Minority Rights Group International

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities.

Our activities are focused on international advocacy, training, publishing and outreach. We are guided by the needs expressed by our worldwide network of partner organizations which represent minorities and indigenous peoples. MRG works with over 130 organizations in nearly 60 countries. Our governing Council, which meets twice a year, has members from 10 different countries.

MRG has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and is registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee under English law.
In 2001, MRG’s work was needed more than ever as the tragic events of the year produced fresh challenges for minority rights.

In Central Africa and Indonesia, we drew attention to continuing grave abuses of minority rights and analysed the prospects for peace. In South-East Europe, we pushed for international efforts to resolve conflict in Macedonia and to continue community-building in other countries of the former Yugoslavia. In Central and Eastern Europe we worked with Roma-led organizations to support the development of a new generation of Roma activists. Throughout the year, in Geneva, Strasbourg, Durban and New York, we supported minority and indigenous rights leaders from around the world to make their arguments to governments and international policymakers at the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe and other intergovernmental organizations.

The new international agenda in place at the close of the year brought further concerns: the danger of setting aside human rights standards in pursuit of the ‘war against terrorism’, the potential wholesale characterization of excluded communities as ‘terrorists’, and increasing incidences of xenophobia and racism. Yet the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the war in Afghanistan also prompted an international debate about many fundamental minority and indigenous rights issues. These have included: the consequences of excluding communities; and the extremes of inequality within and between states – and the impact this may have in generating and sustaining conflict.

Examples of our work in these areas are described in the following pages. It is work that depends on the very different contributions of a wide range of people around the world: the dedication of human rights defenders, the imagination of policy-makers, the open-mindedness of individuals in government, and the commitment of our donors. Above all, it depends on the initiative and courage of our partners in minority and indigenous peoples’ organizations, often working against overwhelming odds.

Mark Lattimer
Director
Minorities speak out

MRG believes that the people best placed to speak on minority and indigenous issues are minorities and indigenous peoples. In 2001 one of our priorities was to make sure that our partner organizations were able to take part in the formulation of policies that affect them. For example, with partners, we organized national consultations, such as one in Malaysia that focused on ‘Biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples’ Knowledge’. Also with partners, we organized regional meetings such as one on the ‘Recognition of Minorities’ in seven countries in South-East Europe.

At a global level we brought minorities and indigenous peoples to participate at key bodies of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and at the UN World Conference Against Racism. Whether national, regional or global, these meetings brought minority and indigenous communities together with government representatives, UN officials and other international organizations.

Participants swapped views, experiences and ideas, and discussed different approaches to tackle shared problems. Given how isolated many minority and indigenous peoples’ organizations are within their countries, some participants also took strength and inspiration from others facing and tackling similar issues.

We also supported minorities and indigenous peoples to present evidence of abuses of their human rights to international decision-makers, and to try to convince the international community to act. Minority and indigenous peoples’ representatives at international events made sure that their communities’ issues were raised and discussed.

Minorities and indigenous peoples also provided an independent view, that challenged complacent, defensive or evasive governments.

Partners told us that just by attending intergovernmental meetings, their government took their organization more seriously. For example, one trainee/partner copied an intervention that she made at the UN Working Group on Minorities to embassies in her country. When she attended a meeting of donors, NGOs and the government to agree a common approach to development in her country, she was pleasantly surprised when several of the donors used points she had made in her intervention. One donor even used part of the intervention word for word during the meeting.

However, representatives from minority and indigenous peoples’ organizations don’t always have the knowledge or skills to speak out in international bodies that follow legal conventions and diplomatic rules of procedure.

MRG provided training for our partners on international law, on how different intergovernmental systems work, and on how to influence people. Sometimes this training is linked to a particular event (e.g. UN Working Group on Minorities) or process (e.g. implementation of the Framework Convention on National Minorities). At other times, the training focuses on a particular group of people (e.g. Pastoralists in Eastern Africa or minority and inter-ethnic NGOs in South-East Europe).

MRG believes that it is very important that information from international representation and training events is passed on to participants’ communities.
In 2001 we supported follow-up projects after most events to further participants’ work, so that they can apply what they have learnt. Over 40 follow-up projects were underway in 2001. Just three examples give a flavour of their variety and impact: an advocacy campaign for first-language education for the Turkish minority in Macedonia; a three-day training workshop in Rwanda to increase knowledge of minority rights in NGOs based in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda; and four one-day workshops attended by 325 people in Colombia on minority rights, first-language education and ways in which different communities can live peacefully together.

We also worked with our partners to strengthen their organizations. This support ranged from providing consultancy and advice to partners when problems or opportunities arose, to grants to buy computers, to programmes of mentoring training for Roma NGO staff in eight countries.

