“MRG's flexible and practical support was instrumental in our success”.

1 Ponniah Logeswary, of Sri Lankan rural land rights movement, HDO, shown adding to a timeline of events in Sri Lanka. See Loges.)
A. Executive Summary

Purpose and result of the evaluation
The purpose of this evaluation is to review and assess the work between 2012-18 of its target audience - MRG and Sida and capacity-building Partner organisations, community leaders, influencers and other allies. The work is evaluated against relevance, Impact and sustainability, with examples throughout the report, and a short summary at the end. It is found to have been consistently sound with overall strongly positive impact across questionnaire, KI research and primary source data.

Scope and context of the evaluation
This evaluation was unusual. The scope was enormous, covering 7 years, 60 countries, the entirety of MRG capacity building -most of its work. The evaluation covered far more than a 'programme' and could not rely on any single document against which to evaluate. 178 questionnaires were returned (132 Trainees; 46 Partners) from 1800+ sent to 60 countries. Visits were made to 4 countries (Tunisia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Macedonia), the evaluation drew on data from the team's 2018 evaluation on Irish Aid funding in E and C. Africa, and baseline data from the team leader's worldwide 2013 MRG capacity building evaluation.

MRG’s intricate, quantified targets and detailed reports allow clarity (eg 34 of 38 targets achieved/exceeded for 2013-2020 and 4 partly met). Programme visits brought colour to the statistical results, e.g. the Programme and Results Matrix 2013-2016 gives ambitious targets for the legal challenges of both the Enderois and Ogiek peoples; the 2018 report shows that activists at the highest levels were invigorated and enthused by the positive judgments in African legal institutions.

Summary of questionnaire and Key Informant findings
When asked 'What worked well?' Trainees and Partners gave disparate examples on content, advocacy and opportunities. Multiple Trainees said that the program had strengthened their careers and initiatives, and 'gave voice to the voiceless' especially youth and women. Trainees wanted greater funding; many of their other qualitative responses were resource-related. Some of these may be eventually tackled by MRG’s growth; others by ongoing encouragement

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2 Terms of Reference
3 The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Swedish: Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete, Sida) is a government agency of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
4 'programme' is nonetheless used throughout the report, for want of a better summary term.
5 An estimated 25% were bounced back from expired email addresses etc.
6 Totals from the two 4-year reports to SIDA.
to use MRG support as a trigger\(^8\) with Trainees themselves setting up Facebook groups\(^9\) etc.; many more need good expectation-management. Respondents asked MRG to offer more hours of training more regularly, improve its training material and Trainees’ advocacy skills, and provide localised (country or province-specific) minority-based reading\(^10\), session material and ‘more pragmatic’ programmes. In sustainability indicators, they want MRG to maintain their accounts, for post-training networking and better quality communication from MRG and peers. All of this is encouraging; the programme is valuable, and Trainees want more. The report title is indicative; MRG is lauded for 'flexible and practical support’ by Ponniah Logeswary of the Sri Lankan Human Development Organisation (HDO) which welcomed support with navigating EU funding, access to arenas and more (see Text Box)

When asked 'What worked badly?' less than 3% of Trainees and Partners had an answer, with nearly all of them about the lack of follow-up, which some at MRG see as caused by a lack of resources\(^11\), or IT-related issues about the web platform. MRG is already dealing with a minor efficiency matter (but significant to Trainees) of providing due certificates. Overall, common ‘final messages for MRG?’ were ‘Thanks’, ‘Keep on going’, and ‘incredible experience’.

