

# FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

## PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE CIVILIANS IN IRAQ

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects the findings of an end-of-program evaluation of Minority Rights Group's (MRG), "Protecting Human Rights of Vulnerable Civilians in Iraq," project which ran for 48-months in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as well as Baghdad, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Diyala, and Basra governorates, ending in July 2017. The evaluation aimed at examining overall project success against its proposed objectives as well as presenting findings on program design and implementation, particularly to assess whether MRG has contributed to increasing the capacity of civil society organizations and other civilian activists to monitor and report grave human rights violations against vulnerable civilians in Iraq including minorities, women, and internationally displaced persons (IDPs), and advocating for increased protection to these groups by local, national, and international actors. The evaluation included an overall assessment of the project's effectiveness and achievements particularly to gain an understanding of the extent and depth of changes made at both institutional and grassroots levels and how far reaching these changes were as well as providing recommendations for future planning and programming in this or related areas.

The key interlinked, strategic areas of focus for the project included the following objectives and activities:

- Objective 1: Regular and reliable information on human rights violations against vulnerable civilians in Iraq reported by civil society in a timely and transparent manner to local, national, and international authorities and media. Built on existing networks of civil society organizations and civilian activists, including those representing the interests of vulnerable women, minorities, and IDPs. Published periodic bulletins on the human rights situation as pertains to vulnerable women, minorities, and IDPs in English and Arabic and produced one documentary, with targeted media launches.
- Objective 2: Strengthened ability of civil society organizations in-country to report grave human rights violations in a secure way and to support human rights defenders. In addition to further building on networks of civil society organizations and civilian activists, developed a data collection system, with strong security protocols, for storing and creating accounts of violations. Carried out

capacity-building and training workshops in human rights monitoring for civil society organizations and activists. This included focus on security protocols to protect identities of researchers and victims and the integrity of the data collection system as well as on international human rights and international humanitarian law as relates to civilian protection. Distributed capacity-building grants for smaller civil society organizations working with IDPs, minorities, and vulnerable women to improve human rights monitoring and become a part of growing network and system for documentation and reporting.

- Objective 3: Greater priority given to civilian protection of vulnerable populations, particularly women, minorities, and IDPs, in country plans drawn up by international agencies and in cooperation with the national government and other actors. Published periodic bulletins on the human rights situation as pertains to vulnerable women, minorities, and IDPs in English, Arabic, and Kurdish and produced one documentary, with targeted media launches. In addition, carried out annual advocacy meetings with government and opposition representatives, parliamentarians, and international agencies on the ground to promote civilian protection. Held annual international advocacy missions to the UN Secretariat and relevant agencies (New York), U.S. Government and Congress (Washington, D.C.), UN human rights mechanisms (Geneva), and EU (Brussels) to brief international actors on the human rights situation in Iraq.
- Objective 4: Establishment of civilian-led monitoring (CLM) as a reliable and recognized technique with wide potential application to a range of human rights situations, particularly where security and access of traditional monitors is compromised. As noted, built on existing network of civil society organizations and activists and created a data collection system that enabled reporting from multiple sources (including mobile/SMS, e-mail, and web communications) gathered on a single channel with cross-verification. The platform also had geographic referencing functionality and security protocols. In addition, published a lessons learned thematic report on realizing the potential of civilian-led human rights monitoring and held an expert seminar on the topic in Geneva to discuss findings.

To carry out this evaluation, Social Inquiry conducted a desk review of internal and external MRG documentation in relation to this project; an online survey of MRG stakeholders and mailing list members; key informant interviews with MRG staff, local partners, and external stakeholders; and focus group discussions with workshop participants and indirect beneficiaries (i.e., members of vulnerable communities, particularly those affected by conflict). The evaluation was implemented between May and September 2017, with an evaluation team attending an expert meeting on civilian-led human rights monitoring in Geneva in June, launching the online survey in July, and carrying out interviews and focus

group discussions by Skype, phone, and in person in Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaimaniya, and Baghdad from June through September.

Overall findings indicate that this project was highly relevant to the context of Iraq, particularly as new conflict broke out in the initial phases of project implementation with the emergence of ISIS further putting at risk minorities, women, and displaced populations. Its capturing of territory and brutal targeting of minorities, women, and anyone who did not abide by their rules or who belonged to security forces or leadership, caused not only mass casualties but mass displacement as well. The same was true with respect to the military operations to retake areas from ISIS. This forced displacement created fertile ground not only for further identity-based targeting and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, but had the potential to increase already high rates of domestic violence both within displaced communities as well as those hosting the displaced. All of this taken together gives rise to a number of protection concerns that must be addressed. As such, national and international stakeholders need to be mobilized to ensure the protection of such vulnerable groups. This in turn requires timely data gathered on the ground, in areas that are security-wise and in some cases politically off limits to international human rights monitors, to present and share in public and private advocacy fora. Both advocating for protection and enabling greater local monitoring of the human rights situation particularly for minorities, women, and IDPs, in these areas were key aspects of MRG's project.

The project design too was appropriate for the objectives as a starting point to lay the basis for a human rights culture in Iraq. The project implementation was able to keep as closely as possible to its timeline even with sudden changes within the context. MRG quickly responded and adapted its project to the onslaught of ISIS and the need to change a local partner as a result. Not only this, MRG was able to strategically position itself and its research to raise awareness of the plight of minorities in this conflict as attention to Iraq grew internationally, in media and policy fora in the U.S. and Europe, particularly. In addition, partners as well as microgrant recipients reported having very positive and strong working relationships with MRG through the duration of the project.

Key findings across the specific strategic objectives are as follows, where it should also be noted that the project met or exceeded the bulk of its target indicators:

- MRG bulletins on the human rights situation in Iraq, particularly in relation to minorities and IDPs, generated great a deal of interest in key advocacy capitals and fora including with Iraqi and Kurdish authorities. These reports benefitted as well from substantial input from partners on the ground that were collecting information on human rights violations including through their own networks of monitors.

- With respect to capacity-building of civil society organizations and activists to monitor and report human rights violations, the project had broad sweep, training a total of 155 actors across Iraq. All participants in these activities reported very high levels of satisfaction with the knowledge and skills they gained.
- While the project fell short of its perhaps too high target with respect to percentage of participants actively engaged in human rights monitoring after training, that up to one-third of trainees are actively working in the field is a considerable achievement, particularly given the difficulty of the current conflict and the violence surrounding it. However, a concern is that those active and trained tend to report only on violations that happen to their own ethno-religious group. Microgrant recipients also successfully implemented all projects funded by MRG to increase human rights protections and monitoring at the local level.
- MRG's participation in high-level events in capitals in Europe and the U.S. (either through oral or written participation) allowed for follow-up with policymakers, attention and debate in relation to protection of vulnerable groups. MRG's key points and recommendations are reflected in UNDP's 2016-2020 Iraq Country Program Strategy; OHCHR Deputy High Commissioner's statements on Iraq; UN Human Rights Council's reports; emerging research and protocols within the National Protection Cluster in Iraq on collective punishment of ISIS families; and a UK-Iraq resolution on accountability for ISIS crimes.
- That MRG was successful in bringing Iraqi activists to these platforms also contributed to raising awareness of human rights abuses in the country from people who are directly experiencing it (e.g., Nadia Murad) and giving them a network for greater advocacy and influence in turn.
- Positive influence in law-making in Iraq was achieved through this project thanks to the combination of MRG's direct advocacy activities, active collaboration with national policymakers both in Erbil and Baghdad in relation to protection of minorities and enforced disappearance legislation, among others, as well as the sponsoring of microgrant recipients that have successfully influenced their provincial policymakers through their projects including anti-discrimination policies in schools.
- A portal for CLM (Ceasefire) was effectively established, first allowing only partner organizations to upload information, and is now opened to the public to report into. External stakeholders reported interest in utilizing the portal for information on trends as a component for wider protection advocacy and MRG developed innovative technology particularly for the Arabic language in capturing trends based on reporting and discussion across Twitter.

- MRG's expert meeting presenting the portal and lessons learned on civilian-led human rights monitoring was well-attended and very well received as noted by participants including OHCHR, ICRC, and the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC), among others who expressed continued collaboration on this issue. In addition, commitment has been secured to pioneer a CLM program in another country, Iran.

