Independent evaluation of MRG’s Disability/
Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project

BRIDGING DISABILITY ACTIVISTS WITH THE CIRCLE
OF HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS

Final evaluation report
December 2021

Prepared and submitted by Güler Koca, independent consultant
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The report is the product of the author and not the Evaluation Department
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Executive summary

“We have a connection with OPDs, and they also learned and assure to incorporate PWDs of minority issues in their program”

“It is now an issue of my organization”

This report presents the findings and recommendations from an independent evaluation of the two-year pilot phase of the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project implemented by Minority Rights Group (MRG) and its partners. Overall, the pilot phase objectives were successfully delivered, and a wide range of results were achieved, as outlined in this report, alongside recommendations for the continuation of this work.

Persons with disabilities in minority or indigenous communities do not experience discrimination as members of a homogenous group but rather as individuals with multidimensional layers of factors, identities and circumstances. They may face multiple forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, caste, religion, language... While these factors may vary from one situation to another and should be analysed in context, PWDs belonging to minorities or indigenous communities may still face stigmas due to a lack of awareness and visibility and absence of meaningful actions that reach or include them.

MRG has a good track record of work on intersectional and/or multiple discrimination in general with many programs addressing these issues in the global south, such as a program on multiple discrimination affecting women within ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. MRG also publishes on the range of intersecting factors that can contribute to the exclusion of those who are most marginalized and who are at most risk of being left behind.

Following this work, MRG recently decided to begin substantive work addressing the intersection of discrimination affecting PWDs who are also members of indigenous or/and minority communities, as they remained largely invisible, including within the circle of Human and Minority Rights activists who are advocating for fulfilment of rights within these communities, as well as within organisations formed of people living with a disability.

In this regard, MRG developed a project aiming at bringing together minority and indigenous activists and PWDs within these communities, providing support to bring issues of intersectional discrimination to the circle of human and minority rights activists as well as Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs1) and ensuring effective and meaningful participation of indigenous and/or minority PWDs by

1 Disabled Persons’ Organizations or Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs or OPDs) are interchangeable terms and refer to the same thing. This evaluation uses the latter and both acronyms are not utilized each time for readability purposes.

In their General Comment No. 7, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines OPDs as follows:

“[O]rganizations of persons with disabilities should be rooted, committed to and fully respect the principles and rights recognized in the Convention [on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities]. They can only be those that are
applying the principle “nothing about us without us”. Drawing on Minority Rights Group expertise working on multiple discrimination experienced within ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous communities, producing authoritative research on minority rights and indigenous rights, and supporting partners to engage in targeted advocacy at various levels.

The scope of the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination project covers a wide range of activities and initiatives, including:

- Submitting joint alternative reports to international Human Rights mechanisms,
- Organizing capacity building trainings/Coalition Building meetings, concluding observation follow-up meetings,
- Supporting activists to engage in international and Covid-19 and disability intersectionality advocacy,
- Increasing communications on the intersecting factors affecting disability and other minority groups as well as indigenous communities in terms of discrimination.

This report presents the findings and recommendations from an independent evaluation of the two first years of implementation of the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project. The purpose of the evaluation is to both look at the extent to which the outcomes and outputs of the pilot phase of the project were fulfilled and to identify strengths and challenges to be considered when taking the project forward.

The evaluation drew from a realist evaluation approach to provide an analysis of the contexts and mechanisms that affect project performance and impacts. The evaluation also engaged with the project implementation partners and target groups as well as with MRG staff to co-create the key learning areas and suggest lessons for the next areas of work regarding this project.

The methods included:

- Document review,
- Interviews with a variety of key informants including provision of reasonable adjustments such as sign language interpretation,
- Email and phone questionnaires in accessible formats.

