

A woman wearing a light-colored headscarf and a brown coat is looking upwards and to the right. She is holding a book with Arabic text on the cover. The background is a stone wall and a doorway.

Minority
Rights
Group

Minority Rights Group Strategy 2025-2028

Summary Version

Achieving Protection, Equity and Environmental Justice for Minorities and Indigenous Peoples

Our vision

We believe in the potential of *all* - not only those deemed worthy, talented, meritorious, intelligent, creative and valuable. We bear witness to how social structures and deep-rooted anthropocentrism has brought our planet to the brink of destruction. We marvel at unwritten human histories, celebrate myriads of cultures, languages, religions and lifestyles, mindful of how these values have often been deemed less worthy, conscious of the extent to which oppression has subjugated and dominated these communities and extracted their resources.

We listen to communities, collect evidence of human rights violations, and testify to the reach of entrenched structural discrimination and its power to fragment societies. We strive to overcome barriers and believe that people can replace the greed driving the theft and transfer of collective wealth to the hands of the few, with empathy borne from beliefs in the equal worth of every individual and community.

We work with minorities and indigenous peoples towards a world where the realization of human potential is not based on an accident of birth but achieved through building

egalitarian societies informed by inclusive education and collective empathy, mindful of the need to overcome the deep anthropocentricity of humanity's relatively short tenure on the planet. We aim to achieve change by deepening our three objectives, namely, to: combat persecution, challenge marginalization and realize climate justice.



Cover:
Dagmara Sulkiewicz of the Muslim Religious Union in Poland, engrossed in a walking tour on the Jewish history of the 7th district of Budapest. The tour was part of the second central training of MRG's MARIO programme, subgranting to CSOs across Central and Eastern Europe. Credit: *Emília Lola Eördögh*.



Back cover:
A Malay Muslim trader ties Sato beans into a bundle at a market in Muang Yala district in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces, near the border with Malaysia. This photo was taken as part of MRG's second yearly three-day photography training to inspire young people in the region to use the power of the camera as a form of non-violent resistance. Credit: *Shabirin U-soh*.

Who we are

Established in 1969, Minority Rights Group (MRG) is a non-governmental organization working through partnerships with nearly 300 minority and indigenous-led local community groups to advocate and secure their human rights worldwide while promoting cooperation and understanding between communities.

Our work focuses on disadvantaged religious, ethnic, national, linguistic and racialized communities and indigenous peoples, usually fewer in number than the rest of the population in the state or administrative area in which they live. We undertake intersectional interventions to challenge multiple discrimination and ensure a life of dignity and equal opportunity. MRG has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee under English law.

Alejandro Perez, representative of San Matias Chilazoa in the fight for water rights, shows a bull he made from the mud around a water hole. San Matias Chilazoa, Oaxaca, Mexico.
Credit: Noel Rojo.



Intractable problems, proven solutions

This strategy emerged from consultations with partners and other supporters to respond to sharply increasing challenges facing minority and indigenous communities: widening and deepening populist authoritarian trends and closing civil space, set against multiple crises (including a global pandemic, dysfunctional international governance and conflict) that severely affect those already marginalized and persecuted, who have limited margins to absorb economic shocks, and bear the brunt of scapegoat politics constructed to divert attention from the failures of governments.

The immediate impacts of climate change felt most by those who contributed least to its root causes, demands urgent attention when energies are already stretched by the scale of inequality, exclusion and persecution, and in countering strategies by the powerful to limit the

dialogue, challenge and protest that are essential for sustainable, peaceful and inclusive societies.

MRG strives for positive change against this tide with the central objective of our four-year strategy being:

To empower communities affected by discrimination, poverty and/or oppression to claim their rights to equality, non-discrimination and a life of dignity in peace, and support them to achieve progress towards improved fulfilment of human rights for their members and all groups within them.

