Evaluation Report

Inclusive Peacebuilding In Thailand's Southern Border Provinces

Minority Rights Group

Executive Summary

Introduction

The **Inclusive Peacebuilding in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces** project was a multi-year initiative aimed at increasing the meaningful participation of marginalised communities in peace processes in Thailand's deep south. Implemented by Minority Rights Group International (MRG) in partnership with the Institute of Peace Studies (IPS) at Prince of Songkhla University and Kampung Taqwa Association (KTA), with funding provided by the European Union (EU), the project sought to reduce intercommunal tensions and foster inclusive dialogue. Activities included community-based peacebuilding initiatives, capacity building, dialogue sessions, and small grants to support grassroots efforts. A strong focus was placed on elevating the voices of underrepresented groups, ensuring their perspectives and priorities were integrated into broader peace and reconciliation efforts.

The evaluation applied a predominantly **qualitative approach**, using Outcome Harvesting and the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology to assess the project's effectiveness and impact. Outcome Harvesting involved identifying observable changes and tracing the project's contributions, while the MSC approach captured participants' experiences through stories of significant change, providing insight into individual-level impact. Data collection methods included key informant interviews (KIIs), and document reviews, with findings triangulated across multiple sources to ensure reliability. The evaluation was guided by the OECD DAC criteria — relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability —offering a structured framework for assessing achievements and lessons learned.

Key Findings

Relevance: The project demonstrated strong relevance by directly addressing the entrenched conflict dynamics and the needs of marginalised communities in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces (SBPs). It prioritised intercommunal dialogue, human rights education, and the inclusion of underrepresented groups such as women, persons with disabilities, and youth. Activities were tailored to reflect local realities, including mental health support for conflict-affected individuals and community-driven research on issues like land rights and emergency laws. The project's locally grounded, participatory approach ensured that interventions were responsive to community needs while fostering trust across religious and ethnic divides. By amplifying community voices in peace processes and supporting grassroots initiatives, the project effectively responded to the region's social, economic, and governance-related challenges.

Effectiveness: The project was effective in achieving its core objective of increasing the participation of marginalised communities in peace processes. It met or exceeded key targets related to training, community engagement, participatory research, and policy advocacy. Outcome Harvesting identified several significant outcomes, including increased community agency, enhanced rights awareness, greater visibility of persons with disabilities, strengthened civil society capacity, and improved engagement between civil society and policymakers. Participants reported increased confidence in advocating for their rights and engaging with authorities, while small grants supported community-led initiatives that contributed to tangible, local-level impact.

Efficiency: The project demonstrated a high level of efficiency, delivering activities largely as planned while adapting to contextual challenges. Strong, trust-based partnerships with local civil society organisations (CSOs), combined with clear financial management systems and responsive planning, supported effective implementation. The project leveraged existing community networks, reducing the need for new infrastructure and ensuring cost-efficient use of resources. Challenges, such as initial difficulties with financial reporting among smaller organisations, were addressed through tailored support and capacity-building. Despite external obstacles, including restrictive legal frameworks, the project maintained steady progress, ensuring timely delivery of key activities and optimal resource allocation.

Impact: The project contributed to strengthening intercommunal relations, enhancing community resilience, and empowering civil society actors to address structural injustices in Thailand's southern border provinces. While broader trends in violence remained cyclical, project activities created structured spaces for trust-building and engagement, contributing to more constructive intergroup interactions. Anecdotally, participants reported a shift from polarised narratives toward shared concerns, such as security and economic well-being, demonstrating the project's role in fostering practical cooperation. By fostering inclusive dialogue, supporting community-led initiatives, and building the capacity of local organisations, the project laid the groundwork for more sustainable, community-driven peacebuilding efforts.

Sustainability: The project demonstrates promising sustainability, with several factors supporting the continuation of its impacts beyond the implementation period. By investing in the capacity of local civil society and community-based organisations (CBOs) through training, mentorship, and small grants, the project strengthened their ability to independently sustain activities. Community-led initiatives, such as a disability working group and interfaith dialogue platforms, continue to operate and advocate for local needs. The project's emphasis on local ownership and the use of existing community networks and movements further enhance the likelihood of lasting impact.

Partnerships: The project fostered strong and collaborative partnerships, both between MRG and its local partners, and among local CSOs. MRG's flexible, supportive approach provided technical assistance and funding while ensuring decision-making remained locally driven. Partnerships with IPS and KTA facilitated effective community engagement and expanded the project's reach. Additionally, the project strengthened cooperation among local CSOs, supporting the formation of networks which continue to promote intercommunal dialogue and human rights advocacy. These partnerships were characterised by mutual trust, knowledge-sharing, and a shared commitment to inclusive, community-led peacebuilding.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Overall, the Inclusive Peacebuilding project was a highly successful, locally grounded initiative that highlights the transformative potential of grassroots activism in fostering long-term social cohesion and inclusive governance. Recommendations primarily focus on refining and scaling successful strategies rather than fundamentally altering them.

Strengthen support for locally embedded organisations – Funding established community-based and civil society organisations has proven cost-efficient, impactful and sustainable. Expanding the grant-making model with flexible, context-responsive funding will allow these organisations to adapt to evolving challenges while maintaining their grassroots focus.

Expand capacity-building opportunities for CSOs – Targeted training in financial management, grant compliance, procurement, and reporting will strengthen the financial oversight of CSOs, improving their ability to manage resources effectively and secure long-term funding. Mentorship and technical support should complement these efforts, particularly for smaller or emerging organisations.

Integrate local research into policy and advocacy: The project successfully supported community-led research, but ensuring that findings influence policy requires further action. Future initiatives should include training on evidence-based advocacy and strategic communication to help CSOs translate research into compelling policy briefs, media campaigns, and direct engagement with decision-makers.

Institutionalise inclusive dialogue mechanisms - The project successfully fostered interfaith and intercommunal dialogue. To sustain this progress, future initiatives should formalise these dialogue spaces through structured mechanisms such as community peace councils or advisory groups that include representatives from Buddhist and Muslim communities, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. These structures can provide an ongoing platform for trust-building, conflict resolution, and engagement with local authorities.

Leverage storytelling and community-led research – Providing local organisations with training in research methodologies, digital storytelling, and policy engagement will enable communities to document lived experiences, generate evidence for advocacy, and influence decision-makers. Further strengthening these capacities will enhance grassroots advocacy and amplify community voices in peacebuilding discussions.

Sustain and expand mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) – Integrating trauma-informed approaches by equipping facilitators with psychosocial skills, incorporating peer support mechanisms, and ensuring access to psychosocial services will sustain participation. Psychological supervision for CSO staff should also be prioritised, recognising the emotional strain on frontline workers supporting affected communities.

Table of Contents

1. Background

1.1 Project Background

The **Inclusive Peacebuilding in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces** project was a multi-year initiative designed to increase the meaningful participation of marginalised communities in peace processes in Thailand's deep south. The conflict in this region — primarily affecting Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and parts of Songkhla — has persisted for decades, driven by a complex interplay of historical, political, and socio-economic factors. The area, once part of the Patani Sultanate, was incorporated into modern-day Thailand in the early 20th century. This integration process generated tensions between the predominantly Malay-Muslim population and the central government, which historically promoted cultural and linguistic assimilation. These longstanding grievances have contributed to a separatist movement that has, in turn, been met with a militarised state response, perpetuating cycles of violence and distrust.

In response to these challenges, Minority Rights Group International (MRG) implemented the project in collaboration with two local partner organisations: the Institute of Peace Studies (IPS) at Prince of Songkhla University and Kampung Taqwa Association (KTA), with funding from the European Union (EU). The project aimed to reduce intercommunal tensions and distrust through dialogue and confidence-building activities while **promoting the participation of marginalised groups** — such as women with disabilities and youth — in decision-making processes. Key activities included dialogue sessions, and community-based peacebuilding initiatives designed to foster inclusive and participatory processes. The project also provided small grants to support grassroots peace initiatives, organised community forums, and applied participatory research methods to ensure that local voices informed activities and outcomes. By interweaving community engagement, policy advocacy, and public discourse, the project sought to build trust across diverse communities, strengthen the role of civil society, and contribute to the development of sustainable, inclusive peace processes in the region.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation provides an **independent assessment of the project,** examining its design, implementation and outcomes. The primary purpose is to assess the extent to which the project achieved its overarching goal of fostering inclusive and participatory peace processes by amplifying the voices of marginalised communities in the southern border provinces of Thailand. The evaluation also seeks to identify lessons learned and good practices that can inform future peacebuilding initiatives, particularly those operating in contexts characterised by historical grievances, intercommunal tensions, and complex socio-political dynamics. By analysing the project's achievements, challenges, and contextual factors, the evaluation provides actionable recommendations to guide potential follow-up activities and enhance the design and implementation of similar initiatives.

The scope of this evaluation encompasses the full duration of the project, covering activities implemented by MRG and its partner and sub-grantees across the target provinces. It includes an assessment of all key project components, from the initial planning and design phases through to implementation, monitoring, and the completion of activities.

2. Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation is structured around the **OECD DAC criteria**, providing a systematic framework to assess the project's performance and outcomes.

