

# Final Evaluation: NORAD-MRG ‘Protecting the rights of religious minorities.’ 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2023



Local youth volunteers in Kalmakanda,, Bangladesh completed a minority rights’ training run by Shapla Swarna Ruram, a graduate of the project’s *Minority Rights Advocacy Tool-kit training*. Photo: Shapla Swarna Ruram.

**‘Working quietly on hard, local issues with local CSOs’, but  
‘Minority rights’ violation is a long-term malady which needs a  
long term solution’.**

**By: David Hampson (Team Leader, Researcher, Author); Ava Batay-an (Researcher, Layout); Zoran Ostojic (Researcher); Emma Proux (Researcher); and Alexandra Pilling (Photo Editor).**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Freedom of Religion or Belief<sup>1</sup> is gravely threatened worldwide<sup>2</sup>. This project is found to be making a significant contribution, and to have succeeded against DAC criteria.

The outstanding recommendation is that:

- NORAD and MRG scale up through existing partners the amount, timescale and predictability of its support, and liaise with other donors to do so.

Other recommendations include:

- Engagement with partners on preparing for government-to-government advocacy in the case of human rights abuses of partners or trainees
- Greater visibility and fundraising: more training and an expanded small grants program.
- More detail in future project design documents, including clear logframes
- Expanded support for rural trainees with phone-based, open-source online content and training on how to navigate online courses.
- opening the management of future programmes to CSO partners from the Global South

Full recommendations are provided [here](#).

Key findings are that:

- Quiet community-level programming, coupled with visible international advocacy was an effective approach.
- Partners - MRG-HL-Ceasefire-NORAD - continued to work smoothly and effectively. This was qualitatively reflected at the grassroots by both subgrantee partners and trainees in Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).
- Quantitative responses on both partnership and programme were consistently higher even than in the high MTE scores, suggesting a growth in satisfaction and confidence. These included 84% approval for the project making 'A Direct Positive Impact', up from 79% in the MTE and suggesting growing levels of trust and deepening of relationships and understanding
- 'NORAD: Protecting the rights of religious minorities' was judged to have met all of the DAC evaluation criteria.

This report's title is a coupling of two quotations.

The first part comes from MRG staff member, Fitra Jehwoh in the conflict zone of Thailand's Southern Border Provinces (SBP), who said *'I like that we are working quietly on hard, local issues with local CSOs'*. The evaluation judged this to be an effective approach in a mistrusting, dangerous environment.

The second part comes from Abdus Sabur Biswas in Bangladesh who said, *"Minority rights violations<sup>3</sup> are a long-term malady which needs a long term solution. So, it will be a humble request to MRG to plan a long-term proposal for sustaining the result. Otherwise, good practices will disappear over time'*. Dr Fareeda Panjor in Thailand added, *"spend more, for longer!"* and Dhirenda Panda in India said *"make the projects more long-term"*.

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<sup>1</sup> Including the right not to believe

<sup>2</sup> One example report is <https://adfinternational.org/report-identifies-worst-violators-of-religious-freedom/>

<sup>3</sup> Exact words from the first half of the project, adapted grammatically for the title

Having conducted the Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of the project from July-September 2021, evaluators worked part-time on this Final Paper from November 2022 to March 2023. They adequately reached stakeholders, receiving high enthusiasm and responses to [10 positive questions from the MTE](#), which then fed into KIIs. Two questionnaire [scores](#) were maintained at high levels (eg 81% affirming capacity support for women within religious communities), but eight were higher (eg. confidence in sustainability from partners and trainees at 85% and 93% - and also from Southern Border Provinces (SBP) Allies at 93% .

Improvement has been made since the MTE on (i) **Access**, with concrete attempts to reach PLWD, women and youth in communities and greater emphasis on community-based small grants. Work remains on downloadable offline materials, which can be stored on cell phones, and an extension of the small grants. (ii) **Networking**, with ex-trainee groups still active in Lebanon, Thailand and internationally, but with continued calls for MRG to take a catalyst role in all countries for sustainable Facebook and WhatsApp groups, aim for consistency in coordination worldwide, and continuity in trainings (iii) **Visibility/Fundraising**, with advice regularly posted on MRG's website, and Ceasefire's website particularly seen as a model and (iv) **Project Design**, where it has been acknowledged by project partners that future baseline data, project narratives and logframes should be improved. Other areas for continued improvement are contextualisation of training materials, collaboration with government where possible, and MRG's obligation to be clear about the inability to provide security and protection, but to pre-emptively engage NORAD on security response in the worst case scenarios.

Impact strengthened since the MTE, evidenced both in questionnaire scores and quotes. Michel Decache on workshop support to the tiny, newly-arrived marginalised Syriac minority in Lebanon, stated *"Impact was beyond our expectations, very smooth... with Ceasefire, it was a breakthrough. We were supported [and]shared the same values. [Minority participants] had been scared, but it was replaced by trust... transformed into confidence"*. Another small and fearful minority in Lebanon is agnostics and atheists: Mazen Abou Hamdan from Lebanon commented *' If a child is found to be atheist, they will be kicked out of school. It was really helpful to provide counselling... a big help and a powerful safety net.'*

Trainees and partners grew in confidence at advocating larger small grants, and longer, more predictable, and, ideally, unrestricted funding from donors; NORAD may not only reflect on this but, if in agreement, become an advocate to other donors.

The overriding finding was of success towards objectives; the overriding recommendation of the need for sustainable scale-up of the programme.

## 2. BACKGROUND and CONTEXT

In January 2023, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE<sup>4</sup>), a Budapest-based non-governmental organisation collaborated with Ceasefire and HL-Senteret to complete a 4- year, primarily NORAD funded, programme 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities'. The ultimate goal was to ensure that the human rights of religious minorities are respected and that these communities are protected from persecution and discrimination. At the heart of the project was building the capacity of local civil society and offering activists the opportunity to join forces and become the voices of their communities. The project aimed to strengthen minority activists and organisations strengthening the rights of minorities of faith and belief where the need to act on these issues is the greatest: 15 Middle

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<sup>4</sup> 'MRG' is used to include all parts of MRG International (MRGI). MRGE is only used when the comment is specific only to that geographical part of MRGI

East, North African and South / Southeast Asian countries, namely Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, Lebanon, Egypt Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, Syria.

The main institutional partners in the project are Ceasefire, HL, MRG and NORAD. Their self-declared roles are as follows:

Ceasefire: 'The Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights is an international initiative to develop civilian-led monitoring of violations of international humanitarian law or human rights; to secure accountability... [through] Empowering civilians in war zones to monitor violations and seek justice'

HL: The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL-senteret, and forthwith 'HL': 'The HL centre is a research, documentation and training centre which focuses on the Holocaust, other peoples and minorities in modern society'.

MRG: 'Minority Rights Group International has over 50 years' experience of working with non-dominant ethnic, religious and linguistic communities to... ensure that disadvantaged minorities and indigenous peoples, often the poorest of the poor, can make their voices heard.'

NORAD: 'Norad is the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation... quality-assurance... to ensure that Norwegian development aid funds are spent in the best possible way.'

### 3. ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

This lists more unfamiliar short-cuts; all acronyms are spelled out once in the body of text:

<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CEmSoJ</b>	Community Empowerment and Social Justice
<b>CVO</b>	Civil Volunteer Organisation
<b>ForB</b>	Freedom of Religion or Belief
<b>HL</b>	HL Senteret
<b>HRD</b>	Human rights defenders
<b>KI(I)</b>	Key Informant (Interview)
<b>LSD</b>	Leadership for Sustainable Development
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East/North Africa region
<b>MRG(I)(E)</b>	Minority Rights Group (International) (Europe)
<b>MTE</b>	Mid Term Evaluation
<b>NCE</b>	No Cost Extension
<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>SBP</b>	Southern Border Provinces of Thailand (3 majority Muslim provinces)
<b>ToT</b>	Training of Trainers
<b>UNFMI</b>	United Nations Forum on Minority issues
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review, under the auspices of the UN
<b>VR</b>	Virtual reality

## 4. EVALUATION CONSULTANCY TEAM

**David Hampson** ([email](#) / [LinkedIn](#)) was Team Leader, Researcher, Writer and main Editor. He has undertaken independent work for MRG for over 25 years in ten roles including [Global Strategy](#), on [Capacity Building](#), [Programme](#) and [Batwa \('Pygmies'\) Gender](#). He's served at senior/consultant levels for DFID, UNFAO, IFRC, Oxfam, SAVE, Christian Aid, VSO etc. on the nexus of rights', humanitarian and development action in 60+ countries.

**Ava Batay-an's** ([email](#) / [LinkedIn](#)) was Researcher, Writer and Layout Editor. She is an Indigenous Person and grass-roots [disaster](#), and [environmental](#) professional. She has also worked with MRG on [global strategy](#) and [capacity](#) and at senior/consultant levels with CARE, CRS, DFID and VSO. Previous evaluations with MRG include [REILA](#) and [ERELA](#) reports.

**Zoran Ostojic** was Lead Researcher, Lead Analyst and Lead Writer. His [LinkedIn](#) shows his previous MRG work as Associate Researcher for North Macedonia. Zoran is a psycho-social specialist and manager working on anti-violence at the 'Crisis Centre for Man; Serbia' and has extensive qualitative research experience, including with EU INTERREG III C CADSES[1] and IFRC's 'Red Cross Guidelines on Working with Vulnerable Roma.' Previous evaluations with MRG include [REILA](#) and [ERELA](#) reports.

**Emma Proux** ([email](#) / [LinkedIn](#)) was a Researcher, and led on quantitative issues. She worked on the evaluation of MRG's entire 2012-18 [work](#) in 2019. She is a masters student in international relations from Sciences Po Bordeaux, France and a researcher on international migration and development with Laval University, Quebec. She has worked on research projects and data reviews for the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) and the YWCA as an intern.

**Alexandra Pilling** ([LinkedIn](#)) was Photo and Text Editor. She studies at Durham University and has carried out human rights research and editing, both for MRG in [REILA](#) and [ERELA](#), and in violations leading to wrongful convictions in high profile criminal trials.





(Photo shows participant villagers in Bordol, Kharnoi Union, Thana Kalmakanda, District Netrokona. They are Christian Catholic Religious minorities (Bengali Catholic), Low Caste Hindu minorities (Nomo Sudra) and majority Muslim participants, with local political leaders. Those pictured were attending a workshop on how to prevent, protect and deal with violence against religious minorities in remote areas. Picture taken by TOT awardee, Shapla Shwarna, on her phone.

## 5. SCOPE of the EVALUATION

The scope of this final evaluation was to assess the four-year project's implementation, achievements, gaps, challenges and learning against DAC criteria.

In consultation with the MRGE team, the evaluation was afforded an in-depth visit to Southern Border Provinces, and a partners' closure meeting in Budapest, and also set out to interview ex-trainees and Ceasefire partners across the Middle East, and MRG trainees from South Asia.

## 6. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY and APPROACH

**6.1** The foundation for the research was the enthusiastic participation of partners, ex-trainees and allies in quantitative research. The main findings are presented in pages 18 ([global](#)) and 32 ([Southern Border Provinces](#)). Three baseline comparators were also used. The Mid Term Evaluation percentage scores were incorporated into findings. Some data was used from the 2021 Global Evaluation of MRG. And during a visit to Southern Border Provinces 11 Allies/Implementers who are current MRG partners in similar peacebuilding programs in Southern Border Provinces, were interviewed face-to-face. For each question, between 7 and 11 people answered, providing a second source of comparative scores.

### 6.2 Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions

**Outcome level:** Where completed as planned, did the activities contribute to the planned results? Where this was so, refer to evidence. Where not so, what factors intervened and explained how they impacted. Suggest ways that MRGE tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was (or

not). Document any changes in the external environment that may have helped or hindered the project. If there were any unplanned results (positive or negative) explain what these were and how they came about. The evaluation should pay attention to and comment on the mainstreaming of gender and other forms of intersectional discrimination and cross cutting issues in the project.

The project design shows ambition, but targets have been met; According to the master contact list and subgrants tracker document provided to evaluators before the onset of the final evaluation there were 73 subgrants and 12 HRD grants; 28 UNFMI attendees; 13 groups of MENA-webinars; 24 online trainings; 11 rounds of the online courses in 2021-22. The Minority Rights Advocacy Toolkit online course on minority rights advocacy and FORB was unanimously praised. It can be confidently assumed to have contributed to the ability of trainees to monitor, document and report rights violations, and to design and implement targeted approaches to address discrimination and human rights violations. Dozens of initiatives with local, national, regional and international actors were undertaken to advocate changes to policy/laws/ or their implementation. For example, in 2020, project grantees Wahid Foundation produced a report entitled “Bargaining Freedom: A Decade of Monitoring Freedom of Religion and Belief” as well as a related policy recommendation briefing. As a result, Mohammad Dawam (a Member of the National Police Commission of the Republic of Indonesia) said, during the 7 September 2020 launch of the report, “[As a result of the report and its launch] we invited Wahid Foundation to engage further in planning programs to reduce ForB violations committed by police actors.”<sup>5</sup> The project additionally supported two organisations (Eyzidi Organisation for Documentation (EOD) and the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM) in Kurdistan Region, Iraq) to implement activities securing the rights of the minority Yazidis. In particular, they were pushing to amend an existing law on Yazidis missing in the 2014 ISIS genocide <sup>6</sup>

**Output level** included dozens of advocacy films, several high-impact research reports, numerous articles boosted over social networks and dozens of reports submitted to UN mechanisms and local authorities. Output from HL-S also included the development of 360 tours and film-based online training modules

Early in the programme, COVID-19 dramatically reduced face-to-face sessions, to many trainees’ frustration, with project partners forced online with the time-burdens of re-designing the project and learning anew the online skills to implement it. Findings in section 7 (marked MTE) show that many ex-trainees expressed frustration with the limits and challenges of online training, but that partners found it also had advantages in access, replicability and budgets. The challenges remain of designing materials downloadable to mobile phones. HL used the opportunity to create digitally sophisticated ‘360’ virtual tours<sup>7</sup> which are available offline through 360 VR glasses. Later in the programme, KIs mentioned repeatedly that the pandemic has ceased to be a significant obstacle, and welcomed the return to face-to-face methodology, whilst recognising that new skills in online communication had resulted in greater time and cost efficiency between people who already knew each other. The Project accelerated towards its goals with the easing of COVID-19, network formation, and adaptation to the needs and requirements of subgrantees and trainees. A key development was improved visibility; ‘Outputs increased visibility, but the outputs were being produced slowly. *In* the second half, partners pushed the visibility.’<sup>8</sup>

A key output, after Covid’s seriousness had diminished, was the face-to-face strengthening of the inter-regional network. Ifra Asad of MRG said, ‘The Inter-regional meeting of October 2022 in Bangkok was

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<sup>5</sup> Progress report for 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Progress report for 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <https://www.inclusive-citizenship.no/>

<sup>8</sup> Nicole Girard, MRG



promising, people were passionate and drew energy from other people: *“Look, we can change!”* I wish we had more time to use this energy.

Another key venue for activities leading to results was the UN Forum on Minority Issues every November. Participation to this was made available for some subgrantees thanks to the special MRGI status in the UN ECOSOC at which state delegates and activists meet. Some subgrantees participated in a 3-day training before participation, with one day allocated for statement. Somaya, from Justice House, Tunisia, and Joe William, from NORAD-MRG partner CCT from Sri Lanka, found the experience very satisfactory. Anonymous KI females from Indonesia and Tunisia had appreciated an opportunity to give statements and meet Government representatives.. In the Thailand part of this report, NORAD-MRG trainee Hasan Yumadhiba outlines the concrete changes it had brought about within Thai Government practice, as well as the security restrictions it had produced for him personally.



Nineveh, Yazidi pupils at Mount Shingal returning home from school. Photo by: Ibrahim Ezidi.

Evaluators juxtaposed the outcomes from subgrantees, with the **key achievements of partners from their respective donor reports**:

**HL Senteret.** In 2021, within its project on Inclusive Citizenship and Human Rights, initiated translation of subtitles into Kurdish, Arabic and local minority languages for its 2020 documentary film on religious diversity and inter-faith coexistence, and other video stories in Iraqi Kurdistan These are used in online education and other trainings on interfaith coexistence. HL further adjusted the manual for these video [stories](#).<sup>9</sup> Output from HL-S also included the development of 360 tours and film-based online training modules.

**Ceasefire** reported multiple achievements, including, ‘Provision of a secure online reporting tool and formation of monitors network’ and ‘Four grants, two per region in Y2 and Y4 for the implementation of joint local / national projects on preventing or challenging rights violations/discrimination’. Ceasefire selected grantees in Egypt and Lebanon to implement monitoring and violation documentation projects. ‘The continued strengthening and support of FORB civil society organisations is crucial to the long-term monitoring, documentation, and reporting of human rights violations. In the Egyptian context, activists speaking about minority issues continue to face persecution, including

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<sup>9</sup> Report from HL-senteret to MRG for NORAD’s report for 2021.

harassment, discrimination, and in some cases arbitrary detention'. Ceasefire selected two grantees in Lebanon and Iraq to implement national networks' advocacy campaigns. 'This contributes to the embedding of good human rights practice at a national level. The creativity with which both grantees have approached coalition building at a national level is reflected in their projects'.<sup>10</sup>

**Impact:** Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the specific objective of the project. If it is unlikely that all or part of the purpose will be achieved, why is this and is this something that could have been foreseen or overcome?

Respondents and evaluators are confident that the primary objective, of empowering CSOs in FoRB advocacy and program actions, has been achieved. Michel Dacache of LSD in Lebanon, said. "We reached our target but when friends and relatives knew what a success our workshops had been, we had huge enthusiasm and demand... with a bigger amount we could have made a big impact in Lebanon, we were very specific on a small Syriac minority ... There are large INGOs who give large money for tiny impact. We do the opposite; we can do so much more with small money than the larger CSOs and INGOs who receive large donor funding". In Tunisia, it was reported that Berber communities gained enormously in pride, confidence and representing rights through the travel opportunities..



Two participants at the "Leadership for Sustainable Development" 2022 workshop on the "Syriac Challenges in Lebanon and Syria: Freedom of belief and expression", aimed at promoting and supporting Syriac people's FoRB

The flexibility in translating local languages remained appreciated in Sri Lanka (MRG) and across multiple linguistic<sup>11</sup> and religious communities in Iraq ( see HL videos<sup>12</sup>). Comments about longevity made in the first half of the programme such as, "[MRG] should think about longer level, to have a more sustainable impact, with longer strategies" by Prabindra Shakya in Nepal<sup>13</sup>, increased in the second half, comprising all South Asia KIs, many<sup>14</sup> in SBP and many KIs globally. In the MTE, partner Abdus Sabur Biswas said, "Minority rights' violation is a long-term malady which needs a long term solution. So, it will be a humble request to MRG to plan a long-term proposal for sustaining the result. Otherwise, good practices will disappear over time." Dhirenda Panda of India added, "MRG projects are small projects but it is good, good results, very satisfactory, good communication." The only outstanding issues for here were, "Make the projects more long-term" and "sometimes MRG colleagues should come visit India [for this NORAD project] – it would help."

Another key development was adaptation of the teaching methods to the needs of participants. Yomn Al-Kaisi explained, 'the second round of training focused on international humanitarian law. They wanted it to be more discussion-based [so the] teaching program included coaching, mentoring and ... reach[ing] other people who work in the field... building relationships.'

<sup>10</sup> Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights' narrative report, 31 January 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, Armenian, Assyrian.

<sup>12</sup> including [this video](#)

<sup>13</sup> Community Empowerment and Social Justice (CEmSoJ) Network

<sup>14</sup> particularly Anchana Heemmina, Dr Fareeda and Ismael Teh

### 6.3 Conceptual Framework

This final evaluation follows the DAC criteria of:

1. **Relevance:** To what extent the response is relevant or addressing the needs of the affected people including how the needs were identified, prioritised and if there were unmet needs.

