

Securing Protection and Promoting Fundamental Freedoms of Vulnerable Minorities in Iraq and Somalia 2008-2011

External Evaluation: MRG Iraq and Somali 2008 -2011 Contract No. 2008/159-305

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Executive Summary

MRG responded in 2008 to an EIDHR call on Enhancing Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in countries where they are most at risk; thus embarking on a major three year programme 'Securing Protection and Promoting Fundamental Freedoms of Vulnerable Minorities in Iraq and Somalia'. For three years they worked with partner organizations in Iraq and Somalia/Somaliland and with Somali diaspora in Kenya to build capacity to monitor, research, and publicize abuses of minority rights in difficult contexts. Trainings were delivered in human rights, minority rights, research, monitoring and advocacy. Field research was undertaken for three major MRG reports (two on Iraq and one on Somalia) and small grants issued to help local groups in their own planning and effective operations.

During the three year period Iraq and Somalia each presented stark and complex configurations of unresolved political/institutional conflicts, lethal in-fighting and political positioning along identity (religious, ethnic or clan) lines. MRG was successful in managing to deliver alongside partners in both contexts. In Iraq their operations covered, for example – Baghdad itself, Basra, Zubagr, Nineveh Province's Al hamdaniy and Telkif Districts, Dohuk and Erbil. For Somalia work was not confined to Nairobi (initial political site and base for the Transitional National Government or TNG and later the Transitional Federal Government or TFG) but also extended with the help of partners to Mogadishu, Puntland, South Central Somalia and Somaliland. Target groups were minority populations from all walks of life, with a conscious inclusion and generally high ratio of women. In many cases the settings and populations served had been out of reach in terms of participation and visibility to national or international actors.

A final evaluation was commissioned in early 2012 for review and consolidation of key learnings and progress to date. By this time the three (soon to be four) reports were in mainstream circulation and had been well received – with citations on other websites and application through advocacy and educational outreach. These are: 'Still Targeted: Continued Persecution of Iraq's Minorities' (2010), 'No Redress: Somalia's forgotten minorities' (2010), and 'Iraq's Minorities: Participation in Public Life' (2011).

The evaluation entailed a desk top review of project documentation; a working visit to Nairobi to talk with partners and implementing agencies; similar mission to Erbil to meet with partners and beneficiaries; interviews with over two dozen sources to gauge opinion about the project, outcomes and impacts; and conversations and email exchanges with relevant MRG staff in London and Italy.

One key finding was that MRG was successful in its international advocacy for both Iraq and Somalia, not only through the reports cited above but also through concerted and dedicated lobbying and awareness raising in Brussels, in Geneva (notably inputs to the Universal Periodic Review on Somalia), in European capitals, in New York and Washington, as well as through seminars using venues such as Chatham House in London to good effect for maximum high profile.

For Iraq there are verifiable indicators of optimum delivery in all activity target areas, after a delayed start due to violence in the operating environment. The MRG field visit in August 2009 and workshops in Baghdad and Dohuk then set the pace for steady implementation. Written evaluations and personal interviews indicate satisfaction with the content and quality of trainings.

Incremental minor delays to publications resulted through translation processes and cross-checking data gathered through monitoring. Problems such as no visas being granted to bring partners to Europe-based advocacy events, could not have been anticipated (given formal invitations in place) and were out of MRG control. Concerning results, the small grants programme provided impressive outreach to social groups in need of visibility and participation, as per the Black Iraqis of Basra and specific minority groups in the Nineveh region. It is indicative of impact that Iraqi National media now gives coverage to the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM) and the Parliamentary Minority Caucus, minority-group members of Iraqi lawmakers from various political parties. In Iraqi Kurdistan visible measures have been taken for increased minority and civil society representation at Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) level. MRG effectively lobbied high level officials of the KRG. MRG work has helped to consolidate and give impetus to fledgling human rights initiatives in Iraq.