Table 1: Overview of Evaluation Questions

Criteria	Evaluation Question
Relevance	How well has the intervention responded to local needs?
	To what extent did the intervention benefit all target groups equally?
Effectiveness	Has the intervention achieved ist outputs and outcomes?
	What unintended outcomes were achieved?
Efficiency	Were all activities delivered as planned?
	What internal and external factors contributed to and/or hindered implementation efficiency?
Impact	What broad changes has the intervention contributed to generate?
	To what extent were the results due to the intervention rather than something else?
Sustainability	Will the benefits last?
	How effective was the exit strategy?
Partnerships	What partnership relationships have developed between MRG and the partners and amongst the partners? How successful were they?
Learning	What are the main learned lessons and best practices for the programme?

2.2 Overarching Methodological Approach

The evaluation primarily employs a **qualitative approach**, using **Outcome Harvesting** and the **Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology** to capture complex and nuanced changes emerging from the project.

Outcome Harvesting Approach

Outcome harvesting is a flexible, utilisation-focused methodology designed to identify, analyse, and verify the outcomes of complex interventions, particularly in dynamic contexts such as peacebuilding. Unlike traditional evaluation approaches that begin with predefined objectives and indicators, outcome harvesting starts by identifying observable changes and then works backward to determine how the intervention may have contributed to these outcomes.

Key Steps in the Outcome Harvesting Process:

o **Identification of Outcomes:** The process began with the systematic collection of data to identify key outcomes related to the project's activities. This involved reviewing project reports, activity records and interview transcripts to pinpoint observable changes.
o **Describing the Pathways of Change:** Once outcomes were identified, the next step involved tracing the processes and pathways through which these changes were achieved. The evaluator examined how specific project activities — such as training sessions, community forums, and advocacy efforts — contributed to the outcomes observed.

o **Verification of Outcomes:** To ensure the reliability of the findings, the outcomes were verified using multiple data sources. Triangulation was employed by comparing information from interviewees, project documentation, and external sources where available. For example, participant lists and training attendance records were reviewed to confirm reported increases in community engagement, while meeting minutes from advocacy forums provided corroborating evidence of policy-related outcomes. External verifiers, including independent observers and publicly available reports from relevant institutions, were also consulted to cross-check key findings and provide an additional layer of validation for the project's reported achievements.

Most Significant Change Analysis

The evaluation also applied a Most Significant Change (MSC) analysis to capture the project's impact from the perspectives of individuals directly involved in or affected by the intervention. The MSC technique is a qualitative approach that focuses on collecting stories of significant changes perceived by participants, then analysing and interpreting these narratives to identify the intervention's most notable outcomes. This method provides insight into the human experiences behind the data.

Key Steps in the MSC Process:

- **Story Collection**: Interviews were conducted with project participants, including representatives from community-based organisations, affected individuals, and volunteers. Participants were asked to share stories of significant changes they observed or experienced as a result of project activities. Stories were collected across key domains, such as community empowerment, human rights protection, intergroup relationships, and disability inclusion.
- **Selection of Significant Changes:** The evaluator reviewed the stories to identify the most compelling examples of change, using criteria such as relevance to the project's objectives, the depth of the change, and the significance from the participants' perspectives. Two individual stories were selected for inclusion and are presented as stories of change in the report.

2.3 Data Collection Strategies

The evaluation relied primarily on qualitative data collection methods, using individual and group interviews, extensive fieldwork, and direct observation to assess the project's effectiveness and impact.

1. **Interviews**: Semi-structured interviews, both individual and in groups, were conducted with key stakeholders, including project partners, civil society representatives, grassroots activists, and community members. These interviews provided in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perceptions of the project's effectiveness, and the broader impact on intercommunal relations and governance. Interviews were designed to be flexible, allowing respondents to elaborate on key themes while ensuring consistency in data collection across different interviewees.
2. **Fieldwork and Direct Observation**: The evaluator conducted fieldwork across the project's target areas, engaging directly with community members and observing the broader socio-political context in which the project operated. Field visits provided opportunities to interact with project participants in their own environments, capturing contextual factors that influenced project outcomes. The immersive nature of the fieldwork

allowed for a deeper understanding of local dynamics, community relationships, and the practical implementation of project activities.

Table 2: Overview of Individuals Consulted

Stakeholder Type	Data Collection Method	# of Participants
MRG project staff	KIIs	2
Parnter organisation staff	KIIs	2
Sub-grantee organisations		21
Other community stakeholders	KIIs	4
Total number of indviduals consulted		**29**

The evaluation also included a **review of secondary data** to contextualise findings and verify information from primary data collection. Project documentation, including reports from implementing partners, training materials, and internal M&E progress reports from MRG, provided insights into activity implementation and progress toward objectives. External research and policy reports on peacebuilding, human rights, and governance in Thailand's southern border provinces helped situate the project within broader regional trends. Additionally, conflict monitoring data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) was analysed to track patterns of violence and security incidents, offering an external reference point for assessing the conflict environment in which the project operated.

2.4 Data Analysis

The evaluation used a **qualitative**, **thematic analysis** approach to identify patterns, key findings, and underlying trends across the collected data. Interview transcripts, field notes, and observation records were systematically reviewed, with recurring themes coded to assess the project's effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Data from individual and group interviews were triangulated with secondary sources, including project reports, MRG's internal M&E progress data, and ACLED conflict monitoring data, to ensure consistency and validity. The Outcome Harvesting method was applied to trace the project's contributions to observed changes, while the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach helped capture personal narratives illustrating meaningful impacts.

2.5 Methodological Risks and Limitations

The evaluation faced several methodological challenges, primarily due to the **highly dispersed nature of project activities** and the large number of small grants awarded to diverse local organisations. Given the variation in focus, scale, and contexts of these grants, assessing outcomes at the individual grant level would have been impractical. Instead, the evaluation adopted a cross-synthesis approach, analysing common themes, shared challenges, and broader trends across multiple grants to identify overarching project contributions. Additionally, as is common in peacebuilding evaluations, attribution remained a challenge due to the complex interplay of external factors, including broader political dynamics, security conditions, and parallel initiatives by other actors. To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation focused on tracing plausible pathways of change, triangulating findings across interviews, secondary sources, and project documentation to ensure a balanced and contextually grounded assessment.

3. Key Findings

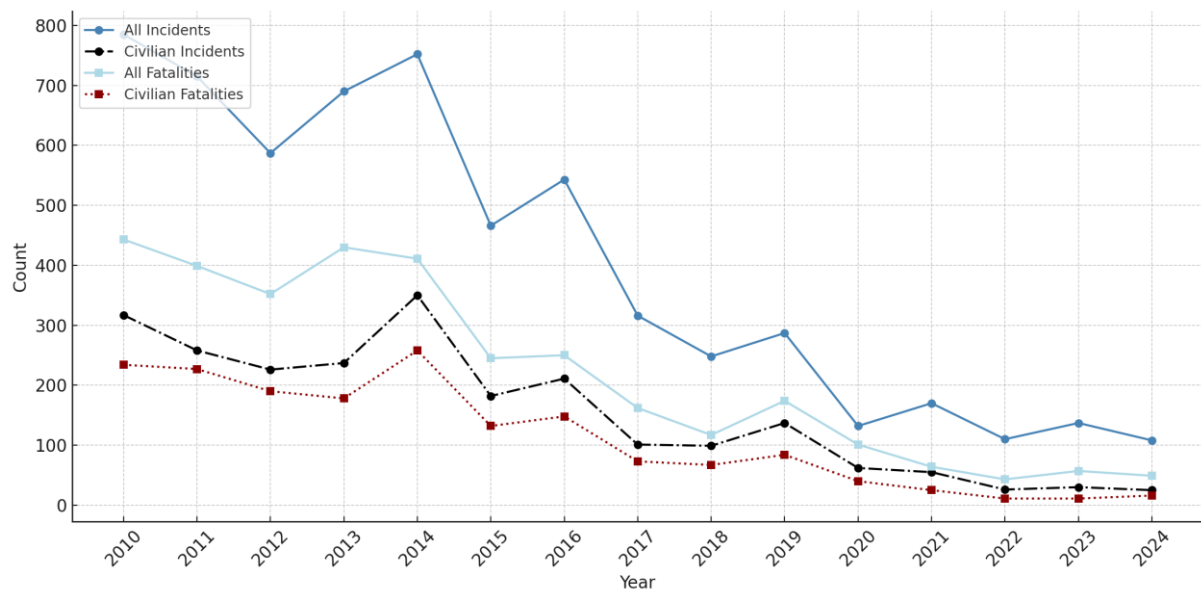## 3.1 Relevance

Overarching Assessment of Relevance

The project demonstrated a **high level of relevance** in addressing the entrenched conflict dynamics and the needs of marginalised communities in Thailand's southern border provinces. By fostering intercommunal dialogue and promoting the inclusion of underrepresented groups such as women and persons with disabilities, the project directly responded to the region's social and political realities. The emphasis on mental health support, human rights education, and participatory research methods aligned with the needs of conflict-affected populations, particularly families of detainees and individuals facing economic exclusion. The project's inclusive, locally-led approach also ensured that community voices were amplified in peace processes, while its efforts to bridge divides between Buddhist and Muslim communities provided a critical foundation for long-term reconciliation.