This project and its initial outcomes have the potential to reverberate long after its completion. This is because as the conflict context shifts in Iraq toward post-conflict stabilization, development, and peacebuilding, more actors will be forced to engage in the legacies of human rights violations of ISIS and other actors. Such a shift is already starting to happen as noted by resolutions around accountability for ISIS crimes and exploration of preventing collective punishment. That these initiatives are at present not encompassing enough of all victims and all perpetrators, the need for impartial monitoring and documentation as well as advocacy is necessary. In addition, there is growing interest in the CLM portal from local and international civil society based in Iraq, including partners as well as an emerging field of study and practice on the uses of CLM. Iraq is a useful context to further pilot new innovations with the portal to improve its impact and usage among a variety of actors. Related to this, MRG has further built a network of activists and civil society organizations on the ground who are actively carrying out human rights reporting and monitoring. This growing engagement of local actors will help in furthering the knowledge of human rights monitoring and reporting to ordinary citizens who may be affected by such violations. Given this, there is room to further grow and deepen the network to be a more vocal, reliable, and active force in human rights discourse and action in the country.

The following recommendations should be taken into consideration in designing and implementing programming to build on the solid foundations put down with this project:

- Greater coordination and interaction between local partners. This would help in further strengthening the network of human rights monitors with partners sharing their own lessons learned and strategies with each other as well as fostering greater dialogue and interaction across groups and locations. It would also allow for greater ownership and opportunities for stronger, nationally-led advocacy.
- More encouragement for cross-identity human rights documentation and reporting where possible. This is the approach local partners take and should be spread more to those they are training so that all cases are included in monitoring irrespective of identity. Perhaps even fostering more spaces for cross-identity learning and implementation. Furthermore, efforts need to be made to reach out beyond minority and women's organizations to capture greater diversity of IDPs (e.g., Sunni Arabs) affected

by conflict with respect specifically to capacity building of local communities in relation to human rights monitoring and reporting.

- Improved tracking of knowledge gain and active use. While the rationale for not carrying out pre/post tests of knowledge gain and learn with vulnerable populations is important, more culturally sensitive objective measures of learning and application of skills should be considered not only to show impact but as well to determine which technical capacities need improvement and how best to keep engaged human rights monitors in such a difficult setting. This could take the form of greater and more sustained follow-up with participants after initial capacity building.
- Related to this, implement more training events, at different levels depending on participants' needs. This may be necessary for further training and capacity building of civil society actors and activists that have already undergone an initial training. Regular follow-up on them would help to determine where individuals and communities have gaps in knowledge and implementation as well as delve into more advanced topics for those who are ready for it.
- Engage partners, local civil society, and activists more actively in the writing process of reports and co-authorship. To further build more ownership of the process of human rights monitoring and reporting, work with these stakeholders in co-authorship of reports rather than have them input information to reports.
- Increase MRG presence in Iraq. The majority of stakeholders indicated that more face-to-face interaction and support would be of use in raising key issues, further building capacity, in providing more impactful technical advice, and in helping prevent unrelated political intrusion into policy discussion and formulation. This includes better interaction with advocacy actors based in Iraq, including international human rights and humanitarian ones. In addition, it may also be worthwhile and useful to further encourage and activate local partners to increase engagement within these fora including humanitarian cluster system, where most of the information (especially protection-related) flows.
- In addition to innovations already planned for CLM, track monitoring via Facebook post as this is also a source of significant information on rights violations and incidents across Iraq (more widely used than Twitter).

## 1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Minority Rights Group's (MRG) "Protecting Human Rights of Vulnerable Civilians in Iraq," implemented in coordination with the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, the Asuda Organization for Combating Violence against Women (ASUDA), the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO), and Essex University, respectively, aimed to develop innovative ways to allow real-time, civilian-led reporting of human rights violations affecting minority communities, women, and internally displaced people in the country with a particular focus on those in conflict and difficult to access areas. The project included capacity building for local partners, learning by doing through small grants, research and publications analyzing violations reported and verified, linked with national and international advocacy. This work was supported by the European Commission, as well as the Canadian, Dutch and Finnish Ministries of Foreign Affairs and was carried out over 48 months (including 6 months extension), ending in July 2017. The project was implemented in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as well as Baghdad, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Diyala, and Basra governorates.

The impetus for this project came out of the recognition of two critical factors. First, that many patterns of human rights abuses against vulnerable civilians, by both governmental and non-state actors, remain under-reported. And second, that vulnerable civilians in Iraq encompass a broad sector of the population including ethnic and religious minorities as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless persons and vulnerable women, including those fleeing gender-based violence (GBV). This proved to be especially true after ISIS swept through half the country as project implementation began, brutally targeting minorities and women particularly in addition to anyone who did not abide by their rules thus causing widespread, mass forced displacement of a large swath of the population, including Sunni Arabs. This forced displacement also created fertile ground not only for conflict related sexual and gender-based violence, but had the potential to increase already high rates of domestic violence both within displaced communities as well as those hosting the displaced given strain placed on families already dealing with the economic crisis facing the country. Furthermore, ISIS's arrival and the military operations to remove them made large portions of Iraq inaccessible for human rights monitors, deepening the need for more civilian-led efforts in this regard.

As such, building on its previous programming with ethnic and religious minorities on civilian-led human rights reporting, with this project MRG and its partners carried out work across the following interlinked strategic objectives:

*Objective 1: Regular and reliable information on human rights violations against vulnerable civilians in Iraq reported by civil society in a timely and transparent manner to local, national, and international authorities and media.* Built on existing networks of civil society organizations and civilian activists, including those representing the interests of vulnerable women, minorities, and IDPs. Published periodic bulletins on the human rights situation as pertains to vulnerable women, minorities, and IDPs in English and Arabic and produced one documentary, with targeted media launches.

*Objective 2: Strengthened ability of civil society organizations in-country to report grave human rights violations in a secure way and to support human rights defenders.* In addition to further building on networks of civil society organizations and civilian activists, developed a data collection system, with strong security protocols, for storing and creating accounts of violations. Carried out capacity-building and training workshops in human rights monitoring for civil society organizations and activists. This included focus on security protocols to protect identities of researchers and victims and the integrity of the data collection system as well as on international human rights and international humanitarian law as relates to civilian protection. Distributed capacity-building grants for smaller civil society organizations working with IDPs, minorities, and vulnerable women to improve human rights monitoring and become a part of growing network and system for documentation and reporting.

*Objective 3: Greater priority given to civilian protection of vulnerable populations, particularly women, minorities, and IDPs, in country plans drawn up by international agencies and in cooperation with the national government and other actors.* Published periodic bulletins on the human rights situation as pertains to vulnerable women, minorities, and IDPs in English and Arabic and produced one documentary, with targeted media launches. In addition, carried out annual advocacy meetings with government and opposition representatives, parliamentarians, and international agencies on the ground to promote civilian protection. Held annual international advocacy missions to the UN Secretariat and relevant agencies (New York), U.S. Government and Congress (Washington, D.C.), UN human rights mechanisms (Geneva), and EU (Brussels) to brief international actors on the human rights situation in Iraq.

*Objective 4: Establishment of civilian-led monitoring (CLM) as a reliable and recognized technique with wide potential application to a range of human rights situations, particularly where security and access of traditional monitors is compromised.* As noted, built on existing network of civil society organizations and activists and created a data collection system that enabled reporting from multiple sources (including mobile/SMS, e-mail, and web communications) gathered on a single channel with cross-verification. The



platform also had geographic referencing functionality and security protocols. In addition, published a lessons learned thematic report on realizing the potential of civilian-led human rights monitoring and held an expert seminar on the topic in Geneva to discuss findings.

## 2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation comprised both qualitative and quantitative methodology to assess the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficacy, impact, and sustainability. Evaluation activities included:

- Desk Review of Documentation Below
- Online Survey of MRG Stakeholders / Mailing List Members
- Key Informant Interviews with MRG, Ceasefire, ASDUA, HHRO, and Essex Staff and Stakeholders
- Focus Group Discussions with Workshop Participants and Indirect Beneficiaries

The desk review entailed reading through and analyzing the following MRG project documents:

- Project Proposal, Workplan, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Budget
- Interim Narrative Reports
- Activity Completion Tracker
- Human Rights Bulletins
- Ceasefire Portal Reporting and Web Analytics

The online survey was developed by Social Inquiry with input from MRG and focused on stakeholders' knowledge and usage of MRG advocacy products. MRG usually sent hard copies of their reports and other products to key stakeholders, the team compiled an e-mail mailing list for those policymakers, academics, and other civil society contacts with whom they have interacted and shared information. The survey, developed via Google Survey, was sent to this list by MRG along with regular follow-up messages. To ensure confidentiality of respondents, all responses were sent directly to Social Inquiry.