In Somalia a national action plan was compiled as planned but could not be fully implemented due to conditions over which MRG had no control. It remains an outline approach which can inspire and guide in future. MRG worked with SOMRAF for further networking among groups. The replication of wider Somali conflicts within Nairobi and the NGO community itself, along with high risk and low cohesion were underestimated by MRG. But there is no doubt that 'No Redress' and its Nairobi launch were highly influential, raising awareness of minority communities in Somalia/Somaliland. In terms of results, the Somali work was not only inclusive of women, but also saw one key partner and participant going on to become a woman Minister in the TFG. Other participants were active in civil society consultations on the new Somali Republic Constitution. There is evidence that MRG's work and key partner raised awareness has translated into positive public statements by policy makers and contributed to inclusion of new draft text in legislation currently under discussion in Somalia. A partial loss in funds due to extreme circumstances for the partner can be offset against the high profile influence evident in constitutional debates and process. The ongoing transition process, as well as clear and present conflict with Shabaab in the country mean that Somali minority constituencies will need assistance for a long time to come. There is also a long term need for developing both civic awareness and viable human rights organizations.

Recommendations to MRG include the need for extending security training and provision to include cyber safety, firewalls and computer locking systems for partners in the field. Forward planning for work in high risk settings would benefit from a fund for protection or re-location of human rights activists and their families, in the event of severe intimidation or life-threatening actions (note: this could be done by negotiated understanding or special agreement with EU mission or UN agencies on the ground. Dissemination practice issues should be reviewed, such as speed and quantities of reports available for distribution in the field. For maximum effectiveness, hard copy reports still matter a great deal in the field. While mobile phones have fostered a revolution in communications, actual computer, downloading and printing facilities are not available to the majority. Lastly, both Somali and Iraqi representatives advised MRG to 'get closer to the ground' with a 'more stable presence'. If field-based office operations are not possible, formats for a local MRG focal point could be devised, possibly sharing facilities or based under the umbrella of an established development or human rights agency.

MRG has delivered in an effective manner in Iraq and Somalia, on local, national and international levels.

Securing Protection and Promoting Fundamental Freedoms of Vulnerable Minorities in Iraq and Somalia 2008-2011

Background

Minority Rights Group secured support from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in 2008 for a major programme on 'Securing Protection and Promoting Fundamental Freedoms of Vulnerable Minorities in Iraq and Somalia'. For the following three years they worked with partner organisations in Iraq and Somalia/Somaliland and Kenya to build capacity on human rights and minority rights, monitoring and research, communications and advocacy on abuses of minority rights. Iraq and Somalia presented starkly different, complex configurations of unresolved political/institutional conflicts, lethal in-fighting and positioning along identity (religious, ethnic or clan) lines. For both contexts the major objective was the same: to strengthen the monitoring and advocacy capacity of civil society organisations and human rights activists representing vulnerable minorities and promote their effective public participation at local, national and international level.

Expected results were:

1. Strengthened capacities of civil society organisations, their networks and activists working to protect and promote the human rights of vulnerable minorities in Iraq and Somalia.
2. Increased awareness of the human rights situation of vulnerable minority communities by national and international policy-makers.
3. Increased participation of minority representatives and civil society organizations representing minorities in the relevant national/regional power structures.
4. New or strengthened partnerships between minority organizations and intergovernmental actors with a human rights, humanitarian or conflict prevention mandate in Iraq and Somalia.
5. Improved working environment of minority organizations/human rights activists following the removal of existing legal and/or procedural barriers to freedom of expression, association and religion for minority representatives and civil society organisations representing minorities.

This final evaluation was commissioned in early 2012 for review and consolidation of key learnings and Progress to date.