Responsiveness to Conflict Dynamics and Local Needs

Since the early 2000s, Thailand's deep south has experienced a **resurgence of violence**, with attacks targeting security forces, government officials, educators, and civilians. Armed groups, such as Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), have been central actors in the conflict, advocating for greater autonomy or independence for the region. While the number of conflict incidents and fatalities has gradually declined over the years, sporadic violence persists. The ongoing occurrence of such violence, albeit at a reduced scale, indicates that the underlying tensions and grievances driving the conflict in the SBPs remains unresolved. This enduring instability underscores the complex nature of the conflict and highlights the importance of sustained, inclusive peacebuilding efforts that address the root causes of the violence and promote long-term reconciliation.

Moreover, ACLED data on civilian-targeting events reveals a persistent pattern of violence against civilians, even amid the broader decline in overall incidents over the past two decades. From 2021 onwards, the proportion of events involving civilian targets has remained high, indicating that civilians continue to bear a substantial burden of the conflict's impact. This persistent violence is rooted in, but also contributes to, systemic human rights violations, deep-seated mistrust between communities, and the **pervasive securitisation of daily life**. These factors contribute to a climate of fear and hinder efforts toward reconciliation, underscoring the critical need for initiatives like the Inclusive Peacebuilding project, which worked to foster trust, and create spaces for dialogue among diverse community members.

Figure 1: Annual Trends in Conflict Incidents and Fatalities (2010–2024) – Adapted from ACLED

A key dimension of the project's relevance was its **emphasis on healing**, **psychosocial support**, **and community empowerment**. The conflict in the SBPs has left a significant portion of the population traumatised, with detainees, and their families experiencing prolonged psychological distress. State-provided mental health services remain limited, and affected individuals often struggle with social isolation, and economic hardships. The project addressed this gap by integrating mental health support into peacebuilding and human rights initiatives. This was particularly important for women-led organisations supporting widows and families of detainees, who reported that the project helped them regain a sense of agency and collective resilience.

At the intersection of human rights and peacebuilding, the project addressed **intercommunal tensions and religious identity-based divisions**. While much of the discourse around the SBPs has focused on Muslim communities, Buddhist minorities in the region have also experienced displacement, marginalisation, and a lack of trust in state mechanisms. The project's efforts to create dialogues between Buddhist and Muslim communities were particularly significant in this regard. By framing coexistence not just as a political issue but as a shared struggle for rights and security, the project helped shift narratives that have traditionally positioned different communities in opposition to each other. Participants noted that government-led dialogue initiatives had often failed to gain community trust, whereas civil society-led discussions provided safer spaces for open conversations.

Another crucial aspect was the project's focus on **human rights protection and legal literacy**. The SBPs remain subject to special emergency laws that grant broad powers to security forces, contributing to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and restrictions on civil liberties. Community-led human rights organisations in the region have long operated under restrictive conditions,[1] with limited access to resources, training, and formal advocacy channels. The project helped strengthen local peacebuilding and human rights organisations by providing

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[1] https://www.icj.org/thailand-human-rights-must-be-mainstreamed-in-the-deep-south/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

capacity-building, technical support, and networking opportunities. This enabled local actors to document human rights violations systematically, build early warning mechanisms, and advocate for policy change. Testimonies collected from multiple key informants indicate that data collection efforts have led to greater visibility of human rights violations, allowing affected communities to engage with national and international actors in ways that were previously inaccessible.

The project was also highly relevant in its approach to **local ownership** and sustainability. Many participants expressed that past donor-driven initiatives often failed because they were top-down, short-term, or misaligned with actual community needs. In contrast, this project was structured to support existing local movements, strengthen community networks, and ensure that interventions were adaptable to evolving circumstances. By focusing on local ownership, the initiative contributed to a more resilient and self-sustaining civil society landscape. This was widely reflected in testimonies from local organisations that emphasised how the project helped them navigate complex bureaucratic processes, access new funding opportunities, and build regional and international networks.

Rather than favouring established organisations with existing networks, the project was particularly successful in identifying and supporting **highly localised, small-scale, but high-potential impact initiatives**. These included organisations working at the grassroots level on issues that might otherwise receive little attention, such as community-led research on the proposed development of a national park and its potential effects on local populations and livelihoods. By funding organisations deeply rooted in their communities, the project ensured that support reached those most directly affected by ongoing challenges, rather than being concentrated in larger, more established civil society actors.

Case Study: Community Research on National Park Expansion

One of the most locally grounded initiatives funded through the project was a **community-led research effort** examining the proposed development of a national park in Narathiwat province and its potential effects on local livelihoods. The issue emerged as a major concern among rural communities, who feared displacement and the loss of access to essential land and natural resources — resources that not only sustain their livelihoods but also contribute to the social cohesion of these communities. Land, for many residents, is deeply connected to their cultural identity and collective sense of belonging. However, given the sensitivities surrounding land rights and conservation policies, community members initially lacked the resources and technical expertise to document their concerns effectively or engage in meaningful advocacy. The Thai authorities had adopted a top-down approach to the park's development, failing to adequately consult residents living in the area, which further eroded trust and exacerbated existing intercommunal tensions.

Through project support, community members received **training in participatory** research **methods**, equipping them with the skills to collect and analyse robust evidence about the potential impacts of the national park expansion. Participants learned how to conduct surveys, document land use patterns, and present their findings in accessible formats. As their skills developed, residents were able to compile a comprehensive report that outlined the potential risks of displacement, disruption to traditional livelihoods, and the broader socio-economic implications of the development. The findings were subsequently presented to local policymakers, enabling community members to assert their concerns in formal decision-making spaces where their voices had previously been absent.

Beyond the research itself, the initiative played a critical role in **raising public awareness and strengthening community mobilisation efforts.** Through community meetings, information sessions, and joint advocacy initiatives, residents developed a clearer understanding of their legal rights related to land ownership and environmental governance. Community members who participated in a group interview reported that the project helped them articulate their concerns more effectively and engage in discussions with local authorities without fear of reprisal. These interactions fostered a sense of agency among residents, who described feeling more empowered to participate in future policy discussions.

The relevance of this initiative to broader peacebuilding efforts became particularly evident as it unfolded. Historically, land disputes have contributed to intergroup tensions in Narathiwat and surrounding provinces, often reinforcing perceptions of injustice and exclusion. By facilitating open, evidence-based dialogue between residents, local authorities, and conservation agencies, the project helped reduce potential future tensions.

The project also expanded its research efforts to other areas, broadening its impact on **community-driven knowledge generation** and leadership. Led by IPS, in collaboration with KTA, a dedicated project component aimed to strengthen grassroots expertise by recruiting and training local researchers, many of them women. Participants were equipped with essential research skills, enabling them to collect and analyse data on socio-economic conditions, public health challenges, and community development issues. Despite having little or no formal research background, they successfully learned to design surveys, conduct interviews, and document findings, gaining the ability to systematically explore and articulate the realities facing their communities.

Through structured workshops, mentoring sessions, and ongoing support, participants developed a deeper understanding of the complex challenges affecting their communities, linking their research to broader peacebuilding and policy discussions. This initiative provided an important opportunity to generate reliable, community-driven data on previously undocumented issues, such as the prevalence of disabilities, economic vulnerabilities, and the social struggles of marginalised groups. The research findings played a crucial role in strengthening community-led advocacy, ensuring that local perspectives were not only recognised but also actively informed more inclusive policy dialogues.

Responsiveness to the Needs of Different Population Groups

The project made **conscious efforts to include all relevant groups** particularly affected by the conflict, ensuring a balance between different religious communities and addressing the needs of women, persons with disabilities, detainees and their families, and youth. This was done primarily through the selection of sub-grantee organisations that represent and respond to the diverse needs of these groups. By working with civil society actors embedded in local communities, the project aimed to ensure that activities were inclusive and reflective of the realities faced by those most affected. Each sub-grantee typically worked with one specific group, which meant that while the project as a whole reached a broad range of communities, individual activities were often tailored to the needs of a particular segment of the population rather than being designed to serve all groups equally.

Women's Participation and Benefits

The project **actively engaged women**, particularly those affected by the ongoing conflict, by supporting initiatives that focused on legal empowerment, mental health support, and human rights training. Many of the women involved were widows, family members of detainees, or individuals facing economic hardship, often struggling with the psychosocial and legal consequences of the conflict. Through sub-grantee partnerships, the project provided women with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and networks, enabling them to navigate legal processes, access mental health support, and, in some cases, engage in advocacy.

One of the key ways in which the project benefited women was through **legal training and human rights education**, which allowed them to better understand and assert their rights. For example, the sub-grantee organisation Human Rights Organisation of Pattani (HAP) worked with women whose husbands had been killed or arrested under emergency laws, offering training on legal frameworks, human rights documentation, and mental health rehabilitation. Participants were trained to collect and analyse data on the impact of emergency laws on their communities, and their findings were later presented at academic conferences attended by NGOs, academics, and state officials. Likewise, the partner organisation Civil Society Assembly for Peace (CAP) focused on legal literacy and psychosocial support, working with women directly impacted by conflict-related violence and lacking access to legal assistance. CAP provided training sessions in partnership with psychiatrists from Yala Hospital, equipping women with tools to cope with trauma and stress, while also facilitating public dialogues on emergency laws and peace processes where women were able to voice their concerns and engage in discussions on policy reforms.