Freedom of religion or belief is undoubtedly a relevant pursuit, guaranteed by article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief<sup>15</sup>. However, apostasy and/or blasphemy laws remain in 71 countries worldwide<sup>16</sup>. MRG's overall coordinator for the project commented that the right to FoRB is in decline, hate speech is up, particularly in S. Asia and N Africa (Sahel). The MTE had established that the issues tackled under the NORAD-funded program are serious and relevant, quoting anonymous KIs, 'forced religious conversion of female minors to Islam' (in Pakistan) and 'in the Arab world, you need to have an official paper from the Ministries to be in contact with minority families. If you contact them on your own, you will get punished. It is terrifying for us'. In India, a KI stated that the state is "targeting us". Research on the second half of the programme brought similar evidence; NORAD-MRG partner Anchana Heemmina chronicled her court cases; the photography of MRG ally Yostorn Triyos in [SBP](#) chronicled the detention without trial, torture and release without charge of suspected Muslim activists. Nada Tarek (of Syrians For Truth and Justice) lauded the educational relevance of their project's research; Jian Badrakhan (of YASA) commented, "Human rights work is always relevant... when we talk about Northern Syria... the relevance is to document what happened."

Interventions from partners were also relevant in meeting the MTE recommendation of creating public awareness. Salam Omer (Kirkuknow) explained that "Iraqi media is divided among ethnic and religious lines, so there's hardly enough space for minorities, you can hardly see positive stories and objective reporting about minorities. So what we did is to counter that, to feed objective reporting and that's one of the aims of the project" Salam Omer expanded on impact criteria, adding that "the project produced impact stories, where we received feedback online and offline. The initiatives impacted all beneficiaries in all the best possible ways".

Nada Tarek shared a similar view that, "The report (they had published about Yazidis minorities)... benefited a lot of the researchers and the report is being used as a source. Other people working on this subject have a reference they can go back into. In the advocacy campaign, not only did we share the report online but also shared it with international organisations and some stakeholders, Yazidi local organisations." The report on Yazidis helped in the local organisations' work to counter-reference their findings and information. The report included the feedback and suggestions of the other stakeholders. It was an inclusive process. "Publishing a report is relevant to the cause".

Mazen Abou Hamdan (of Freethought Lebanon) shared that responding to the needs of atheist/agnostic beneficiaries is "complicated by the fact that the needs are a lot, not just of taboos. Lebanon has a severe economic crisis. The severity of needs is a lot more than what we were able to address. But to feel a sense of protection, community, gathering like-minded people, breaking taboo - yes this contributed to creating a community. We were able to meet those needs".

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<sup>15</sup> [International standards: Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief](#)

<sup>16</sup> [The politics of blasphemy: Why Pakistan and some other Muslim countries are passing new blasphemy laws](#)

One of the key reasons that MRG, Ceasefire and HL's work remains relevant is that the partners sensitively listen to partners and refrain from undue interference. Deepanjalie Abeywardana, a Sri Lankan: partner commented 'We did a big piece of work on the effectiveness of C19 response. internal communication [with MRG] was very good, great staff, great to work with, hassle free... they understand that locals know and don't try and impose, they can see vigilantly, follow up, and make external impact... While they are keen on getting the message out, they are sensitive to complexities. I don't always see that coming from others.

Of all the DAC criteria, the evaluation team was most convinced of the relevance of global projects protecting FoRB.

2. **Efficiency:** Were activities cost-efficient? Were objectives achieved on time? Was the response implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

Scoring for this was 100% 'yes' for the final evaluation, and 100% 'yes' for the MTE.

The MTE had evidenced how closely partners factored cost into their thinking. For example, 'Covid online savings' turned into video material. Trainees considered the trade-offs between quantity and quality and savings, through mainstreaming into government or localisation.

One factor which was present in the MTE, but was more strongly expressed in the second half of the project, from Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Thailand and also from staff of MRG HL and Ceasefire, was the tight limitation of small grants totalling only 5,000 euros or similar.

This was even expressed as a caveat from Allies of MRG who scored 'efficiency' as a 100% successful criterion (overall scoring was 84%). In particular, extra funding could be well used for small grants and an ongoing networking roles / staff time<sup>17</sup> for Ceasefire, MRG and HL.

About the correct use of small amounts of money, partners and trainees were even more confident than they had been in the MTE. Anchana Heemmina commented, 'MRG uses money strictly for good results, not wasting it'. Deepanjalie Abeywardanabeywardan, Head of Media Research for Verité Research Sri Lanka commented 'no delay, no postponement...prompt on releasing funds'.

The project also operated in some environments on limited informational resources. Nada Tarek said, "Of course we faced obstacles, like identifying the list of people we wanted to interview because the number of Yazidis are shrinking (from the genocide). Thanks to our network and our close relationship with Yazidis, we were able to identify potential targets. It was difficult at the beginning, the process of conducting interviews with them was not the easiest one, they were reluctant to talk about the violations they were subjected to, for fear of security and persecution. They were presenting areas that are under the control of different parties. They have been subjected to violations by those parties. There was a lack of open resources that we can also use as reference in our report. We did a lot of extensive efforts to do research to obtain, cross check and verify many sources of information. It was not easy at the beginning but we managed to implement the project".

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<sup>17</sup> Conversely, this Team has previously produced MRG evaluations on budgets of below 3,000 euros; a real sustainability challenge for attracting researchers at or lower than the UK minimum living wage of 12 euros per hour.. With a budget of post-tax 7,600 euros, this research will pay evaluators at around 19 euros p/h.

Jian Badrakhan and his fellow lawyers at his organisation YASA work pro-bono. Their pro-bono work complemented the resources provided by the grant.

Salam Omer commented that the project “was cost efficient, especially during the pandemic, it was so difficult to work...to move around the country. For different regions, you need different authorisations, different registrations, so it was so difficult to move from one province to another. It was cost effective because we have freelancers (as representatives) in local communities. We didn’t need to move around. The information we have given us a lot of privileges to implement the project in the best possible way”.

After the exceptional COVID-19 context of 2020, when the project budget was under-spent, the catch-up from 2021-23 was considered to be wisely spent, as predicted in the MTE.

The final objectives were met on time and an appreciation of timeliness was clear throughout project performance. The evaluation judged that the MRG-Ceasefire-HL partnership continued to provide good value for money, with low unit costs, sometimes of below 1000 euros per trainee for multiple days of training.



Participant In the “Leadership for Sustainable Development” (LSD) 2022 workshop on the “Syriac Challenges in Lebanon and Syria: Freedom of belief and expression” gives a thumbs-up.

3. **Effectiveness:** To what extent were the objectives achieved in Phase One? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives or activities?

The grants application process in the NORAD-funded project had been universally regarded as simple and the flexibility of MRG praised. For example, the organisation Community Empowerment and Social Justice (CEmSoJ) in Nepal had not completely updated their legal status since 2017 (and it became harder with COVID-19). MRG gave them the requisite leeway.

“The uniqueness of MRG is how they leave us a lot of freedom”, commented Dharendra Panda - Centre for the Sustainable use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR) India, which received a subgrant in Round 1.



Anchana Heemmina of NORAD-MRG partner Duayjai in SBP said that MRG's interventions<sup>18</sup> had been specifically, positively impactful upon CSO disability groups, including that of Senah Deesa-eh whose group had trained 100 PLWD, on issues as basic as having the confidence to leave one's house. Anchana wanted MRG partners to be effective in the wider peace situation... *'we need to sit and ask what money they want and what strategy together... The problems in communities are very big and diverse.., if we have a small money, we need to know what can make a small change'*

Deepanjalie Abeywardana, a Sri Lankan partner, was one of many who focused on the importance of MRG's willingness to fund translation into minority languages. 'We have to go back to other donors, but with MRG, it is incorporated...I don't always see that coming from others',

Nada Tarek said "the intervention was not a direct one, not a humanitarian intervention, it does not solve a problem immediately. However, with the available resources (grant) 5K, it was an effective intervention".

Partners highly and enthusiastically praised the project at their meeting in Budapest. The only frustration was the visibility limitation to such a significant global problem as FoRB Minorities.

Miriam Puttick of Ceasefire said, 'We have managed to do more. We used budgets and saved lots of money to develop online material.

Sidsel Viborg of HL said, 'Within the project, we produced or helped produce films in English about inclusive society, various video stories<sup>19</sup> and fact-boxes. The director of some of the films from Iraq is an Iraqi Kurd. Local partners in different countries make films as well, in India, Indonesia, Iraq, Tunisia and other countries. All material is free and publicly available.' She continued, 'In the first half of the Project HL produced '360 virtual tours' to sacred places of religious minority groups... of... historic and national heritage'. These resources have been used by local partners in training and conferences for inter-faith understanding in both Tunis, Iraq, India and Indonesia.

Ceasefire presented that their monitoring tools had recorded 2119 cases between July 2020 and January 2021. The project's special reports had received positive replies, including from the UN Special Rapporteur during a series of consultations. The Iraq report had drawn reference in UN research into refugee and asylum land. There had also been submissions to UN UPR mechanisms on Syria with Arabic and English articles boosted on the 'Freedom of Religion and Beliefs' Facebook page.

4. **Impact:** Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the specific objective of the project. If it is unlikely that all or part of the purpose will be achieved. Why is this, and is this something that could have been foreseen or overcome?

The impact of the intervention was considered to be the totality of positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

As the conceptual frameworks for analysis of the data, evaluators used Social Cognitive Theory. This assesses not only the products of an intervention (e.g. policy change), but changes in behaviours, attitudes, perceptions and agency of the people and organisations affected by the intervention. The progress indicators in this evaluation were based on key components of human agency, according to

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<sup>18</sup> outside of the NORAD project, but in a complementary EU peacebuilding project

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.inclusive-citizenship.no/web-stories/>

Social Cognitive Theory<sup>20</sup>, e.g. from passive to empowered or open-minded to committed. The partner enthusiasm generated in the MTE, and amplified in Budapest, is therefore itself a significant finding, as is the relatively high levels of enthusiasm of evaluators in this research, compared to research on other MRG projects.

Two institutional partners (Ceasefire and HL-Senteret) received support, and Ceasefire made ten subgrants and Centre for Law and Justice received a grant through Asia Strategic Litigation.

From the contacts list that MRG sent to the evaluators, there were 49 organisations in total who received subgrants (another 14 organisations were not included in the contact list). Four were South Asia Collective (SAC) members, (1 Bangladesh, 1 Sri Lanka, 1 Afghanistan, 1 Pakistan). KIIs showed that subgrants helped organisations in the short-term to meet their stated objectives, mostly within 6 month grants, with some being shorter. Partner organisations also showed confidence in the sustainability of the impact in KIIs and questionnaires (at 85%).

At community project level, Anchana Heemmina pointed to significant impact upon CSOs, and sought greater MRG involvement in the SBP peace process.

Deepanjalie Abeywardana in Sri Lanka commented ‘we were able to convince many who had no idea of the issues, including key politicians from the Tamil side. Our seminars were reaching people who could resonate, and others who did not yet have an understanding...’.

Salam Omer added, ‘providing communities with fact-based information is a basic human right... because it’s related to freedom of expression. We were able to produce a lot of content that supported communities.’

Nada Tarek emphasised that the direct impact is “having an advocacy campaign, because it helped disseminate the campaign and talked about the issue. It’s a forgotten issue (conflict), we don’t talk a lot anymore of Yazidis religious tribes, so we can say that it helped raise the awareness of the subject. It also advances the research on the subject to have a complete verified reference”.

Mazen Abou Habdan’s organisation Freethought Lebanon said that the project Leadership for Sustainable Development (LSD) with Ceasefire provided a useful and constructive link with a UK organisation which shared the same values. He said that the professional website of Ceasefire also helped motivate participants, ‘The impact on people’s lives was definitely positively influenced. The community at large [had the] ability to get together, that they are part of a collective to advocate for freedom of thought and speech and added, “It strengthened the sense that we are not alone”. Freethought broke barriers by promoting freedom of thought through a first venture into a Comedy Night, in which peoples opinions could be changed through jokes about religious topics. “Our goal wasn’t to promote atheism, [but] that it’s ok to say these things in public. The idea of laughing and being happy together is a strong force for building a sense of solidarity, but in terms of long term advocacy [there is] still a long way to go. There was a positive contribution, but the challenge requires much more work. much is left to be done”.

The intervention developed local capacity. Jian Badrakhan and his organisation [YASA](#) (the Kurdish Centre for Legal Studies & Consultancy in Northern Syria) trained people to document abuses in

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<sup>20</sup> Used widely in development projects/programs, see: Rogers, Patricia (2014). Theory of Change: Methodological Briefs - Impact Evaluation No. 2, *Methodological Briefs*, no. 2

Afrin using international standards. This training helped YASA write a report documenting 160 human rights cases.

The intervention also developed the individual capacity of subgrantees. Somaya Selim of Justice House in Tunisia shared, 'this enabled me to communicate with international communicators, learned how to advocate, and doing it also was very impactful. I was also able to communicate with others with different contexts. It made me look at wider issues. I built contacts at an international level. This will help us in our work in advocacy. This is the highlight in our work. I saw that we are not alone in these issues. These gave me other people's perspectives and learned from them. I hope this continues in the future'.

Miriam Puttick stated that continuous Ceasefire work and subgrants were a catalyst for the successful, and crucial, passing of the Yazidi Survivors Law in the Iraqi Parliament, which foresees reparations for Yazidis survivors of the genocide.

Sidsel Viborg of HL stated that many interfaith coexistence and diversity films were published, with an educational and motivational impact on local partners. One of the films produced ("Co-existence in Iraqi Kurdistan" with an Iraqi Kurd as director) attracted views of over 100,000, and has been used by activist youth worldwide, as well as by the educational regional authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan to present the diversity of the region in numerous conferences. The films produced by the local partner in Tunis were shown to authorities there. A positive meeting between an MRG-NORAD partner and the Tunisian Ministry of Education provided the basis for the use of such films in teacher-training." This is considered a significant high-level impact in a country still learning about its own emerging minorities such as Amazigh, Jewish, Shia etc.

Other successes at engagement with government - recommended in the MTE - are increased UPR involvement of CSOs, links to the Prime Minister's office in Pakistan, and passing of the Yazidi Survivors Law in the Iraqi Parliament, which foresees reparations for Yazidis survivors of the genocide.

Yomn Al-Kaisi, commenting about impact from Ceasefire's monitoring tool, said 'We are documenting violence and results will be seen in 10 years. We are attempting to change the way one speaks about minorities.' She explained the accessibility of the tool to women, children and elderly, allowing in-depth insights into their experiences and reflections: 'We take the testimonies, have begun with the statistics, which are needed of course, but to humanise people you have to record what they said.' Ceasefire are working on both policy and grassroots level with schools in Lebanon, questioning sectarianism and inquiry into how people find themselves in politicised environments. The training added video tutorials, WhatsApp groups, sharing of resources amongst partners and more discussion in the second half of the project, which focused on international humanitarian law, in response to early feedback. The teaching program included coaching, mentoring, and the high rate of 70% of trainees wanting to reach other people who works in the field and build relationships.') One was a beekeeper, who became very active and motivated for human rights work, reaching out to his students and wanting to make initiative with friends on human rights advocacy.

The project is deemed to have achieved impact, with the challenge to extend that to strategic, cohesive, sustainable global impact in collaboration with donors, INGOs, CSOs and communities.

## **Sustainability**

Questionnaire results showed great partner and trainee confidence - Partners at 85% and SBP Allies at 93% - in the unpredictable area of sustainability. Anchana Heemmina said emphatically, 'Yes, it is long term with long term results'.

Truncated funding remains a problem. Partner, Deepanjali Abeywardana commented 'There was not a follow-on... we run lots of platforms, and we take over the funding even if it doesn't fit into a funding cycle... This is where we now need support. The only local platform for political fact-checking in Sri Lanka since the economic crisis is not fully funded'.

Salam Omer stated how, 'continuous objective reporting of minorities gives a voice to them. It has become a norm now among journalist freelancers, they look at the angle of minorities as a needed topic to be included in the newsroom'.

All project reports are published online and are accessible by everyone. Nada Tarek sees this as an element of sustainability, 'having strongly documented references will ensure an open source resource available to the public. This will not only be used by people focusing on Syria but also worldwide. Online resources are being used by activists, journalists, academics... we didn't only talk about violations [but also] correct information, recommendations to address the violations happening to Yazidis... how to achieve justice'.



Image by: Abdul Halik Azeez. A small Malay community without permanent housing lives by the rail tracks. They are joined by recent evictees from Java Lane, Malacca.

It is considered that the Project will produce some long-lasting effects from: policy changes (e.g. Yazidi Survivors Law); research reports submitted to the UN and EU; enlightenment on mechanisms underpinning politicisation and misuse of minorities; praised and widely-viewed advocacy films aimed at youth.

Similarly, the project had a profound effect on grassroots level through high-quality, learner-centred reflective training, with dialogue and discussion connected to life experiences, creating deeper understanding, applicability and potential for sustainable activism.

Through education, empowerment and advocacy, partners managed to tackle expectancies, behavioural capability, observational learning and efficacy beliefs, amongst thousands of participants.

When speaking about Width (eg activity scope) vs. Depth (eg. partnership) of project changes, Ifra Asda of MRG said: 'we sparked!', referring to the words of Joshua Castellino from MRGI who said at the Partner's meeting, 'width and depth matter [in implementation], but it is all about the sparks.' Relationships between INGO partners and with CSO partners and trainees remain a key element of project sustainability.

**Learning and good practice:** What was the key learning? What were the major factors, including coordination, capacity, communication, partnership, security, protection, which influenced the achievement or non-achievement?

**The key learnings are reflected in the Recommendations.** The work is excellent, appreciated and met its targets. Informants want more training, more and more predictable and significant grants, more involvement in UPRs, more networking on WhatsApp and Facebook. Progress has been made on networking, on open source material, and participants want even greater use of downloadable materials for mobile phones, and greater connection to grassroots, offline communities. They support the discrete approach at project level but want more international visibility and fundraising for MRG and its partners. Where administrative coordination and communication has had gaps – as in Pakistan (MTE) Sri Lanka and Lebanon – they want these matching the best examples of the Middle East North Africa region, with staff going the extra mile as catalysts for sustainable networking. They want deeper partnership, continued improvement of capacity. Not one expectation, either in the MTE or Final Report research, was expressed about MRG or partners providing support against the considerable constraints of security and protection. Trainees and partners expressed fears, threats, SLAPP cases, abuse; they know these constraints, and are intimately concerned about protection. Several KIs expressed confidence that ‘MRG knows the protocols’ on providing anonymity (which is why this report names non-controversial informants, but anonymises controversial opinions likely to draw reprisals). Participants would welcome - in the case of arbitrary, extended detention and torture as in SBP - any role that NORAD could encourage, government to government, and MRG-NORAD dialogue to devise any such contingency procedures.

Nada Tarek commented about work in Iraq ‘One of the key learnings from this project is [the importance of] partnership. We partnered with a new local organisation. Our experience and the local partner’s access to the field complemented each other (and gave us a] network of contacts. They played a role in accessing the Yazidi community. The project timeline was short. We exceeded the budget. The excess was covered by the organisation. If we had a bigger budget and longer timeline, it would be better. The donor was flexible. We asked them for a no cost extension of 2 months and we were able to finish the project’.

The ‘short timescale’ observation was echoed in every KI in the Indian Sub Continent, and in a significant minority of all KIs worldwide.