**Key findings:**

The activities and initiatives of the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination pilot phase contributed to the broader capacity development of minority organizations and indigenous communities to understand how PWDs may experience intersectional discrimination, including:

- Creating bridges between organizations of PWDs and other minority groups and indigenous communities,
- Increased data on PWDs among minority groups and indigenous communities,
- Enhancing visibility of intersectional discrimination at local, national, regional and global level

Findings also indicate that there are several ways in which the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination project supported activists with disabilities and from other minorities or indigenous communities to develop their network, gain confidence in, engage in advocacy work and enrich their led, directed and governed by persons with disabilities. A clear majority of their membership should be recruited among persons with disabilities themselves.”
skill sets accordingly. In particular, across this pilot phase, 324 people participated in trainings and coalition building meetings. The majority of this number were PWDs, but participants also included personal assistants, policy makers or government representatives, or parents of children with disabilities and 164 (51%) of these participants identified as women or transgender.

Other project results include familiarizing different stakeholders and duty bearers with the concept of intersectional discrimination and the rights-based approach in any programs, activities or policies answering these issues. Overall, the activities planned for this pilot phase were successfully delivered and the aimed results met their purpose.

Key contextual factors:

The analysis of key contextual factors impacting the performance and outcomes of the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project resonate with MRG’s strategic framework on disability, consisting in switching to a rights-based approach across the whole organization.

The evaluation revealed the following key contextual factors surrounding the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project:

- PWDs among minorities and indigenous communities are particularly far away from the disability rights movement due to a lack of capacity and resources,
- Mainstream programs and organizations are often not including the rights of minority PWDs in their work,
- Minorities and indigenous people are not always embodied in the work of OPDs,
- There is a lack of visibility and meaningful engagement of minority PWDs in local and national decision making, consultations and all forms of government.

Recommendations for MRG:

This evaluation affirms MRG’s commitment to build a stronger cohesion among different minorities and indigenous groups including PWDs among them, aiming at cross-fertilizing their mutual work on discrimination.

1. Providing an introduction session for the new partners with some background information on MRG, its work and strategies:

New partners may not always be very familiar with MRG’s work at the beginning. They may get this understanding by checking at the website and through having conversations, but this may not be the most effective way. Briefing partners on this matter would help them to get an understanding of how MRG operates and what its strategies are.

This may be complemented with a short and easy to understand resource kit for new partners. This can be a guide with MRG’s values, principles, operational strategies as well as some information on how MRG identifies project countries and target groups.

2. Training the partners at the beginning of the project even in case there was an existing collaboration:
It may be relevant to check the skill sets of the partners to help MRG to understand which kind of training they may need and prevent some misunderstandings on expected activities. Partners may not have a full understanding of what is a civil society report, the level of quality required and the content on the one hand, and on the other hand they may need to gain conceptual knowledge on intersectionality. Training the partners on these aspects may help ensuring that the activities carried out by partners are in line with the objectives of the project. The training costs should be incorporated in the overall budget.

3. **Having an access envelop for reasonable adjustments on top of the regular project costs:**

When preparing a budget for any project, event or program, some PWDs may ask for reasonable adjustments requiring additional costs (transportation, sign language interpretation, PA). This shall be taken into consideration not only for projects related to disability but in any mainstream activities.

For example, the International Disability Alliance (IDA) always sets a 10% access envelop on top of all costs in all projects and so this tends to be generalized within other organizations as well. MRG’s fundraising team should outline the access envelop in all costs and negotiate with the funder about it.

4. **Ensuring that sign language using minorities are included in MRG’s outreach and programs (addressed by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues):**

Sign language users often identify as a linguistic minority in their countries. As such, they may be potentially disadvantaged and excluded depending on the context while this may intersect with other minorities. When possible MRG shall make sure its approaches and programmes including linguistic minorities involve sign language users of the implementation area.

5. **Foreseeing sufficient time between the grant approval from the donor and the start of the project activities in order to increase participation:**

The process to go through for getting a grant approval may take longer than expected and when it happens, more time is needed for MRG to dispatch it to local partners. When this happened for India and Bangladesh, there were very few weeks left to carry out the data collection process as the deadlines for the CRPD alternative reports were very close. Leaving more time between the overall grant approval and the start of the first activities could prevent this from happening. Ultimately, sufficient and reasonable time should be given to the partners to operate after the grant was approved. What is sufficient and reasonable may vary and shall be decided together with the partner. This will also give more opportunities for meaningful participation of PWDs across the project implementation.