The project played a key role in expanding **women's participation in research and advocacy**, ensuring their voices were integral to discussions on governance, human rights, and conflict resolution. By equipping them with the skills to design and conduct research, analyse data, and communicate findings, the project enabled women to take on more active roles in shaping local and national discourse on issues affecting their communities.

In addition to these efforts, several sub-grantees supported **women-led research on the effects of emergency laws and conflict-related policies**, generating critical data that informed advocacy strategies. These studies provided evidence-based insights into how legal frameworks and security measures disproportionately impacted women, ensuring that their perspectives were included in discussions on legal and human rights reforms. By directly addressing the historical exclusion of women from decision-making processes, the project strengthened their agency and influence, positioning them as key stakeholders in policy debates and peacebuilding efforts. Through this approach, the initiative not only amplified women's voices but also reinforced their role as active contributors to shaping a more inclusive and equitable governance landscape.

Furthermore, some sub-grantees also supported women-led research on the effects of emergency laws and conflict-related policies, generating critical data that was later used to inform advocacy efforts. These studies ensured that women's perspectives were included in discussions on legal and human rights reforms, helping to counteract their historical exclusion from decision-making processes.

The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

The project placed a strong emphasis on promoting the **meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities**, ensuring that their lived experiences, challenges, and perspectives were not overlooked in the peacebuilding process. This commitment went beyond providing services; it sought to position PwDs as active participants and contributors to discussions on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and community development. The sub-grantee initiatives were designed to create inclusive, accessible spaces where PwDs could share their experiences, articulate their needs, and engage in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives. This focus on disability inclusion was particularly relevant given the context of the SBPs, where conflict itself has been a significant factor contributing to disability. Several key informants with disabilities interviewed during this evaluation described how they sustained their injuries as a direct consequence of conflict-related violence, including shootings, bombings, and other attacks. These experiences often resulted not only in physical impairments but also in psychological distress and social isolation, compounding the difficulties they faced in accessing essential services, employment opportunities, and community support structures. By integrating the voices of PwDs into peacebuilding efforts, the project sought to address these intersecting challenges while simultaneously recognising their potential as agents of change.

The initiative worked with **disability-led organisations** and local partners to build the capacity of PwDs to advocate for their rights, participate in community dialogues, and contribute to the development of more inclusive governance structures. For example, ILCD, a sub-grantee working on disability rights, focused on increasing the standard and quality of life for PwDs by providing training, employment opportunities, and advocacy support. The organisation worked closely with local authorities and service providers to raise awareness about disability rights and ensure that persons with disabilities were better informed about the resources available to them. One of their key achievements was organising training sessions for state officers and public servants, helping them understand the legal rights of persons with disabilities and the barriers they face in accessing public services. In addition, ILCD ran awareness-raising activities in nine communities, providing practical knowledge on welfare entitlements, employment opportunities, and social inclusion. Participants consistently reported that these sessions increased their confidence and sense of agency, enabling them to participate more actively in both community life and governance processes.

Beyond policy engagement and employment support, the project contributed to improving the **capacity of disability-led organisations** to advocate for their rights and expand their activities. By providing technical support, funding, and opportunities to connect with other civil society actors, the project enabled organisations to develop new strategies for engaging with decision-makers and strengthening their advocacy work. This was particularly important in a context where persons with disabilities face not only physical barriers but also significant economic and social constraints that limit their ability to participate in public life.

The Inclusion of Buddhist Communities

The project **actively engaged Buddhist communities** in the SBPs, ensuring their inclusion in peacebuilding efforts and broader discussions on security and governance. While Muslims are a minority in Thailand overall, they form the majority population in the SBPs, where the conflict is most concentrated. As a result, much of the discourse around the conflict and peacebuilding efforts has focused on the experiences of the Muslim population, particularly in relation to state-led security measures, emergency laws, and historical grievances. However, Buddhist communities in the region have also been significantly affected by violence, displacement, and

a sense of insecurity, particularly in areas where they are now in the minority. Many feel disconnected from national discussions on governance and rights, and their concerns are often overlooked in both official peace processes and broader civil society initiatives. The project sought to address these issues by supporting initiatives that fostered trust between Buddhist and Muslim communities, addressed security concerns, and increased Buddhist participation in discussions on special laws and conflict resolution.

One of the project sub-grantees, the Peace Development Association (PDA), worked specifically with Buddhist communities to **promote peace and coexistence**. Their efforts included training Buddhist community members on non-violent conflict resolution and legal rights, organising dialogues on special laws, and supporting women's livelihood initiatives. A critical aspect of their work was creating space for Buddhist community members to express their concerns and engage in discussions about their security, rights, and role in the broader peace process. Participants reported a noticeable shift in attitudes over time, particularly in dialogue spaces where Buddhist and Muslim communities came together to discuss shared challenges. One representative from PDA noted that when they first launched community dialogues, many Buddhist participants were reluctant to engage. Some were entirely opposed to discussions with Muslim counterparts and were hesitant to allow media presence due to fear and mistrust. However, over time, these perspectives began to shift, and discussions increasingly focused on practical concerns such as economic challenges, local governance issues, and daily life rather than religious identity

> "When we first launched community dialogues for peace among Buddhist communities, we could see how radical some participants were. Many were completely against Muslims and did not even want media present because they were afraid. But after continued discussions, their views started to change. Now, in these dialogues, people talk about their daily lives, their livelihoods, and shared problems rather than focusing on religious differences." – PDA staff members

The project also engaged with Buddhist communities on the role of Thailand's special laws, which have been in place in response to security concerns, including bombings and targeted attacks on Buddhist civilians and security personnel. During interviews it became evident that many Buddhists in the SBPs see these laws as vital for maintaining security, while most Muslims view them as discriminatory and a violation of human rights. This divide has contributed to long-standing tensions, with **limited dialogue between communities** on the impact of emergency laws and their implications for justice and governance.

Through its support for interfaith dialogue and legal awareness initiatives, the project created opportunities for Buddhist communities to discuss their perspectives on security and governance while also hearing from those who have been negatively affected by the enforcement of special laws. Sub-grantees reported that these discussions helped **bridge some of the misunderstandings** between Buddhist and Muslim communities, shifting the focus from opposing narratives toward shared concerns about safety, justice, and the long-term impact of the security situation on local communities.

The Inclusion of Youth

The project **actively engaged young people** in the southern border provinces, recognising their role in shaping the region's future and their potential as agents of change in peacebuilding and human rights efforts. Given the long-standing conflict, many youth in the region have grown up amid heightened security measures, restrictions, and limited opportunities for civic

engagement. The project sought to address this by providing young people with training, leadership development opportunities, and platforms to participate in governance and advocacy efforts. Sub-grantees worked to equip youth with practical skills in human rights monitoring, digital security, and conflict resolution, ensuring that they had the tools to engage meaningfully in discussions on peace and justice.

The sub-grantee organisation Human Rights Organisation of Pattani (HAP) played a key role in youth engagement, particularly through its training programme aimed at empowering young volunteers. The organisation provided workshops on human rights knowledge, legal frameworks, and digital security, attracting a diverse group of participants, including university students, activists, and young people from families affected by the conflict. One key component of HAP's programme was a data collection initiative, where volunteers were trained to document the effects of emergency laws on communities. Participants were required to research the impact of these laws on women and children, gather data on human rights violations, and compile findings for further analysis. This initiative ensured that young people were not only learning about human rights in theory but also actively contributing to research and advocacy efforts. HAP's work culminated in an academic conference where youth volunteers presented their research findings alongside NGOs, academics, and state officials, giving them an opportunity to engage directly with decision-makers.

Beyond training and research, the project also supported youth participation in **media and digital advocacy**, recognising the power of storytelling and visual documentation in raising awareness and influencing public discourse. One key initiative was a photography training, which provided young participants with technical skills in visual storytelling, image composition, and ethical considerations in documentary photography. Organised in collaboration with Realframe, a collective of professional Thai photojournalists and documentarians, the workshop provided participants with hands-on training in photography, visual storytelling, and the use of media as a non-violent tool for peacebuilding. Participants engaged in fieldwork exercises, explored techniques for capturing and narrating their community's experiences, and took part in discussions on peace and conflict resolution. The training aimed to equip them with the skills to document everyday realities in conflict-affected areas, enabling them to contribute to broader conversations on social change.

Following the workshop, participants developed personal photography projects over two months, submitting images that were reviewed by trainers. Some of their work gained national and international recognition, including a photograph published by the European Union Delegation in Bangkok. By providing a creative outlet for self-expression and documentation, the workshop strengthened youth engagement in peacebuilding and advocacy, particularly in a context where conventional channels for civic participation are limited. Participants honed their ability to use photography as an **advocacy tool**, crafting visual narratives that highlighted the impact of conflict, human rights violations, and community-led peacebuilding efforts. Some produced photo essays and digital campaigns shared on social media and in local exhibitions, expanding the reach of their messages, while others documented the effects of emergency laws on their communities, providing **visual evidence for policy discussions**. By integrating digital advocacy into its broader peacebuilding approach, the project not only fostered creative expression among youth but also strengthened their role as active contributors to dialogue and change in their communities.