#### **6.4 Methods for data collection and analysis**

Quantitative and Qualitative methodologies through:

- Questionnaires (via [Typeform](#))
- Key Informant Interviews in virtual web meetings worldwide, and face-to-face in Pattani, Yala (SBP) and Budapest

#### **6.5 Selection of the sample of stakeholders**

In consultation with MRG, the evaluators in MTE had focused on MRG partners from Pakistan and Tunisia. A list of stakeholders and key informants was provided by MRG. In the latter research, greater attention was given to SBP, Ceasefire work across the Middle East and MRG work in the Indian Subcontinent.



**6.6 Analytical approaches:** The four areas of obstacle and solution outlined in the MTE recommendations are: access; networking; visibility/fundraising; project design. This final research undertook to measure whether there had been reversal or progress on the key issues.

## **7. FINDINGS of QUESTIONNAIRES and INTERVIEWS (Global)**

### **7.1 Findings from survey participation**

- Questionnaire (ex-)Trainees, Activists and Researchers: 58 (51 for the mid term evaluation)
- Questionnaires from Partners, Allies, Influencers: 21 (26 for the midterm evaluation)

After only two pushes, the trainees' surveys achieved a 59.2%% completion rate, and the partner surveys a 44.1% completion rate. This may suggest an unusually and positively high investment from ex-trainees in the program, who may not have a concrete future stake in the program. It was noted, unsurprisingly, that more responses came from recent ex-trainees.

Partners' response rate was also very high for research of this kind, although it was curiously lower than that of ex-trainees, as partners are still involved and likely to benefit financially from MRG and possibly NORAD in the future).

There were high drop-out rates for both partners and ex-trainees whilst answering the questionnaire. After two prompts for 'activists', for example, 143 people had viewed the questionnaire, 98 started it, 58 completed [with long answers to 'anything you would like to tell us']. This could inform us on ties with MRG being strong enough to open, but often not enough to complete the questionnaire. It could also suggest very busy schedules and imperfect internet access.

### **7.2 Findings from surveys**

#### **7.2.1 Partners. 21 partners responded as follows to the following questions:**

i. Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Had a direct, positive impact"; Partners scored at 84.4%<sup>21</sup>. Evaluators regard this as a very strong endorsement of the program from partners. The MTE had recorded 79.2%. A smaller sample<sup>22</sup> of SBP Allies and partners of a new MRG peacebuilding

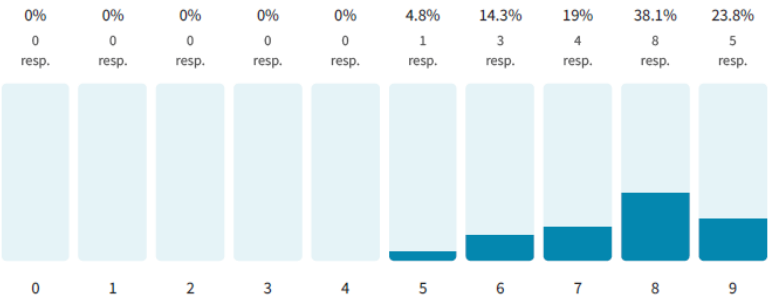
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<sup>21</sup> Answer options were from 0-9, to avoid the tendency of 'sitting on the fence' or using the middle score. In this way 0,1,2,3,4 are below average and 5,6,7,8,9 are above average. Each score is gained by multiplying the participant's rating by 11.11. Unless it is judged to make a difference, scores are adjusted to the nearest decimal point; so a score of 4 is 44.44 rounded down to 44, but a score of 9 is 99.99, rounded up to 100%. Please note that 'Average Rating' scores are computer generated photographs from the software; as it scores '1' as 0% and is not set up for a 0 setting, it does not correctly calculate the average scores.

<sup>22</sup> questions were asked of 12 MRG peacebuilding partners. Six questions received answers from 10 or more, 3 from 8 or 9 respondents, and one from 4 people. ,

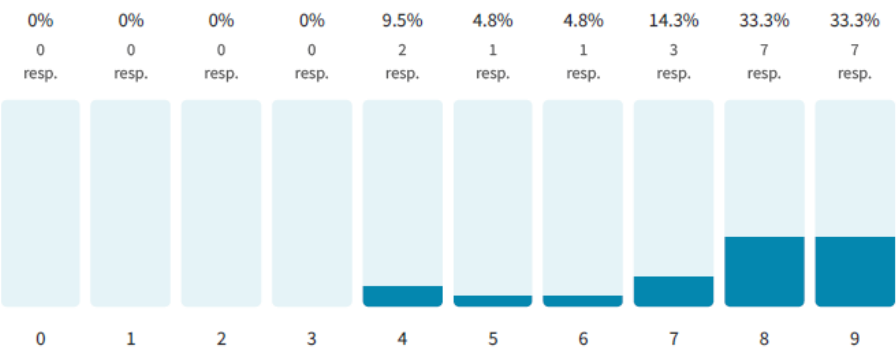
project funded mainly by the EU were asked the same question, and returned 96% confidence in MRG’s openness and Allies from SBP 84%. This constitutes a positive progression from already high scores.

7.6 Average rating



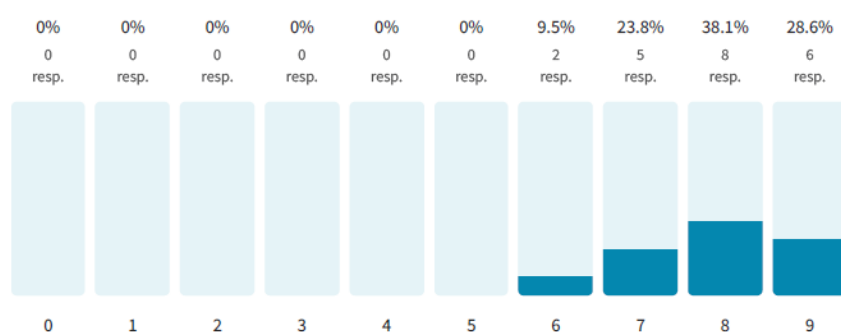
ii. Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries" = 76.7%. This again is considered a strong endorsement, although it is, exceptionally in this research, a lower score than the MTE score of 80.4% and the 84% from SBP Allies.

7.6 Average rating



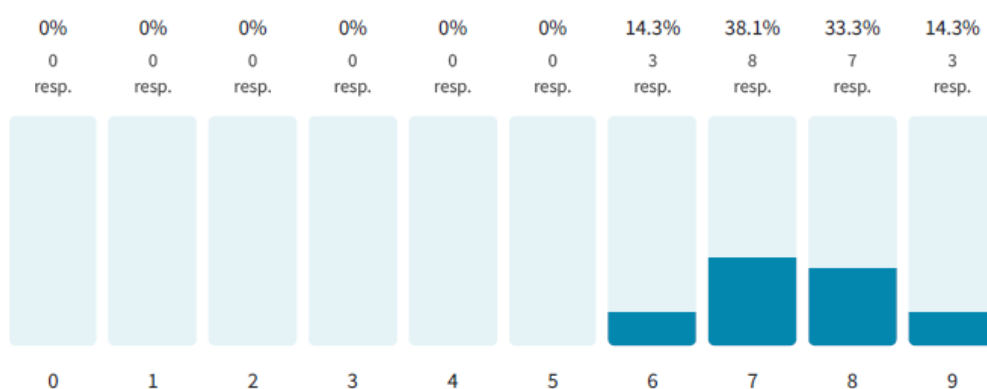
iii. Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries" = 84%. This refers to the religious minority communities served by the project. Its strong endorsement may be slightly qualified by the fact that - by nature of having internet access and working in the aid sector - respondents could not be considered a representative cross-section of these communities. The scores were consistently high across the Final Evaluation at **84%**, 82.5% for the mid-term (MTE) and 85% for Thailand’s SBP Allies. with a high sample size, it can be stated with confidence that MRG and NORAD were responding strongly to real, relevant needs,

## 7.9 Average rating



iv. Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits" = MRG-NORAD interventions: "Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits" scored **85%** (81% midterm and 93%<sup>23</sup> from SBP Allies. These are consistently strong endorsements, showing confidence in the 'difficult to attain' area of sustainability. One reason may be the tools used; the trainee course is practical, linked to activity and sometimes grants. The crucial link from learning to action was again bolstered by examples in key informant interviews.

## 7.5 Average rating

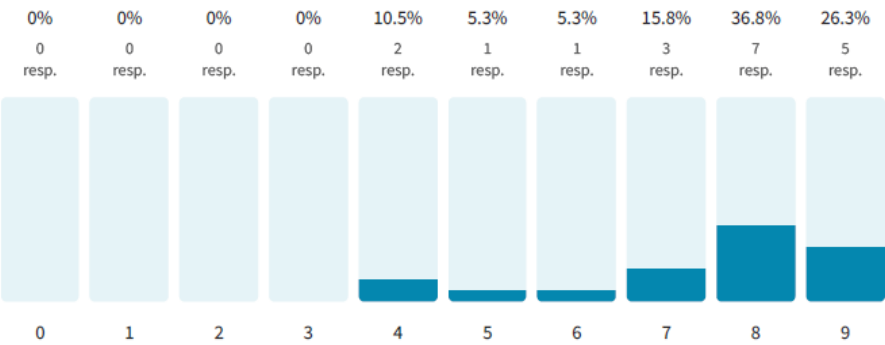


v. Was MRG able to accept when communities, partners, allies and influencers refuse MRG's advice and take a different approach? In this Final Evaluation the score was 82.2%. Multiple KIs, including in Lebanon, Thailand and Iraq described MRG as 'flexible' and 'open'. This displays a very significant building of trust and understanding from the Mid Term score of 76%. High scores for this indicator have been a USP for MRG in this Team's 9 pieces of research for MRG, overwhelmingly positive at 77%,

<sup>23</sup> One score of 16.5% was excluded from this scoring, because the partner explained it by the fact that her program had not long started 'this is something new, by the end of this, we are looking for another funding to continue our work. What we did is just a start. we are focused on 2 years, if we don't continue, it will be gone. Another score at 44% was excluded because it referred to participants on a subsection of a training not owning a camera. If these scores are included, SBP Allies scoring becomes 75% agreement.

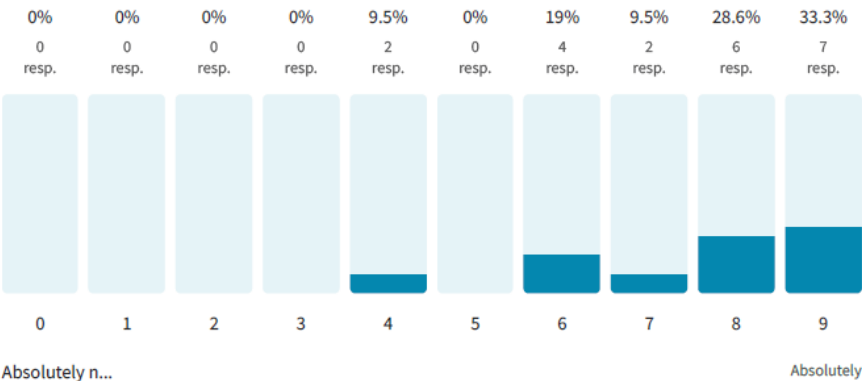
79%, 91% and 76%<sup>24</sup>; in SBP the smallest sample of 4 respondents scored it at 96%. These are very positive endorsements through very high scores.

### 7.4 Average rating



vi. Was MRG actively working with partners, allies and influencers to assess gaps in their capacity to influence change? = 83.3%. Again, evaluators regard this as a strong endorsement, given the time and resource constraints to genuinely involving stakeholders in line with accountability obligations.

### 7.5 Average rating

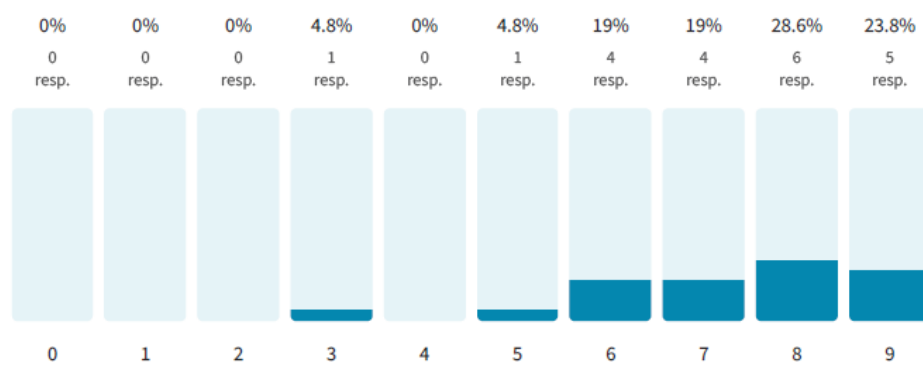


Results for this question were the same as in the MTE. Work on capacity gaps appears to be contextual, depending on priorities and staff time. A small sample of SBP Allies scored it at a very similar level, 85% with Anchana Heemmina the low-scoring outlier because she believed it was not a project priority ‘They [MRG] focus in this project on space for our work to go in our direction [ie, the direction chosen by CSO partners], not on capacity gaps.

<sup>24</sup> chronologically, in the Team’s research into programmes funded by the EU on Global Advocacy, FoRB, Roma and the NORAD MTE

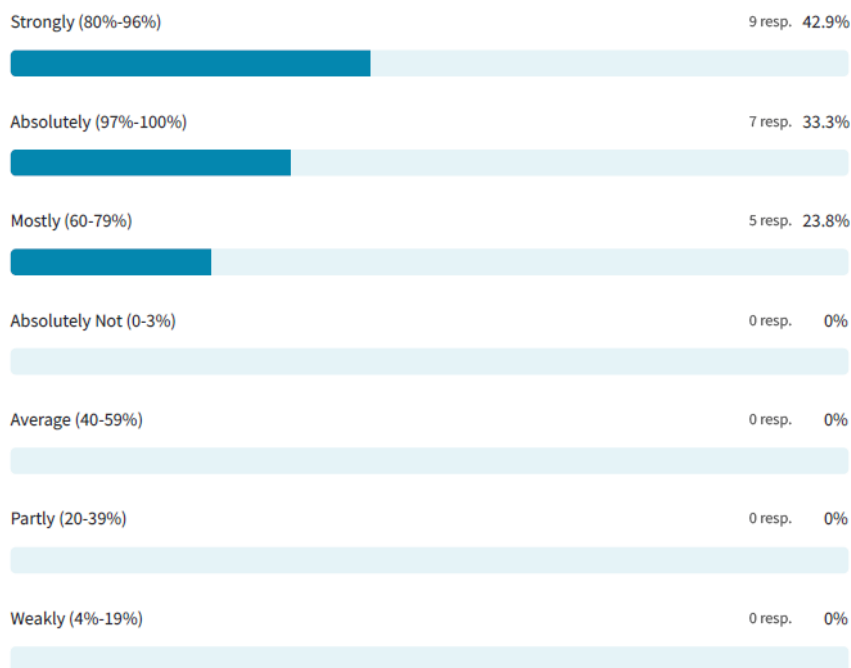
vii. Was MRG actively supporting women within religious communities to develop their skills and abilities to ensure that issues are taken up with their communities and by MRG? In the Final Evaluation this was scored and in the final at 81% (81% for the midterm). Support from SBP was scored at 95%, where 7/9 people answering were women, and two men felt unsure how to vote, or whether enough was being done. All this constitutes a strong endorsement, but mostly from educated women; on behalf of women in communities.

### 7.3 Average rating



viii. Was MRG actively reducing or eliminating participation barriers (including disabilities, age, statelessness, rural/urban) for potential and actual minority activists. For the midterm evaluation, half of participants answered Strongly (80%-96%), or Absolutely (97%-100%). For the final evaluation, **scores were higher**; 9 partners answered Strongly (80-96%), 7 answered Absolutely (97%-100%) and 5 answered Mostly (60%-79%).

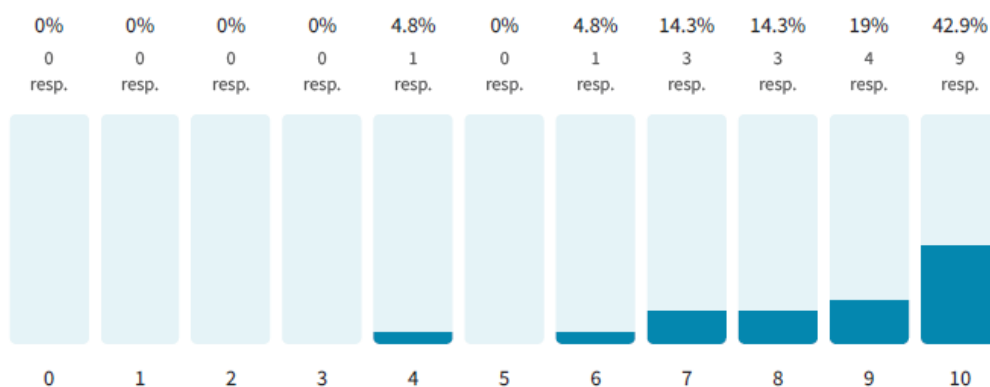




The SBP score from 7 participants was 82%

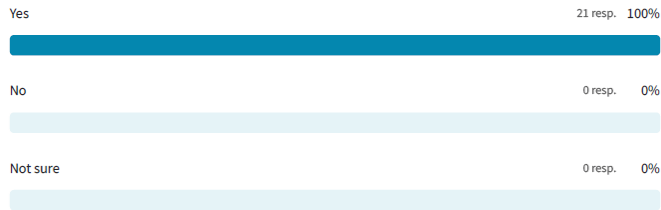
ix. How would you rate the level of communication and openness between organisations on this programme? 95% which represents a very strong endorsement (the same as the 95% at MTE). The SBP score from 9 participants was 79%, with one outlier score at 56%

### 8.6 Average rating



x. Were activities cost-efficient / on time / implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? 100% yes for the final evaluation, and 100% for the MTE)

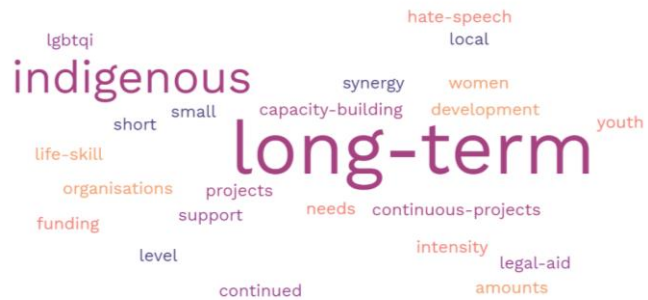
10 participants from SBP gave an average score of 84%, but four of those participants - whether they scored at 100% (one), 89% (one) or 67% (two) - were insistent that the amount of funding was too low for them to maximise impact. Comments worldwide included 'to gain better results it needs a bigger budget' (LSD Lebanon), 'small funding' (Duayjai Thailand), and 'We try to look for funding through [MRG] (KirkukNow, Iraq), with many organisations emphasising their practice of extending programs with their own private funds, but the strains this can sometimes cause.



Administratively, minor issues were reported; Deepanjalie Abeywardana commented that at one point she had needed to report to two different MRG staff who were not adequately coordinating information. She felt that she had to induct both. One partner mentioned without rancour that his request for fundraising help from Ceasefire had not received an answer. Such comments were few, and are judged to be oversights or necessary prioritisation of time.

**FINAL EVALUATION: Key words from the question “Which one thing should MRG start or improve? Why?”**

The words “long term”, “indigenous”, “capacity building” and “LGBTQI” were mentioned the most.



**MTE: Key words from the question “Which one thing should MRG start or improve? Why?”**



The words ‘flexibility’, ‘networking’ and ‘funding’, ‘local’ were mentioned the most.