Methodology:

This review has been conducted with the following steps:

1. A desk top review of project documentation
2. Visit to Nairobi to talk with partners and implementing agencies
3. Visit to Erbil to meet with and talk to IMC staff, Board members and beneficiaries, training participants and other project beneficiaries.
4. Meetings and Conversations with around 20 sources to gauge opinion about the project, outcomes and impacts.
5. Conversations and email exchanges with relevant MRG staff in London/Italy.
6. Identifying generic learning for future planning and work in similar settings.

Findings are here presented using the expected results (above) as a central organizing principal.

I. Strengthened capacity of civil society organizations and human rights activists representing vulnerable minorities in Iraq and Somalia and promote their effective participation at local, national and international level.

Capacity building outcomes varied between Iraq and Somalia according to the entry level capability of partner organizations and groups engaged during outreach. In Iraq there was relative social stability (not always in Baghdad, nor in 2008 when attacks took place against largely Christian groups in the Mosul region) and a high level of education, literacy and competence in basic business formats and communications. Somalia suffered from prolonged civil war, a lack of formal governance since 1991; mass population migrations and divisions and an ongoing conflict with Shabaab during the entire period of this programme. There is evidence of broad and sustained progress in Iraq, where groups applied their new skills and went on to innovate and develop. Specific capacity in Somalia and individual inputs into the transitional federal constitutional process were achieved, with the main partner using new skills in grant writing to forge a ground-breaking contract with UNDP. In both settings MRG successfully promoted women's participation.

Iraq: Key Implementing Partner Iraqi Minorities Council (IMC), previously known as IMO or Iraqi Minorities Organization.

There are verifiable indicators of optimum delivery in all capacity building target areas, after a delayed start due to violence in the operating environment. The MRG field visit in August 2009 and workshops in Baghdad and Dohuk then set the pace for steady implementation. Written evaluations and personal interviews indicate satisfaction with the content and quality of trainings and workshops. Participants went on to successfully gather data for the two reports published: 'Still Targeted: Continued Persecution of Iraq's Minorities' (2010) and 'Iraq's Minorities: Participation in Public Life' (2011). Incremental minor delays to publications resulted through translation processes and time needed cross-check data. A third report is now completed and near publication.

A 2011 survey of 27 participant in a series of six workshops conducted by MRG and Iraqi Minorities Council (IMC) indicated the following: 85% said that they/their organization's advocacy work increased since the training; 81% said that they/their organization definitely benefited from the training and/or found it very useful; 74% had been in contact with other participants as a result of the training; and 63% had undertaken joint work together and/or shared information, knowledge and/or expertise related to minority rights. If anything, some feed-back demonstrates a hunger for more. One participant interviewed (who has a current leadership role working on human rights) suggested that 'three days is not enough in which to do survey training. Real capacity building in data collection must be more finely tuned; rigorous in terms of systems and collation'.

Significant and creative work resulted from the small grants programme. The 2011 Black Iraqi women's and men's empowerment sessions in Al Zubayr near Basra look to have been unique in awareness raising, with outreach to local government and the wider community. Conducted by the Iraqi Centre for Human Rights Activists, this is ground-breaking activity. (1) Other groups which benefited included the Nineveh Centre for Research and Development, the Basra Society for Research and Media for Women, Iraqi Southern Sun Association (Mandaean), the Iraqi Centre for Human Rights Activists and the National Institute for Human Rights. The small grants programme encountered time lags for translation (from Arabic) and communications reasons. From the

recipient end some disquiet was expressed about the process of applying for small grants, indicating a long time for response to applications, unexpected counter-proposals and changes; with very small sums of money involved for quite a lot of work. For MRG the uneven quality and often inexperienced submissions meant additional processing time which they took in their stride.