Partner responses (46; 14 female, 30 male, 2 other) were very positive. Typical was Danseurs du Sahel's Ahmed Guerfel's, "Thanks for your support; you've been the best supporters of activists in Tunisia". Average programme ratings were 86% for ‘direct, positive impact'; 82% ‘responds to beneficiary needs'; 82% ‘has sustainable outcomes’. MRG ratings were even higher: 94% ‘a positive force'; 91% ‘open to criticism; 87% ‘expert’ and 81% ‘able to help... secure funding’. The ‘modal\(^12\)' answer was ‘Absolutely. 96%-100%’. Exceptions (e.g. Sustainability, whose mode was equally ‘Strongly 80-96%' and 'Mostly 60-79%') support the evaluation’s case (in Section B’s conclusions) that the results are meaningful and legitimate. Extensive results are reported in pie-chart form in Appendix 4. Partners learned about advocacy, research, and consultation, gained deeper theoretical understanding of capacity building. They called the MRG programme reliable – ‘honored all promises', professional. and useful in helping tackle discrimination. MRG training was almost universally seen as positive. Improvements suggested: were fundraising accompaniment, building on MRG’s examples with AIMPO, UCRT and WOPU\(^13\) in E Africa, until Partners can successfully bid independently\(^14\); and communication-networking-follow-up,

\(^8\) Agnes Kabaujuni, Head of MRG Africa, says ‘our interventions... should be triggering people to act, to link with others, to get people to fundraise’. An excellent example since 2016 is ex-Trainee Sajjad Hassan's South Asia Collective's initiative https://crosasia-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/4151/1/e-Book-SA-SoM-Report-2016-291116.pdf

\(^9\) An MRG newsletter has also been suggested. This would keep MRG in Trainees’ inboxes but would only be significantly useful if it was read. If time and resources are spent, these might be for a ‘quick and dirty’ trial publication, with a genuine attempt to find out how many people actually read what; alternatively a web-based trial could give actual results of views, and the number of seconds spent reading the publication.

\(^10\) Faith Tushabe, AICM Executive Director opines that this maybe ‘unrealistic' with time and translation costs. This list is offered as a summary of respondent views, not as evaluation recommendations

\(^11\) Carl Söderbergh says ‘Trainees have MRG accounts which are closed after the training simply because of lack of resources... the tutor... shifts to other... groups of people... We have 1200-strong Trainee groups with whom we would love to maintain contact. But we are still seeking funding to do this... it costs to maintain contact and sites’

\(^12\) OECD/DAC = “value of the variate... possessed by the greatest number of members of the (data) population”

\(^13\) MRG Partners African Indigenous and Minority Peoples Organization, Women's Organisation for Promoting Unity Union des Coopératives de la Région de Tori and

\(^14\) AIMPO has achieved this; UCRT leads a consortium, WOPU is considered to be on the way to success. MRG now informs Partners of funding opportunities through MRG Facebook, a good small step in offering fundraising support.
again, a facilitation, resource, and expectation-management issue. Again, these 'more of the same' answers are encouraging; refresher trainings and more tailor-made, collaborative, localised projects and intensive capacity building. MRG is stretching to achieve this; e.g. the MRG Sida 2018 Work Plan aims to exponentially reach more people with training, advocacy and small grants. The 2018 target was to train 40 additional journalists, but for 2020 was 200 additional. All targets from 2018 to 2020 in every category are at least doubled. A specific technical issue was the difficulty (e.g. for elderly and visually impaired activists) of registering and using the online course via the web platform. It was seen as complicated, with insufficient administrative support and frequent changing of MRG staff.

**Main findings**
The full list of recommendations can be found on page 41 and in the visit country sections. The TORs' strategic evaluation purpose is to 'inform the strategic review... setting strategic goals...request strategic support on priorities, shared objectives, methodology, intervention and ways of working'. From 2012-18 MRG has shown the ability to shift focus to emerging global actual needs and opportunities. **The TORs for this research focused on 2012-18 at two levels (i) capacity building, addressed mainly in Section B and (ii) all of MRG's operations, the strategic level for which the evaluation was accelerated to provide 'big themes' input for the MRG/MRGI** Strategic Planning, in which staff step back from the normal 'spend[ing] our time feeding donor needs'. **At this level, visit and questionnaire research encourages MRG to further reflect on four high-level, inter-related themes (i) MRG growth/global reach/optimal scale, staff, budget etc) (ii) visibility, particularly social media (iii) taking opportunities around 'new minorities', with and without the use of intersectionality (iv) the role of evaluations. The main recommendations for these are:**