I learnt that I do not need to be confrontational but persuasive and strong, i.e. stand my ground when communicating to leaders/government about the rights of the minority and marginalized.

Participant at the Pastoralists Advocacy and Rights Training, Kenya

I would like to appreciate all the assistance that you have been able to accord us to date, without which, a lot that has been achieved this end may never have been achieved. It is the undertaking of CEMIRIDE that we shall always endeavour to ensure that we make use of this relationship for a better life of our peoples.

CEMIRIDE (Kenya)
Although the law needs to be strengthened, international laws or standards that could protect minorities and indigenous peoples do exist. Some governments refuse to ratify them, and others sign up but then do nothing to implement them. In 2001 MRG helped partners to monitor how far states were implementing international standards and to point out where states are in breach of them.

The Framework Convention on National Minorities is a binding agreement that has been ratified by most European states. By ratifying the Convention, a state agrees to have its treatment of minorities and its compliance with the Convention regularly reviewed. States have to submit reports to an independent expert committee. Our partners worked in six countries, with MRG support, to submit alternative reports to challenge the official record, which they felt was giving a partial or incomplete picture, or to raise awareness of the Convention and its usefulness for minorities in countries that have already ratified it.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, five organizations working on minority issues formed a coalition and contacted government officials who were responsible for

Putting laws into practice

Minorities and indigenous peoples get their view across
Paul Weinberg/Panos Pictures
drafting the report on how the state had implemented the rights for minorities set out in the Convention. The coalition offered to have an input into the state’s report and is consulting with communities and gathering evidence which it will either feed into the official state report or submit independently to the expert committee.

MRG also lobbied hard during 2001 (especially during the World Conference Against Racism) to get more states to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. An MRG Report, launched in Geneva, Switzerland, summarized the information that different governments have submitted under the Convention on their record of eliminating racial discrimination.

MRG believes that the implementation of human rights depends on the right information getting to the UN committees that monitor compliance with international conventions. We published and disseminated a training manual designed to help NGOs have an input into the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, explaining how to send in information when their state’s record on discrimination is being reviewed. We began work with partners to translate this manual into Albanian, Bulgarian, French, Hindi, Russian, Spanish, and Telegu.

MRG also intervened directly to point out where abuses of minority rights law were taking place (for example by making statements at the UN as simmering conflicts flared up in Indonesia and Macedonia). MRG’s Reports also document where states are failing to live up to minority rights standards; one example of this in 2001 was our Report on Religious Minorities and China, which sets out how the Chinese state persecutes certain religious groups and prevents many groups from exercising their right to practise their religious beliefs.

MRG’s support for implementing human rights and the rule of law includes defending our partners when they are in danger. Saad Eddin Ibrahim headed the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies in Cairo when he and other defendants faced political charges in an Egyptian security court and were imprisoned in 2001. Throughout the year, MRG lobbied the European Union, governments and international organizations to put pressure on the Egyptian authorities to release Saad.

MRG’s publications are very valuable and will be used when possible in the work that I do with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Jaap Doek, Chairperson, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

You have been early and tireless campaigners during our long ordeal and we cannot thank you enough for all that you have done.

Democracy campaigner Saad Eddin Ibrahim of the Ibn Khaldoun Center, Egypt, on his release from prison in February 2002

Muslims in Kashgar, Xinjiang, a contested region in China
Ian Teh/Panos Pictures
Conflicts are most frequent in poor countries ... where there are sharp inequalities between ethnic or religious groups.

UN Secretary-General’s Millennium Report

Public Participation and Minorities [MRG Report] provides a wide analysis of the institutional arrangements meant to enhance minority participation in public life, as well as an overview of the mechanisms used for avoiding turbulence, secession or bloodshed in multiethnic societies when re-negotiating the contract after the crisis or during a process of transition.

Ethnic Conflict Research Digest

Clear, concise and comprehensive, it disentangles the complex web of ethnic, religious, geographical and historical elements which make [Afghanistan’s] problems so intractable.


From conflict to cooperation

Abuses of human rights often contribute to hostility and conflict between communities within countries. MRG worked in 2001 to draw attention to minorities affected by conflicts, to prevent conflicts emerging or escalating, and to help communities rebuild relationships after conflict. One way that we did this was to hold workshops where communities that have been involved in past conflict can come together and talk about how to move forward. This has been a major part of our work in South-East Europe: in 2001 we held workshops in Sarajevo and Mostar on issues that need to be resolved after the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia so that communities can move on.

Partners often stress to us that in a tense and hostile atmosphere, it is very difficult to find balanced information about ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Publishing this information, that our partners can use to inform debate locally and internationally, is therefore very important. At a time of renewed conflict in Indonesia, we published a Report documenting and analysing the conflicts there. This Report reached a minority-based NGO in Indonesia who wrote to make contact with MRG because they were impressed with the Report. They told us that they planned to use it in a project they are undertaking on impunity and believe that the Report makes an important contribution to the analysis of the problems facing their minority community in Indonesia today. Similarly, in November 2001, as the country was engulfed by war, we published a Report on the human rights crisis in Afghanistan.