The key informant interviews consisted of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders conducted in Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaimaniya, and Baghdad as well as by phone and Skype as needed. The interview guides used were developed by Social Inquiry in coordination with MRG specifically for this evaluation, tailored to the specific interview and stakeholder as needed.

Interviews were also held with MRG staff related to this project. These were all conducted by Skype.

In total, three focus group discussions were carried out in Sulaimaniya, Baghdad, and Dohuk. Social Inquiry developed the focus group discussion questions in part based on more simplified versions of the key informant interview guides. The focus group discussions involved a sample of participants of ASUDA workshop participants, HHRO workshop participants, and potential indirect project beneficiaries from the Ezidi community, respectively.

A full list of interview and focus group participants are listed in the table below. The online survey, key informant interview guides, and specific focus group guides can be found in the Annex.

Table 1: List of Key Informants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>
Mark Lattimer	MRG Executive Director	Skype
Mays Al-Juboori	MRG Civilian Rights Officer	Skype
Miriam Puttick	MRG / Ceasefire Center Civilian Rights Officer	Skype
Ayman Alhelbawy	School of Computer Science and Electrical Engineering, University of Essex	Skype
William Warda	Chairman, HHRO	HHRO Office, Erbil
Rebwar Karim	Project Coordinator, ASUDA	Skype
Mikhael Benjamin	Director, Nineveh Research Centre	Dilshad Hotel, Dohuk
Layla Hamawandi	Director, Jihan Organization for Education, Human Rights, Culture	Phone
Eileen McCarthy	Advocacy Campaigns Manager, Save the Children Iraq	Classy Hotel, Erbil
Belkis Wille	Iraq Researcher, Human Rights Watch	Skype
Suki Nagra	Former Member, UN Investigation Mission to Iraq (OHCHR)	Skype
Ashwaq Al-Jaff	MP, Human Rights Committee	Café, Sulaimaniya

Table 2: List of Focus Group Discussion Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>
6 HHRO trainees	Various civil society representatives (5 men, 1 woman)	HHRO Office, Baghdad
5 ASUDA trainees	Various civil society representatives	ASUDA Office, Sulaimaniya

	(4 women, 1 man)	
2 Ezidi community members	Community members from displaced Ezidi population	Community Centre in Sharia, Dohuk

### Limitations

The biggest obstacles to carrying out this evaluation came in terms of reaching stakeholders and gaining their consent to participate in this work. MRG put together an extensive e-mail list for the online survey, but from the July 2017 launch to present, only 9 respondents participated in the survey, despite repeated reminders from MRG. This is relatively common with online means of data collection, hence regular follow-up with potential respondents. The timing of the survey, over the summer and early autumn may have also played a role, as many people tend to be on holiday during this period. The same was true with both Iraq-based and international UN and policy officials. Social Inquiry worked through both MRG's contact list as well as utilizing its own networks to reach out to relevant contacts. However, again, there was minimal response, even after follow-up. With regard to Iraqi policymakers, the Social Inquiry team made contact with several, many of whom declined to participate. Given the political goings on in the country over the course of the evaluation, including the Kurdistan referendum, many Iraqi policymakers were not in Baghdad but in their home constituencies. Social Inquiry reached out to them in these locations as well, but again, was met with little interest in participating in this evaluation. The team accommodated requests to see questions ahead of time and to meet or call where convenient to not much avail. Finally, with regard to focus groups with indirect beneficiaries, the one scheduled with Ezidis originally included both men and women and was put together in coordination with an HHRO partner in Dohuk. However, once the discussion started, the women participants left as they did not feel they could answer the questions posed and were under the impression this session was about humanitarian aid provision.

### **3. FINDINGS**

MRG has a strong track record of human rights programming and advocacy in both the Kurdistan Region and Federal Iraq with both local civil society and policymakers in addition to links with international community on these issues as relates to minorities, women and other vulnerable groups. This makes the organization very well placed to carry out the highly coordinated, nuanced, and sensitive work necessary to build a civilian-led human rights monitoring and reporting network in the country and to broach

discussion at the international level on the use of such methodology across conflict settings in the pursuit of accountability.

### *3.1 General Project Design and Implementation*

The overall project design was appropriate for the objectives as a starting point to lay the basis for a human rights culture in Iraq. The project implementation was able to keep as closely as possible to its timeline even with sudden changes within the context. MRG quickly responded and adapted its project to the onslaught of ISIS and the need to change a local partner as a result. Not only this, MRG was able to strategically position itself and its research to raise awareness of the plight of minorities in this conflict as attention to Iraq grew internationally, in media and policy fora in the U.S. and Europe, particularly. As an MRG staff member noted:

*We kept the project activities, but moved them in order in some cases . . . we relied on more traditional methods for monitoring and documenting at first stages. I think we reacted quickly and we prepared the “From Crisis to Catastrophe” report on the crimes against minorities. It was one of the first reports internationally on what was happening to minorities in Iraq and the first one trying to put facts over what was happening.*

In addition, partners as well as microgrant recipients reported having very positive and strong working relationships with MRG through the duration of the project, *“I am so glad in working with MRG because they are so good in their job, they provide things for us and their forms and reports are simple and understandable. Also, they are good people.”*

One area to consider for improvement in design going forward relates to local partner interaction, specifically in having them connection with one another more to further strengthen activities and network building. ASUDA and HHRO were unaware of each other’s work during this project (and their respective existences in general) and worked on parallel tracks. While they did have different focuses for this project, both organizations work across the entirety of Iraq and focus on rights protections for vulnerable populations. Having them interact and build relationships may help in further cementing efforts at human rights documentation and monitoring across the country as well as creating greater coalitions for locally-led national and international advocacy in this regard.

### *3.2 Relevance*

Overall, the project exhibited high relevance to the context of Iraq. Minority groups have long been targeted for violence and social and political marginalization and exclusion in the country as have those

who have previously been displaced or deemed ‘stateless’ within Iraq’s borders. Women have also been targeted for gender-based violence, including partner violence in the home. This was certainly the case before the current conflict in Iraq. The emergence of ISIS made this even clearer as both minorities and women were brutally targeted by the armed group. ISIS also targeted anyone who did not abide by their rules or who belonged to security forces or leadership, thus causing mass forced displacement of a large swath of the population, including Sunni Arabs. This forced displacement also created fertile ground not only for conflict related sexual and gender-based violence, but had the potential to increase already high rates of domestic violence both within displaced communities as well as those hosting the displaced. While ISIS’s arrival and upheaval of society was long and extremely damaging to civilian populations, so too have been the military campaigns to remove the armed groups and have caused further displacement, especially of conflict-affected women. All of this taken together gives rise to a number of protection concerns that must be addressed. As such, national and international stakeholders need to be mobilized to ensure the protection of such vulnerable groups. This in turn requires timely data gathered on the ground to present and share in public and private advocacy fora. Both aspects of this work are key to MRG’s project.

Developing new and innovative ways of monitoring and reporting human rights abuses through empowering civil society and civilians seems particularly necessary then as many areas have not been accessible due to the nature of the parties in conflict (i.e., ISIS) and because national authorities have heavily restricted access of journalists and human rights rapporteurs to areas where violations have been allegedly committed by security forces, as reported by one evaluation respondent. Civil society organizations are well-placed to be able to report however they do need more training and support, *“Some quality is good, but some are not even to the minimum standard. Some are mixing primary data and people’s opinion. The question is also about format, sometimes it is not easily accessible, sometimes it is shared randomly and in weird avenues”* (MRG staff). Indeed, as one external respondent noted, *“[O]rganizations like these need proper documentation, treatment of information in terms of confidentiality, treatment of sources, ensure that there was not tampering with any of the sites . . . they need to improve on technicalities.”*

In addition, there is growing interest from local peacebuilding and reconciliation actors to similarly map incidents of violence as well as community initiatives to reduce harm via an online platform that is accessible to the public. Developing a CLM platform also fits with other recent initiatives that aim to combine technology, social media and decentralization for the benefit of human and civilian rights globally (e.g., documentation efforts by Syrian Archive; spatial analysis of conflicts through digital

content as in Forensic Architecture; use of social media and mobile technology for documenting housing, land, and property issues).