3.2 Effectiveness

Overarching Assessment of Effectiveness

The project effectively increased the participation of marginalised communities in peace processes, **meeting key targets** in training, community engagement, and policy advocacy. Through small grants, dialogue sessions, and capacity-building workshops, the project empowered women, youth, and PwDs to engage more actively in decision-making and advocacy. Outcome harvesting revealed increased community agency, enhanced rights awareness, greater visibility and inclusion of PwDs, strengthened civil society capacity, and increased engagement between civil society and policymakers. These changes were achieved through participatory research, community-led monitoring of human rights violations, and advocacy efforts that brought grassroots perspectives into policy discussions.

Achievement of Intended Results

The project **successfully achieved its intended results** across key areas, meeting or exceeding the targets set for training, research, community engagement, and policy advocacy. Training sessions for civil society actors, including human rights defenders and network members, were implemented as planned, with broad participation from diverse groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Participatory research activities also met their objectives, yielding a rich body of data that provided critical insights into local conflict dynamics while equipping participants with practical skills to document and analyse issues affecting their communities. Community forums saw particularly strong engagement, creating safe, inclusive spaces for dialogue across different groups and helping to build trust and cooperation among participants. The small grants component further supported these efforts by empowering grassroots organisations to implement locally driven initiatives aligned with the project's peacebuilding objectives.

Beyond the successful delivery of outputs, the project made significant progress in achieving its intended outcomes of **increasing the participation of marginalised communities** in peace processes. Evaluation findings indicate that participants reported greater confidence in engaging with authorities, advocating for their rights, and contributing to discussions on governance and conflict resolution. Women, youth, and persons with disabilities were consistently present and active in community dialogues, while civil society organisations expanded their involvement in both formal and informal peace structures. Advocacy efforts led to greater engagement with policymakers, resulting in the inclusion of marginalised groups' perspectives in discussions on peace and governance. The project's ability to meet its targets across these different areas reflects its overall effectiveness in fostering inclusive, community-driven approaches to peacebuilding and strengthening the capacity of local actors to sustain these efforts over time.

Outcome Harvesting Analysis

The outcome harvesting analysis identified **several significant outcomes** that reflect the project's contributions to peacebuilding efforts in Thailand's SBPs.

1. Enhanced Community Agency and Participation

 Outcome: The project has fostered increased community agency, particularly among groups historically excluded from peace processes. Women, youth, and PwDs now participate more actively in community forums and advocacy efforts, contributing their perspectives to peacebuilding efforts.

Concrete examples illustrate the significance of this outcome. In one case, women who attended an advocacy training successfully lobbied local authorities to reconsider a policy that restricted access to public meeting spaces, applying the skills gained to present their concerns in a clear, evidence-based manner. Another example is youth participants who created a video documenting the impact of curfews on small businesses, which was later shared with policymakers and prompted discussions about potential adjustments to enforcement practices. Community members in Narathiwat described how training sessions equipped them with the skills and confidence to voice concerns related to land rights and livelihood challenges to the authorities. These examples collectively demonstrate the project's success in equipping community members with practical, actionable knowledge that empowered them to engage more actively with local governance processes and contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding efforts in their communities.

Pathways: The project supported this outcome through a combination of strategically designed training sessions, participatory research activities, and community-driven initiatives aimed at fostering sustained engagement in peace processes. Advocacy training provided participants with practical tools to communicate effectively with decision-makers, present evidence compellingly, and design tailored advocacy strategies that address community-specific concerns. Photography workshops equipped youth with the skills to document local realities, transforming abstract policy discussions into relatable, visual narratives that captured the attention of policymakers. Participatory research training further enabled community members to conduct systematic investigations into pressing issues, such as land rights and access to public services, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to contribute to evidence-based policy discussions. These pathways, grounded in participatory and inclusive methodologies, created multiple entry points for marginalised groups to engage with peacebuilding processes.

Verification: The increased agency and participation of community members were verified through multiple sources. Interviews with training participants consistently highlighted a greater sense of confidence and competence in engaging with local authorities, particularly when advocating for community concerns. Documentary evidence, including meeting minutes, official correspondence, and media coverage, corroborated these reports. For instance, media reports documented the youth-produced video and the subsequent policy discussions it generated. In Narathiwat, the community-led research findings on the proposed national park expansion were formally presented to local authorities, with copies of the research report and notes from stakeholder meetings serving as tangible evidence of the community's enhanced capacity to engage in policy discussions.

2. Enhanced Rights Awareness

Outcome: The project has fostered increased rights awareness, particularly among communities historically affected by conflict and vulnerable to rights violations. Individuals across diverse demographic groups, including women, youth, and PwDs, now demonstrate a clearer understanding of their legal protections and available mechanisms for reporting abuses, enabling them to engage more confidently with authorities and contribute to peacebuilding efforts.

One participant described how they successfully assisted a family whose relative had been detained, guiding them through the process of contacting relevant authorities and documenting the case for follow-up. Similarly, participants from Duayai Group described how human rights awareness workshops helped them identify and report cases of arbitrary detention and torture. In one instance, volunteers used the project's human rights monitoring database to document a case of mistreatment, which was subsequently shared with both local authorities and national-level human rights organisations. Interviewees from PDA also highlighted the impact of rights awareness training in Buddhist communities, where participants reported greater confidence in addressing concerns about emergency law enforcement practices and engaging in constructive dialogue with state officials.

Pathways: The project achieved these outcomes through a multi-pronged approach focused on capacity-building and participatory engagement. Human rights training workshops served as the primary pathway for increasing awareness, equipping participants with foundational knowledge about national and international legal frameworks. Community dialogues provided additional opportunities for participants to discuss the practical implications of these rights, share personal experiences, and collaboratively explore strategies for addressing ongoing violations. Participatory research activities further reinforced these learnings by involving community members in documenting and analysing cases of human rights abuses, enabling them to apply their new skills in real-world contexts. The development of the human rights monitoring database, implemented by Duayai Group, offered a tangible tool for tracking trends and patterns of abuses, fostering greater community vigilance and collective action to prevent future violations.

Verification: The increased awareness of human rights and related protections was verified through a combination of qualitative and documentary evidence. Interviews with some training participants reflected an increased understanding of legal rights and reporting mechanisms, with interviewees providing concrete examples of how they applied this knowledge in their daily interactions with authorities. The documentation of reported cases in the human rights monitoring database provided further verification, as records showed an increase in the number of community-led reports submitted.

Case Study: Duayai Group's Early Warning Mechanism

Background: The Duayai Group, a human rights organisation operating in Thailand's southern border provinces, implemented an early warning and early response (EWER) mechanism as part of its activities under the Inclusive Peacebuilding project. The initiative aimed to empower community members to monitor, document, and respond to human rights violations. The need for such a mechanism arose from the longstanding pattern of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and other abuses, which often went unreported or dismissed as isolated incidents**.**

Development and Implementation: The early warning mechanism was developed through a series of community workshops focused on human rights, conflict management, and database management. These sessions were held in six communities, with approximately 30 participants in each. Participants were trained in monitoring techniques, incident documentation, and reporting protocols. The training also introduced participants to the concept of pattern recognition, helping them identify systemic trends rather than isolated events. Five individuals from each community were selected to act as focal points, responsible for collecting and submitting incident data.

Achievements and Impact: The Duayai Group's efforts yielded significant results. Within three months of launching the system, participants reported 176 incidents, including cases of torture, and intimidation. The data were compiled into an annual report, which was subsequently shared with state officers and civil society organisations across three provinces.

Challenges and Lessons Learned: Despite its successes, the implementation of the EWER mechanism was not without challenges. Duayai Group members reported difficulties in navigating legal restrictions, particularly regarding information sharing under martial law. Financial and human resource limitations also affected implementation. The organisation, which initially operated on a volunteer basis, struggled to recruit enough staff to manage the growing workload. One interviewee explained that the administrative demands of maintaining the database and preparing reports stretched the group's limited resources, requiring staff to work long hours without additional support.

3. Increased Visibility and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Outcome: The visibility and inclusion of PwDs in peacebuilding and local governance processes increased as a direct result of the project. Through their involvement in project-supported initiatives, PwDs have become more active in community dialogues, public meetings, and advocacy efforts, contributing their perspectives on issues affecting their daily lives and the broader community.

Interviewees described how, prior to the project, PwDs were often excluded from decision-making processes and public events. However, the formation of a disability working group and the implementation of accessible dialogue sessions enabled PwDs to voice their concerns directly to local authorities. For example, an ILCD participant shared how their involvement in the project led to their first-ever invitation to a district-level meeting on community development, where they successfully advocated for improved wheelchair access in public spaces. Another ILCD representative noted that, after participating in a peace dialogue in Indonesia through the project, they were subsequently invited by the United Nations to contribute to a consultation on disability rights, providing a platform to share local experiences at the international level.

Pathways: The project facilitated this outcome by providing small grants to local organisations working with persons with disabilities, enabling them to implement activities that promoted disability inclusion and rights awareness. Rather than relying on external actors to lead these efforts, the project supported disability-led initiatives that placed PwDs at the forefront of planning and implementation. ILCD, for example, used its grant to establish peer-support networks, conduct rights awareness campaigns, and engage with local authorities on improving accessibility in public spaces. The organisation also implemented a mentoring approach, pairing

experienced advocates with newer participants to build confidence and capacity. Through these initiatives, PwDs not only gained a better understanding of their rights but also developed practical skills in community organising and advocacy.