6. **Continue to build on existing methods of specific outreach in virtual activities:**

When taking its work forward, MRG may still need to organize an increasing number of virtual activities (FFMs, Coalition Building meetings and trainings) that would normally happen face to face may still be held online. MRG should reinforce its strategies to reach marginalized people who do not have access

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2 In Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reasonable adjustments/accommodation are defined as follows: “Reasonable accommodation’ means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”
to network and/or technological devices. This should be adapted for participation of persons with disabilities among minorities or indigenous communities not necessarily having access to internet and/or assistive devices while safeguarding their privacy. This means that for them relying on a third person for participation cannot always be a suitable solution. Indeed, one person who was invited to the virtual webinar on CRPD Concluding Observations in India but could not make it said: “I am in a rural area and did not get scope and opportunity for participation”.

7. Training all MRG’s staff on disability on a regular basis and supporting them to adopt a twin track approach:

This project allowed MRG staff to get a primary understanding of disability, but more trainings are needed to complement and consolidate the lessons learnt during this project. The interviews showed that there is still room for learning and need for more commitments of all MRG staff to make their daily work inclusive for PWDs. In addition to being considered on related specific projects, disability should also be mainstreamed in all MRG activities, programmes and strategies.

In this regard, MRG staff should be aware that women, men, girls, boys and LGBTIQ individuals with all types of impairments (being hearing, visual, physical or cognitive impairments as well as intellectual or psychosocial disabilities) should have full access to all MRG’s projects, activities and programs while being embodied in all its strategies.

The Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project highlights MRG’s commitment to build bridges between different minorities and indigenous groups in order to better determine and address forms of discrimination faced by PWDs among them. Since this was a pilot project, greater impacts are yet to be realized. Beneficiaries will be empowered to be on the first line when planning and sharing next steps of the project.

3 In their factsheet on influencing the UN common country strategy the International Disability Alliance (IDA) defines a twin-track approach as follows:

“The CRPD emphasises the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development, while, at the same time, recognises that disability-specific projects are needed. Governments and UNCTs should improve disability-specific actions (such as capacity building actions for DPOs) and disability-inclusive practice by mainstreaming disability rights in all development policies, in order to empower persons with disabilities.”
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<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>Universal Periodic Review</td>
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<td>CERD</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
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<td>Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales de Personas con Discapacidad y sus Familias</td>
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<td>Women with Disabilities Development Foundation</td>
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<td>WFD</td>
<td>World Federation for the Deaf</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>IMOK</td>
<td>Independent Media Organisation Kurdistan</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
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Introduction

Background information

MRG is an international NGO which supports minority and Indigenous people as they strive to maintain their rights — to the land they live on, the languages they speak, to equal opportunities in education and employment, and to full participation in public life. MRG campaigns worldwide with around 150 partners in over 50 countries through training and education, legal cases, publications, media engagement and cultural programmes.

The project evaluated is based on the idea of intersectionality, meaning that every person has multiple characteristics including, but not limited to, ability/disability, culture, religion, class, caste (e.g. especially in south Asia), language, sexual orientation, nationality, age, gender and ethnicity which are all important to shaping experiences of discrimination, disadvantage and marginalisation for certain communities.

MRG developed a project to bring together minority and Indigenous activists and People Living with a disability (PWDs) within these communities, providing support to bring issues of intersectional discrimination to the attention of human and minority rights activists as well as to activists working to secure rights for PWDs. The overall aim of this work is to ensure the effective and meaningful participation of Indigenous and/or minority PWDs by applying the principle “nothing about us without us” to local activist efforts for equality and inclusion. Original project countries included Bangladesh, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Mauritania, Rwanda, Uganda and Ukraine, where MRG worked with existing minority and Indigenous partners and built new partnerships with Organisations of People with a disability (OPDs) or, supported the creation of new organisations. Nepal and Thailand were added during the course of the project and some work was explored in Kenya and Pakistan. Due to security issues, work in Egypt was suspended in 2019 until the end of the project.

MRG’s Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination project was funded by SIDA and the first sets of activities were implemented by MRG and its partners from January 2019 to December 2020.