The transition between MTE and Final Evaluation for the above word graphs in some ways mirrors the progression in the Evaluation Team’s recommendations. At MTE, both are focused on the mechanics of funding, networking, training and budgets etc. In the Final Evaluation, it is clear that progress on these matters has been made. The project is successful. The obvious direction is for scale-up, long-term, reliable, more significant funding for methods which work.

Key final evaluation answers to “Which part of the programme training/programme worked best?” were as follows:



The words “capacity building”, “advocacy”, indigenous”, “training” were mentioned the most.

The MTE’s answers to “Which part of the programme training/programme worked best?” are below

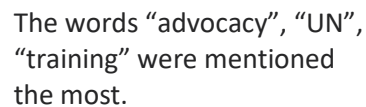


The words ‘awareness’, ‘advocacy’ and ‘report’, ‘communication’ were mentioned the most.

The above results suggest progress in that all of the main pillars of the programme are mentioned; respondents appear to have ‘grown into’ the programme’s objectives.

#### **7.2.2 Ex-trainees. 58 ex-trainees responded (compared to 45 for the midterm evaluation) as follows:**

Trainees' answers are also very disparate and comprehensive in the final evaluation. When asked “what part of the program worked best?” The answers ranged from “International mechanisms”, to “videos”, “Minority Rights Advocacy Tool Kit” and “education for minority, facilitator and mediator program, peace process program”. These different answers testify of an overall satisfaction of the training.



A word cloud of terms related to the report, with 'advocacy' as the central and largest word. Other prominent words include 'training', 'lessons', 'assignments', 'capacity', 'webinars', 'quizzes', 'experiences', 'media', 'campaigns', 'reports', 'structured', 'intersectional', 'organized', 'LGBTQ', 'experts', 'zoom', 'un', 'rapporteur', 'media', 'experiences', 'capacity', 'webinars', 'quizzes', 'experiences', 'media', 'campaigns', 'reports', 'structured', 'intersectional', 'organized', 'LGBTQ', 'experts', 'zoom', 'un', 'rapporteur'. The words are in various shades of blue and are arranged in a circular pattern around the central word 'advocacy'.

A sample of ex-trainee responses to 'scoring questions' is given below (all answers are provided in the Annexes):

<sup>25</sup> This final evaluation and the MTE were recorded by online questionnaire, and SBP Allies/Implementers were asked face to face. All were asked to 'vote' from 0-9, with 0 = 0%, 4 = 44%, 9 = 100% etc

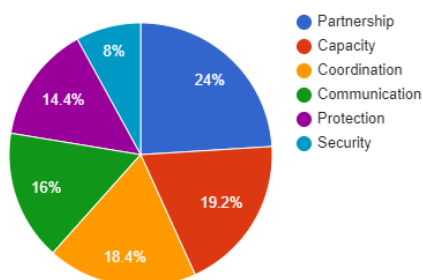
similar peacebuilding programs in Southern Border Provinces, who were interviewed face-to-face, with between 7 and 11 people answering each question (11 for this one) gave this a score also of 84%)

For the statement "MRG helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries" ex-trainees from this NORAD Final Evaluation gave scores of **82%** against 80.4% in the midterm, and 81% from Allies in SBP). 82.5% for the mid-term (MTE) and 84% for Thailand's SBP Allies.

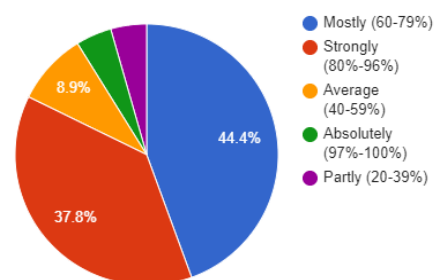
"Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries" was scored at **84%**, 82.5% for the mid-term (MTE) and 85% for Thailand's SBP Allies

MTE 30 trainees answered that MRG should focus on its partnerships:

(Ex) trainees - If you answered anything except "Absolutely Right", should MRG should increase its focus on:



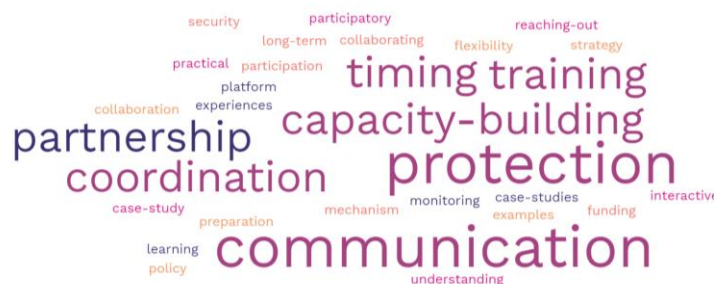
(Ex) trainees - Did the response make a real difference to the affected people?



Some quotes surrounding partnership, coordination and communication were: 'A platform for coordination among participants should be created through the training'; 'The interaction with peers was lacking, as they would show up only during webinars'; 'MRG should share their contacts so that they are able to stay in touch through social media platforms.' Keeping in touch seems important for the trainees and they would be willing to if it was facilitated by one of their numbers or by MRG with perhaps a WhatsApp group or a platform for alumni.

Other requests by trainees were for more interaction in-between sessions and during, more practical/technical/capacity building training and more specific case studies.

Key words from the question "Which one thing should MRG start or improve? Why?"



The words "communication" "capacity building", "protection, , "timing" were mentioned the most. Administrative communication was raised several times in KIs. It is normal that capacity-building



features as this is a central element of the project. It was suggested in KIs that NORAD might play a diplomatic role in protection where necessary. Timing may refer to occasional administrative delays.

MTE: Key words from the question “Which one thing should MRG start or improve? Why?”



The words ‘partnership’, ‘coordination’ and ‘capacity’, ‘local’ were mentioned the most.

### 7.3 Findings from interviews

#### Main Partners:

The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL-senteret) is a research, education and documentation centre in Oslo focusing on the Holocaust, other genocides and the situation of minorities in contemporary societies. This young partnership of five years remains a successful collaboration. In the MTE, HL reported that they learned a lot from MRG’s practicality and field experience, including in assessing potential partners/applications on the ground. Successes mentioned by KIs in the Final Report research included the widely-acclaimed 360 degree tours into sacred sites. HL encouraged film-making and 360 tours<sup>26</sup>, with audio-visual methods which appear to have fully presented MRGs’ detailed research on the condition of religious minorities. This collaboration resulted in visual projects around interfaith understanding. The 360 tour visits were set up in the holy Yazidi site of Lalesh, and the Christian site of Al-Qush. Online visitors can walk around virtually, and ‘visit’ the adjacent mosque and church. Around 100,000 people have watched the inter-faith film, according to its Iraqi Kurdish film-maker and Government authorities. This included viewing with VR headsets where internet access was impossible or intermittent. One of the main filmmakers, Zahavi Sanjavi, said he worked with complete creative freedom but “with HL having access to extra resources that does help in realising projects”. His objective was:

“To prevent any prejudice and misconceptions of each other, how to explain to each other the reason that they attack each other and destroying other communities is wrong”

Other films and online resources produced by the project were also viewed over 5000 times.

Ceasefire is the other main MRG INGO partner for this project. The Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights is an international initiative to develop civilian-led monitoring of violations of international humanitarian law or human rights; to secure accountability and reparation for those violations; and to develop the practice of civilian rights. The organisation has a longstanding partnership with MRG.

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<sup>26</sup> Available at: <https://www.inclusive-citizenship.no/>

In the latter part of the project, Ceasefire's support for capacity development in social media was appreciated, and its website regarded as an inspiration. Ceasefire staff commented that they had learned from MRG experience on sub-grants.

The organisation developed the online tool for religious understanding - a platform for the MENA region where witnesses and survivors of religious discrimination or assault can submit details of violations in English or Arabic. It has a gender-based violence specific form.

Feedback from these online courses included participant requests for more discussion time and the creation of a dedicated feedback session., both of which were provided in the second half of the project. Expansion of such methodology was recommended by KIs; who said that specific technical areas like filmmaking could increase in knowledge with deeper links between organisations, and filmmaking as a strong visual advocacy and pedagogical tool for communication strategies: Prabindra Shakya in Nepal asked for "Video makers to have experience, a network and resources, willing to make videos to explicit more how the communities work and the important individuals"

#### **Ceasefire subgrantee partners:**

**The interventions from partners created public awareness through Arabic and English articles and posts.**

**There were criteria to track the impact.** Objective research with local partners provided a platform to document cases of religious minorities.

The intervention developed local capacity, allowing partners to build capacities of researchers, networks, HR allies to hone their skills on documentation using international standards. The results of research and documentation allowed partners like YASA to write a report which can be used by international minority rights stakeholders.

Ceasefire had little previous experience of sub-grants, but learned from MRG institutionally, and from a current staff member who had previously worked for MRG.

The lack of internet access had been a challenge for many partners who advocated in the MTE for the provision of a complete set of downloadable training materials in PDF. Although some KIs were not yet aware of the development, MRG reported that the Minority Rights Advocacy Tool-kit is now available in a downloadable PDF format.



In Pakistan, MRDO's mobile registration bus is used to register Hindu women's marriages and receive computerized national identity cards to help protect their rights (2021). Photo by: Marvi Rural Development Organisation (MRDO).

## 8. FINDINGS of QUESTIONNAIRES and INTERVIEWS (Southern Border Provinces)

### A focus on Southern Border Provinces<sup>27</sup> (SBP)

The research afforded a visit by the Team Leader to Pattani and Yala, to update previous 2019 MRG baseline data<sup>28</sup>, maximise previous contacts' willingness to give rich data, and provide in-depth commentary in one country. The evaluation visit gave the opportunity to interview NORAD-MRG trainee Hasan Yamadibu of long-standing MRG partner Bungaraya, who made impactful speeches in Geneva as part of the NORAD-funded project. Visit-time was focused largely on Duayjai CSO and its 5,000 euro NORAD funding for 'Elimination of discrimination against Islamic private schools', including a day-long field visit to Yala to witness and engage in community meetings.

The context of conflict in SBP is both overwhelming and enduring. The opportunity was taken to interview new and long-standing partners of an MRG-EU peacebuilding programme (referred to as 'allies' of MRG). There is much overlapping between the NORAD and EU-funded projects. For example, the NORAD-funded Duayjai community participants met on the field visit overlapped with those of EU-funded CSO HAP's training for families experiencing torture and detention, their supporters and interested parties. Partnership was considered by KIs to be the key ingredient to success, and the

<sup>27</sup> This section aims to address context, partnership, NORAD, MRG and peacebuilding within Thailand. Comments of Thailand partners, staff and allies on MRG generally against DAC criteria and questionnaire prompts are included in those sections for ease of reading and comparison.

<sup>28</sup> [MRG2020 by Hampson, Batay-an, Ostojic with a focus on Southern Border Provinces](#) 2016-18 MRG programs funded by the EU, Sida and the Embassies of Belgium and Switzerland.

overall message to NORAD, MRG and the EU was the same request for long-term, significant investment in the peace process.

**Background in Southern Border Provinces and update since 2019:** Conflict in the 'Deep South' SBP provinces of Thailand goes back to the break-up of Pattani in 1909, with violent escalations in 1960 and 2004. In 2019, KIs presented the Thai Government as 'counter-productively paranoid, clumsy, weak and socially incompetent, falsely impugning civil society activists with supporting the separatist movement, whilst itself fanning the flames of separatism through incessant torture'. A recent victim had remained for weeks on life support before dying, with the military claiming he 'slipped over in the bathroom'; a medical KI said 'It was a mistake... their water-boarding should only have lasted 5 or 10 seconds... They do a lot of torture'.

In the 2019<sup>29</sup> research, a KI said 'the nationalism of Thai people and also Thai Government is very high, together with Islamophobia, of Al-Qaeeda who we [also] fear'. A foreign resident in Thailand commented 'With the political instability, there is never any Government or Military strategy or planning beyond five years'.

The similarities with 2019 are outstanding; above all that the three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand's 73 provinces, and approximately 3M people of the 76M in Thailand, still seem very distant from Government priorities in Bangkok. The main difference is that the greater stability of the Thai Government, the use of Special / Martial Laws, and the relative budgetary power of the military over civilian bodies appears as delegation of an inconvenient but distant issue to the Armed Forces. The Military have thus competently improved law and order, with a decline in violent incidents and more relaxed checkpoints. However, the underlying strategy - of 'One Thailand' with its clumsy attempts at demanding a narrow practice of Thai nationalism (in the anthem, the flag, 'being Thai', soldiers entering Islamic schools to conduct patriotic lessons etc) – seems unchanged and as unproductive as ever. Communities feel a huge distance from the Peace Process which is now almost exclusively the secret domain of the Thai Government, armed with one rebel faction called the BRN<sup>30</sup> (from among 20 groups of varying activeness and peacefulness, many based in Malaysia) and Malaysian Government facilitators. The ensuing disenchantment and disinterest undermine potential for any sustainable solution. And detention without charge for up to 37 days, and continued torture then release fuel the recruitment of separatists in schools and communities. The Thai Government approach appears self-defeating if its objective is unity, and failing in indicators other than the escalation of military spending and improved law and order. At no time in my two visits did I feel any revolutionary or anti-Thai sentiment amongst activists and communities. Perhaps because the Government approach appears so wasteful and vulnerable to populist critique, there was some optimism expressed that a change of Government might bring peace dividends to all of the people living in Thailand.

**The CSO / Academe response:** In 2019 MRG's coordinator said 'Organisations are low capacity, even organisational structures are low, not always a Board or a Mission Statement..; if no Director, the organisation collapses... [it was about] making them more robust... also minority rights, fundraising' In 2019, Waeromlee Waerbula of Kampong Taqwa, a village-based organisation, described Government CSO assistance from SBPAC[i]<sup>31</sup> as 'Money Bombs' 'They are trying to buy people, by giving them money to do nothing.. it is not good, no solution.' That SBPAC structure has been discontinued after vehement opposition. Divisions are still created by selective funding under ISOC4, but CSOs appear more discerning and worldly as to its motivations. As a whole, the sector appears stronger and more

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<sup>29</sup> The evaluation team's research of MRG's global programme.

<sup>30</sup> Barisan Revolusi Nasional Coordinate (**BRN**). See history [here](#).

<sup>31</sup> Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre: The Thai Government body for managing funds to NGOs and CSOs (and other duties)

confident than in 2019. Anchana Heemmina states ‘The first thing needed is respect from the Thai Government. For the language, culture and religion of Melayu Pattani people. And second in importance is good livelihood and justice.... People in the rural communities suffered very much, they know the reality which others don’t.’

A National Council of CSOs has been formed<sup>32</sup>. A large majority of KIs advocated, as a priority, the involvement of the community in the Peace Process. The evaluation team leader witnessed the active involvement of community training workshops of an MRG-NORAD partner Duayjai, and an MRG-EU Peacebuilding partner HAP, with dialogue about community realities and international protocols. The Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity (CSCD) at Prince of Songkhla University (PSU), and its sister organisation Institute for Peace Studies, (PSU) which employs long-standing MRG partner and ally Fareeda Panjor, has produced a roadmap<sup>33</sup> from consultative workshops for women’s involvement, stating: ‘Thailand has promulgated the General Equality Act... Thai Women Empowerment Funds...National Committee... Coordination for Children and Women in Southern Border Provinces... obligated to carry out its international commitments... women’s roles in society and the economy have increased while their participation in national development remains moderate. Thailand ranks 79/156 countries according to the Gender Gap Index (p14-16). To push forward the WPS agenda in Thailand, it is necessary to coordinate consultations with various stakeholders... inclusive... exchange of knowledge and analysis’ p. 21-22). The ongoing division and mistrust of the CSO sector might usefully be seen as a challenge in the context of shared belief that community perspectives must be brought to the fore if the Peace Process is to succeed. Fareeda has links to some of the CSO sector including MRG ally Senah Deesa-eh who works with fellow PLWDs on training and services to women. KIs agreed that CSCD might – along with one or two other groups – play a central role in a commonly expressed hope for a trust-building annual meeting of MRG partners and others. It

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<sup>32</sup> and there also exist alternative groupings.

<sup>33</sup> Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Recommendations for the development of national action plan; A Marddent, D Buranjaroenkij, Fareeda Panjor: Institute for Peace Studies, Prince of Songla University, funded by FCDO, UK

seems there is scope for shared learning, and for coalition-building around this simple advocacy, amplified by media and international connections.

The divisions in Civil Society, which were exacerbated by selective Government support, mean that joint action must be carefully engineered. A NORAD-project trained and long-term partner and ally of MRG, Hasan Yamadibu of Bungaraya pointed out the current difficult environment, 'This Government and the former Government look at NGOs as Opposition. They announced a new law relating to NGOs who they want to control without limitation. If an INGO wants to support a local NGO, there are many bureaucratic steps, which are more difficult' He added 'All NGOs here were checked on finance etc. now 70% of CSOs have failed/finished, and could not work freely... now we need documents and papers signed by soldiers to work in a geographical location)...'. There was some optimism expressed by KIs about the opposition Pheu Thai Party<sup>34</sup> current strong showing in opinion polls, and hopes for a change in the probable elections of 7 May 2023.

**MRG's position and NORAD funding:** In 2019, problematic relations had been experienced between the organisation and its local implementing partner who was described by several partners as 'the wrong person'. There are currently present, active and widely-appreciated MRG staff present in Pattaya, and talented management from within Thailand. Fitra Jehwoh and Nasreen Charong were repeatedly described as 'a good team', with comments similar to those of Fareeda Panjor, "I feel relief when I work with people as a good partner, like with Fitra. I love these kinds of people, not forcing me to do something for their benefit'. MRG itself remains a trusted partner to a variety of groups; those who have had contact with Nicole Girard also expressed a high opinion, such as NORAD trainee Hasan Yamadibu of MRG ally Bungaraya "Nicole is so excellent in speaking and writing also'.

Although partners repeated in other words the 2019 critiques of 'pin pricks'; that MRG funding remains 'too short and too small', MRG's role is seen as an important catalyst.

NORAD-MRG partner Duayjai CSO reported in depth upon its 5,000 euro NORAD funding for 'Elimination of discrimination against Islamic private schools'. Duayjai interviewed teachers and executives in five schools about, 'What is violence against the school; students and teachers'. It<sup>35</sup> concluded 'We have three types of violence i) structural; policy, law and discipline ii) physical harm against religious teachers and students, and the checking of documents iii) cultural or religious violence at army checkpoints... the perpetrators of discrimination are both civilians and security... Special Law can last 37 days in a military or police camp. Religious teachers are a target, they think they recruit for



Sitti Fatima of Duayjai Displays community comments about the role to be played in the peace process by three levels of society; People (In orange) CSOs and NGOs (in pink) and Leaders (In green). Photo: David Hampson

<sup>34</sup> Led by **Paethongtarn Shinawatra**, youngest daughter of the former Thai prime minister [Thaksin Shinawatra](#) whose decision to sell shares in his corporation for more than a billion tax-free dollars started a path to controversy, protest, boycotted and then invalidated snap elections, 1 2006 military coup and self-imposed exile.

<sup>35</sup> Anchana Heemmina, Executive Director of Duay Jai.

rebel groups.’ ... I heard how the military was sending uniformed and armed soldiers – not teachers – into Islamic schools on a regular basis to conduct a curriculum aimed at bolstering national pride and the importance of ‘being Thai’. Headteachers, teachers and students, it was claimed, were afraid of these visits but were left no choice but to comply.