Clearly, MRG’s Reports published in English are useful for many audiences but if the information is to reach minority and indigenous communities, NGOs and government officials in most countries, it needs to be translated. In 2001 MRG partners published translations of our Report on the Batwa in Central Africa into Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, and Swahili; and our Report on Adivasis in India into Hindi. By 2001 our partners in South-East Europe had translated 10 different publications into one or more of Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Greek, Hungarian, Macedonian, and Serbian.

Minority and indigenous communities say that their exclusion from national politics is a source of many of their problems. MRG published a new Report in 2001 on participation, by the distinguished constitutional lawyer Yash Ghai, that sets out methods to ensure that minorities are involved in government. These can range from granting autonomy to particular regions of a country, which then have greater control over their own affairs, to systems that promote or guarantee representation for people of different backgrounds in national governments.
Halving minority and indigenous poverty by 2015

In the Millennium Development Goals, the international community has set itself the goal of halving world poverty by the year 2015. MRG is working to make sure that minority communities and indigenous peoples are included in and benefit from aid policies and development projects.

If aid doesn’t benefit whole sections of society, conflict can result, which often destroys years of investments and development, and increases poverty.

MRG (in partnership with the UN) organized a meeting attended by international, minority- and indigenous-based NGOs, donor governments, and UN staff and experts, to discuss how to tackle poverty and discrimination, and how best to include minorities and indigenous peoples in aid policies and projects. The UN Independent Expert on the Right to Development attended this meeting and has since asked MRG to work with him on a study on ‘Minority Rights and the Right to Development’.

As part of an ongoing programme of publications that document minority and indigenous peoples’ experiences of development, we published a Macro Study on Economic Development, Democracy and Ethnic Conflict in the Fiji Islands. It traces the history of conflict, including recent events, and the conflict’s roots in patterns of economic exclusion of certain groups.

During 2001, MRG and partners also undertook research in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, India, Macedonia, Nigeria and the Philippines to investigate how minority and indigenous communities are affected by development.

MRG seeks to ensure that development bodies such as the World Bank and the UN Development Programme receive the facts on minorities and development, and our Reports include information on the economic position of minority and indigenous communities. For example, a 2001 Report, Uganda: The Marginalization of Minorities, included chapters on minorities’ access to appropriate education and health services.

There remain many unresolved issues with the minority community in Fiji and this Macro Study on Minority Rights and Development is timely. It addresses many of the other issues that I have not highlighted and makes some sound recommendations to government that will help correct the current imbalance.

Fijian MP Mick Beddoes at the launch of the Fiji Study

The report is an invaluable addition to our information resources and should help us in our enduring efforts to improve our programmes.

UN Development Programme, Uganda
These accounts are a summary of information extracted from our audited accounts. The full report and accounts were approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee for recommendation to the Council. The full accounts can be obtained from MRG at 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE, and from www.minorityrights.org

### Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 December 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources arising</th>
<th>Unrestricted funds</th>
<th>Restricted funds</th>
<th>Total 2001 funds</th>
<th>Total 2000 funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statutory contribution</td>
<td>422,386</td>
<td>491,517</td>
<td>913,903</td>
<td>964,589</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-statutory contribution</td>
<td>25,620</td>
<td>665,292</td>
<td>690,912</td>
<td>491,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from sales of publications</td>
<td>33,156</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33,156</td>
<td>47,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright and literary fees</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>31,604</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31,604</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and dividends received</td>
<td>17,084</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17,084</td>
<td>18,394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Direct charitable expenditure    |                    |                  |                  |                  |
| Projects                         | 289,812            | 1,225,699        | 1,515,511        | 1,061,866        |
| Advocacy                         | 115,911            |                  | 115,911          | 175,335          |
| Cost of sales of publications    | 4,795              | -                | 4,795            | 3,889            |
| Cost of consultancy              | 9,323              | -                | 9,323            | -                |

| Other expenditure                |                    |                  |                  |                  |
| Fundraising                      | 63,079             | -                | 63,079           | 81,268           |
| Administration                   | 21,341             | -                | 21,341           | 4,940            |

| Resources used in year           | 504,261            | 1,225,699        | 1,729,960        | 1,327,298        |

| Change in resources before transfer and valuations | 25,623               | (68,890)         | (43,267)         | 194,030          |

| Realised gains (losses)           |                    |                  |                  |                  |
| Realised gains on tangible fixed assets disposals | -                   | -                | -                | -                |

| Other recognised gains and losses |                    |                  |                  |                  |
| Gains (losses) on investments unrealised | (10,027)           | -                | (10,027)         | 3,340            |