Somalia: Key Implementing Partner Somali Minority Rights and Aid Forum (SOMRAF)

Both the meaning and effects of capacity building work with Somali groups varied considerably. The key implementing partner SOMRAF, and more demonstrably its leader started well with good media work and strong, well networked presentation leading to direct involvement in civil society consultations for the Somali constitutional process. SOMRAF was a major actor in the public consultations on the constitution held in 2009-2010. The timing for MRG advocacy was deemed by interviewees to have been 'right precisely because of the developing constitution which will (hopefully) shape the future in terms of institutions and evolving norms'. SOMRAF also benefited from MRG training in project and bid planning, leading to a successful bid for the UNDP Constitution project. Capacity building was needed from the most basic start level. The lack of precedents in organizational or social cohesion resulted in over-dependence on a single individual. It proved unsustainable when the lead figure suffered from the high risk setting and 'burn out' due to pressure.

For the smaller partnering groups, MRG capacity building was a start for new engagement in transition processes. One group advocating for Jareer-weyne, Bantu and Banaderi rights has gone on to train with NDI for the formation of a new political party and when met in April was also working solidly to send named minority Elders to Mogadishu for the parliamentary selection process. A group member said privately that 'MRG was the only one to take us seriously'. In another case, MRG programme support to Green Hope was deemed 'considerable' in that funds were critical, enabling workshops on rights and awareness raising to be held in Mogadishu in 2010, furthering engagement and interactions with Elders and political leaders. Green Hope colleague Mariam Aweis Jama was later called on to be the Minister for Gender for the TNG. MRG worked with SOMRAF to build relationships with others for a needed network. This included outreach to groups including Vosomo, Silent Cry, Gabooye organizations, Green Hope, Riverine Development Action as many others. Deep-seated clan rivalries and power dynamics playing out in Somalia were replicated in urban Nairobi, creating insecurity, high risk and direct threat levels that had been underestimated.

Even as severe regional draught became a dominant concern, the successful launch of the MRG report on 'No Redress: Somalia's forgotten minorities' (2010) caught national and international attention. There is no doubt that this report and the SOMRAF involvement in constitution drafting had a major effect.

II. Increased awareness of the human rights situation of vulnerable minority communities by national and international policy makers.

MRG was successful in its international advocacy for both Iraq and Somalia, not only through the reports cited above but also through concerted and dedicated lobbying and awareness raising in Brussels, in Geneva (notably inputs to the Universal Periodic Review on Somalia), in European capitals, in New York and Washington, as well as through seminars using venues such as Chatham House in London to good effect for maximum high profile. Spring 2011 saw advocacy in Brussels which brought in project partners from both Iraq and Somalia, together with decision-makers,

EPLO, MEPs, EC staff, EU government representations and the Somali Ambassador to the EU, as well as interested journalists.

Iraq

In Iraq's 2011 December Dohuk riots Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and Islamic Union head Salahaddin Bahaddin met immediately to contain and calm the situation, indicating both an increased awareness of minority vulnerability and a willingness to respond in a visible way. Iraqi national media now gives coverage to the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM), as well as the Parliamentary Minority Caucus, minority-group members of Iraqi lawmakers from various political parties. In Iraqi Kurdistan visible measures have been taken for increased minority and civil society representation at Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) level. MRG effectively lobbied high level officials of the KRG. In Baghdad (February 2012) The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, met with members of the Iraq Minority Council, attracting good publicity locally and internationally. It is significant that USIP quotes MRG research on their web site, in a notice dated 2 April 2012. (2)

Somalia

In 2009 a national Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Minority Rights (NAP) for Somalia was completed, in principle owned by Somali minority organizations with the intent of using it to guide future advocacy. Resulting participation in the constitution building process and effective data collection for publication pushed this agenda forward, but implementation will depend on the future viability of the Somali Republic and its body politic. As mentioned above, the MRG report 'No redress: Somalia's forgotten minorities' was well received for its regional and international launches, and is widely acclaimed for bringing a new perspective to the dynamics of oppression and loss in the Somali conflict. International actors in Nairobi, London and Brussels praised it as groundbreaking. Interestingly, given the long arm of diaspora politics, a specialist expert in Somali affairs reports a new willingness on the part of the Anglo-Somali society in the UK to discuss human rights.