### 3.3 Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Impact

**A. Strategic Objective 1:** Regular and reliable information on human rights violations against vulnerable civilians in Iraq reported by civil society in a timely and transparent manner to local, national, and international authorities and the media

Effectiveness and Efficiency: The completion of the activities linked to this strategic result highlights that the targets have been largely met or exceeded. The research pieces on human rights violations have also reached relevant stakeholders and target groups within the media (both Iraqi and international), policy spheres, and researchers.

In addition, MRG seems to have developed a good communication flow of data between their staff and local partners, which has positively impacted the program's efficiency in producing results. Partners on the ground input substantial amounts of information to MRG in the drafting of bulletins. Furthermore, MRG also utilized their field visits to good effect in gathering as much information as possible. Given this wealth of data, additional bulletins are in the works in addition to the target figure, likely to be published after the completion of the project.

The role of partners in this process, however, was solely to provide information rather than having greater ownership of the bulletins including by being more involved in the drafting process (the specific result related to this indicates information should be "reported by civil society"). The reports were written either by MRG staff, external consultants, and/or other international partners. Only one forthcoming bulletin will be co-authored by ASUDA (this one beyond the 9 planned). Having partners more involved with the bulletins may have also helped in building ownership for the work and in disseminating these reports in Iraq more widely, as their reach in country seems to have been much lower than externally. This is corroborated with interviews with external international stakeholders based in Iraq who were somewhat familiar with MRG but reported not interacting much with the bulletins.

Table 3. Summary of targets in Strategic Objective 1

Target	Completion
1a. 9 bulletins are effectively published and disseminated to at least 1,000 stakeholders.	9 bulletins have been published and disseminated on a variety of topics. Hard copies have been sent to 500 stakeholders. Counting the use of social media, MRG estimated that the dissemination of the bulletins has reached

	more than 20,000 people.
1b. 50% of key national and international policy-makers surveyed report using the contents of the bulletins and other reports.	The online survey carried out at the end of the project by the evaluation team showed that, out of 9 respondents, one of them check/read MRG's bulletins every time they are published, four others check/read them nearly every time they are published, and 4 others check/read them occasionally. In addition, 6 respondents pointed that MRG's analysis and research is very relevant for their work. Although the sample size is extremely small in comparison to the total number of stakeholders to which the bulletins reached, the data available shows that the target of at least 50% of stakeholders surveyed reporting a use of MRG's bulletins has been met.
1c. Statistics and cases given in the bulletins are quoted or adopted by official agencies on at least 10 occasions.	Official agencies and other organizations have been quoting MRG's bulletins, including UNHCR, the Immigration Refugee Board of Canada, the UK Government Stabilization Unit, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Brookings, etc. In total, the number of references exceeding the target of 10.
1d. At least 100 items of international media coverage are generated.	Some bulletins alone were seen to be covered in more than 60 news items. Although no final figure is available, it is likely that, across the nine bulletins, the target of 100 media pieces generated has been achieved.

Impact: Each report was launched either at the European Parliament or in Geneva. At many of these events, Iraqi and Kurdish authorities were also present. In general, policy stakeholders within these fora showed a great deal of interest in the reports based on MRG's own internal reporting. For example, MRG's annual report mentioned that the *Millstones* bulletin "*spark[ed] great debate particularly regarding the humanitarian response and funding responsibilities of the international community.*" However, reception was not the same for each bulletin. In general, it was reported that the bulletins on women's rights and domestic violence did not gather as much attention as the others on conflict and violations against minorities.

While MRG and its work is well-known abroad in policy arenas (Geneva, Brussels, Washington, D.C.), international actors working in Iraq within the humanitarian and protection cluster systems are less familiar with the organization and its reports. In a focus group discussion with indirect beneficiaries, there seemed to be trust in this kind of work, but concern over its reach, "*we have not seen this kind of reports ever but I think if the government saw them and took them under consideration, then it may change something for us, but the problem is that there is a lot of corruption in our government and they will not ever see them.*"

**B. Strategic Objective 2:** Strengthened ability of civil society organizations in-country to report grave human rights violations in a secure way and to support human rights defenders

Effectiveness and efficiency: As part of this strategic objective, 7 workshops were conducted with Iraqi NGOs and activists (3 on minorities' rights stream, 4 on women's rights stream). In order to spread knowledge more widely and to as many people as possible, each workshop was made up of different participants for a total of 155 people trained. The targets established with regard to female participation were met as were those linked to skills and knowledge gain, based on participant self-reporting of learning. Per MRG policy, more objective tests of knowledge gain (such as pre-/post-testing on subject matter) were not utilized out of concern for the self-esteem and confidence building of minority communities who may have had less access to learning opportunities and experiences in general than the overall population. While this policy makes sense and is culturally appropriate particularly when working with vulnerable populations, it made it difficult to ascertain what specifically participants learned and to what degree. It was also difficult to objectively pinpoint the degree to which participants used this knowledge in practice, as according to project partners, less than half of those who participated in trainings were active in civilian-led monitoring activities. Focus group discussion with trainees revealed that in some cases people were brought in to fill diversity requirements of each workshop who may not have been appropriate participants for this kind of work. In addition, respondents indicated that it may also have been the case that some people needed more training to be able carry out monitoring activities on their own, even if self-reporting they were prepared to do so at the end of one training. Finally, relevant target groups were covered within the workshop participants, who by and large were members of established minority NGOs and/or minority activists. This was an important target to meet, but it may have excluded other groups that emerged from the current conflict, like Sunni Arab IDPs.

Project partners suggested that the presence of high profile speakers, including policymakers and international experts, would have increased the overall success of the workshops. The inclusion of policymakers in particular may have further encouraged participants in their work. That being said, the workshops did have the participation of speakers/trainers who had relevant expertise including MRG staff, an Iraqi civil court judge, and well-known Iraqi human rights activists, among others.

The achievement of this strategic objective also included the administration of nine microgrants. Although the original target was 15 grants, the lower number here is due to the higher budget conceded to each one to help ensure the success of activities planned – this was duly reported to the donor the EU ahead of time and approved. The evaluation criteria to select grantees resulted in good geographic



coverage of human rights projects, with projects in governorates that otherwise would be difficult to access. Many of the grantees are well-known organizations in Iraq.

Table 4. Summary of targets in Strategic Objective 2

Target	Completion
2a. 70% of the participants at the training events report having gained necessary skills and knowledge and take an active part in the civilian-led monitoring network.	Although each workshop measured learning differently, across all of them more than 70% of the participants self-reported to have gained necessary skills and knowledge and take an active part in the civilian-led monitoring network – there was no workshop in which the rate was lower than 70%. The degree of active participation in monitoring however seems to have been below 50% per partner and focus group discussion reports.
2b. At least 50% of the participants overall are women.	In most of the workshops, the number of female participants exceeded the number of men – in many cases significantly. The target was amply achieved.
2c. At least 10 CSOs independently issue regular, credible statements on human rights violations.	Although this evaluation did not follow-up with each workshop participant or microgrant recipient to determine whether they issue independent, credible statements on human rights violations, through anecdotal evidence collected, it is clear that a number of CSOs report human rights monitoring information to MRG and its partners. Whether these are public, standalone statements however is unclear.
2d. At least 10 new monitoring projects run successfully by small CSOs across Iraq.	A total of 9 micro-projects by small CSOs across Iraq were funded by MRG and implemented. The lower number is justified by the higher budget per project than expected initially.