Asked about potential improvements to MRG’s work, Anchana Heemmina, Executive Director of Duay Jai said, ‘My [questionnaire] scores are very high for MRG. Only one is low (20-39%), about whether MRG is able to accept the Partners’ right to disagree and do its own thing. There are two aspects to this (i) the Thai NGOs here need to improve internally and increase their analysis of the Peace Process. And (ii) MRG needs to USE the information it gets from the grassroots to make a good situation in the South, to become.. an active supporter... in the Peace Process... with knowledge and skills. It needs good financial management, good follow-up, good bringing of funds from EU etc, and we can bid for them. Transparency is important; MRG is transparent but maybe local people are not transparent. It needs good close follow-up from MRG, timely correspondence, participation, and intense control. It needs friendly and influential people at local level’

NORAD-funded trainee Hasan Yamadibu founded his educational organisation, Bungaraya, an MRG partner, in the remote areas of provinces including with women and children. Hasan was invited to join a two-day Geneva conference on Minority Rights in 2018, and a networking and teamwork training. ‘It was very good... exchanges from all round the world; we still have an active WhatsApp chat group... I joined many programs done by the UN, about environment, labour, education, Human Rights, peace etc... I participated in questions, gave speeches to 1000 people... then we posted on FB, people waited to listen...

The attention and popularity has an enduring downside. ‘Until now my passport was linked to radicalism at the border... blacklist...I came back from the UN seen as a supporter of a ‘radical group’. I am not now independent to do things and travel. Sometimes [agents] follow me... check me, ask me how many days, which border, I do a lot in Bungaraya on minorities, gender, education... with special people like prisoners... in social media, Intelligence Officers, soldiers, attack me [as] a ‘liar’ ‘anti-government’ ‘terrorist’... It doesn’t affect people, they already know me’.

From MRG staff, the prioritisation of partnership was evident. Nasreen Charong said ‘our CSOs are our targets, and via them religious leaders, women, widows, victims of violation, disability... they already have the knowledge... and we give more chances and space to act. Fitra Jehwoh added ‘I like that we are working quietly on hard, local issues with local CSOs... focus on the content of the work’. It seems that the triangle of partners, MRG staff and MRG is working smoothly; Fitra said ‘I appreciate the flexible working style, giving independence to staff and having a good distance for M&E’.

The focus visit to the Deep South allowed a wide range of interviews with the complementary and overlapping work of MRG’s current EU-supported Inclusive Peacebuilding in Thailand’s Southern Border Provinces peacebuilding programme. Yostorn Triyos has produced a compelling book<sup>36</sup>. of black and white photographs centered on detainees/torture victims, prefaced ‘This work reflects the suffering of people subject to the special law... trauma and untold damage.... His forthcoming book will be called ‘Living Room’, a safe space, to counter incorrect perceptions that the Deep South is very dangerous, that nobody can survive. In fact, its inhabitants are ‘normal people, we are human’. ‘It will also be used in two exhibitions on the Deep South’ Yostorn’s work stands out also because of the intensive and inclusive (particularly with PLWD and women) community preparation work, and its enlisting of trainees from within the communities. One of these interviewed local students was Yura Wanwant of an MRG-led Youth Photography Training, 12-14 August 2022. She stressed the importance of youth education in countering violence. Like Rosidah Pusu of MRG ally N-WAVE, an active connector

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Gray Zone’ Yostorn Triyos. RealFrame, 2021.



of women to Government and Police, and other KIs. Yura wanted more and longer projects, but she appreciated the feedback and has used the experience to sign up for Disability Training and work on LGBTQ+ issues. Previous MRG partner Kampung Taqwa - a previous grantee and a partner in the current peacebuilding project - continues its community organisation around good governance and rural leadership. Waeromlee Waebulat explained that it works for peace through four pillars; the Imam; a local leader; local government; and a natural leader (respected, maybe younger, a woman leader). 'I work to uplift the community, build good governance systems. Community consultations and respect are the start... when we have a project we work together... People follow each other. People have a problem, anti-government... we must change this mind'. Kampung Taqwa coordinator Kanungnit stated, however, that on occasion: 'People are not the problem; Government is the problem'. I was privileged to travel to Yala to observe a well-spaced and comprehensive 8-session training by long standing MRG partner and ally HAP entitled 'Human rights and mental health rehabilitation training'. This incorporated community visits and a seminar with Government and other stakeholders. A participant stated 'We villagers do not have legal knowledge... or management...to eliminate conflicts... [involving] government officials... Today's training gave us knowledge of legal and human rights... and made us more understanding.

Despite the environment of a majority of participants having been tortured or had their loved ones tortured, Director Ismael Teh saw the benefits of inclusion 'When you open up the invitations, government people and education systems are interested to join, Youth also... not only people affected by violence... Next steps we aim for networking between them and participants... it is something we can share also with the government...' He added 'We need MRG to go and talk with the Thai Govt and BRN , talk about... violations... with both sides.' And if the Government or the rebel group does not listen? 'Ask the donor Government!' Ismael has worked with MRG since 2016, and appreciated its accessibility.

### **Recommendations from Southern Border Provinces 2023:**

Donors such as NORAD and the EU, interested Embassies, MRG and other INGOs such as Save the Children International might usefully invest in strategy, time and long-term institutional and programmatic money in helping to support the Peace Process. In particular, an advocacy focus might be put on how communities, including women, can be informed of developments, and then to be able to shape them.

A shift in emphasis might reduce the number of short-term grants on low budgets. These have been previously useful for building partnerships. With a longer-term strategy, the grants could be progressively stepped up and coordinated between CSOs as part of a longer strategy building up to impactful interventions in the Peace Process, and enduring institutional partnerships for MRG and ideally NORAD.

MRG might support – through CSCD and one or two other accepted groups – a central role in the trust-building annual meeting of MRG partners and others. It seems there is scope for shared learning, and perhaps coalition around the simple advocacy above, amplified by media and international connections.

### **Interview Dates and Times**

Date	Interviewee	Location
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Monday 6 February 2023		
16:00	Mr Yostorn Triyos, Real Frame	Bangkok, Translator Kornkanok Jnr.
Tuesday 7 February		
17:00-18:00	Fitra Jehwoh (MRG)	Pattani: Paradise Hotel (near Pakistan Masjid)
19:00 onwards	Hasan Yamadibu	Paradise Hotel
Wednesday, 8 February		
10:00	Anchana Heemmina (Duay Jai)	Paradise Hotel
14:00-16:00	Fareeda Panjor (IPS, EU Project Coordinator)	Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity (CSCD), PSU Pattani Campus
Thursday, 9 February		
10:00	Rosidah Pusu (N-WAVE)	Paradise Hotel, with Translator Fadila Lala
13:30	Nasrin (MRG) and Yura (a NORAD project trainee)	Paradise Hotel
Friday, 10 February		
All day	Duay Jai's community training on Early Warning Early Response. (Unarmed civilian protection, the first meeting to let them protect themselves in the peace process, at cluster.)	Lebuh Yoh, Cho-I-Rong, Narathiwat community, Translator Anchana Heemmina
Saturday, 11 February		
10:00	Suena (PLWDs)	Paradise Hotel, , Translator Yura Wanwang
14:00	Waeromlee Waebulat and Kanungnit (Kampung Taqwa)	Paradise Hotel, Translator Yura Wanwang
Sunday, 12 February		
10:00-12:00	Ismael Teh (HAP), and people introduced as Jamal (teacher, networker), Anas (creative arts in SBP issues) and Aladi (President HAP) and Workshop for family victims of torture	The River Restaurant, Yala; Translators Jamal Kirai and Yura Wanwang

## 9. HYPOTHESES and CONCLUSIONS

**9.1 The MTE had produced hypotheses and conclusions; in consultation with MRG, it was agreed in this final report to see if progress had been made since then. Many of these results are worked into earlier parts of the document, including against the DAC criteria. Some additional comments in selected key areas from the MTE were:**

**There has / has not been progress with the MTE recommendations to:**

- **‘redouble efforts to prioritise women and people from a religious minority background’**

One of the MTE recommendations concerned lower participants of female activists compared to male participants in the Project. Most of the KIs from the Partner organisations confirmed that the number of female project participants should be 50% of the total number, but this goal proved challenging as a slightly lower percentage of female participants was recorded.

Progress continues to be made, however. In SBP, Duayjai is targeting community women of 25-45 years old for empowerment against domestic violence and for the peace process. Current practice includes Women’s Marches, ‘to help women to be clever and brave, good, knowledgeable lobbyists’.

In Sri Lanka, Verite provided some good news, but a need for vigilance: ‘Racial profiling was mainly severe in COVID-19,... when minorities are targeted, women are also highlighted... These have gone down in terms of numbers (from our database). There are ongoing issues of crimes, especially. sex-related, they are dramatised but also trivialised and of objectification. ... irrespective of gender, there is religious violence which we monitor, that has not changed over the years... While the circumstances have not changed for women, the demands for structural change have been more prominent... interesting, noteworthy ... All of the international work is not a phase, the remnants are in-tact, we will see it in the election’<sup>37</sup>

- It was considered overall that progress had also been made since the MTE at institutional level, with concerted attempts to open the programme up to women closer to and at community level. Nicole Girard of MRG explained ‘We have localised more in our online course. [At the MTE stage], a US woman was helping us. We now have an indigenous woman from Burma based in Chiang Mai; we felt it was a better choice to bring the material down to local level... We were also able to select some women-led organisations e.g. AWAM in Pakistan. Sometimes, we receive a really good application for small grants that are from local organisations but they are not minority-led organisations. But sometimes the minority-led organisations’ applications are not so good, so we now try to work with them [to improve the application]... One was led by Christians in Pakistan, also one in Kashmir. {We worked} together to improve the application we were direct with them Nicole also pointed to MRG’s SIDA-funded Disability Programme which had some areas of overlap with this NORAD-funded one, thereby prioritising the inclusion of people with disabilities, e.g. in the work of NIDWAN (Nepal Indigenous Women Asia Network In regard to the participation of female activists in this NORAD-funded Project, it is encouraging to see the higher turnout of women partners answering the survey in the final evaluation.

**Has there been progress in ACCESSIBILITY to the learning and capacity building services provided by the project ‘Protecting the rights of religious minorities,’ since MTE for grassroots organisations?**

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<sup>37</sup> local elections; as predicted by Verite, these have been delayed from 9 March to 25 April 2023.

There has also been progress in attracting more activists from minority communities. Miriam Puttick from Ceasefire explained that for sub-grantees a combination of methods was used. A call for proposals was sent directly to well-known partners, but also public selection of participants for Ceasefire now involves public advertisement boosted on Facebook and word of mouth techniques. Localization to context was enhanced in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, with efforts to overcome participant hesitancy. The training further targeted those interested in human rights, not only people with professional experience.

Several KIIs from Partner organisations explained in the plenary session (Partners Meeting in Budapest, January 23-24, 2022) or in individual interviews that the majority of participants have a minority background, but many chose not to declare this in highly sensitive and politicised environments for fear of abuse and victimisation. "Protecting the rights of religious *minorities*" was sometimes a very sensitive labelling issue. Miriam Puttick said "We should be creative about how to work with it, most participants were minorities, (but) they do not want (the term 'minority') to be used. For example, in Lebanon everything is sectarian, and there are 15 different groups. Michel Decache stated that smaller minorities, such as the Syriacs, were excluded from the representational and political rights enjoyed by larger Maronite, Shi'a or Druze minorities.

Sidsel Viborg from HL Sentret concluded, 'Issue of minorities is a very sensitive question, and political culture doesn't allow talking much about minority, minority issues and rights.'

In summary, partners encouraged minority community participation and took on the challenge to flexibly overcome the problem of terminology.

**It was recommended in the MTE to translate materials to local languages and provide cost-free, offline formats. It was also recommended to create networks to protect the rights of affected populations where knowledge, guidance and capacity building are lacking.**

In this regard, the partners were forthcoming and adaptable to the needs and requirements of the participants. Miriam Puttick commented, 'As part of the training, a lot of materials, video instructions, and online modules were developed that were not initially planned for online training. The materials followed the various questions that the participants asked the mentors, who were otherwise available all the time.

Ceasefire is engaged in long-term activities in Syria and Iraq. Starting from scratch in Lebanon afforded 'more room' to organise follow-up sessions, produce new, shared material, maintain the network through a WhatsApp group, Arabic training material from other organisations and submission of a report to the UN. In their online module, participants can ask questions eg. about subgrants and documentation.

Yomn Al-Kaisi, said, 'We launched a lot of online materials, video tutorials...Are going to launch three modules explaining how to document violation, work with victims of trauma, international humanitarian law; this was born from training, as the trainees said they need more. Part is translated to Arabic to make it more accessible.'

Nicole Girard explained that material from the Minority Rights Advocacy Tool-kit which had previously been only available online is now downloadable in a PDF format, with additional suggested activities for in-person trainings. Grants have been made on how to use this material in local settings, which are available to previous subgrantees and unaffiliated activists. There had been more trainers from local communities, such as in the third round of Peace Point training in Myanmar, which was provided exclusively by Burma teachers.

Some problems had been experienced regarding the availability of materials and capacity building of local organisations. A staff member from MRGE said, 'In the Arabic online course, there were problems accessing the platform, and not enough translation to Arabic'.

One KI noted that the Project was led by 3 European implementing/funding partners, and suggested diversification to a partner/s.'in future collaboration. This may contribute to capacity building, access and equity, sustainability of results, and possibly fundraising, language and grassroots' reach. It would not be a cure-all for meaningful representation - Sri Lanka is very different from Syria - and would need to be based on merit, added value, accountability and legal requirements. However, evaluators feel it might be a significant action of localisation, and deserves consideration at the level of both Partners and Networks.

Overall, it is concluded that partners made significant efforts to improve accessibility of the materials to the grassroots, and to follow their needs and requests for capacity building. Still more could be done in regard to translating and making the materials available. And a broadening of the main partners to Global South organisations deserves consideration in any future project.

#### **The importance of keeping active networks:**

- **Progress has been made. Nicole Girard pointed out,** ' Partners in the MTE had asked MRG to set up a networking platform of alumni and contacts of different project partners, to develop and deepen links with similar human rights organisations. Nicole Girard of MRG commented that 'we had a regional meeting in October 2022 to get people to learn from each other and establish relationships...Part of the six month extension will include an inter-regional meeting that will include participants from both MENA and Asia'.

It is recommended that MRG seek funding to allow the staff time for meaningful networking; as Fitra Jehwoh mentioned, it needs to have an ongoing purpose to be sustainable. Anchana Heemmina in the SBP section requested an MRG network meeting once a year. Despite the ongoing mistrust of a complex political situation, this seems feasible, with visibility/coordination owned by the Prince of Songkhla University in conjunction with a small number of selected CSOs. KIs suggested this would also be welcomed in Sri Lanka<sup>38</sup> 'If they can bring their partners together and see an opportunity for us to learn from each other it would be really good. It can be facilitated...

The passion and energy from face-to-face networking, and the importance of the UN Forum are made under the methodology output section.

#### **Has there been progress in VISIBILITY and FUNDRAISING, as the priorities of the project 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities,' since the MTE?**

For MTE most respondents to the questionnaires and interviews praised the programme; they want more! Program visibility had expanded as more work was produced after the pandemic. Informants expressed that the work is relevant, impactful, efficient. They wished to continue and expand the small grants program: This was universally welcomed by partners, for example 'Grants are very small but can leave a good impact at community level'.

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<sup>38</sup> from multiple KIs; this representative quote is from Deepanali of Verite

Nicole Girard highlighted the FORB Ministerial Event in EC in London. 'That was a flagship event in the Western world'.

She also mentioned the online Ceasefire reports which were distributed by the hundreds to supporters, UN people and journalists, leading to media coverage. These materials are also used internally by EU agencies in the assessment of eligibility of asylum seekers and in protection of people who are fleeing from their home countries due to persecution. MRGE and partners discussed the potential funding opportunities at the Partnership Meeting in Budapest designating a session on sustainability and identified one US and one EU call to apply together for protecting FORBs.

MRG held a one day training at the Asia regional meeting in Bangkok which focused on building fundraising skills. MRG also promoted its commissioned film Section 298, with a dedicated premiere in London in September 2022.

To recap, much was done in the second half of the Project (after MTE) in terms of visibility when the Project's outcomes were produced to a greater extent. There is still a great need for new subgrants and training.

**Has there been progress in optimising blended (face-to-face and online) methodologies as a legacy of adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

It appears that this issue has evolved and progressed naturally, depending on target groups. Online, cell phone-based approaches have retained access to home-based women and lawyers; HL's '360' virtual tours continue to be used in community as a teaching method providing pdfs, video tutorials, Q&A, curricula etc, and 'offline is better in a conflict zone, the real situation, and based in the community... you see people oppressed in front of you.' <sup>39</sup>

It continues to be recommended that access considerations are taken into account when deciding on the relative online and face-to-face proportions of future blended learning.

Online training was part of the partners' creative adaptation to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The adaptation also brought certain advantages in terms of the inclusion of people who otherwise could not participate in the training, especially in terms of engagement of female activists.

Miriam Puttick said, "The transition to online training due to the COVID-19 pandemic enabled the participation of people who otherwise would not participate if the training had been organised live, particularly women, mothers who couldn't be 3 days away from their obligations."

To conclude, the blended approach to learning yielded many benefits increasing overall reach of the Project, while decreasing expenses.

**Has there been progress in Clarity on what MRG and partners cannot provide on Security and protection, and preparatory discussions with NORAD before future projects?**

Progress has been made by addressing security in the online course, and in a dozen specific cases. On extreme occasions, such as the chaos of Myanmar and human rights extremes of Iraq, NORAD has understood the contextual need to support via unregistered organisations or non-registered bank accounts. The bureaucratic accountability needs of a donor and the realities of human rights risks will always be in creative tension; context sensitivity is required in stakeholder discussions, including the

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<sup>39</sup> Anchana Heemmina, Duayjai



level of demand for sums as low as 5000 euros. The evaluation concludes that the size of many small grants - and the level of administrative demand - might be increased, but that these remain strictly contextual rather than uniform; over-funding and under-funding are both potentially damaging.

NORAD-MRG discussions on wider security roles would happen more naturally in the run-up to any follow-on programme. The issue seems ongoing, and NORAD may be called upon to provide assistance in the event of violations of HRDs. Anchana Heemmina commented 'Yes I think NORAD can do that, they have a diplomatic presence in BKK. They can raise issues [for example] of Anti-Slapp Laws. I have two trial cases dating back before MRG and NORAD involvement; the British, Swiss and German embassies sent someone to support me in Court [which is] . not independent of Govt. The case was mentioned in Parliament, but I did not yet discuss it with NORAD or MRG. Dr Fareeda of PSU/IPS concurred that Anchana and many others in and close to the network, including her husband, had faced multiple threats and abuses for raising rights issues. Once again, there was no expectation that MRG or NORAD could take responsibility for this environment, but a request for solidarity in the event of state malpractice.

Hasan Yamadibu of Bunagaraya in SBP commented on the importance of continuing to use sensitivity to reputation on the international advocacy stage... 'Many things Thailand did as a result of my speeches [in the NORAD-MRG project, at the UN], they added a local alphabet, they changed things in the curriculum to Malay (but they do it themselves, they don't ask other experts)'. In many contexts where the project worked, the life of an activist remains "lonely and dangerous."

At the Partners meeting in Budapest, MRG's Zsotia Farkas commented, 'Even for me it was tangible how much risk participants bore'. One of the participants presented the case of a subgrantee who opened a resource centre (library) for a 5000 EUR grant in an undisclosed location in India. Thereafter her husband was put on a watch-list, and Partners lost contact with her for months, until the situation cleared.

About the safety of the activists issue, Miriam Puttick said that in some circumstances, 'To be realistic, we cannot help, EU, NORAD cannot help as nobody has a knowledge of what happens in the country and trying to intervene may make the case worse. Planning and network creation should be improved. It is important to monitor the situation, it is important to plan ahead AND at least have a protocol on how to plan activities. Sometimes the state itself is a threat and many participants do not trust the state. It is possible to connect the participants with other organisations, especially with the UN mechanisms for monitoring information on cases and by activating different mechanisms.'