In the Somali experience there was a potential discrepancy in what was palatable in terms of national and international advocacy. Local voices were concerned about content relating to religion (i.e. Christians in Somalia) possibly because of geo-political sensitivities in the region. This was but one small section amid many others, and MRG has an obligation to international conventions and standards.

III. Increased participation of minority representatives and civil society organizations representing minorities in the relevant national/regional power structures

Participation was visibly increased in national power structures; future and sustained work will be required to make this participation meaningful, given long established power structures, inequalities and belief systems.

Iraq

Iraq used election minority quota law for national elections in March 2010. Due to investigations into allegations of fraud and wrangling between parties, it took until November for a power-sharing agreement to be announced, and for Nouri al-Maliki to be reappointed as prime minister. The Council of Ministers included two Christian ministers (human rights, and industry and minerals), one (of 38) minister was female (Minister without Portfolio, Bushra Hussain Salih).

In KRG, the Ministry of Minorities has changed to the Ministry for Endowment and Religious Affairs which now has a departmental forum for Minorities including civil society representatives. IMC has been working for greater influence in education. The Kurdistan News Agency (Duhok, 26 April 2012) reported on ‘changes (to) cover the curriculum from the fifth elementary class until the fifth scientific class in Arabic, history, geography and civics’.(3) There was also press coverage as ‘Dr. Hunain Al-Qaddo ‘Head of The Iraqi Minorities’ was invited by the Ministry of Human Rights to attend and participate in a minorities workshop in Baghdad. The main aims of the workshop were assessing the problems and challenges facing the Iraqi minorities and the search for possible solutions. Dr. Abdul Karim Abdullah Al-Shallal, Vice Minister of Human Rights , headed the workshop and other government representatives from different Iraqi ministries’. (4)

Somalia

De jur minority inclusion in constitutional process and law is now in place for the Somali Republic, but within the confines of a fragile and still transitional process. Dominant constitutional values and norms are still based on Islam and on the majorities, as is the case for Puntland, i.e. ‘Islam shall be the only religion of Puntland State of Somalia. No any other religion can be propagated in Puntland State, while the Islamic Religion and the traditions of the people of Puntland are the bases of law’. Articles 1 and 2 for the SR are similarly worded.

MRG’s ‘No Redress’ report drew some concern (even criticism) from local actors for its mixing of religion with other identities—and the risk of being associated with western (therefore it could be assumed Christian or secular) interests and making a little-discussed cleavage even deeper. International human rights advocates take a different view, in that ‘truth’ needs to be addressed and spoken; standards not compromised. This is but one difficulty with the Somali national discourse on minorities.

In both Iraq and Somalia Islam is defined as a state religion and it is stipulated that while ‘others may follow’ their religions, there can be no proselytizing and no conversion. For Somalia this means that in legal, technical terms a non-Muslim may also not convert to Islam (as the documents read currently) which could pose major difficulties in the future. Puntland’s constitution refers to discrimination based on race or religion, but not gender. The Somali Republic’s draft includes rights of women but there are differences in translation re: the practice of female genital mutilation with the English version banning this outright and the Arabic stipulating that the Pharonic (or most extreme) is not allowed. While challenges remain, the door has been opened to both women’s and minority participation in national structures.

IV. New or strengthened partnerships between minority organizations and intergovernmental actors with a human rights, humanitarian or conflict prevention mandate in Iraq and Somalia.

In Iraq partnerships have been strengthened and continue to grow. IMC has cultivated partnerships with USIP, the Canadian Government (CIDA), the EU and Ireland Bureau, British Council and MRG. UNAMI also works with many of the groups fostered by MRG. IMC expressed a need for increased lobbying and connections with the EU and a wish that the UN would ‘open an office in Nineveh’ in light of ongoing tensions, ‘family militias’ and violence levels in Kirkuk and Mosul. Their message is that partnerships are still needed and there is both willingness and energy to pursue these.