**Impact:** It is difficult to know the exact impact of the activities carried out under this rubric with regard to workshop participants' own work as they each participated in one workshop, the only data on learning was self-reported, and there was no follow-up on what they did after the workshop or what skills they applied in practice. That being said, given the difficulty of the current conflict and the violence surrounding it, having up to one-third of trainees actively working in the field is no small feat, even if it did not meet target projections. According to one partner, *“Training has been very important. Now we have almost doubled the number of people informing us. If I open the phone, I will have a lot of messages, Whatsapp or Viber. All this is from the people we trained . . . We can cover quite a lot of areas in the country because thanks to the training we have increased our network of monitors from Sinjar to Basra.”*

Finally, while many minority groups are well organized on the ground, they tend to cover only abuses perpetrated against their group, which has the potential to bias reporting and to leave other vulnerable groups without a voice if they are not as organized, as one end-user of such reporting indicated, “Minorities in general have a very inward focus. When they raise their issues, they are going to put it in a historical framework in which they are victims and it is going to limit the view on broader trends.” One example of this includes Sunni Arab IDPs. While Sunni Arabs are not a minority by definition, they are the largest proportion of IDPs in Iraq and have been subject to severe violations by both ISIS and security forces. This in-group focus and lack of Iraqi civil society advocacy around Sunni Arabs was noted by another external stakeholder as follows:

*I saw the [Iraqi] population organized by groups, each of them defending their mission. In Geneva, they were lobbying for their own group. Within the Christian community, there are different groups . . . you would have some speaking on behalf of all, but they would not speak for all Iraqis. If anything, some Christian groups would tell us that we should be focusing a lot on Ezidis. So, the groups that were strongly impacted in Nineveh Plains, they would talk on behalf of other groups, like the Ezidis or tell you that you should be looking at other groups – but I don’t recollect them speaking about the Sunnis affected. At most, there was some discussion about how the government was using the whole issue about defeating ISIS as a pretext for clearing some areas from Sunnis, but there was no actual advocacy [for the Sunni Arabs] by anybody.*

This is a critical concern, however cracks in this civil society-wide insularity are starting to appear from more exposure to others including through activities of this project, “I was impressed in the workshops I attended in terms of people being aware of human rights violations being wrong generally with independence on who committed them – even if it was their own group” (MRG staff). Thus, building on this, going forward there should be more encouragement for cross-identity human rights documentation and reporting where possible, as opposed to just paying attention and monitoring issues within one’s own ethno-religious group – this is something it seems local partners do, so should be spread more to those they are training so that all cases are included in monitoring irrespective of identity. Perhaps even fostering more spaces for cross-identity learning and implementation.

**C. Strategic Objective 3:** Greater priority given to civilian protection of vulnerable populations, particularly women, minorities, and IDPs, in country plans drawn up by international agencies and in cooperation with the national government and other actors.

Effectiveness and efficiency: A number of advocacy missions were held over the course of the 4-year project, primarily in Geneva, Brussels, and Washington, D.C., usually linked to the publication of

bulletins or in anticipation of significant policy and diplomatic milestones and decisions (e.g., Universal Periodic Review of Iraq in the UN Human Rights Council, high-level committee sessions, the publication of the Chilcott Report, the visit of senior officials to Iraq, etc.).

Many of these events benefitted from the network established by MRG and its partners, in the sense that they were able to bring to the advocacy capitals several members of Iraq's civil society. In part as a result of this as well as MRG's own bulletins, international and national policy stakeholders have been incorporating the rights and protection needs of vulnerable populations in their reports and statements (e.g., UNDP Iraq's country program 2016-2020, statement by OHCHR Deputy High Commissioner, etc.), often asking MRG to contribute language. This has helped in meeting the targets set out under this objective.

Positive influence in law-making in Iraq has also been achieved as part of this result, thanks to the combination of direct advocacy activities, active collaboration with national policymakers both in Erbil and Baghdad in relation to protection of minorities and enforced disappearance legislation, among others, as well as the sponsoring of microgrant recipients that have successfully influenced their provincial policymakers through their projects.

Table 5. Summary of targets in Strategic Objective 3

Target	Completion
3a. The UN country team or other inter-governmental agencies in Iraq introduce at least one specific initiative to increase human rights protection of specific vulnerable civilian populations.	Some examples on the achievement of this target would be UNDP's country program document for Iraq (2016-2020) quoting MRG's recommendations; OHCHR Deputy High Commissioner releasing a statement echoing many MRG's own priorities after MRG engaged her a week before her trip to Iraq; and UN Human Rights Committee reflecting many of MRG's concerns about the situation of vulnerable groups in Iraq.
3b. 3 positive changes in law, policy or practice are introduced at national or provincial level removing restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of vulnerable populations, including vulnerable women, IDPs, stateless persons and minorities.	Some examples of positive changes in law include: new law on protecting minorities passed in May 2015 in Kurdish Parliament; new representation for minorities introduced in KRG's Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs; new measures to combat discriminatory practices against religious minorities in public schools in Maysan Governorate (advocacy through Al-Miezan Association); current discussions and readings in the Iraqi parliament on domestic violence and anti-discrimination law; current works with the Iraq High Commission for Human Rights on forced disappearances.

3c. Insertion of ongoing concerns about rights of minorities, IDPs and women into the agenda of IGOs and development agencies operating in Iraq.	Emerging protocols and research within the Protection Cluster on collective punishment of ISIS families, including women. UK-Iraq resolution within the 2017 UN General Assembly on Accountability for ISIS Crimes in Iraq.
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Impact: Although it is difficult to establish a clear and direct cause-effect relation from MRG’s advocacy work and policy in relation to Iraq, international attention to vulnerable populations has increased over the last 4 years. As reported in annual reports, MRG’s participation in high-level events in capitals in Europe and the U.S. (either through oral or written participation) allowed for follow-up with policymakers, attention and debate. The fact that MRG was successful in bringing Iraqi activists to these platforms also contributed to raising awareness of human rights abuses in the country from people who are directly experiencing it (e.g., Nadia Murad) and giving them a network for greater advocacy and influence in turn. From an MRG staff, *“A good example of success is Nadia Murad, whose first international event was an MRG workshop where we invited her to give a statement in the Minority Rights Forum in Geneva. Her statement and the UN Human Rights Council was really effective and this gave her a platform to gain greater impact.”*

MRG also seems to have strong relationships with Iraqi national policymakers. One interviewed for this evaluation highlighted the initial *“smart steps”* MRG enacted in bringing together policymakers around minority rights and felt it necessary for MRG to continue to remain engaged with the Human Rights Committee to help in *“limiting political intrusion”* to carry policy and legislation forward for the benefit of all Iraqis. Both partners also raised the need for more MRG support and presence in country and in joint meetings with policymakers as they felt MRG would have helped their own efforts. The 2 missions (in years 3 and 4) may have been too few.

It also seems that international human rights and humanitarian stakeholders based in Iraq have less knowledge of MRG and its work than international and national policymakers; and the project would have benefitted from more national advocacy in Iraq with other advocacy actors, both national and international, operating in the country. Data from the online survey indicates that scholars and researchers utilize these reports, but interview data points out that protection and advocacy practitioners on the ground do to a much lesser extent. As one advocacy practitioner noted, *“Most conversations and networks happen here face to face, it is critical especially when it comes to talk about human rights abuses and the sensitivities of it . . . There should be encouragement for MRG’s local partners to work with other INGOs, and especially to get into the clusters.”* Going forward, MRG and its partners getting formally in touch or engaging with the existing humanitarian clusters in Iraq led by OCHA, especially the protection one, may enhance advocacy efforts further.

**D. Strategic Objective 4:** Establishment of CLM as a reliable and recognized technique, with wide potential application to a range of human rights situations, particularly where security and access of traditional monitors is compromised.

Effectiveness and efficiency: A portal for CLM (Ceasefire) was effectively established, first allowing only partner organizations to upload information, and now has recently been opened to the public to report into. The portal originally collected the reports that project partners were gathering –especially ASUDA’s researchers deployed in 6 cities across Iraq. The portal was also presented in the training workshops organized by ASUDA and HHRO so that local NGOs and activists are aware of its existence and how it works. Because the partner organizations were by design operating in slightly different capacities in terms of human rights monitoring and reporting, they had differing views on the system. Because ASUDA had more advanced researchers carrying out human rights monitoring, and they were made aware of the portal earlier, they were extremely keen to use it. As noted in focus group discussions, *“The most important thing that made the trainings with MRG promising was especially the portal which was an amazing idea to make all the needed people who cannot contact us, can express their concerns online to get help and get others to take action.”* HHRO workshops on the other hand, introduced the portal later in the project with a more varied skill-level of trainee who expressed that while they appreciated the training they did not yet feel comfortable using the portal. In addition, MRG has developed a Twitter crawler that automatically scans all Arabic-language content published on Twitter for reports of human rights violations in Iraq. These tweets are condensed into a live feed displayed on the Ceasefire online platform as a window into social media discussion of these most pressing issues. Internal data analysis tools were also incorporated into the online platform that allow for the identification of trends across tweets and isolate significant reports as they come in. This package is a particularly innovative development given that up to now, very little of language processing technology has been used for Arabic despite the fact that social media is perhaps the largest forum in which information on human rights violations is shared and discussed in the Arabic-speaking world.