Nicole Girard commented, 'Online participants understand security risk. The issue of providing clarity was addressed since the MTE. Subgrantees were informed "we can fund you, but you have to be aware of the risks." She explained that the security situation was getting worse, so 4-5 grant emergency grants were provided in 2022 alone. She gave an example of a human rights activist monk, who eventually had to flee to a neighbouring country with family and two disciples. The grant was 2500 euros for a lawyer's fees.

Partners often managed to mitigate serious consequences on the safety of activists. The Project yielded 'lessons' in this regard, such as using UN mechanisms, better networking and use of emergency response funds.

### **Has there been improvement in the PROJECT DESIGN of the project 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities,' since the MTE?**

The Project Design was regarded as suboptimal as the application process was too short at less than a month. Partners were found in haste, without adequate time for discussion. In retrospect, planning

should have been more strategic, optimising overlapping projects and partners to reduce administrative burdens.

The situation was somewhat improved by use of the “Implementation and Activity Plan” and “Results Framework” excel format that was introduced to MRG by Norad task-manager in early 2022, to monitor the activities and achievements.<sup>40</sup>

34% of the project funds were used for staffing. This may have been because of restrictions in the Calls for Proposals or from MRG’s own choice to engage at part-time (50%) for Coordinator and (80%) Assistant positions. It was possibly an inadequate level of funding; the effect of high-calibre professionals working part-time can be detrimental to human resources development and retaining of staff. These issues are shared throughout the poorly-funded sector of INGO/CSO human rights work; as MRG’s Nicole Girard commented ‘partners also struggled with low staffing costs’

Some KIS proposed more diplomatic push-back to donors. In human rights, unconventional approaches and deep understanding is sometimes needed. An issue raised by participants of the Partners meeting was that administrative burdens are excessive for small amounts of money; it was pointed out that over the project period NORAD rules became more stringent. This is cumulative, as the Government and Banks require greater scrutiny when Partners receive money from INGO.

To conclude, the Project design had many flaws due to inadequate preparation time for applications, allowing little or no space for analysis and discussions, and excluding any chance of thorough strategic review. These flaws are very difficult to correct later, but were compensated with the resourcefulness and enthusiasm of the people working on the Project.

### **Has there been improvement in fundraising support?**

Partner KIs noted an improvement. MRG extended the fundraising functions of its Facebook site from sharing funding opportunities to fundraising advice and tips: . MRG held a one day training after its regional network meeting in Bangkok in October 2022 at which fundraising staff from London advised on how to find money, plan and implement. Evaluations showed that partners found it useful that MRG management staff prioritised the search for funding opportunities for grantee partners. and preparations for applications, for example connecting two organisations<sup>41</sup> to extend the scope of successful LGBTQ+ work from Afghanistan to Bangladesh. Partners requested more of the same, describing in Thailand - where partners had received MRG advice and tips -, Sri Lanka and Iraq a particularly challenging funding environment post pandemic, and particularly for rights and governance.

**Has there been improvement in the functionality and accessibility of the online platform/accessible technology in general, and for the elderly and visually impaired...** There has been no progress made on functionality of the platform, and this remains a recommendation. Some related progress was made in the second half of the programme. MRG employed a Disability Officer targeting PLWD minorities, including In SBP and Nepal, and for persons with visual impairment and PLWD minority rights activists<sup>42</sup>. The SBP visit brought confirmation that Disability had been addressed in sub grants and network activities.

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<sup>40</sup> Progress Report for 2021.

<sup>41</sup> HRAB and BCHRB

<sup>42</sup> One ally Suena was interviewed by the Team as a KI, see Southern Border Provinces section

- **Has there been improvement in... ‘MRG might consider its optimal % of unrestricted funds, and its optimal % of funding tied to individual programmes, and to accelerate its search for donors able to accommodate any unrestricted funding.**

Such progress could only be slow in an extremely challenging funding environment. However, long-term, significant and reliable funding is a requirement of optimally successful rights’ work. As far as the Team is aware, no progress has been made since the MTE. This Final Evaluation makes long-term, significant and reliable funding its overriding recommendation. Partners and allies suggested that this may begin with a discussion between MRG and NORAD, and ideally may result in NORAD using its influence on other donors.

On an INGO-CSO level, MRG conducted a fundraising training for all sub-grantees at its Regional Meeting in Bangkok in October 2022.

- **Has there been improvement in ‘MRG consider the optimal size and structure of its Communications Team..., a larger Team and effective strategy may need: close liaison between Programmes, Campaigns Communications; strategy, investment in the interactive nature of the website and social media; training of staff in creating video content; social monitoring tools, and greater staff time to optimise their use’**

MRG has already added Visibility through Communications as a fourth pillar of its strategy, and continues to advance in this area. Testament is provided by MRG’s leaner, cleaner publications, such as ‘World Directory of Minorities, Indigenous Peoples’, and ‘Minority Stories’, State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples and ‘Peoples under Threat.’

In this NORAD-funded project, MRG produced and promoted three films in Asia and six altogether, for example, Section 298 on the Blasphemy law in Pakistan, which had a live screening in London. The organisation has ambitions for showings at film festivals. In Sri Lanka, MRG partner NCEASL’s databases and ally Centre for Policy Analysis’ video games for Youth around the world provide good models of creative use of technology. In the Norad project, good examples are provided by HL Senteret’s 360 degree tours, and Ceasefire’s website.

## **9.2 Maximising the COVID-19 context potential for online and offline learning:**

Partners showed great flexibility in the face of challenges in the COVID-19 context, YASA for example was able to train local networks to do the research on the ground, without flying in people from other parts of the region or outside Syria was cost efficient.

Although an estimated 59.5%<sup>43</sup> of the global population have some access to the internet, in most countries worldwide this is either intermittent or too expensive for continual use.

Many ex-trainees had expressed frustration with the limits and challenges of online training, both for those who do it, and those without internet who are excluded from it. Shapla Swarna appreciated that the course “really took into account the Bangladesh context” addressing the critical issue of providing online skills to people in very rural areas, who face participation barriers both in applying and learning. She said that more training on how to navigate online courses could be helpful.

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>

MRG partner and trainee Laila Shanhnawaz commented ‘All online materials are an internet challenge. Much of my work is in rural areas... For those who are new, reading materials have less impact than face-to-face. Difficult to grasp, I read again and again. It is a challenge.

**Ex-trainees continued to share**, however, an overall positive experience of the online courses and webinars. There was a feeling that MRG and Ceasefire had fully responded to requests for localisation, discussion-based modules and methodology and the addressing of security. Content had been appropriate to trainee and partner activities. Requested mentoring and guidance has been provided and regional meetings appreciated by those attending them, ongoing interaction with other trainees via WhatsApp and Facebook was frequently reported.

## 10. FULL RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Context of Relevant Recommendations from the Global Evaluation of MRG’s work 2012-18, and progress between the MTE and Final Evaluations:

In 2020, this report’s three evaluators conducted MRG’s [Global Evaluation](#) whose full recommendations are on pages 26-37. In 2021, the Team conducted the [MTE](#). On an ongoing basis, it is recommended that MRG and partners HL and Ceasefire where appropriate:

### On keeping focus on successful core activities:

- evolve and increase their courses and partnerships; serve partners and trainees to mutual satisfaction and expand programmes to more minority rights defenders and organisations. Questionnaires and KIs show there is demand for more and more significant amounts in the **small grants** (based on fulfilment of criteria and organisational capacity), and localised and contextualised and **training programmes**. Evolution suggests appropriate innovation; partners should try to avoid the pressure to innovate in a way which removes the focus from grassroots communities and religious minorities.

### On networking:

- develop networks within countries or regions, e.g. South Asia, Middle East, etc. to encourage continued discussions after events such as launches or training sessions. The need for advocacy networks continues to be expressed by partners
- continue to expose ex-trainees to face-to-face international networks, such as the UN forum, as well as regional and national. International examples and knowledge from other areas in the world were greatly appreciated in SBP and Lebanon. Trainees expressed the interest in creating links with other activists from the same field of action.
- seek funding to play a central role to expand networking and manage post-training relationships, routinely expecting trainers and staff in their Terms of Reference to be catalysts for WhatsApp and Facebook groups. Until funds are available, this should involve carefully managing expectations and seeking cost-effective ways to attract Trainees (eg. through ‘prestige’ incentives) to manage countries or theme groups. The staff role may mostly be in choosing and motivating Administrators, and – while under contract – participating by supplying relevant and interesting material. The measure of success would be the extent to which Trainees and Partners maintain accounts and share learning, as in Lebanon and SBP.
- **continue to nurture grassroots networks and organisations**, youth groups, CSOs etc, who can use the interaction with MRG and partners for knowledge, guidance, capacity building and meeting minority rights.

### On fundraising, visibility:

- whilst quietly conducting programme work, partners should continue to aim for increased international visibility and increased fundraising for themselves and CSO partners, including the newly-increased fundraising functions of Facebook site and email groups which now regularly share funding opportunities, advice and tips. KIs expressed that the work is relevant, impactful, efficient; but invisible within countries inhabited by ex-trainees and partners.
- continue to strategically consider the optimal size and structure of Communications Teams, with close liaison between Programmes, Campaigns and Communications, investing in ever-increasingly interactive websites and social media; staff training in creating video content and connection to experienced and networked video makers; investing in social monitoring tools, and greater staff time to optimise their use.
- try to devote time and effort to be active in country networks.
- consider their optimal % of unrestricted funds, and its optimal % of funding tied to individual programmes, and to accelerate its search for donors accommodating unrestricted funding.

### On administrative and participation barriers:

- review and seek to improve the functionality and accessibility of the online platform / accessible technology in general, and for the elderly and visually impaired. It was noted that in the second half of the programme, MRG had employed a Disability Officer targeting PLWD minorities, including in SBP and Nepal, and for persons with visual impairment and PLWD minority rights activists<sup>44</sup>. The SBP visit brought confirmation that Disability had been addressed in sub grants and network activities.
- continue, **post-pandemic**, to open up face-to-face events, but with consciousness of the occasional advantages of online access e.g. to home-bound mothers, time-pressed lawyers. through translated, free, open-source documents on websites.
- seek and require consistency in coordination and **administrative** functions worldwide to attain competence, for example, in filing of job applications, and a consistent understanding of the correct allocation of tasks to staff, consultants and partners. Coordination and responses to requests were reported as strong, for example, across the Middle East, but seemingly less so, for example, in Pakistan.

### On Project design:

- **Baseline data**, and especially the two-page narrative from 2017 was found to be weak in the MTE, and the log frame to be ambitious and inconsistent in quality. Partners should provide more detail in project design documents.
- seek contextualisation and sustainability through **Government involvement where possible**.
- provide clarity / expectation management on limitations in providing protection and **security**
- engage donors and other stakeholders on security limits and on advance preparation for responding to individual cases of persecution.

It is fully recognised that since these publications, MRG has made significant concrete steps towards achieving many of the recommendations, particularly in expanding its visibility and attractiveness to the public and on power-sharing with partners and trainees, particularly attention to the grassroots. . New measures take time to produce results, particularly results that can be perceived by trainees in a short-term course or partners using their first sub-grant communications.

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<sup>44</sup> One ally Suena was interviewed by the Team as a KI, see Southern Border Provinces section

## 10.2 Full Recommendations directly from this 2023 MRG - NORAD Final Report on FoRB

In the second half of this programme, secure and confident in their progress and relationships, partners have amplified their voice for more significant, longer-term and predictable funding. They have emphasised in SBP (peace process) and Pakistan the importance of trust-building at community level. And they have reiterated that they do not expect MRG to offer security, but suggested that the important role of government donors in preparation for, and action in the case of, governmental human rights abuses of HRDs, CSO partners, trainees and partners, in a way that MRG partners cannot.

### **It is recommended that NORAD:**

- consider how to provide budgets which are longer-term, reliable and larger, particularly for small grants and networking, or ideally in a way which allows MRG, HL and Ceasefire - and through them the CSO partners - greater scope for decision-making, whilst retaining their accountability obligations
- consider how to use influence with other donors to encourage the same.
- continue to resist the temptation to demand constant innovation where the effect is to take resources away from core elements and/or grassroots communities and religious minorities.
- request from partners **more detail in project design documents eg. clear logframes**
- engage with Ceasefire, HL and MRG on the potential - in the event of human rights abuses of partners or trainees, such as torture and detention without trial - for raising cases with host governments.

### **It is recommended that MRG and partners:**

- advocate for longer-term, reliable and larger funding, particularly for small grants and networking, and try to increase actual spending on those areas
- provide more detail in project design documents eg. clear logframes
- provide further support to trainees in rural areas to overcome participation barriers both in applying and learning. In particular, phone-based open source online training might usefully be provided on how to navigate online courses.
- carefully consider in future projects, the diversification from Europe to selected partner/s and/or network(s) from the Global South, as a significant action towards the localisation agenda.
- Overall, it is concluded that partners made significant efforts to improve accessibility of the materials to the grassroots, and to follow their needs and requests for capacity building. Still more could be done in regard to translating and making the materials available. And a broadening of the main partners to Global South organisations deserves consideration in any future project.



## **11. ANNEXES**

### **11.1 Terms of reference of the evaluation**

Final Evaluation – Terms of Reference and call for Expressions of Interest

Project name: Protecting the rights of religious minorities

#### **1. Background of the project**

Minority Rights Group Europe (MRG), a Budapest-based non-governmental organisation implements a 4-years primarily NORAD funded programme 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' in partnership with Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies and Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights. This project supports minority activists and organisations that are working towards strengthening the rights of minorities of faith and belief, in regions where the need to act on these issues is the greatest: Middle East and North Africa, and South and SouthEast Asia.

The project targets up to 14 countries: Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, Syria. At the heart of the project will be building the capacity of local civil society and offer activists the opportunities to join forces and become the voices of their communities.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that the human rights of religious minorities are respected and that these communities are protected from persecution and discrimination.

See more about the project and Minority Rights Group [here](#).

#### **2. Evaluation Objectives**

**This final evaluation will build on the previously completed midterm evaluation, which can be found [here](#).**

The objectives of the Final Evaluation are:

- A. Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in Protecting the rights of religious minorities' Programme Document and furthermore, provide MRGE with an opportunity for 'structured evaluative learning', with the aim of learning from the programme design and implementation processes.

- B. Compare the project as measured against the midterm evaluation and provide analysis on relative progress
- C. Based on the findings of the evaluation, develop a set of suggestions and key recommendations for future and continued MRGE and its partners activities.
- D. To report to NORAD and other funders on the usage of their resources in the project.

The evaluator will need to be independent of MRGE and its partner organisations, its donors, the project targets and participants and will need to demonstrate that no perceived or actual conflict of interests would arise during the evaluation. The evaluator will need to work within the timeframes outlined below. The evaluation will need to satisfy all the requirements of the European Union and evaluation guidelines issued by them.

### **3. Key evaluation questions**

#### *Outcome level*

Where completed as planned, did the activities contribute to the planned results? Where this was so, refer to evidence. Where not so, what factors intervened and explained how they impacted. Suggest ways that MRGE tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was (or not). Document any changes in the external environment that may have helped or hindered the project. If there were any unplanned results (positive or negative) explain what these were and how they came about. The evaluation should pay attention to and comment on the mainstreaming of gender and other forms of intersectional discrimination and cross cutting issues in the project.

#### *Impact level*

Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the specific objective of the project. If it is unlikely that all or part of the purpose will be achieved, why is this and is this something that could have been foreseen or overcome?

### **4. Key deliverables**

1. Evaluation work plan /inception report
2. Preliminary findings ( max. 5 pages) at mid-term of the evaluation period
3. Final evaluation report ( max. 40 pages excluding annexes)

### **5. Experience and Expertise required**

- extensive knowledge and experience of working on human rights, minority rights, gender and FoRB
- good knowledge of project target countries
- experience of comparable evaluations and strong track record of evaluations carried out on similar networking and capacity building projects
- familiar with and able to comply with all EU evaluation requirements
- speak fluent English and knowledge of one of the local languages is desirable
- experience of training, capacity building, advocacy and work with minority organisations in the region would also be helpful

### **5. Report submission, timetable and budget**

The evaluator will start working 6 months before the project ends and we expect the final evaluation to be concluded before the project ends. The evaluation should be carried out between 1st January 2023 and 31 March

2023. A draft evaluation report should be submitted no later than 15 March 2023. MRGE and partners will have 15 working days to comment on the draft. A final report must be submitted no later than 1st April 2023.

Visits in two programme countries to discuss the project with relevant groups of beneficiaries are essential. Interviews with all project partners are essential. The budget for this piece of work includes evaluators' fee, travel, communication and other costs.

**Budget:** Gross **10000 EUR** (including applicable taxes, contributions or 27% Hungarian VAT depending on applicant's status).

## 6. How to apply

If you are interested in being considered for this opportunity, please send the following to [nicole.girard@mrgmail.org](mailto:nicole.girard@mrgmail.org) by **31 Oct 2022**. Detailed project description and documents can be requested via email before submission.

- CV
- Cover letter – indicating relevant experience and knowledge and how you meet the candidate requirements
- Work plan including evaluation matrix, methodology, and timetable for the evaluation including provision plans for country visits (numbers and types of people and groups to be contacted). These plans will be finalised in the inception report phase.

## 11.2 Questionnaires to partners and trainees:

### 11.2.1 Questionnaires to partners

What is your full name?

Were you/your organisation part of MRG and/or of the 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' programme with NORAD?

If YES, was your organisation a partner of MRG or how else were you involved?

In which country / countries were you a Partner / Ally / Influencer / Other in this MRG/NORAD 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' programme (please specify)

Are you: (Please specify, if you identify as a member of one or more religious Minority)

Nationality

E-mail address

Telephone

Which part of the programme training/programme worked best?

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Had a direct, positive impact"

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries"

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries"

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits"

Was MRG able to accept when communities, partners, allies and influencers refuse MRG's advice and take a different approach?

Was MRG actively working with partners, allies and influencers to assess gaps in their capacity to influence change?

Was MRG actively supporting women within religious communities to develop their skills and abilities to ensure that issues are taken up with their communities and by MRG?

Was MRG actively reducing or eliminating participation barriers (including disabilities, age, statelessness, rural/urban) for potential and actual minority activists.

If your previous answer is not 'Absolutely', how can MRG actively reduce or eliminate participation barriers?

How would you rate the level of communication and openness between organisations on this programme?

If your rating to the last question is underneath 5, how best to proceed?

What impact (quality and quantity) was made in strengthening the Minority Rights of affected people?

Were activities cost-efficient / on time / implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

Would you be able to elaborate on your answer above by sharing some examples?

What are the Key Learnings from this programme?

Which one thing should MRG start or improve? Why?

This is the most important question. What message do you have for MRG/NORAD about the 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' programme?:

### **11.2.2 Questionnaires to trainees**

What is your full name?

Have you been a trainee in MRG/NORAD Religious minorities programme (including the Minority Rights Advocacy Tool-box)

If NO, were you mostly a Researcher / Activist / Other (please specify)

In which country / countries were you a Trainee / Researcher / Activist / Other in this MRG/NORAD work (please specify)

Are you: Please specify, if you identify as a member of one or more religious Minority      Nationality

E-mail address

Telephone

Which part of the programme training/programme worked best?

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Had a direct, positive impact"

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries"

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries"

Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits"

Did the response make a real difference to the affected people?

Coordination      Protection      Capacity Communication      Partnership      Security

Which one thing should have been improved? Why?