Broadly speaking no evidence was found of strengthened partnerships between minority organizations themselves in Nairobi/Somalia. On the contrary, many appear to be divided, competitive and suspicious of each other. Thematic and individual connections have however certainly been made to intergovernmental actors with human rights, humanitarian or conflict prevention mandates – this is also addressed above under point II. In the case of one partner Green Hope, connections have been made to UNICEF, WFP and USAID—as well as participation in the UNDP working group on human rights where the marginalisation of the Bantu and other minority groups was articulated. During the famine emergency this was extended to OCHA, for outreach on food and sanitation to the vulnerable and to address the problem of sexual violation in IDP camps. Bantu advocacy extended internationally, particularly via the diaspora.

At the Human Rights Council in Geneva in September, the TFG agreed to all 155 Universal Periodic Review recommendations, heralding a new position in relation to this intergovernmental body. MRG's role is noted above.

V. Improved working environment of minority organizations/human rights activists following the removal of existing legal and/or procedural barriers to freedom of expression, association and religion for minority representatives and civil society organisations representing minorities.

According to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) 'protests took place in Iraq in February 2011, at the same time as demonstrations swept through the Arab world. Unlike protesters in other countries who called on their national leaders to step down, Iraqis mostly called for better public services and an end to corruption'.⁽⁴⁾ Thousands have fled Iraq due to persecution as well as endemic violence. For those who left Baghdad for Kurdistan the KRG has sought demonstrably to both welcome and provide a secure environment. The need for improved access for all to freedom of association and expression remain, and backlash can occur if minorities are seen (ironically) to be favoured over the majority population. This said, Objective V is a profoundly long-term project to which MRG has contributed in positive ways.

It cannot be said that there is improvement in the working environment for Somali human rights activists, apart from the confines of specific (UN supported) working groups or consultations. This is due to the wider unresolved transition questions and still ongoing conflicts in-country. However important markers have been put down for future, including Article 47 (52) of the draft constitution regarding political parties: 'd) should appreciate that everyone, including minority and marginalised groups, can participate in politics'.

Conclusion

MRG delivered on its target areas and activities broadly and deeply in Iraq, and with a sharp divergence in Somalia between high impact on the political framework and new constitution, and low sustainability of the key partner amid a weak and divided NGO sector. For both settings international advocacy was conducted with an eye for best promotion of key messages and influential audiences. The publications on Iraq and Somalia have been well received, widely used, and instrumental for pushing forward the national agenda of Somalia in particular.

The MRG programme design was highly relevant, with a reasonable time frame. Project implementation was undertaken with steady response to any problems as they arose.

Internal challenges included inexperience on the part of partners and the need to sensitize re: standard procedures; the need to cross-check and coordinate translations into Arabic and Somali; shifting organizational forms on the ground; and keeping an eye on security situations and trends. Internal divisions among the Somali community in Nairobi itself were underestimated with resulting financial and personal costs. Without a field presence or more continual on-site analysis and day to day ‘ear to the ground’, MRG could not anticipate the severity of the situation. It was dealt with as well as possible, and along with learning on risks goes the verifiable impact of efforts involved.

Capacity building in raising awareness of human rights and minority rights in particular worked well. Training in monitoring receives mixed reviews, and could be refined to more robust methodology with specific target groups if needed for specific survey purposes. One issue which could also be expanded is how local communities can use or benefit from monitoring and information.

Improvements in partner capacity have translated into visible benefits on the ground in Iraq, particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan. In Somalia ‘the ground’ is still contested as a new interim parliament prepares to take its place through a fraught political process supported by the international community. For Iraq there are verifiable indicators of optimum delivery in all activity target areas. Written evaluations and personal interviews indicate satisfaction with the content and quality of trainings. Concerning results, the small grants programme provided impressive outreach to social groups in need of visibility and participation. It is indicative of impact that Iraqi National media now gives coverage to the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM) and the Parliamentary Minority Caucus, minority-group members of Iraqi lawmakers from various political parties. In Iraqi Kurdistan visible measures have been taken for increased minority and civil society representation at Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) level. MRG effectively lobbied high level officials of the KRG. MRG work has helped to consolidate and give impetus to fledgling human rights initiatives in Iraq.