(i) Partners, Trainees and staff believe MRG could usefully grow. ‘I think they maybe don't have enough funds for us’**. Making it grow is not so simple. And it is for MRG to decide how it grows; extended Partner work, more Trainees, more income, more offices, more employment stability? Trying to 'stand still' may be the riskiest option; the margins for mid-sized organizations are small, and one staff member believed that ‘the Arab Spring saved us’. Recent progress has been made on diversifying statutory funding; exceeding fundraising targets, using the '50th birthday' to re-engage with donors and seek support from around 12 potential new trusts, and on mitigation strategies for Brexit permutations.** The best chance of continued

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**Notes:**
15 e.g. MRG's objectives in Strategy 2013 – 2016 and Proposal to Sida were ‘1. Countering discrimination against minorities and IPs and ensuring they benefit equitably from development 2. Protecting the existence of communities under threat and...persecuted 3. Strengthening... voices of minorities and IPs’. The recent increased challenges of Religious Persecution, Migration and the Environment were reflected in Strategy 2017 – 2020's objectives of '1. Countering religious and ethnic persecution, a root cause of forced migration and 2. Promoting the inclusion of minorities and indigenous peoples in sustainable development and society'
16 Elements of this evaluation will be differentially relevant to MRG and MRGI. In terms of the Strategic Planning process, its likely readers will usually be better equipped to judge these intricacies than the evaluators, so 'MRG' is used - as the smaller entity to whom all of it applies - as a cover-all, with the understanding that some issues will also apply to the larger MRGI.
17 This was a constant theme of interviews with MRG staff
18 Green South Kil
19 including targeting of the EU’s European Institute of Democracy (AMIF) which may continue to be applicable; successful use of the Budapest office for SE Asia funding; initial steps in the opening of a Brussels office.
growth is for strategic planning to set an optimal size on the above criteria, optimal % of unrestricted income, a timescale and strategy including organisational messaging on direction and priorities, and an investment strategy on ‘fundraising' and communications, including staffing. This issue is not new; 2013 findings were "MRG could usefully handle much bigger budgets [and] spend it on fewer countries. The need for its work remains critical and overwhelming, the issues are even more topical and MRG... [is] punching above its weight in terms of reputation... MRG is working within an intensely competitive field, and facing... competition from... consultancy companies... as well as mushrooming NGOs21. Certainly, competition for funding remains intense and the evaluator can point to organisations with shorter track records who quickly access and use greater funding levels than MRG has access to at 50. Growth may follow from filling immediate need or demand, and MRG's sustainability over 50 years is to be valued. But campaigning organisations' (Avaaz, 360) outstanding, ongoing growth shows that investment in fundraising and communications can bring rapid results and attention to critical rights issues. Insider-outsider and majority-minority issues are now even more globally topical and publicly contested. In visit countries, Partners could usefully have been funded at higher levels, and possibly been longer and continuous22. MRG knows the value of unrestricted funds; ‘The main problem is that we rely for our funding on projects... in my 5 years, my work has been implementing, running against time to satisfy donors23'. One staff member feels 'hamstrung by an exclusive link to projects'; e.g. the Tunisia project has achieved much in 18 months, but may lack funding after another 18 months. MRG could boldly set a timescale to double its size. Current pushes for greater unrestricted funds and communications-reach are to be welcomed and accelerated. There are real decisions about how far MRG is an advisory think-tank serving INGOs/UN – the CEO comments ‘expert reports for experts is not the way the 21st Century works... [experts] will respond first to the crowds clamoring outside the doors, and we do not reach those people' - and how far to campaign on unfashionable issues and ‘surf' hot topics. Growth is not easy, nor to be advised for all NGOs at all times. But strategic planning and a settled CEO is a good time to plan to reach optimal levels.