Were you able to stay in touch with peers from the programme? If so, how? (i.e Whatsapp)

This is the most important question. What message do you have for MRG/NORAD about the 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' programme?:

### **11.2.3 Email cover letter**

Dear friends and allies of MRG,

I am reaching out to you as you have been a partner or ally to MRG during the last 3 years under the 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' programme.

I am now asking for about 10 minutes of your help, please, this week (by Friday, and sooner is even better!).

MRG and NORAD are proud of its work strengthening rights with minorities and indigenous people.

We always need to improve, and so your questionnaire answers can tell us how to improve! May we kindly ask for some of your time to fill in the questionnaire and submit the answers using this link: [insert link here]

Your name will not be shown in the final report. Your answers will be anonymous, and sent directly to our independent evaluators, not to us. Your name will not be used in the final report (unless you have explicitly stated in writing that you wish your name to be used).

Many thanks in advance. Looking forward to your active participation! Please answer the link above by Friday 13 January.

Thank you,

### **11.3 Questionnaire results**

#### **11.3.1 Beneficiaries, including ex-trainees**

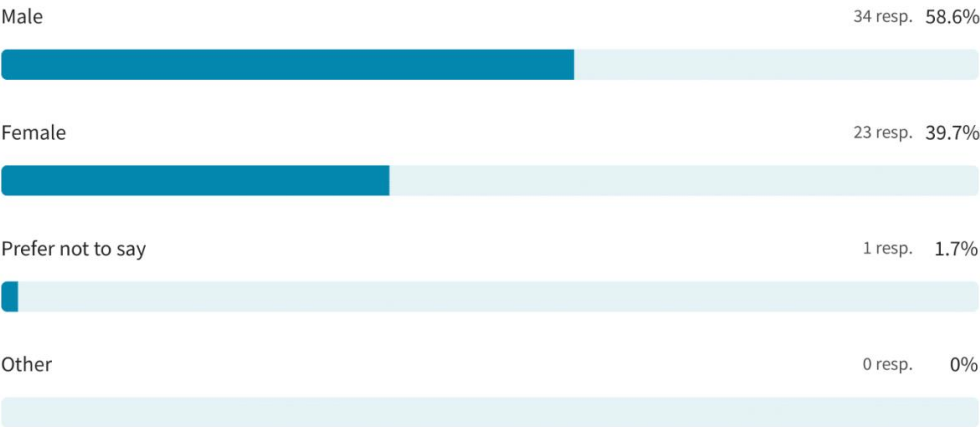
Have you been a trainee in MRG/NORAD Religious minorities programme (including the Minority Rights Advocacy Tool-box)

58 out of 58 answered



Are you:

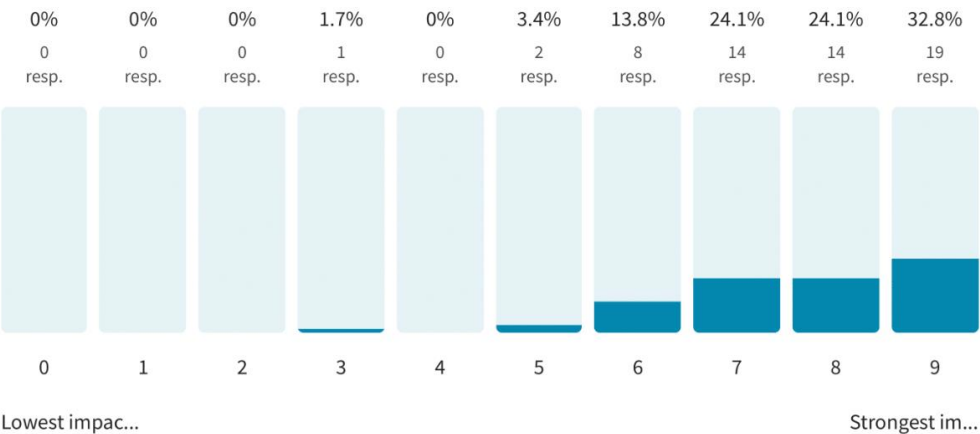
58 out of 58 answered



Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Had a direct, positive impact"

58 out of 58 answered

7.6 Average rating

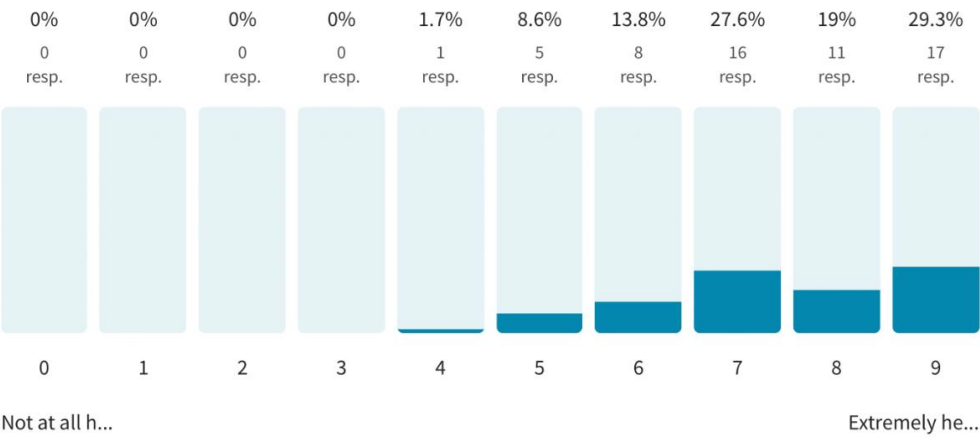




Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries"

58 out of 58 answered

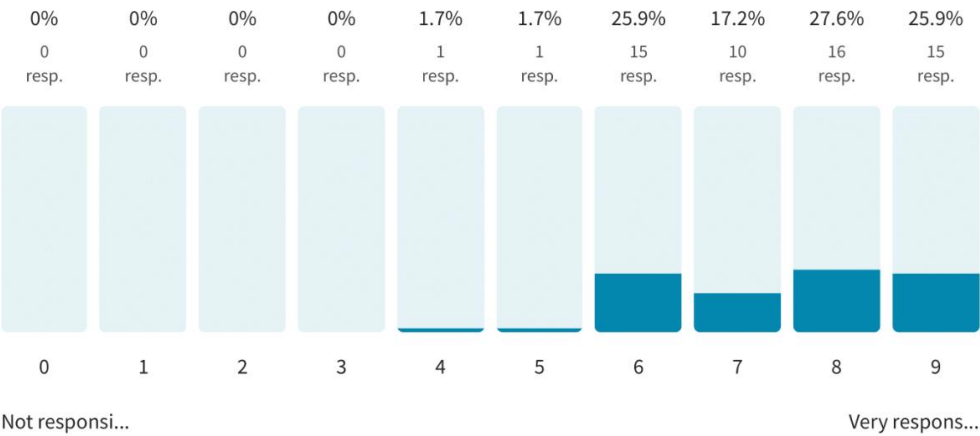
7.4 Average rating

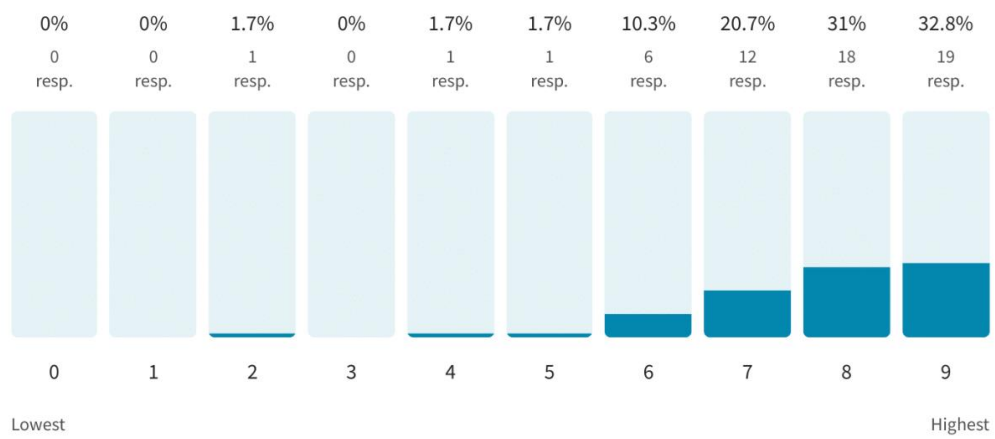


Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries"

58 out of 58 answered

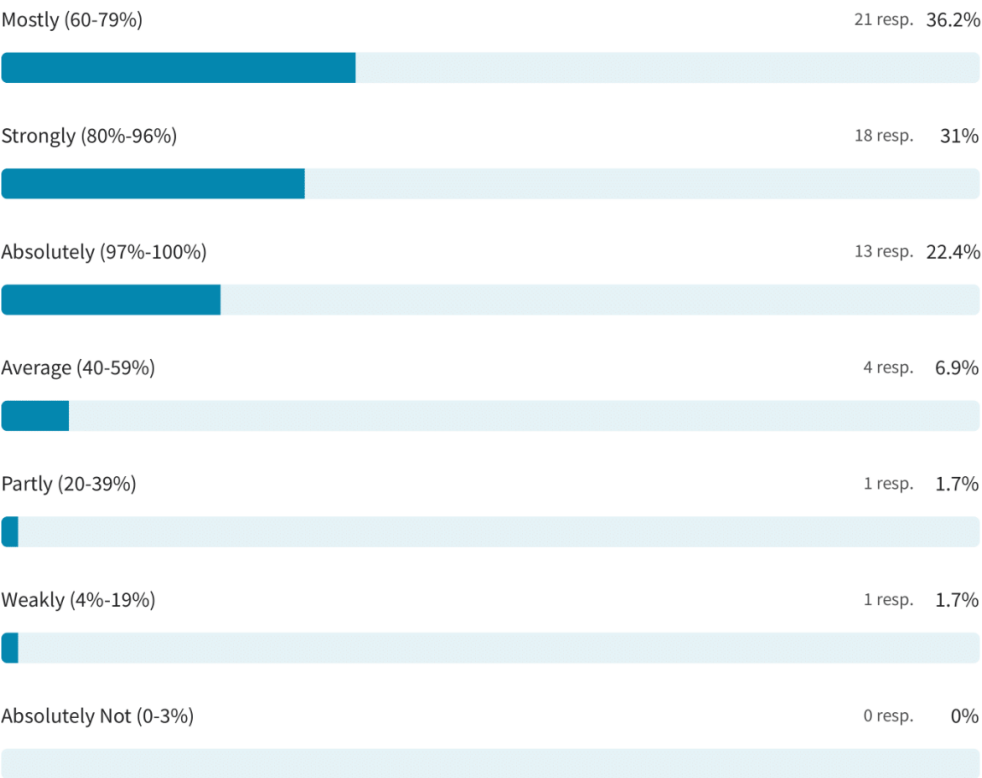
7.4 Average rating





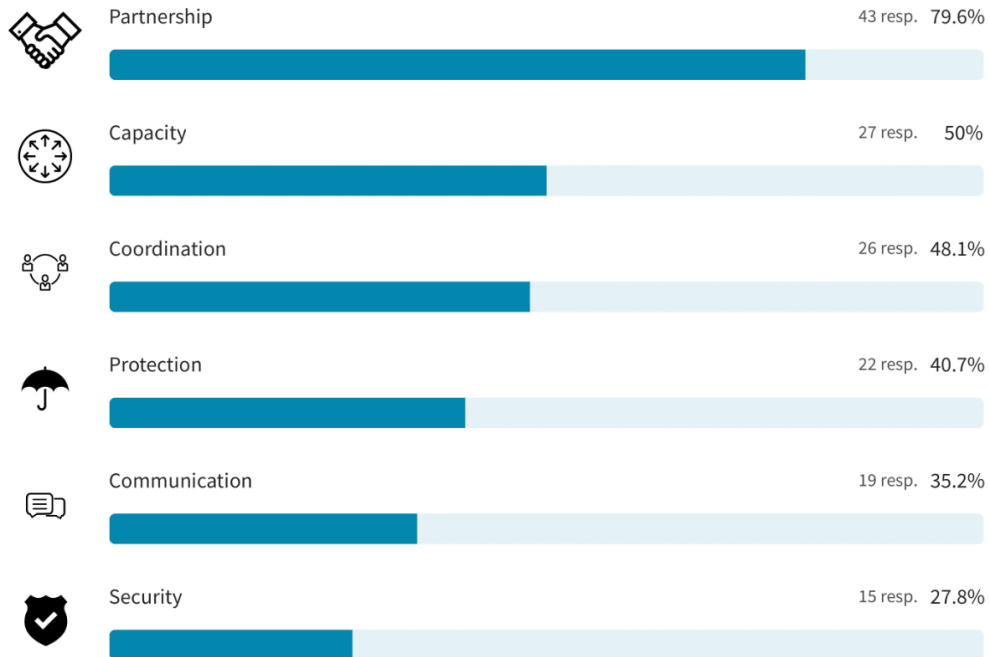
Did the response make a real difference to the affected people?

58 out of 58 answered



If you answered anything except "Absolutely Right", should MRG should increase its focus on:

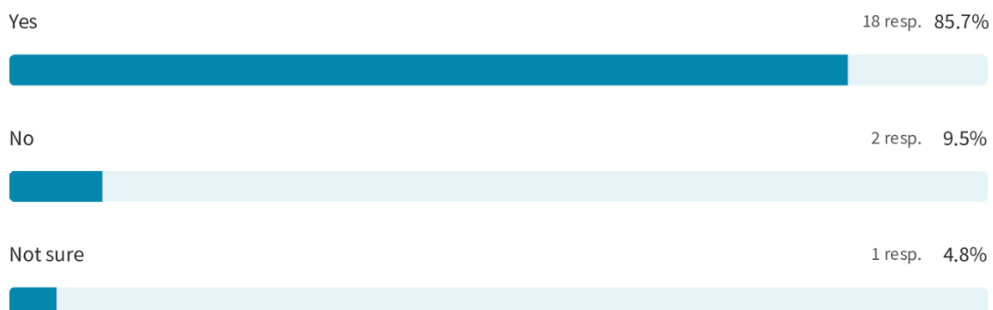
54 out of 58 answered



### 11.3.2 Partners and allies

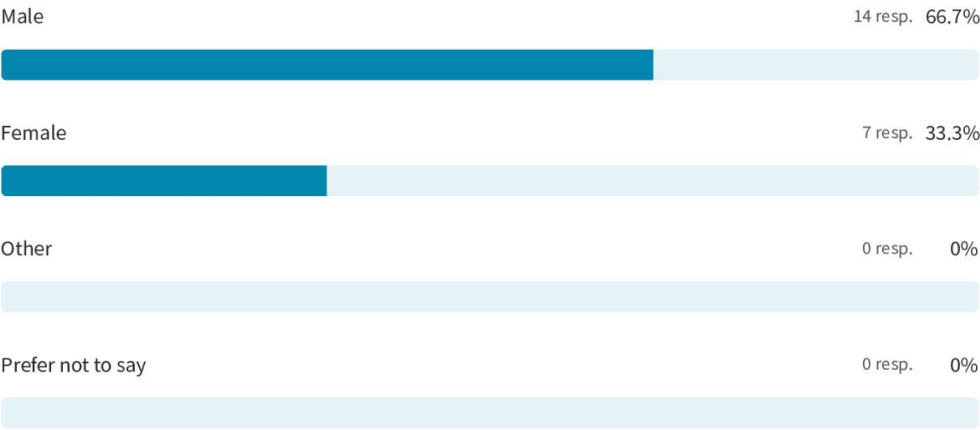
Were you/your organisation part of MRG and/or of the 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' programme with NORAD?

21 out of 21 answered



Are you:

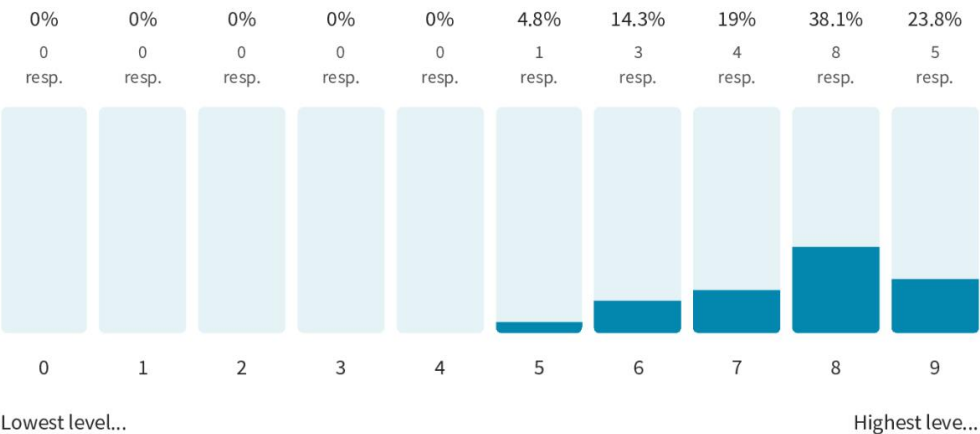
21 out of 21 answered



Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Had a direct, positive impact"

21 out of 21 answered

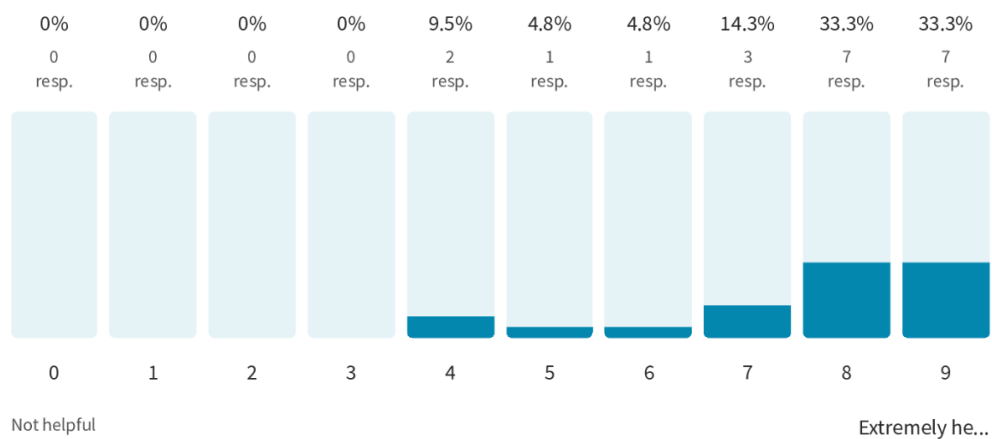
7.6 Average rating



Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries"

21 out of 21 answered

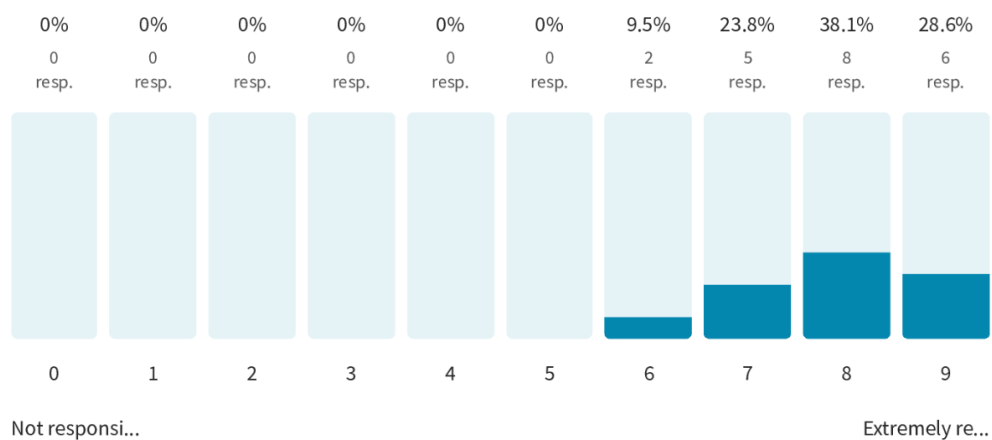
### 7.6 Average rating



Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries"