| Resources retained for further use | 15,596               | (68,890)         | (53,294)         | 197,370          |
| Brought forward 1 January          | 309,629              | 580,879          | 890,508          | 693,138          |

| Carried forward 31 December        | 325,225              | 511,989          | 837,214          | 890,508          |
### Balance sheet as at 31 December 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures in UK Sterling</th>
<th>General funds</th>
<th>Designated funds</th>
<th>Restricted funds</th>
<th>Total 2001 funds</th>
<th>Total 2000 funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed assets</td>
<td>10,459</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,363</td>
<td>11,822</td>
<td>22,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>134,549</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>134,549</td>
<td>144,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash at bank and in hand</td>
<td>113,939</td>
<td>8,819</td>
<td>310,903</td>
<td>433,661</td>
<td>505,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stocks</td>
<td>21,886</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21,886</td>
<td>23,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debtors</td>
<td>61,227</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>226,705</td>
<td>287,932</td>
<td>246,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>342,060</td>
<td>8,819</td>
<td>538,971</td>
<td>889,850</td>
<td>943,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creditors: Amounts due within one year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank overdrafts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other creditors</td>
<td>(25,654)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(26,982)</td>
<td>(52,636)</td>
<td>(52,836)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets/liabilities</td>
<td>316,406</td>
<td>8,819</td>
<td>511,989</td>
<td>837,214</td>
<td>890,508</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Reserves               |              |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| General funds          | 316,406      | -               | -               | 316,406         | 299,629         |
| Designated funds       | -            | 8,819           | -               | 8,819           | 10,000          |
| Restricted funds       | -            | -               | 511,989         | 511,989         | 580,879         |
| Net assets/liabilities | 316,406      | 8,819           | 511,989         | 837,214         | 890,508         |

### Income/expenditure growth

![Income/Expenditure Growth Chart](chart.png)

**UK Sterling**

- Income
- Expenditure

MRG’s donors in 2001

ACT – Netherlands
Alan & Babette Sainsbury Charitable Fund
Baring Foundation
Bromley Trust
Bryan Guinness Trust
CAFOD
C A Rodewald Charitable Settlement
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Christian Aid
Church World Service
Community Fund
Cordaid
Council of Europe
DanChurch Aid
DANIDA
Department for International Development (UK)
Ericson Trust
European Union
Eva Reckitt Trust
Finnish Foreign Ministry
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
ICCO
Ireland Aid
Mercers Company
Misereor
Miss K M Harbinson’s Charitable Trust
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Norwegian Foreign Ministry
Novib
Open Society Institute
Oxfam
Philanthropist Trust
Ruben & Elizabeth Raising Trust
SCIAF
SIDA
Staples Trust
Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
T B H Brunner’s Charitable Trust
Trócaire
UIA Charitable Foundation

Council and staff

Council members*
Gudmundur Alfredsson, Kalina Bozeva, Radhika Coomaraswamy, Maja Daruwala, Paul Divakar, Yash Ghai, Kristina Hedlund Thulin, Wim Jacobs, Alice Mogwe, Edward Mortimer, Benedict Ole Nangoro, Klara Orgovanova, Martin Pick, Patrick Thomberry (Chair)

Committee members*
Sarah Archer, Phil Baker, Steven Burkeman, Lekha Klouda, Kate Phillips, Philip Rudge, Hans Smulders

MRG staff*

Regional officers*
Budapest Anna Maria Biró, Monika Raffael, Ildikó Rigó Delhi Seema Kazi Kampala Juliet Muwanga

Interns and volunteers*
Sabine Deiringer, Vivienne Lamaro, Said Shehata

Staff leaving in 2001
Jane Aubrey (Delhi), Lesley Carver, Krishnadas (Delhi), Lucy Hodgson, Miles Litvinoff, Dennis Rudd, Nicky Torode

* As at April 2002
Getting involved

MRG communicates with minorities and indigenous peoples, governments and policy-makers, students and academics, the media, international inter-governmental organizations, and development and human rights groups.

We provide research and information which is an important resource for those who need to know about current issues on the international agenda, and their impact on minorities and indigenous peoples. Global media - including the BBC and CNN - quoted MRG in 2001. We received front page coverage in Ethiopia, and our issues were picked up by many national newspapers - including The Guardian and The Independent. Our work in Asia and Eastern Europe was reported by the media in those regions.

MRG publishes Reports, Training Manuals, Workshop Reports, Macro and Micro Studies, and Issues Papers, and our newsletter Outsider. These are available on subscription and through our library scheme. If you would like to know more about MRG, how to support us and how to work with us, please visit our website www.minorityrights.org or contact our London office.
Afro-Colombian coffee worker
Jeremy Howard/Panos Pictures