In Somalia a national action plan was compiled as planned but could not be fully implemented due to conditions over which MRG had no control. It remains an outline approach which can inspire and guide in future. MRG worked with SOMRAF for further networking among groups. There is no doubt that ‘No Redress’ and its Nairobi launch were highly influential, raising awareness of minority communities in Somalia/Somaliland. In terms of results, the Somali work was not only inclusive of women, but also saw one key partner and participant going on to become a woman Minister in the TFG. There is evidence that MRG’s work and key partner raised awareness has translated into positive public statements by policy makers and contributed to inclusion of new draft text in legislation. The ongoing transition process, as well as clear and present conflict with Shabaab mean that Somali minority constituencies will need assistance for a long time to come. There is also a long term need for developing both civic awareness and viable human rights organizations.

Recommendations to MRG include the need for extending security training and provision to include cyber safety, firewalls and computer locking systems for partners in the field. Forward planning for work in high risk settings would benefit from a fund for protection or re-location of human rights activists and their families, in the event of severe intimidation or life-threatening actions (note: this could be done by negotiated understanding or special agreement with EU mission or UN agencies on the ground. Dissemination practice issues should be reviewed, such as speed and quantities of reports available for distribution in the field. For maximum effectiveness, hard copy reports still matter a great deal in the field. While mobile phones have fostered a revolution in communications, actual computer, downloading and printing facilities are not available to the majority. Lastly, both Somali and Iraqi representatives advised MRG to ‘get closer to the ground’

through a 'more stable presence'. If field-based office operations are not possible, formats for a local MRG focal point could be devised, possibly sharing facilities or based under the umbrella of an established development or human rights agency.

MRG has delivered in an effective manner in Iraq and Somalia, on local, national and international levels.

Recommendations

Security Provision and Anticipating Threat

As MRG is well aware from previous work in complex settings, for local/national actors in contested settings (still experiencing recurrent violence) minority rights is not project implementation only, but also a question of political struggle and personal risk. Alongside scenario planning and budgeting for basic security:

- Have a fund for protection or re-location of HR activists and their families, in the event of severe intimidation or life-threatening actions (note: this could be done by negotiated understanding or special agreement with EU mission or UN agencies on the ground)
- Explore connections with the EU Human Rights Defenders programme
- Provide security training for Partners which includes cyber safety, firewalls and computer locking systems.

Communications on Ground Level as well as Global Reach

Paper/hard copy reports still matter a great deal in the field. While mobile phones have fostered a revolution in rapid communications, actual computer, downloading and printing facilities are not available to the majority.

- Review dissemination practice issues such as speed and quantities of reports available for distribution.
- Investigate sub-contracting to local printers/publishers if and when possible

Both Somali and Iraqi representative advised MRG to ‘get closer to the ground’ with a ‘more stable presence’. If field-based office operations are not possible, have a local MRG focal point possibly sharing facilities or based under the umbrella of an established development or human rights agency.