Aims and objectives

This was a pilot project for MRG to implement its new aims and objectives in the following areas:

- Identifying the main forms of intersectional discrimination experienced by Indigenous and/or minority PWDs through conducting fact-finding missions in the countries of focus.
- Strengthening and increasing the capacity of Indigenous and/or minority PWDs to engage in relevant local, national and international opportunities.
- Increase communication and collaboration between Indigenous and/or minority activists and OPD’s within these countries through coalition building.
- Giving priority to address intersectional discrimination experienced by Indigenous and/or minority PWDs among international agencies and UN human rights mechanisms.
The scope of the project covered a wide range of activities and initiatives, including:

- Supporting local partners to submit alternative reports to UN committees highlighting intersectional discrimination in 7 countries, which led to 33 mentions of intersectional discrimination in concluding observations by the relevant committees;
- Collaborating with 35 OPDs (as implementation partners or participants) to build cross-movement collaboration with existing Indigenous and minority rights organisation partners. This included working closely with international and regional OPDs such as the WFD, the IPDGN (Indigenous PWDs Global Network), RIADIS and DRF;
- Supporting the creation of OPDs in contexts where minority PWDs are not represented by national OPDs such as in Rwanda, as that this approach may be helpful to build capacity to address intersectional discrimination in other contexts;
- Holding Coalition Building meetings in 9 countries which allowed 324 people to participate in networking and receive training, half of whom identified as women or transgender and a majority of whom had a disability;
- Supporting activists with disabilities to attend and speak at the UN Forum on Minority Issues in November 2019, first attending MRG’s advocacy training session alongside other minority activists. The Forum provided sign language interpretation for the very first time in its history partly as a result of the urgent prompting and advocacy by MRG and partners, with a suggestion from the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues in the closing session that it should continue every year.

Evaluation overview

Objectives

The concrete objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the overall effectiveness of the ‘Minority/disability intersectional discrimination’ project and its methodological approach and intervention in contributing to the capacity development of the target groups, including security and risk avoidance protocols.
- To identify lessons that MRG and its partners as well as other project stakeholders should learn from its implementation and to make recommendations accordingly.

The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation will consolidate MRG’s methodological approach across different project cycles. It will be made available in different accessible formats, including an easy to read and to understand executive summary.

Ultimately, the evaluation should contribute to the broader orientation and development of MRG activities when addressing discrimination affecting minority and Indigenous people, enhancing cohesion between them as well as making the process of building new partnerships on this matter more effective.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions were those reflected in the TOR and defined by MRG and can be found at the end of this report.
Methodology

The methodology is detailed in the Appendix B.

Limitations

During the data collection phase of this evaluation, a survey was sent to the participants of the virtual webinars on the CRPD Concluding Observations held in India and Bangladesh. (Its content and purpose are detailed in the appendixes.) Initially the survey targeted a sample of 20 people trained together in a single activity. It was circulated to the participants who attended and participated in the online webinar held in Bangladesh but due to the low number of responses, it was further sent to the participants of the online webinar in India. India was chosen as a complementary target case study group because of the shared similarities of the participant groups in Bangladesh and India. Due to the fact that the survey was issued at the time that a major 3rd wave of the Covid-19 pandemic severely affected South Asia, participation in both countries was very low. In consultation with the Evaluation Advisory Group, it was decided to choose another case study site and therefore, research was extended to Thailand. As the evaluation process was ending soon, the partner organisation in Thailand used their already existing set of questions in order to save time to diminish the need for translation.

The survey sent to the participants of the virtual webinars on the CRPD Concluding Observations in Bangladesh and India as well as the set of questions sent to the participants of the training in Thailand did not meet their purpose, which was to get more quantitative data on the experience of participants. This is due to several barriers:

The pandemic:

The evaluation process happened while many of the project countries were facing another wave of Covid. This was particularly relevant in the case of India, where the partner had to temporarily close their office and the target groups were dealing with deadly situations in their families and relatives. The survey was still circulated to the participants but there were very few answers.