After the portal and the general CLM initiative was presented, among other events, in Geneva to international policy stakeholders (with attendance of the evaluation team), a lessons learned report was disseminated, successfully tackling some of the challenges that CLM face now for widespread and valid use. The expert meeting was well-attended and very well received as noted by participants including OHCHR, ICRC, and the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC), among others who expressed continued collaboration on this issue.

In addition, commitment has been secured to pioneer a CLM program in another country, Iran.

Table 6. Summary of targets in Strategic Objective 4

Target	Completion
4a. 3 IGO actors or INGOs support the extension of civilian-led reporting in Iraq, or its application to other situations where security or lack of access impedes existing monitoring.	The civilian-led reporting tool was presented in a <i>lessons learned</i> workshop in Geneva successfully gathering the explicit support of other IGO and INGOs that attended and participated in the event.
4b. 10 items of international media coverage are generated on CLM as a technique.	5 items of international media coverage were generated on CLM as a technique.
4c. Commitment is secured to pioneer CLM in at least one other country situation.	MRG has been confirmed an expansion of CLM in Iran.

**Impact:** Discussion and report of lessons learned with regard to CLM in Iraq at the international level garnered a great deal of interest, including one government official indicating that *“Our team is looking through the report and sees opportunities for us to integrate the thinking that went into this piece into various areas of our work.”* The Ceasefire portal itself has helped to create a new source of reporting violations of human rights through both a combination of project partners’ input and ordinary civilian/activists – up to now there are several thousands of cases uploaded into the website. One of the interviewees mentioned that the portal was an interesting development and may at some point become a source to use for humanitarian advocacy, *“I reached out to MRG, thinking it was a useful mechanism to collect information and I asked how they used it, how they analyzed things, and whether it would be disaggregated for analysis.”* The platform however is right now mainly reliant on the inputs of project partners, especially ASUDA’s researchers. For this reason, the data shows an excessive bias towards reporting violence against women. While the general public seems interested in this initiative, considering Facebook analytics in relation to posts about the portal and its public use (1,012,745 people reached and 59,358 engagements including liking, sharing, and commenting on posts), more outreach is likely necessary to have people utilize it and report into it. Strong online and offline outreach has already started and time is needed to see its effect. Also, linking it to existing humanitarian structures already operating in Iraq, such as the cluster system, would be essential in increasing uptake and usage of the portal.

For its widespread use, however, there are several challenges to be overcome as noted by stakeholders and which are necessary to tackle in future projects. For instance, it was reported that some activists that went through project workshops felt a lack of trust in using such a system for reporting and this perspective will need to be shifted through perhaps greater training on how to use the portal and the

security and anonymity of data uploaded. Furthermore, it may be of use to develop a mobile application for the portal to make it easier to use and more widely accessible. To make it more useful to stakeholders, as suggested by an interviewee, future development may also need to develop additional capacity in the portal to produce basic statistics and reports on trends for easier understanding of data –for which plans seem to be effectively in place already. Finally, policy stakeholders showed constructive concerns that CLM need to take into account –in addition to technical issues such as confidentiality protection, there are limits to the impact that CLM can garner beyond showing trends of human rights violations, i.e., being used in justice proceedings as evidence. Setting expectations for what is possible with the tool and working more closely with local and national stakeholders on what would make it more useful and user-friendly may be a good starting point for future programs in this regard.

### *3.4 Sustainability*

As is evidenced above, this project met nearly all of its targets and its outputs and initial impacts have the capacity to reach far beyond just this project alone. This is because as the conflict context shifts in Iraq toward post-conflict stabilization, development, and peacebuilding, more actors will be forced to engage in the legacies of human rights violations of ISIS and other actors. Such a shift is already starting to happen as noted by resolutions around accountability for ISIS crimes and exploration of preventing collective punishment. That these initiatives are at present not encompassing enough of all victims and all perpetrators, the need for impartial monitoring and documentation as well as advocacy is necessary. Furthermore, both international and national policymakers are keen for MRG to continue its work on and in Iraq. In the case of the latter, they wish for more engagement in country to further policy and legislation to protect minorities, women, and IDPs.

In addition to this, there is growing interest in the CLM portal from local and international civil society based in Iraq, including partners as well as an emerging field of study and practice on the uses of CLM. Iraq is a useful context to further pilot new innovations with the portal to improve its impact and usage among a variety of actors. Related to this, MRG has further built a network of activists and civil society organizations on the ground who are actively carrying out human rights reporting and monitoring. Both partners indicated that their monitors have continued at least some work even after the project cycle ended. This growing engagement of local actors will help in furthering the knowledge of human rights monitoring and reporting to ordinary citizens who may be affected by such violations. Given this, there is room to further grow and deepen the network to be a more vocal, reliable, and active force in human rights discourse and action in the country.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Overall findings indicate that this project was highly relevant to the context of Iraq, particularly as new conflict broke out in the initial phases of project implementation with the emergence of ISIS further putting at risk minorities, women, and displaced populations. The landscape for these groups in Iraq in general can be said to be bleak and the ascendance of ISIS exacerbated the situation, giving rise to a number of protection concerns that need to be addressed through the mobilization of national and international stakeholders. This in turn requires timely data gathered on the ground to present and share in public and private advocacy fora. The project design too was appropriate for the objectives as a starting point to lay the basis for a human rights culture in Iraq. The project implementation was able to keep as closely as possible to its timeline even with sudden changes within the context. MRG quickly responded and adapted its project to the onslaught of ISIS and the need to change a local partner as a result. Not only this, MRG was able to strategically position itself and its research to raise awareness of the plight of minorities in this conflict as attention to Iraq grew internationally, in media and policy fora in the U.S. and Europe, particularly. In addition, partners as well as microgrant recipients reported having very positive and strong working relationships with MRG through the duration of the project.

All of this taken together enabled MRG to meet or surpass most of its stated indicators and to create a foundation for greater and more in-depth expansion of the implementation of civilian-led monitoring at the local level and its usage, credibility, and acceptance at the national and international levels.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking all of this together, it is clear that this is the beginning of critical and relevant work in the country that is both needed and wanted by Iraqis themselves that will contribute not only to improving post-conflict dynamics but helping to rebuild a sense of trust in the rule of law and a culture of human rights for all. There is certainly desire for more MRG engagement on CLM and human rights monitoring and reporting and ultimately protection of vulnerable communities in the country. As such, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration in designing and implementing programming to build on the solid foundations put down with this project:

- Greater coordination and interaction between local partners. This would help in further strengthening the network of human rights monitors with partners sharing their own lessons learned and strategies



with each other as well as fostering greater dialogue and interaction across groups and locations. It would also allow for greater ownership and opportunities for stronger, nationally-led advocacy.

- More encouragement for cross-identity human rights documentation and reporting where possible. This is the approach local partners take and should be spread more to those they are training so that all cases are included in monitoring irrespective of identity. Perhaps even fostering more spaces for cross-identity learning and implementation. Furthermore, efforts need to be made to reach out beyond minority and women's organizations to capture greater diversity of IDPs (e.g., Sunni Arabs) affected by conflict with respect specifically to capacity building of local communities in relation to human rights monitoring and reporting.
- Improved tracking of knowledge gain and active use. While the rationale for not carrying out pre/post tests of knowledge gain and learn with vulnerable populations is valid, more culturally sensitive objective measures of learning and application of skills should be considered not only to show impact but as well to determine which technical capacities need improvement and how best to keep engaged human rights monitors in such a difficult setting. This could take the form of greater and more sustained follow-up with participants after initial capacity building.
- Related to this, implement more training events, at different levels depending on participants' needs. This may be necessary for further training and capacity building of civil society actors and activists that have already undergone an initial training. Regular follow-up on them would help to determine where individuals and communities have gaps in knowledge and implementation as well as delve into more advanced topics for those who are ready for it.
- Engage partners, local civil society, and activists more actively in the writing process of reports and co-authorship. To further build more ownership of the process of human rights monitoring and reporting, work with these stakeholders in co-authorship of reports rather than have them input information to reports.
- Increase MRG presence in Iraq. The majority of stakeholders indicated that more face-to-face interaction and support would be of use in raising key issues, further building capacity, in providing more impactful technical advice, and in helping prevent unrelated political intrusion into policy discussion and formulation. This includes better interaction with advocacy actors based in Iraq, including international human rights and humanitarian ones. In addition, it may also be worthwhile and useful to further encourage and activate local partners to increase engagement within these fora including humanitarian cluster system.