Verification: Interviews with PwD participants confirm this change, with several individuals describing their first experiences of contributing to public meetings. A participant from ILCD reported attending a district-level meeting on community development for the first time. Project documentation corroborates these accounts, showing that PwD participation in community forums increased over the course of the project.

4. Growth of Local Civil Society Capacity

Outcome: The project strengthened the capacity of local CSOs to conduct research, engage in advocacy, and manage resources more effectively. By providing small grants to support community-driven initiatives, the project enabled local organisations to apply and further develop their skills in practical, results-oriented ways, ultimately enhancing their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the region.

For example, CAP applied its grant to establish a volunteer-based monitoring and reporting mechanism for human rights violations. CAP representatives explained how the experience of designing and implementing this system strengthened their organisation's ability to collect, verify, and analyse data on incidents of abuse. The process of developing this mechanism also improved the organisation's internal procedures, with staff describing how they gained a clearer understanding of data management protocols and reporting requirements, which has since been applied to other activities. ILCD similarly reported that, through the process of implementing its grant-funded activities, the organisation developed more effective strategies for promoting disability rights and integrating disability-related issues into broader peacebuilding efforts. One team member described how the experience of conducting community outreach in new locations required them to refine their communication strategies, resulting in more effective engagement with both local authorities and community members. The Kampung Taqwa Association (KTA) successfully applied for and secured additional funding from a new donor following its involvement in the project. Interviews with HAP representatives highlighted that the proposal-writing experience gained during the project enabled them to prepare and submit competitive grant applications, which ultimately resulted in new funding to continue their documentation work on human rights violations. These examples illustrate how the practical implementation of grant-funded initiatives contributed to the development of critical organisational skills and strengthened the capacity of these CSOs to continue their work beyond the project's formal conclusion.

Pathways: The project supported this outcome by providing small grants to local CSOs, enabling them to design and implement initiatives tailored to their communities' needs. Rather than delivering traditional capacity-building workshops, the project adopted a learning-by-doing approach, allowing organisations to strengthen their skills through the practical challenges of project implementation. CSOs gained hands-on experience in planning activities, conducting research, managing budgets, and engaging with diverse stakeholders. The process of developing monitoring systems, organising community dialogues, and advocating for policy changes required organisations to apply and refine critical skills such as data collection, analysis, and evidence-based communication. Managing the grant funds also enhanced the organisations' financial management capabilities, as they had to track expenditures, adhere to reporting re-

quirements, and ensure compliance with donor standards. Several organisations reported improvements in their financial tracking systems, and HAP specifically credited their participation in the project with strengthening their proposal-writing skills.

Throughout the grant implementation period, MRG project staff remained available to provide technical guidance and support when needed, particularly regarding financial management and compliance with reporting requirements. This approach not only strengthened the operational and financial capacity of CSOs during the project but also equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to sustain and expand their work in the long term.

Verification: The growth in local CSO capacity was verified through a combination of interviews, project documentation, and observed changes in organisational practices. CSO staff described how they applied new data management skills when compiling reports, which were later referenced in meetings with local authorities. Financial records submitted by partner organisations provided further evidence of enhanced financial management capacities, with the majority of reports aligning with donor requirements and demonstrating improved internal processes. However, a small number of CSO partners experienced challenges in meeting reporting standards, particularly with regard to documentation of expenditures and adherence to submission timelines. Meeting minutes from advocacy sessions and public dialogues documented the use of research findings produced by grant-supported initiatives, demonstrating how CSOs applied their strengthened skills to engage with decision-makers and contribute to policy discussions. These multiple sources of evidence collectively confirm the project's success in enhancing the research, advocacy, and financial management capacities of local CSOs through its grant-based approach.

5. Policy Engagement and Influence

Outcome: The project's advocacy efforts led to increased engagement between civil society and local policymakers. CSOs that were previously excluded from policy discussions gained greater access to decision-making spaces, contributing research findings and community perspectives on critical local issues.

Concrete examples illustrate the significance of this outcome. PDA presented a community-led report on the impact of emergency laws at a provincial-level consultation, where officials acknowledged the community's concerns regarding curfews and other restrictions. CAP representatives described how the organisation organised seven community dialogues to discuss emergency law, peace processes, and social cohesion. These dialogues created new opportunities for participants to communicate concerns directly to local authorities, some of whom later attended follow-up events. Interviews also indicate that the Duayai Group successfully presented its annual human rights report to district officials, raising awareness of extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations

Pathways: This change was achieved through a combination of grant-supported initiatives and sustained engagement with policymakers. Project partners applied their grants to conduct research, produce policy briefs, and organise dialogue sessions that brought together community members and officials. The focus on practical, evidence-based advocacy helped local organisations present community concerns in a format that resonated with policymakers. Training on policy analysis and advocacy techniques enabled CSOs to structure their findings, draft policy recommendations, and develop clear, compelling arguments for more inclusive govern-

ance practices. Additionally, the project facilitated networking opportunities, such as the exchange workshop in Indonesia, which exposed participants to policy advocacy practices in similar contexts.

Verification: The increased engagement with policymakers was verified through interviews, meeting records, and public reports. Interviews with PDA members confirmed that their research findings on emergency laws were cited during a provincial-level consultation, with minutes from the session documenting these references. CAP staff provided documentation of the community dialogues, including attendance lists showing the participation of both community members and local officials. Meeting minutes from Duayai Group's policy engagements indicated that their findings on human rights violations prompted officials to request further dialogue on monitoring mechanisms.

Stories of Change

At the individual level, two stories were selected to illustrate the transformative impact of the project, not only at the organisational but also at the individual level. These stories highlight how the project has supported individuals affected by conflict to move beyond victimhood. The most significant change observed in both case studies — Muhammad's* journey from a torture survivor to a human rights leader and Naree's[*2] journey from conflict survivor to disability rights advocate — is **empowerment**.

From Victimhood to Leadership

Muhammad, a Muslim community leader in Pattani, and Naree, a Buddhist woman from Narathiwat, both endured profound trauma as a consequence of the conflict. Muhammad was subjected to torture and arbitrary detention under emergency laws, while Naree was deliberately targeted as a Buddhist woman caught in a crossfire, leaving her permanently disabled. Their suffering extended beyond physical injuries — Muhammad lived with the constant fear of surveillance and stigma that sought to silence him, while Naree faced the sudden loss of independence and the isolation that often accompanies disability. Both were pushed to the margins of society, struggling with the emotional and social consequences of violence.

Muhammad's recognition that his experience was not an isolated case but part of a broader pattern of human rights abuses marked a critical shift in his trajectory. Seeking to address these issues, he co-founded the sub-grantee organisation HAP, which documents human rights violations, trains volunteers in safe documentation practices, and engages in policy advocacy. Similarly, Naree's engagement with the sub-grantee organisation ILCD, which focuses on the empowerment of PwDs, was a turning point in her transition from conflict survivor to advocate. Initially reluctant to participate, she gradually took on a more active role, eventually leading disability rights initiatives. As a Buddhist woman and conflict survivor with a disability, she navigated multiple layers of marginalisation and emerged as a leader in advocacy efforts. She played a central role in campaigns that increased official recognition of persons with disabilities and established platforms for their collective advocacy.

Strengthening Advocacy through Project Support

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 * Names have been changed to protect identities

While both Muhammad and Naree had already begun their advocacy efforts before the project, the initiative played a crucial role in strengthening their work and expanding their impact. Muhammad, as the co-founder of HAP, benefited from the project's financial support, which was particularly significant given that he remained under surveillance. **MRG's decision to fund HAP was a calculated but notable commitment**, as direct support for an organisation documenting human rights violations in a highly sensitive environment carried inherent risks. This funding enabled HAP to scale up its work, train more volunteers, enhance documentation practices, and engage more effectively in policy advocacy. For Naree, ILCD was already a vital organisation in her journey toward disability rights advocacy, and the project further strengthened its capacity by providing institutional support and additional resources. This allowed ILCD to expand its programming, increase community engagement, and play a more prominent role in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. By supporting these organisations, the project reinforced the sustainability of their efforts, ensuring that they could continue and expand their work in a more structured and impactful manner.

3.3 Efficiency

Ovearaching Assessment of Efficiency

The project demonstrated a generally **high level of efficiency** in implementing activities, with strong partnerships, adaptive planning, and locally embedded approaches contributing to the timely and effective delivery of results. Internal factors such as trust-based relationships with local civil society organisations, flexible approaches adapted to participant feedback, and clear financial management systems supported smooth implementation. External challenges, including restrictive legal frameworks and socioeconomic factors that affected participation, were mitigated through responsive adjustments to activities and venues. While some smaller organisations initially struggled with financial reporting requirements, tailored support helped address these gaps. The project's approach of working with existing community-based organisations proved highly cost-efficient, as it leveraged pre-existing networks and local knowledge, reducing the need for resource-intensive infrastructure development

Enabling and Hindering Factors

Internal Factors

The project's success was supported by **strong, trust-based partnerships** with local civil society organisations. These partnerships brought local knowledge, networks, and credibility to the implementation process, facilitating effective engagement with community members. The project's flexible, adaptive approach to capacity building also contributed to its effectiveness. For example, training content was adapted based on participant feedback, ensuring that materials were relevant to the practical needs of participants across diverse groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Financial management systems established with MRG's guidance were generally described as accessible and clear. However, some challenges were noted, particularly among smaller or newer CSOs that initially struggled with proposal writing and financial reporting. Some sub-grantees reported that their first experience

preparing a financial report was challenging, particularly when asked to provide shop owner identity details as part of procurement documentation

Another key internal factor contributing to the project's success was MRG's extensive experience in the region and its **well-established connections** with both local and international stakeholders. MRG's staff brought a nuanced understanding of the local socio-political landscape. This contextual knowledge enabled the project team to anticipate potential challenges, particularly regarding community sensitivities and the operational complexities of working in the area. Additionally, the presence of well-connected staff facilitated smooth communication with community leaders, and other development actors and stakeholers, which proved essential when organising public events. This combination of local partnerships, adaptive practices, and local expertise created a strong foundation for the effective delivery of project activities.