Language barriers:

In the case of Bangladesh and Thailand, the partners directly reached out to some of the participants by phone to help bridge the language barriers for the survey. This was time consuming for the partners, as they need to juggle with multiple priorities. In the case of Bangladesh, the coordinator was out of office for Covid-19 emergency relief work among the minority network.

Technological inequalities:

Although this was not highlighted by the partners who circulated the survey, the lack of access to assistive devices is most likely to have prevented some participants with disabilities from gaining access to the evaluation process which was done remotely via email and online survey.

As a result, it was not possible to get answers from a sample of participants who were trained in the same country. For this reason, the answers are used for qualitative purposes rather than quantitative ones. They will appear as quotes throughout the findings as illustrated below.
Findings

The following sections present the evaluation findings to highlight key outcomes, outputs and potential impacts of the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project:

- Main activities implemented during the project
- Infographic with text description
**Visual Description of the graphic above:**

Depicted is an infographic showing the most important data about the project.

At the top is a blue circle that contains white writing that says: “2 years of activities & advocacy in 11 countries in which 35 OPDs were involved”. Outside of this circle with general information the main achievements of the project are shown. On the right it says: “Training of 324 participants, 164 of which identified as women or transgender, 250-300 of which identified as having a disability”. The text on the left of the circle states: “11 coalition building meetings, 18 communication outputs, 8 alternative human rights reports supported, 33 mentions of intersectional discrimination in UN committee”. Each of these statements inside and outside the circle is accompanied by an illustration (for example a group of women with disabilities protesting or 3 people around a table discussing something).

Underneath this part of the graphic, it says: “more specifically” and an arrow is pointing downwards to a blue box that contains information about the three countries Rwanda, Bangladesh and Iraq.

The box is organised like a table. The flag of each country is pictured below its name. It is shown that in Rwanda 38 and in Bangladesh 30 people were trained. In Iraq 24 people participated in a coalition building meeting. Below that is stated how many OPDs were involved in each country (2 in Rwanda, 4 in Bangladesh and 1 in Iraq).
Coalition Building and Training

Across the project, Coalition Building meetings were held in 9 countries which allowed 324 people to participate in networking and receive training, half of whom identified as women or transgender and a majority of whom had a disability. Due to some meetings being held online and disability identity data not being collected consistently at meetings or events, the exact number of participants who identified as having a disability is not known but is estimated to be between 250 and 300.

For the online events (in Bangladesh and India) this estimation was made based on MRG staff’s observation of people who talked about their lived experiences of being disabled or who were representing OPDs. There was no registration for these online events that asked for disability status. For the in-person events, either the partner included the number in the narrative report or estimates were made based on the participant registration forms, which do not ask for disability identity but did include a section for “organisation/role/community”. This helped MRG to identify people who were from OPDs or who were interpreters or from government organisations.

The three case studies, namely Bangladesh, Iraq and Rwanda aimed at going more in-depth. It was important to draw a comprehensive picture of their local context, the self-sufficiency of the target organisations and their positioning in the global disability movement to assess how it has evolved throughout the project.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, there is no disaggregated data on PWDs belonging to minorities. The Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) has been conducting the Disability Detection Survey (DDS) since 2013 but statistics on minority people with disability are yet to be shown separately. Indeed, many PWDs among minorities did not have a disability government card yet and were deprived of the relief distributed by the local government during Covid-19. Nagorik Uddyog, MRG’s partner in Bangladesh, found most of them have lost their livelihood during lockdown. They were deprived of government and non-government relief support due to lack of mobility (as transportation was suspended) to receive support. Some of the PWDs among minorities (especially tea garden and coastal belt of Bangladesh) shared that they received phone calls to collect relief, but they could not manage transport to receive the support. Those who regularly need medical support also suffered as doctors and services in hospital were not available during lock down.

The project activities were implemented by Nagorik Uddyog, an organization which was working with MRG since 2015 and consisted in collecting data on minorities with disabilities living in refugee camps and co-organizing Addressing Intersectional Issues in the CRPD Concluding Observations. on Sept 7th 2020. The aim of the webinar was to discuss the UN-CRPD (the United Nations - Committee on the Rights of PWDs) and its applications to minority PWDs (Dalit, Indigenous, Transgender, Tea community and Linguistic minority) in Bangladesh.
During the interviews, an informant said the government does not recognize any discrimination. They stated “There are many OPDs in Bangladesh, but they never think that PWDs can be among other minorities. Minority organizations also never think they have PWDs among them.”

