfur report, October 2006

Preventing conflict through inclusion

Left: A janjaweed militiaman close to the Chadian border. *Espen Rasmussen/Panos Pictures*

The war in Iraq and continuing sectarian violence dominated the headlines in 2006. But around 20 major armed conflicts and numerous low-intensity disputes raged in other parts of the world. In three-quarters of the armed conflicts around the world in 2006, ethnic or religious groups were the principal targets. In 2007, minorities have more cause than most to feel unsafe.

Discrimination and persecution often lead to conflict. Conflict involving minorities can also lead to mass violations of minority rights. MRG firmly believes that the recognition and inclusion of minority rights are key tools in the prevention of conflict, reasoning that if minorities are able to live without harassment and have a say in their future, then they will feel a sense of ownership and belonging in a state.

India is a land of myriad ethnic, religious, caste and linguistic minorities. Integration of these diverse communities has been a central preoccupation of Indian governments since 1947. MRG published a study in late 2006 on India's policy and practice towards minorities, focusing on three violent ethnic conflicts: the Sikh struggle for an independent state in the Punjab region; the Kashmiri Muslim demand for the separation of the states of Jammu and Kashmir from India; and the Naga claims to an independent state of Nagalim in the north-east. The report compared these conflicts with the

relatively successful case of ethnic integration in Tamil Nadu. MRG's recommendations to the Indian government and the international community included: compensation of victims of discrimination; promotion of the right to practise culture, religion and language; and, most importantly, inclusion of minorities in the political system.

In September 2006 MRG published a report entitled *Minority Rights, Early Warning and Conflict Prevention: Lessons from Darfur*. The report argues that neglect of the plight of minority groups in Darfur was fundamental to the rise in violence; yet the international community continually ignored the minority and human rights dimension to the conflict. It argues that, despite the crisis in Darfur and the disaster of Rwanda, the UN still does not have a coordinated early warning system to predict and combat escalating ethnic strife. MRG recommended that UN member states develop rapid-response capability, so that teams with expertise on conflict resolution and minority rights issues can be deployed early on to attempt to head off such catastrophes.

MRG embarked on its conflict prevention programme in Nicaragua by organizing a conference at Bluefields in the Southern Atlantic Autonomous Region with its local partner, the Centre for Human, Civil and Autonomous Rights. The region is home to several

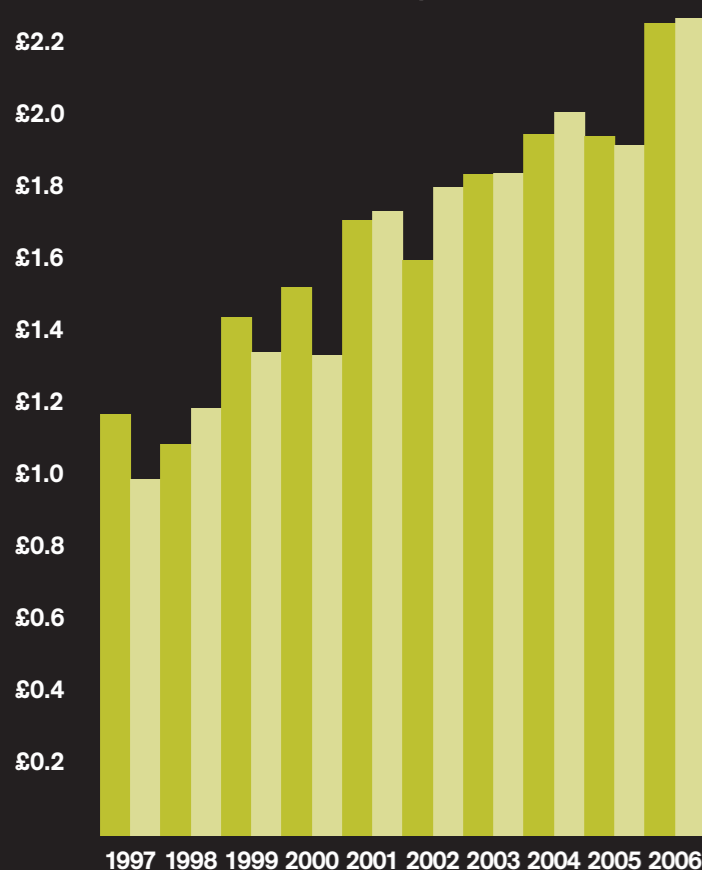
religious and ethnic groups, including Creoles, Garífuna, Miskitu, Rama and Mayagna. The conference focused on conflict prevention and autonomy, and was attended by community leaders, members of autonomy organizations and Nicaragua's largest indigenous social movement, as well as representatives of the Nicaraguan government. Delegates agreed that the radical step of giving minorities their own decentralized governing bodies and control over local natural resources directly contributed to the ceasefire in the war between the government and the MISURASATA guerrilla movement in the 1980s, and sought to apply those lessons to conflict prevention in Nicaragua today.