(ii) MRG could usefully be more visible; this was a constant theme of KIs (Findings; 'MRG has no visibility24'), including visibility in social media, the theme MRG has taken for its, laudably leaner25, 50th birthday briefing for 'Peoples Under Threat'. Initial comment is made on how MRG is developing a Social Media strategy, with a Digital Communications Officer, its website, in-house discussion, staffing, and investment in Facebook and Instagram. The pattern for investment results is clearest with general MRG 'reach'. Without investment, Quarter 1 of 2019 received a 'reach' of 95,000 (95K), Shares of 200 and an Audience Growth Rate (AGR) of 0.2%. An investment of 1600 GBP was made in social media, after which the equivalent figures were 650K (an increase of 666%), 512 (253%) and 9% (4010% rise) in AGR. For 'Peoples Under

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21 An example is given under the Social Media Findings; 'Forest Peoples' budget exceeds that of MRG, despite it being under half MRG's age
22 Although there would of course be competition for their use towards 'matched funds' and reserves
23 Silvia Quattrini, MRG
24 Dorra of Partner NGO 'Chouf' in Tunisia
25 This was previously a report of several hundred pages; now a summary of around 10 pages is provided, along with a regular Press Release.
Threat’ alone, investing 530 GBP coincided with 192k people reached and 53k engagements; only 22.5% by women and 77.5% by men, which deserves further analysis.

For technological innovation elements of creating visibility, the findings show staff willingness both to train and be trained, and the start of considering strategy and structure. If MRG is to increase its ‘reach’, internal collaboration between departments will be key, as will investment, staffing and flexible working. The evaluation recommends increased engagement with popular (and even populist) themes in the language that most people use – the social media section shows how this is not now the case - and more creative quality material e.g. cartoons, podcasts, quizzes, gifs, clips, 'Top 10s'. ‘Advising UN... doesn't reach many people, politically, it needs to reach them’ now MRG can build a social media strategy on partnership-based activity and research, to amplify Partner voices. Traditional media can be enhanced by effective use of social media. Radio is still a relevant, popular medium in most of Africa, and television journalism recently brought MRG Ik Partners in Uganda to the attention of national decision makers. Africa must also be visible on social media, both in ‘wave-riding’ issues such as Maasai or Batwa, but also awareness-raising issues of the Benet, Ik, Ogiek etc. MRG must use journalist briefings, and the new CEO 'Joshua going out and speaking about different topics; [he is] an excellent speaker'.

Part of the 'visibility' call is constant interviewee demand – in 2013 and 2019 - for in-country offices. At MRG’s current scale this is unrealistic, but some MRG staff advocate Asia and Latin America offices, with growth through investment in fundraising and communications. Other options may include in-country representatives hosted by a Partner organization. These are for strategic planning process to address, and then for case-by-case consideration, not an evaluation recommendation. But findings suggest that MRG has work to do in expectation management - presenting itself realistically to trainers and Partners as a mid-scale organisation and in creating and communicating strategic messages on any growth rationale and ambition.