MRG will work with ethnic, religious, linguistic and racialized minorities and indigenous peoples to support those experiencing persecution, and who face marginalization and exclusion augmented by existential climate-related threats. We especially support those communities confronting

societal threats stemming from hate speech and persistent discrimination when accessing economic and social rights, while documenting crimes against humanity and seeking accountability from perpetrators. We work proactively within administrative, legislative and judicial processes that can garner communities their human rights. While our programmes are co-designed with minority and indigenous communities as grassroots interventions, we also work actively with multilateral organizations to strengthen their reach and impact in upholding human rights and promoting sustainable development.

Persecution

A Haratine woman in Mauritania draws water from a well. *Courtesy of Mamoudou Lamine Kane.*

Millions of members of religious communities live in fear of persecution across the globe. Nationalist narratives augment religious persecution to sow division accompanied by repression and sectarianism.

Minorities face inequality, exclusion, harassment, detention, physical attacks, and in the worst cases, mass killings, forced displacement and ethnic cleansing. Protest results in punishment as civic space restrictions suppress inconvenient truths, compromise accountability and put justice beyond reach. Inter-community religious tensions have risen as short-term political advantage is leveraged against the risk of future conflict. Minority and indigenous women face normalized gender-based acts of state and non-state violence. Populism is often overtly masculine, drawing on flawed narratives of the protection of



majoritarian societal values to protect patriarchies that are portrayed as under threat, fostering misogyny, targeting minority and indigenous women and creating febrile environments for women human rights defenders and journalists.

In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia, Syria,

Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkiye, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, we: support activists' resilience in withstanding attack; gather evidence of abuses and present it in forums offering opportunities for holding perpetrators to account; support partners to track, understand and counter misinformation and hate speech in the belief that documenting human rights violations is critical to challenging abuse and holding perpetrators to account.

Marginalization

Excluded from policy making, minority and indigenous communities are rendered invisible. The *Leave No One Behind* promise of the SDGs has not been realized, with data needed to assess progress often unavailable. Globally, women bear the brunt of poverty, women's health services receive less funding, and girls are more likely to be out of school. MRG partners with women-led minority and indigenous organizations to ensure a clear focus on gender transformative programming.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Croatia, Czech Republic, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Nepal, North Macedonia, Rwanda, Pakistan, Serbia, Slovakia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe, we document

discrimination; support claims for equal rights to health, education, decent work and land; lobby for equitable budget allocation; collect and publish data evidencing exclusion, get organized locally and

participate in decision-making processes so that minority and indigenous needs are addressed.

Alevi musicians Ali Avcı and Abuzer Gözaydın visiting the Zülfettin Tomb in Oluklu village after the 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake. 28 March 2023.
Credit: Tolga Sezgin/NarPhotos.



Climate justice

With irreversible tipping points already passed or fast approaching, and 'fortress conservation' models still proposed as solutions, inclusion of minority and indigenous perspectives often remains tokenistic in national and international debates. Minority and indigenous communities who contributed least to carbon emissions are most heavily affected by its impact. This injustice is compounded since many communities' existence is interwoven into lands and environs they inhabit.

Nature's commodification has displaced communities, destroyed their lands and livelihoods and left them impoverished. Their ability to withstand shocks is diminished while their input is dismissed from policymaking. We support work resisting land encroachment, share lessons about sustainable

environmental stewardship, influence climate mitigation, hold power to account and build cohesive movements in countries such as DRC, India, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, Russia, Tanzania and Uganda.

A man from the Batwa community walks on felled trees in deforested land on the edge of Kahuzi Biega National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Cross-cutting themes

MRG's continued focus on the three areas above deepen commitments made in 2021-2024 to harnessing change for the better for minority and indigenous peoples globally. Our partner consultations underlined this identification of the priorities, but emphasized four cross-cutting foci that they advocated should drive our work.