21 out of 21 answered

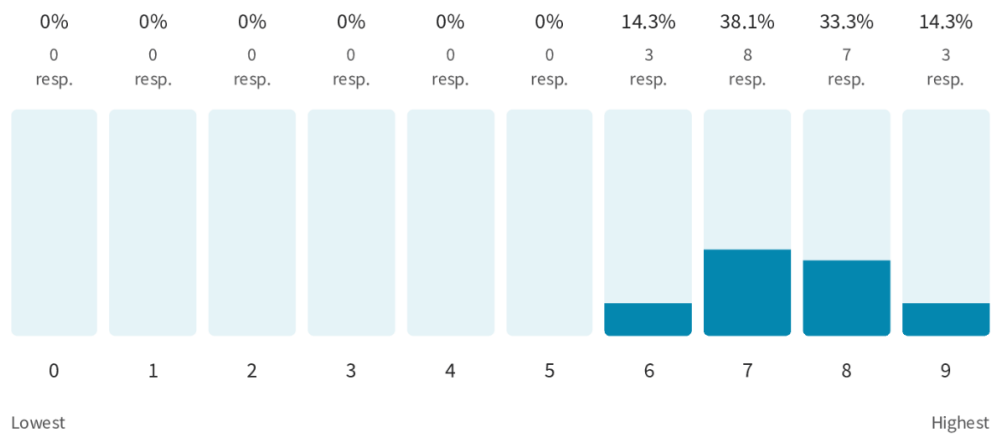
### 7.9 Average rating



Overall, in my opinion, MRG-NORAD interventions: "Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits"

21 out of 21 answered

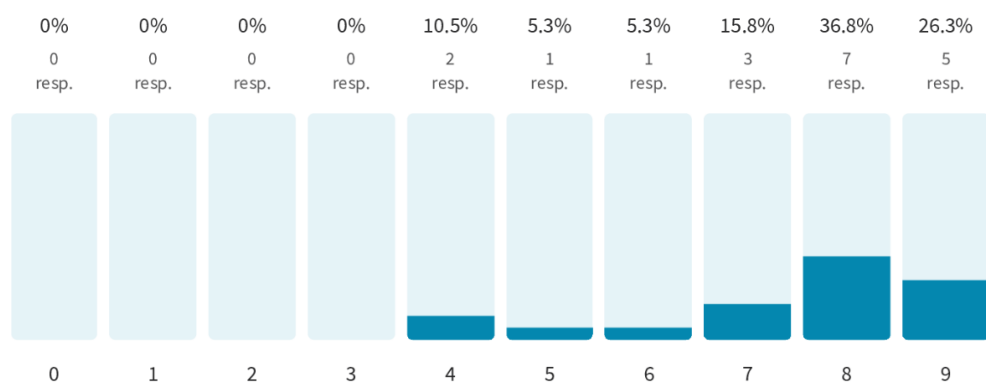
### 7.5 Average rating



Was MRG able to accept when communities, partners, allies and influencers refuse MRG's advice and take a different approach?

19 out of 21 answered

### 7.4 Average rating

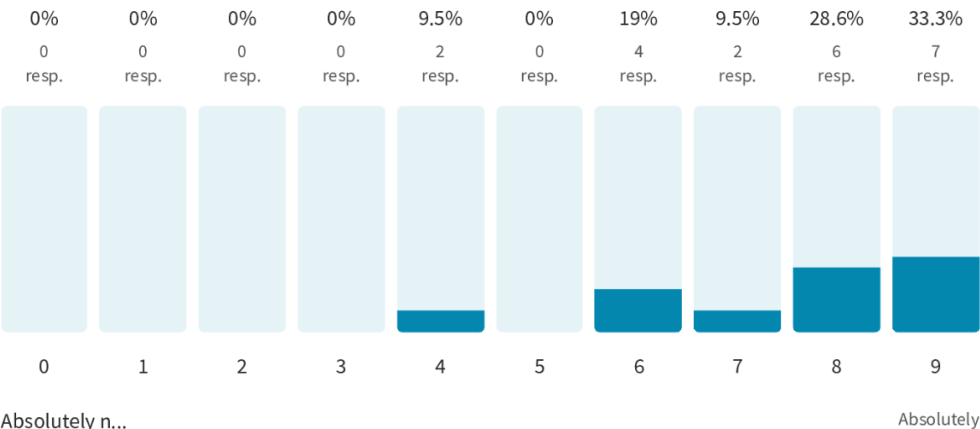




Was MRG actively working with partners, allies and influencers to assess gaps in their capacity to influence change?

21 out of 21 answered

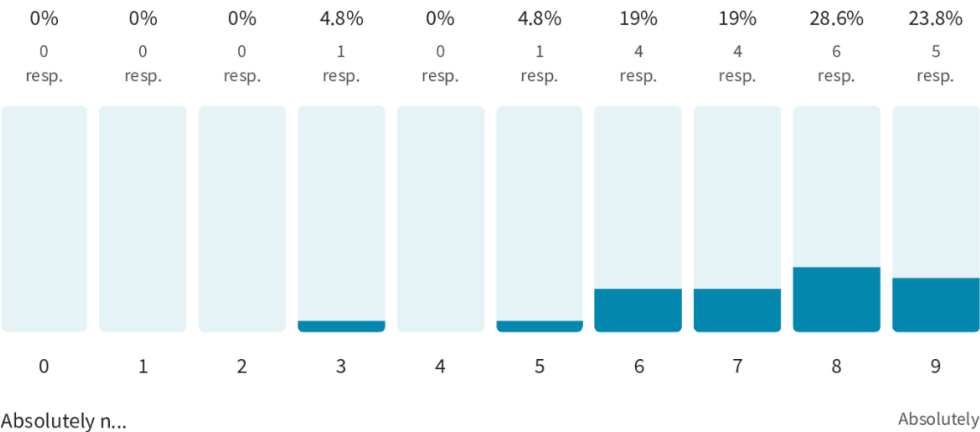
7.5 Average rating



Was MRG actively supporting women within religious communities to develop their skills and abilities to ensure that issues are taken up with their communities and by MRG?

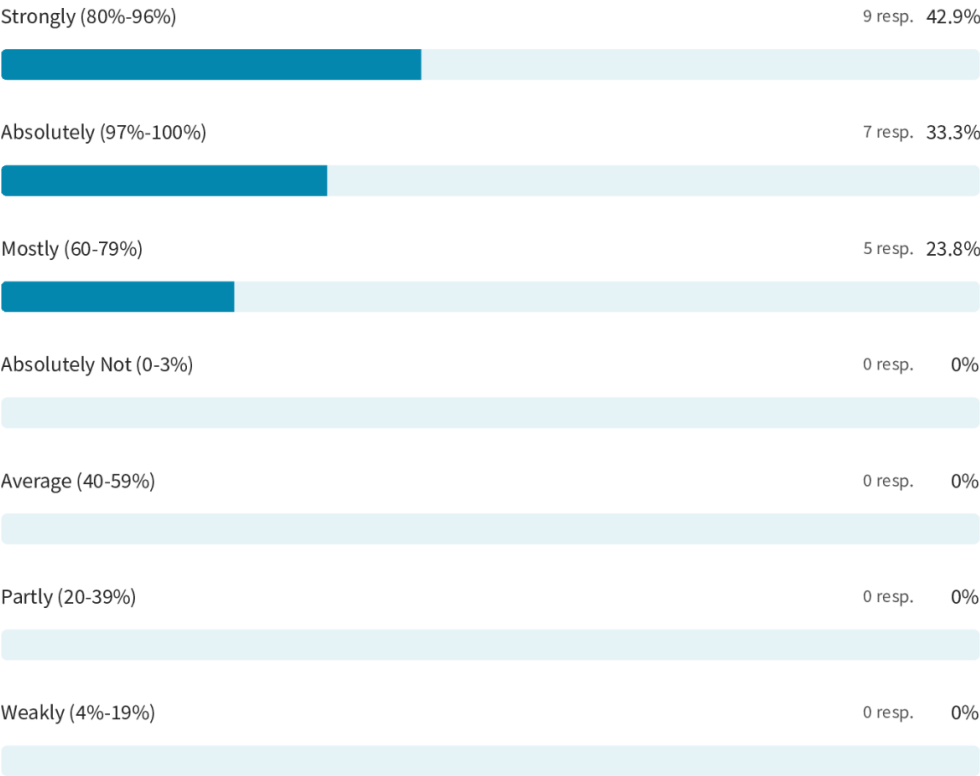
21 out of 21 answered

7.3 Average rating



Was MRG actively reducing or eliminating participation barriers (including disabilities, age, statelessness, rural/urban) for potential and actual minority activists.

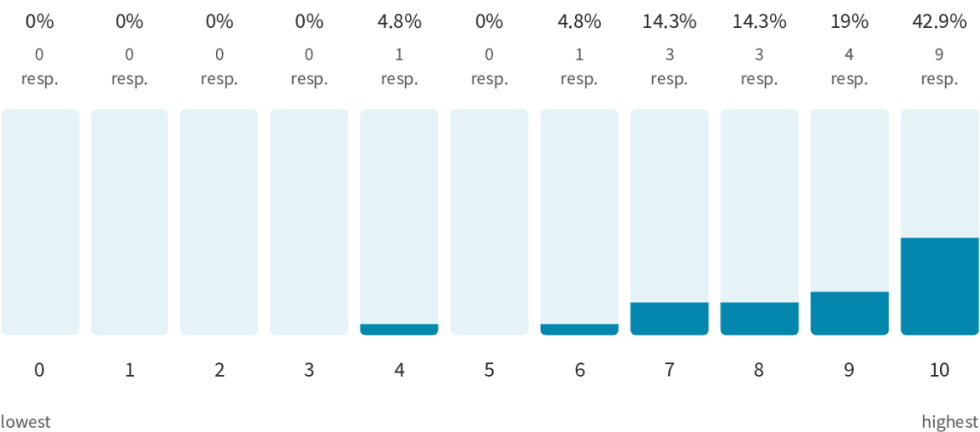
21 out of 21 answered



How would you rate the level of communication and openness between organisations on this programme?

21 out of 21 answered

8.6 Average rating



Were activities cost-efficient / on time / implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

21 out of 21 answered



## 11.4 Evaluation Matrix

Objectives (lifted from the call for proposals)	Key questions	Types of data	Instruments/methods	Outcomes
Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in 'Protecting the rights of religious minorities' Programme Document and furthermore, provide MRGE with an opportunity for 'structured evaluative learning', with the aim of learning from the programme design and implementation processes for the second term of the project.	To what extent has MRG interventions been relevant in addressing the needs of the affected people, including how the needs were identified, prioritized and if there were unmet needs in the project period.	Quantitative and qualitative	Questionnaire, FGDs (used henceforth to denote virtual web meetings eg Zoom where possible)	An overview of the activities implemented (against MRG project objectives) including gaps and areas of unmet needs from both sectoral and cross-cutting perspectives.
	To what extent were the objectives achieved in this phase of the project?  What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non- achievement of the objectives or activities?	Quantitative and qualitative	Questionnaire, KII, (FGDs if possible)	Key achievements and factors influenced the achievement or non- achievement of the objectives or activities are identified.
	To what extent were 'structured evaluative learning' integrated in the project activities?	Qualitative	Questionnaire, KII, (FGDs)	Specific evaluative learning activities identified and impacts to the target populations.
Based on the findings of the evaluation, develop a set of suggestions and key recommendations for continuation of the project for MRGE and its partners activities.	What has happened because of the first Phase of the project implementation?  What real difference has the response made to the affected people?  How many people have been served and with what (in terms of quality and quantity)?	Quantitative and qualitative	Questionnaire, KII, (FGDs)  Questionnaire, KIIs (FGDs)  Questionnaire	Sector specific results, outcomes or impact including operational and other challenges that may be affecting implementation and the quality of programmes are assessed.
	What were the key learnings from the first Phase of the project?  What were the major factors, including coordination, capacity, communication, partnership, security, protection, which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of Phase One implementation?	Qualitative	KII, FGDs	Key learning including good practices and stakeholders' reflection on Accountability to Affected Population (AAP), capacity, coordination, from the Project are identified.
To report to the funders on the usage of their resources in the project.	Were activities cost-efficient?  Were objectives achieved on time?  Was the Project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?	Quantitative and qualitative	Questionnaire, KII, (FGDs)	Cost, timeliness and capacity efficiency of the response are assessed.

## 11.5 Logical Framework Content

1. Oc 1: Strengthened capacities & protection of religious minority activists/CSOs in 15 target states to
  1. monitor, document and report rights violations and
  2. design and implement targeted approaches to address discrimination and human rights violations.
2. Oc 2: Greater collaboration within civil society at national and regional levels across Asia & MENA on identifying, preventing and challenging religious persecution and discrimination and on building interfaith understanding.
  - the pedagogical and academic approach of HL (i.e adding resources to the documentaries and contacting external pedagogical expert)
  - also emphasis on inter-faith understanding with the 360 tours
3. Oc 3: Improved systems for collecting and reporting religious minority rights violations are established and supported in target countries.

4. OC 4: Increased attention by local /national authorities, regional bodies and UN human rights mechanisms and/or other actors to religious persecution and discrimination and increased willingness to take active steps to prevent & combat violations & discrimination.

Col 4: Current value left blank.

Col 5: Targets, repeats Col 2, spread even

Col 6: Sources (means of verification), the usual internal and external reports

Col 7: Little of interest: if Govt does not increase repression, if CSOs are willing (not sure if that should be an assumption to be included here) etc

### 4 Outcome / Output Areas

1. 75% of the 900 can better Monitor violations, 10 Harassed =support, 50% of 8 Projects concrete, 75% of 12 Training of Trainers orgs report
2. 12 countries exchanging views, 2 regional networks, Litigation on discrimination (6 examples of joint work), 10 000 views of the digital learning resource tools, At least 50% of 12 inter-religious understanding sub grant projects resulted in improved relationships or dialogue, cooperation etc.
3. Digital online systems for monitoring rights abuses inc. violations of FoRB are established and maintained, incl. in at least 3 countries where need for such work is particularly high., 19 materials (briefings,online/interactive/video) on FoRB are produced /disseminated to key stakeholders, exporting tool in Iraq – piloted since 2016 when a civilian-led monitoring network was established in the country with EU support. Across Asia: monitoring, documentation, and in-depth research on FoRB issues inc. violations is inconsistent and/or weak, 4000 people with up to date & quality information on FoRB abuses, rights violations & discrimination (PUT since 2017), 400 items of media coverage for issues covered by the materials produced under the project
4. At least 4 international advocacy missions per year by activists to UN / international capitals throughout the duration of the project. (200 mentions at UN for a)
  1. OP 4.2 At least 3 submissions per year are made to UN mechanisms regarding religious minority rights and FORB (UPR, Committee reviews, urgent communications, SR reports etc.
  2. OP 4.3: In each target country, one local or national campaign to challenge rights violation & discrimination is implemented.

### Activities:

A 1.1 Online course on religious minority rights and FORB. Development and roll out of an online course covering religious minority rights concepts, relevant regional and international mechanism, and advocacy strategies (Y1-Y4)

A 1.1.1 Online tool for inter-religious understanding and inclusive citizenship.

A 1.2 Training in Geneva (in parallel with the UN Forum on Minorities): live training in Geneva focusing on UN advocacy skill building, followed by attendance at the UN Forum to practise the implementation of their learning and skills gained. (Y1-Y4)

A 1.3 ToT for 6 participants of the main training annually (one day, in Geneva after UN Forum)

A 1.4 Support and mentoring to religious minority defenders at risk (Y1-Y4) = hardship fund

A 1.5. 8 grants (4/ region) in Y2 and Y4 for the implementation of local/national projects on preventing or challenging rights violations/discrimination.

A 1.6. 6 annual small grants for those who participated in the ToT training to organise training in their own community.

A 1.7 Scoping Study + feasibility research on FORB strategic litigation: One scoping study and follow up feasibility research into 3 or 4 potentially fruitful areas of strategic litigation (thematic or geographical)

UN Advocacy opportunities identified for our 2 target countries (others are below), Nepal / Pakistan

- Voluntary National Review of performance vis-à-vis SDGs in July 2019 (High Level Political Forum, New York)
- UPR mid-term in 2020
- UPR in 2022

Tunisia

- Voluntary National Review of performance vis-à-vis SDGs in July 2019 (High Level Political Forum, New York)
- to be reviewed by the CRC (rights of the child) and maybe by the Human Rights Committee
- UPR mid-term in 2019
- UPR in 2022

Validation of information All on their interviews

## 11.6 Detailed Work Plan and Schedule of Activities

### Key deliverables

<b>Evaluation work plan/inception report:</b> A preliminary report that outlines the target countries (agreed with MRG), key contacts (provided by MRG), participants, initial assessment, baseline information, needs, gathers case studies and observations from interviews and interviews to a small number (to be proposed) of Minority Rights Group International. (Submitted for review <b>by 23 May 2021</b> )													
<b>Preliminary findings at mid-term of the evaluation period:</b> Submission of preliminary findings, maximum 3 pages. (Delivered <b>by 6 June 2021</b> )													

Outputs	Activities	Draft division of roles	May				June					July		Numbers	Types of people
			3-9	10-16	7-23	24-31	1-6	7-13	14-20	21-27	28-30	1-4	5-8		
<b>Deliverable One:</b>	Literature review	Emma leads, A&D read her summary												Refer to List 1 and	Key stakeholders from Pakistan and Tunisia. See



Evaluation work plan/inception report	Identify countries and key contact persons	Dave leads liaison with MRGE														List 2 (NB. hyperlinks removed)	List 1. Also to include online trainees from List 2 which is outside Pakistan and Tunisia.  Official co-applicants' partners / local partners that co-implemented activities / organisations and HRD recipients of grants / training recipients
	Initial assessment	Ava leads															
	Baseline information gathering	Emma leads															
	Case study gathering, interviews	All (may or may not extend a further week)															
	Virtual meetings to MRG country participant	All															
	Inception report and work plan finalised	Ava leads,															
	Inception report cleared with MRG																
<b>Deliverable Two:</b>  Preliminary findings at mid-term of the evaluation period	Virtual interviews to elaborate on inception report with MRG staff	All in the Zoom calls															
	Devise semi-structured interview questions AND KoBo/Survey Monkey questionnaire	Emma leads, A&D guide if necessary, comment if not.															
	Virtual interviews with selected country programme 1 (identified with MRG from inception report)	Divided between us, each writing to agreed format															
	Virtual interviews with selected country programme 2 (identified with MRG from inception report)																
	Questionnaire findings	Emma leads, Ava edits															
	Write up of preliminary findings	All write up their interviews, Emma collates, tabulates															

	Submission of preliminary findings	Dave edits, asks comments E&A and submits inc. draft conclusions and recommendations															
Outputs	Activities	Draft division of roles	May				June						July				
	Validation of information	All on their interviews	3-9	10-16	7 - 23	24- 31	1-6	7-13	14 - 20	21 - 27	28 - 30	1-4	5-8				
	Additional interviews as required	All															
	Write up of draft mid-term evaluation report	Additional info to Emma who drafts,															
	First draft of the mid-term evaluation report	Dave edits, submits															
	MRG reviews and returns comments of the evaluation report	MRG															
	Write up of the final mid-term evaluation report	Dave, E&A comment															
	Submission of first draft of final mid-term evaluation report	Dave											4 July				
	MRG to review												5 July				
	Evaluators present findings to MRG. Receive comments from MRG												6 July	14:00 - 15:30 UK		Evaluators and MRG team	
	Final report submission												8 July			Evaluators	