External Factors

The **complex legal and regulatory environment** in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces posed significant challenges for implementation, particularly for sub-grantee organisations navigating legal requirements related to collecting and handling sensitive information. Restrictions on civil society activities and concerns about surveillance created additional barriers, requiring organisations to exercise caution in their work. **Psychosocial factors** also influenced participation, with some individuals experiencing anxiety related to traumatic conflict experiences. One participant described feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of attending an international dialogue event and ultimately withdrew despite initial enthusiasm. These experiences highlight the need for additional psychosocial support to help participants manage trauma-related stress and ensure meaningful engagement. Future initiatives should integrate trauma-informed approaches, offering tailored support mechanisms and flexible participation options to create safer, more inclusive spaces for dialogue and capacity-building.

3.4 Impact

Overarching Assessment of Impact

The project contributed to **strengthening interfaith relations**, enhancing community resilience, and empowering civil society actors to address structural injustices in Thailand's SBPs. While conflict monitoring data indicates that broader violence trends remain cyclical, project activities created structured spaces for trust-building and engagement, leading to more constructive intergroup interactions. Participants reported a shift from polarised narratives toward shared concerns, such as security and economic well-being, demonstrating the project's role in fostering practical cooperation. The project's impact was particularly visible in the empowerment of marginalised groups, with women, youth, and persons with disabilities taking on more active roles in advocacy and community decision-making.

Broader Impact of the Project

The project has played an important role in **strengthening interfaith relations,** enhancing community resilience, and empowering civil society actors to address structural injustices in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces. By fostering inclusive dialogue, supporting community-led initiatives, and building organisational capacity, the project has contributed to shifting

deeply entrenched divisions and improving collaboration between Buddhist and Muslim communities. Regular interfaith dialogue sessions created structured spaces for open and respectful discussions, helping to reduce distrust and encourage shared problem-solving. Additionally, community-led initiatives, including joint cultural events and collaborative workshops, provided further opportunities for meaningful engagement and reinforced cross-community cooperation.

A key example of this approach was the community dialogue efforts led by KTA which played a central role in bringing together religious leaders, community heads, women leaders, and state representatives to address local challenges collaboratively. These dialogues helped strengthen trust between communities and authorities, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and reinforcing peaceful coexistence. By ensuring that all voices were heard, KTA facilitated discussions that moved beyond religious or ideological divides, allowing participants to focus on shared concerns such as security and economic well-being. Importantly, the dialogues were not limited to discussion but also informed concrete community-led initiatives that supported local development and social cohesion. Interviews with project participants suggest that these activities, alongside those led by sub-grantee organisations, fostered trust and helped to reduce overt expressions of hostility between Buddhist and Muslim communities. Participants reported a shift in discussions from polarised narratives towards shared concerns, such as security and economic well-being. However, while these positive changes indicate progress at the impact level, assessing their full extent and directly attributing shifts in the broader conflict dynamics to the project remains challenging.

Conflict monitoring data from ACLED reveals **significant fluctuations** in both overall incidents and those specifically targeting civilians, highlighting the cyclical nature of violence rather than a clear trajectory of sustained escalation or de-escalation. The data indicates recurring surges in conflict intensity, with notable peaks in mid-2022, late 2023, and early 2024, suggesting periodic escalations rather than a steady trend. These spikes may correspond to shifts in security operations, changes in insurgent tactics, or evolving government policies. Periods of heightened violence are often followed by temporary declines, reflecting the fluid and unpredictable nature of the conflict. The observed fluctuations underscore the ongoing volatility in the region, where conflict activity appears to be influenced by a combination of localised triggers, and strategic shifts among key actors.

Figure 2: Annual Trends in Conflict Incidents by Month (2021–2025) – Adapted from ACLED
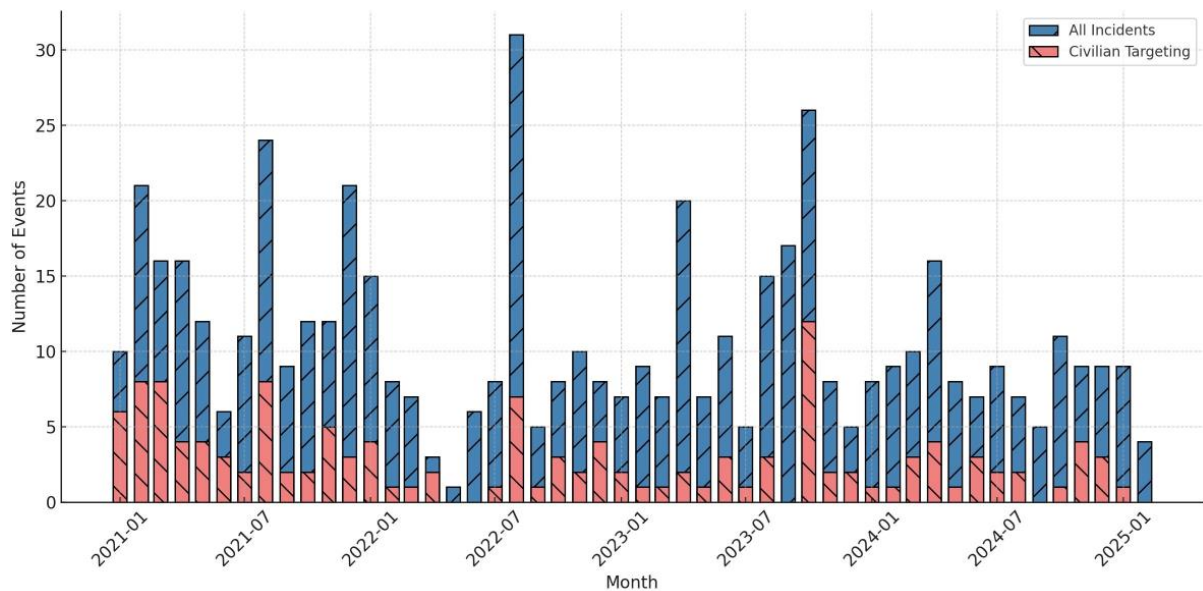
3.5 Sustainability

Overarching Assessment of Sustainability

The project demonstrates **strong potential for sustainability** through its emphasis on local ownership, capacity-building, and the strengthening of community-based organisations. By supporting existing civil society initiatives rather than creating new structures, it ensured that peacebuilding efforts were embedded within established networks, increasing the likelihood of long-term impact. Many project-supported organisations and working groups, including those focused on disability rights and interfaith dialogue, continue to operate independently, demonstrating sustained momentum beyond the project's formal duration. Participants reported a lasting shift in their sense of agency, with women, youth, and persons with disabilities continuing to advocate for their rights and engage in governance processes.

Institutional Capacity and Local Ownership

A key factor contributing to the project's sustainability is the **high level of local ownership** inherent in its design. The project adopted a grant-making approach that funded existing CSOs and initiatives, many of which were volunteer-led and deeply embedded in their communities. These organisations were already engaged in peacebuilding, human rights monitoring, and community development activities prior to the project. The external funding provided by the project enabled them to scale up their activities, but many interviewees emphasised that these initiatives would have continued even without project support, albeit on a smaller scale.

This approach proved to be highly cost-efficient, as it leveraged existing community structures and volunteer networks rather than building new ones from scratch. By providing resources and technical support to locally-driven initiatives, the project ensured that activities were not only contextually relevant but also more likely to be sustained beyond the project's conclusion.

Community members repeatedly highlighted their commitment to continuing advocacy and dialogue efforts regardless of future funding availability.