This opinion was also reflected in the survey, with the following answers:

“Many organizations have strong activities for minority rights, but they never have a single activities, agenda for the PWDs among them.”
“No organization have specific focus on the disabilities of minorities”

The same participants said they also experience forms of discrimination because they are part of another socially excluded group:

“The mainstream people think tea communities are lower caste and should not have the rights like them”
“Access to public places, entering houses of higher caste, temple, sitting in the first row in school etc”
“Become victim of Hate Speech.”

In Bangladesh there are approximately 300,000 Bihari people (Urdu-speaking Muslims) living in camps. As non-Bengali citizens of the former East Pakistan the Bihari minority migrated from Bihar and West Bengal during India’s partition. They have been discriminated against for their perceived alliance with Pakistan during the independence war.

Today many Biharis also live in Pakistan and India. Neither Pakistan nor Bangladesh agreed to grant citizenship to the Biharis (also called stranded Pakistanis) which resulted in them being effectively stateless since Bangladesh’s independence. Until a 2008 Supreme Court ruling that recognized their right to Bangladeshi nationality, many lacked formal citizenship and were therefore stateless. Across its work with the Council of Minorities, the partner found that PWDs among them did not have a disability card which would allow them to get a dedicated allowance. After some organizations supported them to enrol in the government data base, they were able to receive the allowance and other facilities. In order to document the CRPD report, the partner and the Council of Minorities conducted some focus group discussions in the camps.

After the training, it was collectively agreed that there needs to be more research on issues in accessing rights for these groups and formation of a network to achieve this. Since the meeting, MRG has provided a grant to research the status of PWDs among minorities and connect their issues with mainstream advocacy mechanisms.

Responses to Survey Questions:

In the survey, the answers to the question “What motivated you to participate in the Webinar on CRPD Concluding Observations?” included:

“It is now an issue of my organization”
“I am from underprivileged minority community, also a human rights defender, so I thought it would be my opportunity to participate in the CRPD concluding observation “
“I belong to a minority community”
“Opportunity to work for the PWDs of my community.”
Another question was asking for examples about how “your involvement in the webinar increased your capacity to engage with Disability Rights in your community”:

“We have a connection with OPDs and they also learned and assure to incorporate PWDs of minority issues in their program”
“I feel more urge to work for the PWDs of my community”
“Some OPDs expressed interest to work with the Dalit community”
“Communication with OPDs.”

Some complementary answers were as follow:

“From the webinar I came to know OPDs that work in our areas and will help to connect our community to their program.”
“I have an opportunity to conduct several FGDs to know the status of PWDs of tea community.”
“I have incorporated the issue in the regular court yard meeting with Dalit community in Dhaka and other places of the country.”
“I discuss the disability issues in my community meeting.”

Outcomes:
- More PWDs living in camps are able to enjoy their rights such as receiving a disability allowance;
- Minority organizations developed their awareness of disability rights and OPDs;
- Decision to make a documentary on disability minorities;
- Minority organizations gained an understanding of the State responsibility towards implementation of CRPD

Discussion and perspectives for future work:

To the question “What measures would support you best to advance progress of those affected by intersecting disability and other discrimination factors to secure their rights in future?”, the answers were as such:

“Networking with OPDs on the issue of intersectionality”
“Policy advocacy to the issues of minority PWDs”
“Joint advocacy with OPDs”
“More government support.”

Last but not least, an informant stressed that there should have been more time for the focus group discussions in the camps as this was particularly relevant to enrich the CRPD alternative report. When the overall project funds were approved by the donor, only three months’ time was left between the funding approval and the deadline for the CRPD report submissions. MRG approached the partner in Bangladesh and provided a grant for data collection in preparation for the report but that left very few weeks for the focus group discussions themselves.