As part of MRG's commitment to convince policy-makers to incorporate a minority rights approach into conflict prevention policies, we organized a conference in New York in late 2006 to share the initial findings from the six case studies in MRG's minority rights and conflict prevention programme (China, India, Iraq, Kosovo, Nicaragua, Sudan). The conference was attended by representatives of governments, the UN, NGOs and academics working on conflict prevention, as well as by MRG's in-country partners and researchers involved in the six case studies. The conclusions of this conference will be incorporated into a major conflict prevention report to be published by MRG in 2007.

Financial report 2006

These summarized financial statements contain information from both the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 December 2006, but are not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 28 April 2007, and subsequently submitted to the Charity Commission and to Companies House. They received an unqualified audit report. Copies may be obtained from MRG's London office.

Income/expenditure growth
in millions of GBP ■ Income ■ Expenditure



Minority Rights Group (limited by guarantee)
Balance sheet

31 December 2006	2006 £	2005 £
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets	40,758	40,980
Investments	218,129	182,574
	258,887	223,554
Current assets		
Stock	16,379	14,683
Debtors	468,911	428,704
Cash at bank and in hand	42,750	146,593
	528,040	589,980
Creditors: amounts due within 1 year	135,645	183,581
Net current assets	392,395	406,399
Net assets	651,282	629,953
Funds		
Restricted funds	265,806	339,172
Unrestricted funds		
Designated fund	50,000	-
General fund	335,476	290,781
Total funds	651,282	629,953

Minority Rights Group

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 December 2006

	Restricted £	Designated £	General £	2006 Total £	2005 Total £
Incoming resources					
<i>Incoming resources from generated funds</i>					
Voluntary income	-	-	560,770	560,770	459,291
Activities for generating funds	-	-	-	-	457
Investment income	-	-	4,136	4,136	4,773
<i>Incoming resources from charitable activities</i>					
Advocacy & Projects	1,609,507	-	-	1,609,507	1,384,415
Publications	-	-	7,501	7,501	19,780
Consultancy	11,899	-	2,056	13,955	6,654
Cost Recovery	-	-	57,341	57,341	44,329
Total incoming resources	1,621,406	-	631,804	2,253,210	1,919,699
Resources expended					
<i>Costs of generating funds:</i>					
Costs of generating voluntary income	-	-	94,326	94,326	98,496
<i>Charitable activities</i>					
Advocacy & Projects	1,705,407	-	321,142	2,026,549	1,701,328
Advocacy Support	-	-	22,366	22,366	29,706
Project support	-	-	40,037	40,037	16,927
Publications	-	-	35,579	35,579	35,589
Consultancy	11,246	-	-	11,246	5,884
<i>Governance costs</i>					
Governance costs	-	-	37,333	37,333	19,244
Total resources expended	1,716,653	-	550,783	2,267,436	1,907,174
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	(95,247)	-	81,021	(14,226)	12,525
Transfers between funds	21,881	50,000	(71,881)	-	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other gains and losses	(73,366)	50,000	9,140	(14,226)	12,525
Unrealised investment gains	-	-	35,555	35,555	23,717
Net movement in funds	(73,366)	50,000	44,695	21,329	36,242
Funds at the start of the year	339,172	-	290,781	629,953	593,711
Funds at the end of the year	265,806	50,000	335,476	651,282	629,953

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in note 13 to the financial statements.