Data, Information and Disinformation

The emergence of the virtual world through technological advances has changed many aspects of human life. Policy making is data-driven but minority and indigenous communities' relative absence from this space means community issues

are neglected. Yet negative information and stereotyping directs significant harm towards minorities, increasing their persecution. Even organized disciplines: science, economics, history, law, continue to disrespect narratives that challenge dominant anthropocentric westernized extraction-based value systems with a disdain towards indigenous knowledge. This cross-cutting focus will enable us to prioritize design of work around hate speech; ensuring data around minority and indigenous communities is responsibly collected, stored and used to diagnose and design bespoke solutions to challenges; and in investing in minority journalists' and academic networks that collect, analyze and present information beyond traditional colonially influenced knowledge domains.



Sunuwar participants at a public awareness rising gathering on Nepal's census organized by Community Empowerment and Social Justice Network (CEMSOJ) in September 2021, Hawa, Dolakha, Nepal, supported by a previous MRG programme in South Asia. *Credit: Bishal Rajbhandari/CEMSOJ.*

Humanitarian Emergency Response

Every indicator around the climate crisis points towards escalation of human catastrophe from human-induced disruptions to the biosphere. Political breakdown in states and widespread disinformation also makes minorities and indigenous peoples vulnerable to societal breakdown in addition. While help through humanitarian action is slow to mobilize, areas where minority and indigenous communities live are often deprioritized zones. This thematic focus will enable us to advocate for better response rates to minority and indigenous communities in a climate of growing danger, strife and uncertainty.

Young People

Minority and indigenous communities have the right to transmit and propagate their cultures, languages, religion, beliefs and ways of life to future generations. Exclusion of these from formal spaces alongside undue pressures to deny, acculturate, assimilate, conform to and adopt majority cultures as a safety mechanism contribute to the loss of human diversity. Our emphasis on this theme will enable sharper engagement with youth to ascertain their perspectives, respond to their challenges, including in access to health, education and employment; and to encourage and motivate those keen to develop advocacy for minority and indigenous rights and the survival and thriving of their cultures.

Intersectionality

An intersectional lens to programming has been a feature of MRG's work for the past two decades. Our gendered lens was enhanced in the last period by a deliberate focus on disability enabling us further reach into exclusion within communities while also building their relationships with disability rights advocates who previously struggled to access such communities. Our commitment to intersectionality will enable us to pay attention to additional grounds of disadvantage and exclusion in a bid to ensure that emerging systems focused on inclusion address an ever-widening range of factors that inhibit the equal enjoyment of rights for every member of a minority or indigenous community.

Profile and added value



Late afternoon talk of two Kyrgyz women in Murghab, Tajikistan. *Credit Anisa Sabiri.*

MRG has fifty-five years' experience on minority and indigenous rights with an international reputation for sound interventions, information and advice. We have established partnerships with over 300 minority, indigenous, inter-ethnic or inter-religious NGOs with a record of high-quality programmatic work, publications and global advocacy.

We work in 60 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and the Horn, Southern Africa, South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Eastern and Central Europe, and Latin America. This includes strategic

litigation to highlight discrimination and set positive legal precedents. MRG maintains the world's leading information resources on minorities and indigenous peoples, including the *World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples*, used by inter-governmental agencies, governments, journalists, academics, development practitioners, decision-makers, and the general public.

Right: A Bravan artisan from Baraawe, Somalia handcrafts a pair of sandals, showcasing his community's renowned tradition of leatherwork at Via Roma, Hamarwayne District, Mogadishu. *Credit: Mahamud Utaama.*



What you can do

Our work is only possible with the belief and support of people like you. Here are ways you can support:

Subscribe

Sign up to our free newsletter to receive regular updates about our work and news from our partners around the world.
minorityrights.org/newsletter

Read more

Gain detailed information on minority and indigenous communities for your work or activism by using our range of resources.
minorityrights.org/resources

Donate

Make an immediate difference with a donation at minorityrights.org/donate



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