(iii) The evaluation concludes that MRG should not try to do what "the UN has failed to agree (namely) a definition of what constitutes a minority". MRG knows very well why ‘minority rights’ cannot be subsumed into ‘human rights’ or ‘anti-discrimination’. It should keep bringing its expertise to the table, convincing others that identity matters. MRG can keep re-formulating its terminology; it will continue to "secure rights for ethnic, national, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide", including less fashionable causes. 'Minorities of concern to MRG [will still be] disadvantaged ethnic, national, religious, linguistic or cultural groups, , fewer in number... and who may wish to maintain and develop their identity... also... indigenous peoples. Its understanding of 'minority' will still flow from power analysis, self-
definition and wish for affiliation. Caution in treating 'hot minority topics' and 'trending issues' with large constituencies or interest – e.g. environment/climate change linked to land rights, migrants including so-called 'boat people', People Living With Disability (PLWD), caste, LGBT+41 and (possibly less fashionable) stateless people, albinos, older people and street children - may result in missed opportunities, income and exposure. On climate change 'there is a clear message... ‘Everyone’s talking about it... lots of our communities are affected... we should be engaged', using creative media to deliver simple, powerful messages about stewardship and culture-shift. Carl Söderbergh, MRG Director of Policy and Communications says 'in 20 years, the minority rights field will look different... across all sorts of different groups'. Examples are burgeoning Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock alliances, younger generations indifferent to national, sexual, political or religious boundaries. Historic minority definitions are unlikely to survive. MRG should not jump rashly into sectors where it does not have expertise, nor be meekly 'donor-driven'. But it should be on-board with global changes, and accelerating with them. Staff appear ready. The Tunisia visit showed how partnership with DAMJ provided acquired expertise to work successfully on 'traditional minorities' and also within and alongside them on that country's currently most critically discriminated minority of LGBT+. This successful model also showed that programmatic realities do not always allow an entirely theoretical basis; even one with such currency and potential as intersectionality. Discriminated individuals should not need to be also from a linguistic, racial, cultural or national minority; and turning away an LGBT+ male Maliki Sunni Arab from an 'ADC' would itself be a form of exclusion and discrimination. In some contexts, e.g. with LGBT+ gitanos or Afro Cubanos, an intersectional approach will be appropriate; in others MRG needs to be clear on how to handle what might be experienced as a restriction.

It is not whole-scale, public change or abandonment of overlooked-groups which is called for, but organizational, strategic (SWOC) reflection and appropriately inspiring messaging to staff to be bold in meeting needs and taking opportunities. After that, business should be conducted in the usual way; case-by-case decisions made based on needs, competence and opportunity, and decisions through MRG's management and governance structures.

(iv) The report process produced learning on evaluations from the evaluation team’s direct, lived experience; the positive aspects raised the quality of findings and the negative provided

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33 MRG has an impressive track record and current business on land rights e.g. on Ogiek and Batwa, in Kenya and Cameroon, and particularly at the Africa Commission
34 This report will use LGBT+ to include all gender and sexual minorities (GSM). The full list is in flux https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-most-current-full-length-acronym-for-LGBT
35 another interesting example, as Albinos are only perceived to be racially different, which in some places such as Tanzania may lead to murder for 'witchcraft' as well as discrimination and isolation.
36 As Deputy Director Claire Thomas says 'age does not generate the same levels of identification', but this may also change
37 Cecile Clerc, Director of Development and Partnership
38 For MRG, ethnic, religious, linguistic, indigenous people (IP)
39 According, overwhelmingly, to KIs who were from other minority groups
40 First conceptualized as a critique of the way relatively powerful white feminists were deemed to have dominated the movement without due consideration to issues of racial identity and discrimination https://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2014/04/kimberl-crenshaw-intersectionality-i-wanted-come-everyday-metaphor-anyone-could
41 Anti-Discrimination Centres, providing safe spaces and support across Tunisia for all minorities, but primarily Black and LGBTs.
42 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints; 'Threats' is a more common usage in SWOT
obstructions. This evaluation was flexibly and better resourced financially\textsuperscript{43}. It was atypical; selection of visit countries came late, activities had ceased in two of the four countries, and so staff were not ready to host an evaluation. It was centrally supported by extensive, appreciated effort from MRG. TORs discussions between Sida and MRG led to 'The evaluation... beginning 2-3 months later than planned, with almost identical finishing dates\textsuperscript{44}, and thus compression of work. MRG staff may, in future evaluations, usefully provide a first draft skeleton schedule for KII in visit countries. A utilitarian approach is recommended for the time-cost of evaluations. Despite the challenges, evaluators are confident this evaluation presents a fair view, and can safeguard the accuracy of the results from a large sample size. Responses very clearly show pronounced satisfaction from Partners and Trainees, and thirst for more-of-the-same MRG capacity building intervention.

\textsuperscript{43} A marked improvement from previous MRG evaluations conducted by members of the evaluation team.

\textsuperscript{44} Evaluation contract