In this regard, the only options for MRG were either to not do this piece of work which would have been a missed opportunity to get the data collection underway, or to try to start the work in order to enrich the CRPD alternative report before its submission day, through a maximised collaboration with the partner. The latter was chosen.
Even though the little time allocated for the focus group discussions to happen was not in MRG’s hands, it still means that this particular piece of work should be taken forward as the project goes on and that it would be worth it to plan longer time slots between grant requests and the beginning of the project activities. These are potential areas of work for MRG when taking a step forward in advancing the project in Bangladesh.

Further, due to the pandemic, the webinar on CRPD Concluding Observations was held virtually. This was a challenge as most of the Dalit communities are not used to online tools and do not have access to a good internet connection.

Initially the documentary was aiming to target a large number of minority communities involved in the project. Due to the pandemic fewer linguistic minorities could be covered.
Rwanda

Rwanda was described as a “sensitive country in terms of discrimination” by one key informant. There is no public categorization of minorities even though the concept exists. Since the genocide, the Government of Rwanda has applied a policy of “we are all Rwandans” with discussion of ethnic diversity disallowed. There are 36,000 members in Rwanda of a traditionally hunter gatherer community present across the Great Lakes region of Africa, known elsewhere as Batwa but within Rwanda, they are referred to as Historically Marginalized People. The majority of them face many challenges in accessing public services. They are living in extreme poverty and have little access, if any, to education and health services.

The majority of Historically Marginalized People were used to living in the forest and were evicted in the process of creating national parks, so they do not have their own piece of land for farming purposes. An informant stated: “Batwa are a marginalized group who are hardly considered as human beings. For instance, they cannot sit at a same table with other people. And when they are living with a disability, they are facing double marginalization”.

In Rwanda, most of the activities were carried out by partners, mainly by AIMPO, an organization started in 2001 by community leaders. It has three missions:

- To promote the individual and collective rights of Historically Marginalized People;
- To facilitate sustainable development in Historically Marginalized People communities;
- To accelerate the social, political and economic integration of Historically Marginalized People into Rwandan society.

It works with Historically Marginalized People and Indigenous communities in East Africa, supporting them to be self-sufficient. AIMPO collects data on living conditions of Historically Marginalized People and advocates for their Human Rights and for policy change. They have a programme on empowerment where they support Batwa communities on capacity building. For instance, they purchased 80 hectares of land for Historically Marginalized People as means of addressing the issue of hunger. AIMPO created a disability unit within their organization, based on a study on social economic rights of Historically Marginalized PWDs.

In 2017 they started a survey in 10 districts of the country, in order to do some mapping of numbers of Historically Marginalized PWDs, including gender and age. AIMPO’s staff went from door to door to speak to the families because there was no previous data to be built on. A number of 335 Historically Marginalized People living with a disability were identified. Out of these 335 Historically Marginalized PWDs, 198 were children.

Since AIMPO is not an OPD, they could not join the disability rights network, so they decided to empower their disability unit to work autonomously from them and that led to the creation of First Peoples Disability Organisation (FPDO): The first OPD of Historically Marginalized PWDs of the country. Following the principle of Nothing About Us Without Us, the governing Board of FPDO comprised 11 PWDs from the Batwa community. However, these individuals had personally experienced the effects of discrimination, had not been able to complete school and did not have the knowledge and skills in full to be able to oversee or manage the new organisation.

Later, in order to start narrowing down the data regarding Historically Marginalized People children with intellectual disabilities, AIMPO decided to focus on 4 districts where there was a higher concentration of FPDO members. A number of 26 children with intellectual disabilities were identified among which one passed away. AIMPO provided a training to their parents to adopt a rights-based
One informant said the training had great impact on the parents as after that, they started empowering their kids to go to school just like anybody else.

AIMPO wanted to submit a grant application to DRF in order to support the creation of FPDO. They also needed a consultant to develop its strategic plan. The consultant had experience in supporting grantees from the DRF and working in East and West Africa. In Rwanda he was supporting the National Union of Disability Organizations, Rwanda Union of the Blind and Rwanda Organization of Persons with Deaf Blindness.