- In addition to innovations already planned for CLM, track monitoring via Facebook post as this is also a source of significant information on rights violations and incidents across Iraq.

## ANNEX: TOOLS FOR EVALUATION

### *A.1 Key informant interview guide for MRG staff*

Many thanks for taking time out of your schedule to participate in this interview. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been hired as part of a team of external consultants by Minority Rights Group to evaluate the project, “Protecting Human Rights of Vulnerable Civilians in Iraq.” This interview is in relation to the evaluation to see how the project performed during its implementation. I hope today to learn your thoughts and feelings on the work of the project and ideas for improving this project. All the information you provide here is confidential and anonymous. Your inputs will be included in a larger report to help MRG and its donors to design and implement future projects meeting the needs of people in this regard. If you are ready, may we proceed?

1. How long have you been working with your organization? Please describe your work with your organization?
2. Please describe your thoughts on the importance of this project given its time of implementation in Iraq. Do you think it was relevant to the real needs of vulnerable groups and conflict affected communities in Iraq? How so? Do you think it was relevant to the needs of direct project participants, including partner organizations, local CSOs, and policymakers? How so?
3. Please describe the Ceasefire project and your role within it? What components, activities, tasks were you a part of?
4. Do you think you were able to deliver as part of the project in terms of meeting expectations of project participants? Why or why not?
5. What activities were you able to meet and why? What were the most positive aspects of these activities? For partners? For microgrant recipients? Why?
6. What if any aspects of the project did you find innovative? Why?
7. What activities do you think you were not able to meet and why?
8. What were the main issues, challenges and obstacles in project implementation that you faced? How you able to overcome them? If not, why not?

9. How did project design, implementation, and priorities adjust as the context changed after 2014?  
How well do you think the project and partners adapted?
10. Please describe MRG's relationship with its main partners during this project. How well did you feel MRG and partners worked together? Do you feel this engagement helped in furthering their capacity as human rights actors and defenders in Iraq? Why or why not?
11. To what extent did you feel the microgrants had an effect in helping organizations developing their own monitoring, reporting, and advocacy capabilities? Can you provide examples? How much impact has this work had on the communities you have worked in for this project?
12. How well do you think policymakers, international community, and media received MRG reports, film, and bulletins? What impact do you think this reporting has had on the human rights landscape in Iraq? What else is needed in your work to improve on this? Can you provide examples of direct or indirect changes that took place as a result of such work?
13. Do you think there is an established and functioning network of CSOs monitoring and reporting human rights violations in Iraq? Why or why not? What else is needed to improve on this?
14. How do you think monitoring and evaluation was done in the field?
15. How would you rate the overall project implementation and success? 1 = not successful at all to 5 = very successful
16. What would you have changed with respect to this project, in terms of design or implementation? What else is needed to best meet stakeholder and beneficiary needs?
17. How sustainable is a project like this going forward? What are your recommendations for a similar future project?
18. Please let me know if there is anything else you would like to add.

*A.2 Key informant interview guide for partners' staff*

Many thanks for taking time out of your schedule to participate in this interview. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been hired as part of a team of external consultants by Minority Rights Group to evaluate the project, "Protecting Human Rights of Vulnerable Civilians in Iraq." This interview is in relation to the evaluation to see how the project performed during its implementation. I hope today to learn your thoughts and feelings on the work of the project and ideas for improving this project. All the information you provide here is confidential and anonymous. Your inputs will be included in a larger report to help MRG and its donors to design and implement future projects meeting the needs of people in this regard. If you are ready, may we proceed?

1. How long have you been working with your organization? Please describe your work with your organization?
2. Please describe your thoughts on the importance of this project given its time of implementation in Iraq. Do you think it was relevant to the real needs of vulnerable groups and conflict affected communities in Iraq? How so? Do you think it was relevant to the needs of direct project participants, including partner organizations, local CSOs, and policymakers? How so?
3. Please describe the Ceasefire project and your role within it? What components, activities, tasks were you a part of?
4. Do you think you were able to deliver as part of the project in terms of meeting expectations of project participants? Why or why not?
5. What activities were you able to meet and why? What were the most positive aspects of these activities? For MRG? For microgrant recipients? Why?
6. What if any aspects of the project did you find innovative? Why?
7. What activities do you think you were not able to meet and why?
8. What were the main issues, challenges and obstacles in project implementation that you faced? How you able to overcome them? If not, why not?
9. How did project design, implementation, and priorities adjust as the context changed after 2014? How well do you think the project and partners adapted?

10. Were you provided with appropriate training and tools to carry out your work as part of this project? Please explain. How well were you able to use the online platforms developed for monitoring and reporting?
11. Please describe your relationship with MRG and other partners during this project. How well did you feel MRG and partners worked together? Do you feel this engagement helped in furthering your capacity as a human rights actor and defender in Iraq? Why or why not?
12. To what extent did you feel the microgrants had an effect in helping organizations developing their own monitoring, reporting, and advocacy capabilities? Can you provide examples? How much impact has this work had on the communities you have worked in for this project?
13. How well do you think policymakers, international community, and media received MRG reports, film, and bulletins? What impact do you think this reporting has had on the human rights landscape in Iraq? What else is needed in your work to improve on this? Can you provide examples of direct or indirect changes that took place as a result of such work?
14. Do you think there is an established and functioning network of CSOs monitoring and reporting human rights violations in Iraq? Why or why not? What else is needed to improve on this?
15. How do you think monitoring and evaluation was done in the field?
16. How would you rate the overall project implementation and success? 1 = not successful at all to 5 = very successful
17. What would you have changed with respect to this project, in terms of design or implementation? What else is needed to best meet stakeholder and beneficiary needs?
18. How sustainable is a project like this going forward? What are your recommendations for a similar future project?
19. Please let me know if there is anything else you would like to add.

*A.3 Key informant interview guide for microgrant recipients' staff*

Many thanks for taking time out of your schedule to participate in this interview. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been hired as part of a team of external consultants by Minority Rights Group to evaluate the project, "Protecting Human Rights of Vulnerable Civilians in Iraq." This interview is in relation to the evaluation to see how the project performed during its implementation. I hope today to learn your thoughts and feelings on the work of the project and ideas for improving this project. All the information you provide here is confidential and anonymous. Your inputs will be included in a larger report to help MRG and its donors to design and implement future projects meeting the needs of people in this regard. If you are ready, may we proceed?

1. How long have you been working with your organization? Please describe your work with your organization?
2. Please describe your thoughts on the importance of this project given its time of implementation in Iraq. Do you think it was relevant to the real needs of vulnerable groups and conflict affected communities in Iraq? How so? Do you think it was relevant to the needs of you and your community? How so?
3. Please describe the Ceasefire project and your role within it? How did you hear about this project? What made you seek out a small grant? Please describe the process.
4. Please describe the project you carried out with the small grant you received. Do you think you were able to deliver as part of the project in terms of meeting expectations of project participants? Why or why not?
5. What activities were you able to meet and why? What were the most positive aspects of these activities? Why?
6. What if any aspects of the project did you find innovative? Why?
7. What activities do you think you were not able to meet and why?
8. What were the main issues, challenges and obstacles in project implementation that you faced? How you able to overcome them? If not, why not?
9. Were you provided with appropriate training and tools by MRG and partners to carry out your work as part of this project? Please explain. How well were you able to use the online platforms developed for monitoring and reporting?

10. Please describe your relationship with MRG and other partners during this project. How well did you feel MRG and partners worked together? Do you feel this engagement helped in furthering your capacity as a human rights actor and defender in Iraq? Why or why not?
11. To what extent did you feel the microgrant helped in your own monitoring, reporting, and advocacy capabilities? Can you provide examples? How much impact has this work had on the communities you have worked in for this project?
12. How well do you think your work was connected to the rest of the Ceasefire project? Do you feel your work played a role in wider advocacy on key human rights issues affecting your community?
13. Do you think there is an established and functioning network of CSOs monitoring and reporting human rights violations in Iraq? Why or why not? What else is needed to improve on this?
14. How do you think monitoring and evaluation was done in the field?
15. How would you rate the overall project implementation and success? 1 = not successful at all to 5 = very successful
16. What would you have changed with respect to this project, in terms of design or implementation? What else is needed to best meet stakeholder and beneficiary needs?
17. How sustainable is a project like this going forward? What are your recommendations for a similar future project?
18. Please let me know if there is anything else you would like to add.