Annex I. Sample Questions Guiding Evaluation Conversations and Enquiry

1. What effect has the project had (if any) on the capacity of partner organisations and the organisations of other participants in the training events? Detail any progress made but equally identify gaps or constraints that are still impeding progress. What input have other organisations or individuals had in supporting and developing partners' capacity in addition to or alongside MRG's input? Assess the MRG contribution to any capacity gains vis a vis the work of others. Assess to what extent the project has made good decisions in deciding which aspects of capacity building to prioritise. Which capacity building methods worked best and why? Which capacity building methods were less effective and why? Are any gains in partners' capacity sustainable over the longer term? What sort of partnership relationship has developed between MRG and the partners? What aspects of this have been more or less helpful? To what extent have any improvements in partner capacity translated into benefits for the community on the ground? Are the partners now more sustainable organisations?
2. To what extent has the project worked with other initiatives locally? These could be government initiatives or civil society ones? Has the cooperation worked well (if found)? Were there (good? Or understandable) reasons why cooperation did not happen?
3. In relation to the advocacy work what did the partners achieve and what helped them to do so. What efforts were less successful and what barriers or factors impeded progress. Were the project objectives realistic given the time frame How likely is it looking that any advocacy gains (if achieved/found) have begun to or will translate into concrete benefits for communities on the ground?
4. In general it would be useful to have comments on how MRG and partners have monitored, kept track of and reacted to changes in circumstances? Have the reactions and changes in project implementation been based on a sound analysis? Have they proven to be good decisions? Have any critical external context changes slipped under the radar or been picked up too late and, if so, has this impacted on the effectiveness of the work?
5. How have MRG and IMC and SOMRAF used the project to do international advocacy work (including media work)? Were community members involved in this/any such work? How were community members informed of these/any such efforts. What are their views about them? If possible make a judgement about what, if any, difference any such work has made in Iraq and Somalia/Somaliland.
6. Comment on the relevance and the design of the programme, was this appropriate? With the benefit of hindsight what might have been done differently.
7. How did the frequently shifting risk dynamics impact on activity implementation? Did MRG and partners have an effective framework in place to assess risks and deal with them? Did MRG and partners respond to new threats in a timely and effective way? Were programme activities adjusted appropriately? Were reaction times adequate?

Annex II: Conversations and Meetings Held, April – May 2012

Minority Rights Group International

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Abdi Bashir Hersi
Executive Director, Green Hope

Dr. Mohamed Garane Omar
Chairman, Odayaasha Beelaha Hareerweyne

Abu Jalalaxi
Bantu advocate

Maryam Aweis Jama
Minister of Women, Development and Family Care

Abdirahman Hosh Jabril
Minister for Reconciliation and Constitution

Shirwa Jama
IDLO Country Representative

Silvia Lavagnoli
OiC - Human Rights Unit, United Nations Political Office for Somalia

Prof. Yash Ghai
Constitutional and Civil Society Participation Consultant

Catriona Byrne
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Louis F. Climes
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Former Member of Parliament, Head of Shabak Democratic Party
<http://www.shabaknews.com/>

Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman
KRG UK Representative, London

Dr. Sami Spania
Assyrian Democratic Movement

Dr. Srood Salliem
Advisor, Assyrian Democratic Movement

Susan Khoshaba
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Khani Hejar
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Mikhael Benjamin
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Muhamad Sherwany
Political Affairs, British Consulate-General

Susan Arif
Director Womens Empowerment Organization

Mr. Sherdl Tahsin MP
(Turkmen)

Azat Kureci
Head, Iraqi Turkman Front

Mahmud Chalabi
Head of Turkman List

Federica Seymandi
Human Rights Officer
UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

Notes

1) For a 2010 AlJazeera report on discrimination against Black Iraqis see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8-JiZlfTyA>.

2) 'According to Minority Rights Group International, Shebaks number between 200,000 and 500,000, while only 5,000 Sabeen-Mandeans remain in Iraq. The population of Yazidis has reportedly fallen from 700,000 to 500,000 amid emigration and targeted attacks...' See: <://www.usip.org/publications/usip-helping-iraqi-minorities-find-their-political-voice>

3) The new curriculum will include information and pictures on ethnic and religious minority groups. <://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/3/304220/>. This is a proposal for Iraqi Kurdistan which must pass procedural hurdles for actual passage in to law, but heralds new thinking on more inclusive content for education.

4) See <://www.shabaknews.com/> 10 May 2012

5) See <http://iwpr.net/report-news/baghdad-dismisses-free-speech-criticism>