Table 3: Overview of Sub-Grants

Organisation	Project	Budget	Dates
Phase I			
Real Frame	Living (Room) In The Deep South of Thailand	9,998 EUR	2023-01-01 - 2023-10-31
HAP	Human Rights and Mental Health Rehabilitation Training in Southern Border Provinces	9,448 EUR	2022-12-01 - 2023-06-30
Duayjai Group	Creating Early warning early response system to protect Melayu Muslim in Southernmost of Thailand	8,120 EUR	15/12/2022 - 2023-07-15
N-WAVE	Women empowerment for minority rights protection and peacebuilding	10,080 EUR	2023-01-01 - 2023-06-30
Phase II			
Prof. Haji Sulong Foundation	Past I Present I Future Political Movements of the People of Patani (On the Occasion of the 69th Anniversary of the Enforced Disappearance of Haji Sulong)	5,806 EUR	2023-08-01 - 2023-09-30
JASAD	„Protect to Strengthen Society for Peace"	11,197 EUR	2023-09-01 - 2024-08-31
Rural Initiative Association	„Promoting and Protecting Land Rights for Peace in Thailand's Southern Provinces (Preparing Area to Declare the Area of Si Po Waterfall National Park)"	25,000 EUR	2023-09-01 - 2024-08-31
Nusantara Foundation	Promote Knowledge of Human Rights Principles, Handle and Deal with the Torture Act	21,736 EUR	2023-09-15 - 2024-09-15
Foundation for Empowerment of Persons with Disability	Improvement of the Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities in the Community with Participation (Community for All)	25,000 EUR	2023-10-01 - 2024-09-30
CAP Women and Children	Empowering Women in the Peace Process	25,000 EUR	2023-09-15 - 2024-11-15
HAP	Human Rights and Mental Health Rehabilitation Training, Generation 2 and 3	24,945 EUR	2023-10-01 - 2024-09-30
Duayjai Group	Creating a Network of Early Warning Early Response Systems to Protect the Malay Muslims in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces	25,000 EUR	2023-11-01 - 2024-10-31
S.A.D.	Developing the Potential of Women and Vulnerable Groups in the Southern Border Provinces	15,645 EUR	2023-10-15 - 2024-04-15

The project also fostered a sense of **ownership within communities**, particularly through its support for small, locally-led initiatives. Community members, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, described a shift in their self-perceptions — from passive recipients of aid to active contributors to peacebuilding and advocacy. This increased sense of agency, combined with the formation of community-led groups and working groups, suggests that the benefits are likely to persist. For instance, the disability working group established during the project continues to meet regularly to advocate for accessible public infrastructure.

3.6 Partnerships

Overarching Assessment of Partnerships

The project established **strong, locally rooted partnerships** that enhanced collaboration between MRG and community-based organisations, as well as among local civil society actors. By ensuring that decision-making remained with local partners, the project strengthened their leadership, credibility, and capacity to sustain peacebuilding efforts beyond the project period. It also facilitated greater coordination among organisations working on interfaith dialogue, human rights, and community advocacy, reducing fragmentation and fostering collective action. The formation of the Community Peace Network and other alliances has created lasting platforms for cooperation, ensuring that knowledge-sharing and joint initiatives continue. These partnerships, built on trust and shared objectives, have strengthened the foundations for locally led peacebuilding and advocacy in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces.

Strengh and Quality of Partnerships

The project fostered a range of partnership relationships at both the organisational and community levels. These relationships were established to enhance coordination, capacity, and local ownership in peacebuilding efforts in Thailand's SBPs.

Partnerships Between MRG and Local Partners:

The partnership between MRG and its partners was characterised by mutual respect, regular communication, and shared strategic objectives. Interviews with staff from partner and sub-grantee organisations highlighted the supportive and flexible nature of MRG's engagement. MRG provided technical assistance, financial support, and mentorship, while ensuring that decision-making authority remained with the local actors.

Interviewees noted that the partnership allowed the organisations to deepen its community engagement and expand its activities beyond academic research into more applied peacebuilding work. MRG's support as instrumental in helping the organisations build their institutional capacity. MRG's regular check-ins and participatory approach to planning were seen as particularly effective in building trust and alignment around project goals.

Partnerships Among Local CSOs:

The project also played a significant role in strengthening relationships between local civil society organisations. The grant-making scheme facilitated collaboration between groups that had previously worked in isolation. One key achievement was the formation of the Community Peace Network, an informal coalition of CSOs working on issues related to human rights, social cohesion, and local governance. This network emerged organically from project-supported dialogue sessions and continues to meet periodically to share insights and coordinate activities. Participants highlighted how these interactions reduced competition for resources and fostered a shared sense of purpose.

Success Factors and Challenges:

Several factors contributed to the success of these partnerships:

- **Locally Driven Approach:** MRG's decision to work through existing, locally rooted CSOs rather than introducing new structures was repeatedly cited as a key success factor. This approach built on pre-existing relationships and community trust.

- **Capacity Building and Peer Learning:** The emphasis on joint workshops and collaborative activities created opportunities for peer learning and skill transfer, particularly in areas like advocacy, human rights documentation, and community engagement.
- **Flexibility and Responsiveness:** MRG's flexibility in adapting to partners' needs, particularly during periods of heightened insecurity, was appreciated by local stakeholders.

4. Conclusion

The Inclusive Peacebuilding project in Thailand's southern border provinces has demonstrated considerable success in promoting the meaningful participation of marginalised communities in peace processes. Through a combination of capacity-building, advocacy, and community-led initiatives, the project strengthened the role of local civil society organisations in peacebuilding efforts. The use of Outcome Harvesting and MSF methodologies provided valuable insights into the pathways through which these outcomes were achieved. The findings indicate that women, persons with disabilities, and youth have become more visible and active in community dialogues, while the project's support for interfaith dialogue has contributed to greater understanding and collaboration between Buddhist and Muslim communities. The strategic decision to provide grants to pre-existing, volunteer-led initiatives proved to be a cost-efficient and sustainable approach, ensuring that project-supported activities were deeply rooted in community priorities.

Despite the project's achievements, the evaluation also identified ongoing challenges that may affect the sustainability of the results. Persistent security concerns, the restrictive legal framework imposed by emergency laws, and the limited financial capacity of some CSOs present potential obstacles to continued progress. Nonetheless, the strong foundation of trust-based partnerships, the development of skills and organisational capacities, and the high degree of local ownership observed throughout the project suggest that many of the benefits achieved will endure beyond the project's conclusion. The experiences documented through this evaluation underscore the importance of locally driven, context-sensitive peacebuilding initiatives that prioritise the perspectives of those directly affected by conflict. Lessons learned from this project can inform future programming, with particular emphasis on the importance of flexible funding mechanisms, inclusive dialogue processes, and sustained support for grassroots actors in complex peacebuilding contexts.

5. Lessons Learned & Recommendations

The evaluation highlights key lessons from the project's implementation, reinforcing the effectiveness of its locally driven, inclusive, and participatory approach to peacebuilding. Most recommendations focus on **scaling and refining successful strategies** rather than fundamentally altering existing approaches, as these have proven highly effective across multiple dimensions. Strengthening support for community-based organisations, expanding inclusive methodologies, and enhancing financial management capacity will further sustain and amplify the project's impact. The following recommendations build on these successes to ensure continued progress in fostering local ownership, resilience, and long-term engagement in peacebuilding efforts.

1. Strengthen Support for Existing, Locally Embedded Organisations:

By funding community-based and civil society organisations with established community trust and knowledge, the project ensured that interventions were contextually relevant and effective. Rather than replacing grassroots efforts, it strengthened existing initiatives, making the approach both cost-efficient and sustainable. Future interventions should continue prioritising support for locally embedded organisations, expanding the grant-making model with flexible, context-responsive funding that allows them to adapt to evolving challenges while maintaining their grassroots focus.

2. Expand Capacity-Building Opportunities for CSOs:

Strengthening the financial management capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) is essential for ensuring the sustainability and accountability of peacebuilding initiatives. Future interventions should prioritise targeted financial management training for CSOs, covering budgeting, grant compliance, procurement procedures, and reporting requirements. This should be complemented by ongoing mentorship and technical support to help organisations navigate donor expectations and improve internal financial systems. Providing tailored guidance to smaller or emerging CSOs will enable them to strengthen their financial oversight, enhancing their ability to manage resources effectively and secure long-term funding.

3. Integrate Local Research into Policy and Advocacy:

 The project successfully supported community-led research efforts, generating valuable insights into the lived experiences of conflict-affected communities. However, ensuring that these findings translate into tangible policy impact requires a more structured approach to advocacy and strategic communication. Future initiatives should focus on building the capacity of CSOs to effectively communicate their research findings to decision-makers, media, and the public in ways that drive policy change. To achieve this, training programmes should cover policy analysis, stakeholder mapping, and evidence-based advocacy techniques, equipping local organisations with the skills to draft compelling policy briefs, op-eds, and research-based recommendations. Furthermore, workshops on narrative framing and media engagement can help CSOs present their findings in ways that resonate with different audiences, particularly policymakers and the general public.

4. The Power of Storytelling and Community-Led Research:

Community-led research and participatory storytelling have proven effective in raising awareness of human rights issues and fostering dialogue across community divides. Future initiatives should integrate these approaches by equipping local organisations with the skills and resources to document lived experiences, generate evidence for advocacy, and engage decision-makers. Providing training on research methodologies, digital storytelling, and policy engagement will enable communities to influence discussions with credible, locally grounded insights. Strengthening these capacities will enhance the impact of grassroots advocacy and ensure that community voices play a central role in shaping policy and peacebuilding efforts.

5. Sustain and Expand Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):

The psychological impact of past trauma affected some participants' ability to fully engage in project activities. While the project successfully created safe spaces for dialogue, additional support is needed to sustain participation, particularly for individuals with lived experiences of conflict. Future initiatives should continue to integrate trauma-informed approaches by equipping facilitators with basic psychosocial skills, incorporating peer support mechanisms, and

ensuring access to psychosocial services where possible. Additionally, psychological supervision for CSO staff should be prioritised, as many frontline workers also experience emotional strain when supporting affected communities.