Staff list

Council Members at 31 March 2007

Chair
Edward Mortimer
Treasurer
Wim Jacobs
Dr Chaloka Beyani
Professor
Kevin Boyle
Steve Burkeman
Miriam Hooker
Mukesh Kapila
Lekha Klouda
Reem Mazzawi
John Packer
Lydia Ramahobo
Stella Tamang

Committee Members at 31 March 2007

Ade Adeniji
Amna Karim
Annemarie Mijnsbergen
Philip Rudge

Regional Office Staff at 31 March 2007

Snježana Bokulić
Paul Mulindwa
Juliet Nakato
Mwanga

Staff at 31 March 2007

Yinka Adeyeye
Yetunde Apooyin
Richie Andrew
Clive Baldwin
Paile Chabane
Chris Chapman
Neil Clarke
Olu Coker
Emma Eastwood
Zoe Gray
Nurcan Kaya
Aleksandra Kecojevic
Samia Khan
Galina Kostadinova
Mark Lattimer
Gloria Mark
Ishbel Matheson
Farah Mihlar
Cynthia Morel
Katrina Naomi
Charles Osei
Anna Oryema
Marusca Perazzi
Kathryn Ramsay
Tadesse Tafesse
Preti Taneja
Shelina Thawer
Claire Thomas

Staff leaving in 2006/7

Henrik Boejen
Fiona Godfrey
Corinne Lennox
Andrew Mesfin
Ilana Rapaport
Ester Perez

Volunteers and interns 1 Jan–31 Dec 2006

Aysegul Alkis
Kariapper Ayesha
Kinga Brej
Carla Clarke
Rebecca Dove
Justine Greenwood
Ingrid Holmborg
Shane Kelleher
Olga Kosakhivska
Barbara Kussbach
Manal Massalha
Jacqueline Msipha
Krisnah Poinasamy
Hedi Sayeed
Renata Schenk
Erin Thomas
Kelley Thompson
Anna Vidiaev
Maia Yatsiv
Inna Yeranossyan

Donor list

MRG's donors in 2006

CAFOD
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Christian Aid
Cordaid
DanChurchAid
Danida (Danish International Development Assistance)
Irish Aid
European Commission
Ford Foundation
ICCO
Lee Foundation
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
Netherlands Foreign Ministry
Open Society Institute (OSI)
Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
Sigrid Rausing Trust

Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
TBH Brunner Charitable Trust
The Eva Reckitt Trust
The Pilkington General Charitable Trust
Trocaire
UK Department for International Development
UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office
United States Institute of Peace

MRG would particularly like to thank all those individuals who contributed generously to MRG's work during 2006.

Getting our message across

MRG provides research, information and comment on minority and indigenous issues worldwide, and new perspectives on international events and their impact on minorities. Last year, media coverage

of our work appeared in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, and we reached global audiences through the BBC, CNN and Radio France International, among other media.

MRG publishes the *State of the World's Minorities*, a major new annual publication detailing key developments over the last year affecting the human rights and security of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples. The *State of the World's Minorities 2007* highlights in particular the situation of peoples under threat, and has rapidly established itself as an essential reference work for those working in development, human rights or foreign affairs.

MRG publishes further research reports, training manuals, studies and advocacy briefings. These are available on subscription or through our library scheme. All new MRG publications can be accessed online. Our website had three-quarters of a million visits in 2006 and 153,888 copies of our publications were downloaded. Our bi-monthly e-bulletin keeps 4,500 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 or how to work with us, please visit our website at: www.minorityrights.org or contact our head office in London.

Left: MRG's latest report on Iraq, *Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq's minority communities since 2003*.
Richie Andrew/MRG

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minority
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A photograph showing a man in a brown jacket and grey trousers walking through a muddy stream in a destroyed area. The background features the skeletal remains of buildings and mountains under a cloudy sky.

A man walks through the remains
of the Roma Mahalla (quarter)
in Mitrovec/e, Kosovo.
Andrew Testa/Panos Pictures