*A.4 Key informant interview guide for decision-makers and media*

Many thanks for taking time out of your schedule to participate in this interview. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been hired as part of a team of external consultants by Minority Rights Group to evaluate the project, “Protecting Human Rights of Vulnerable Civilians in Iraq.” This interview is in relation to the evaluation to see how the project performed during its implementation.

For background, this project sought to develop innovative ways to allow real-time, civilian-led reporting of human rights violations affecting minority communities, women, and internally displaced people in the country with a particular focus on those in conflict and difficult to access areas. The project included capacity building for local partners, learning by doing through small grants, research and publications analyzing violations reported and verified, linked with national and international advocacy. Key products include the following, among others: Nine bulletins (*From Crisis to Catastrophe: The Situation of Minorities in Iraq*, *No Place to Turn: Violence Against Women in the Iraq Conflict*, *Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq’s Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul*, *The Lost Women of Iraq: Family-based Violence during Conflict*, *Civilian Deaths in the Anti-ISIS Bombing Campaigns 2014-2015*, *Iraq’s Displacement Crisis: Security and Protection*, *No Way Home: Iraq’s Minorities on the Verge of Disappearance*, *Civilian Protection in the Battle for Mosul: Critical Priorities*, and *Humanitarian Challenges in Iraq’s Displacement Crisis*), one film, and the Ceasefire online reporting tool ([iraq.ceasefire.org](http://iraq.ceasefire.org)).

I hope today to learn your thoughts and feelings on the work of the project and ideas for improving it. All the information you provide here is confidential and anonymous. Your inputs will be included in a larger report to help MRG and its donors to design and implement future projects meeting the needs of people in this regard. If you are ready, may we proceed?

1. Please describe your work in/on Iraq. What do you do and how do human rights, particularly with regard to vulnerable groups, factor into it?
2. How aware were you of this project or any of its products before today?
3. Please describe your thoughts on the importance of this project given its time of implementation in Iraq. Do you think it was relevant to the real needs of vulnerable groups and conflict affected communities in Iraq? How so? Do you think it was relevant to the needs of your work in this regard? How so?

4. Do you think there is a reliable and credible network of local civil society organizations monitoring and reporting on human rights violations in Iraq? Have you ever interacted with such a civilian-led network in your work in/on Iraq? If so, please explain. If not, why not?
5. What factors would constitute reliable and credible human rights monitoring and reporting in this context to you? What else is needed to further build this capacity here?
6. How have the bulletins and film of the Minority Rights Group influenced your work? [If positive response] How has it shaped what you/your agency is doing/planning? [If negative response] Why not? [For all responses] What more can be done to bring human rights issues to the fore in your work? What about the reporting across the Ceasefire project website and social media platforms?
7. How sustainable is a project like this going forward? What are your recommendations for a similar future project?
8. Please let me know if there is anything else you would like to add.

*A.5 Focus group discussion guide for workshop & training participants*

Many thanks for taking time out of your schedule to participate in this focus group discussion. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been hired as part of a team of external consultants by Minority Rights Group to evaluate the project, “Protecting Human Rights of Vulnerable Civilians in Iraq.” This discussion is in relation to the evaluation to see how the project performed during its implementation. I hope today to learn your thoughts and feelings on the work of the project and ideas for improving this project. All the information you provide here is confidential and anonymous. Your inputs will be included in a larger report to help MRG and its donors to design and implement future projects meeting the needs of people in this regard. If you are ready, may we proceed?

1. When you first heard about the Ceasefire project and training/workshops provided, what were your initial expectations, if any, on the knowledge and skills you would gain? What were your biggest concerns?
2. Had you participated in such trainings and workshops before? Can you describe them and how they contributed to your work?
3. Can you describe the Ceasefire project trainings and workshops you participated in? How were they similar to previous trainings you have received? How were they different?
4. Did you receive additional support from MRG and partners in relation to your work on human rights? If so, please describe?
5. How have you applied what you learned in these trainings and workshops in practice in your work? Please describe some examples. If not, why not?
6. What are the biggest changes you note in yourself and your work since the Ceasefire trainings and workshop? How did the trainings and workshops help in bringing these changes?
7. What were the most positive aspects of the trainings/workshops/support you received? What would you change and why?
8. How important do you think such training and support are? What else is needed? What else would you like to see done or what needs to change in order to better help someone in your position to be able to carry out human rights monitoring, reporting, and advocacy?
9. Please let me know if there is anything else you would like to add.

*A.6 MRG's subscriber survey*

Dear Colleague,

You are receiving this message as you are on Minority Rights Group's human rights bulletin e-mail list. As part of a final evaluation of our project exploring civilian-led human rights monitoring and reporting, we are seeking your feedback on our research and analysis published and disseminated related to human rights concerns of conflict-affected and vulnerable communities in Iraq. We would appreciate your taking the time to complete this survey.

Please note: all answers are confidential and unnamed, will be analysed by an external research team carrying out this evaluation, and will not be shared with any identifying information to Minority Rights Group or anyone else.

Thank you for your time and participation.

1. Job Title
2. Organization
3. Please choose the location that best describes where you / your organization is based
  - a. Iraq
  - b. MENA region
  - c. Europe
  - d. North America
  - e. Africa
  - f. Australia
  - g. Asia
4. Please choose one of the following that best describes your organization
  - a. Iraq/KRI national
  - b. Regional
  - c. International
  - d. Other (please specify)
5. Please choose one of the following that best describes the type of work your organization focuses on

- a. Non-governmental (humanitarian)
  - b. Non-governmental (development)
  - c. Non-governmental (human rights/advocacy)
  - d. Iraq/KRI Government
  - e. Inter-governmental
  - f. Foreign service
  - g. Development (government)
  - h. Think Tank
  - i. Academia
  - j. Media
  - k. Other (please specify)
6. Which of the following best describes your work in/on Iraq
- a. Humanitarian assistance and services
  - b. Development
  - c. Advocacy
  - d. Governance and institution building
  - e. Peace and reconciliation
  - f. Justice and accountability
  - g. Human rights
  - h. Research
  - i. Support to civil society
  - j. Other (please specify)
7. How familiar are you with Minority Rights Group
- a. Extremely familiar
  - b. Moderately familiar
  - c. Somewhat familiar
  - d. Not at all familiar
8. How familiar are you with the Ceasefire online reporting tool ([Iraq.ceasefire.org](http://Iraq.ceasefire.org))
- a. Extremely familiar
  - b. Moderately familiar
  - c. Somewhat familiar

- d. Not at all familiar
9. How often do you read Minority Rights Group's bulletins
- a. Every time they are released
  - b. Nearly every time they are released
  - c. Occasionally
  - d. Never
10. How relevant are Minority Rights Group's research and analysis relevant for your work
- a. Very relevant
  - b. Moderately relevant
  - c. Somewhat relevant
  - d. Not at all relevant
11. How relevant is the Ceasefire online reporting tool ([iraq.ceasefire.org](http://iraq.ceasefire.org)) for your work
- a. Very relevant
  - b. Moderately relevant
  - c. Somewhat relevant
  - d. Not at all relevant
12. How much of an influence does Minority Rights Group's research have on your work
- a. A great deal of influence
  - b. A moderate amount of influence
  - c. Some influence
  - d. No influence
13. How likely is it that you would recommend Minority Rights Group's bulletins to a friend or colleague looking for human rights information on Iraq
- a. Very likely
  - b. Likely
  - c. Somewhat likely
  - d. Never
14. How do you usually find out about Minority Rights Group's bulletins and other publications

- a. E-mail notification
  - b. Check website
  - c. Twitter
  - d. Facebook
  - e. Other (specify)
15. What other ways do you interact with Minority Rights Group
- a. Regular briefings
  - b. Ad hoc briefings
  - c. Joint activities
  - d. Informal information sharing
  - e. Not at all
  - f. Other (specify)
16. Please provide an example of when and how a Minority Rights Group bulletin and/or the Ceasefire online reporting tool ([iraq.ceasefire.org](http://iraq.ceasefire.org)) helped you in your work.
17. Which topics/themes/groups are missing from Minority Rights Group's agenda in Iraq in relation to human rights monitoring and reporting?