The consultant identified the main areas where the capacity of the board to develop needed to be built:

- Right to inclusive education;
- Right to economic empowerment;
- Right to quality health with specific focus on sexual reproductive health rights.

Their advocacy strategy also included a strong component of participation in political life. Due to the Covid restrictions, the process was a little slower than expected.

MRG provided a grant to AIMPO to fund a 6-month literacy and organisation management training for FPDO board members. A teacher was hired to provide classes 2 days per week. Some board members can now read and write. On the last updates, FPDO had members in 4 districts. They hired another consultant who is supporting them to draft a child protection charter and a policy on sexual harassment. They are working on a report on child protection in minority groups.

According to a couple of informants they still lack managerial competences, educational trainings and understanding of international advocacy instruments. They are not independent from AIMPO yet (financially and in terms of leadership skills). They need to be able to self-organize.

For the consultant it is important to increase minorities’ voices through advocacy so in 5 or 10 years there will be more impact on government policies.

**Outcomes:**

- [Significant] increase in the FPDO board members skills required to manage an organisation
- Participation of FPDO in national consultation processes
- Parents of children with intellectual disabilities have changed their mindset and started sending them to school without being shamed

**Discussion and perspectives for the future:**

Through discussions with informants, it appeared that most of the trainees had a physical disability and that there was only one woman in the board. An informant supposed it is because Historically Marginalized People with physical disabilities may be more active in the non-formal sector and have access to pottery, which is the main activity of Historically Marginalized People. Some works needs to be done to get those with more diverse disabilities and more gender balance among the board members.

Yet this work needs to be extended in other districts and more resources are needed to work with persons having other types of disabilities.
One informant thinks it may be more effective and less expensive to establish a training center in the communities. It was hard for participants to come to the training place each week for 6 months, even if the costs were covered. Establishing an entire training center within the community would further allow Historically Marginalized People and Historically Marginalized PWDs to learn together, as they all need literacy trainings. No need to even build a center, people would be OK under a tree.

According to the informant, development projects should be prioritized over advocacy work. Batwas do have very low income, so they urgently need income generating activities in order to improve their livelihood and living conditions. For instance, AIMPO is establishing self-help group associations where community members can come together, and each person puts a small amount of money. So, when a group member needs a loan, they can take it and there is no profit or interests. But the demand is high, so the group members needed to wait for their turn. Their organization gave some money to the group to have loans in their basket. There is a trust relationship among the community so group members give the money back when they can.

Another informant balanced this a little bit by saying income generation is important but cannot be sustainable until people get the skills to manage this and bring more funds, which is tricky so far because of their background. The state should be a duty bearer to ensure economical rights and social protection. It would be rather worth it to teach Historically Marginalized People to claim for their rights and food to become a social protection issue.

Further, an informant addressed the fact that AIMPO would like to engage in longer partnerships with MRG (between 5 and 8 years) so they could establish a more sustainable strategic plan and build more holistic projects taking into account the social, education, nutrition, gender. In Historically Marginalized People population, malnutrition can cause mental health conditions or intellectual disability. It was also suggested that there could be intermarriage within the community and Batwa women with disabilities are at higher risks of living with HIV because of sexual violence. The population has needs for education on sexual reproductive rights.

FPDO members would further need to be trained on all CRPD issues to be able to work on these topics. Historically Marginalized People being a withdrawn group, there must be an intensive training for them to engage in strategic advocacy, to understand the rights-based approach.

Finally, as the creation of FPDO was funded by both MRG and DRF, an informant suggested that there could be a round table between the various donors to the same project so they do not replicate funding, which would help supporting projects in complementary ways.

The informant suggests developing projects with children of Historically Marginalized People in order to improve life opportunities and break the cycle of marginalisation. One suggestion was that youth development programs could be organized through FPDO and they could speak at the Parliament as children of Rwanda.
Iraq

In Iraq, MRG held a 2-day Coalition Building meeting to acknowledge the reality of PWDs in minority areas that have been subject to major conflict. It was attended by 20 people who represented various religious and national components of minority communities (Christians, Yazidis, Shabak, Turkmen, Kurds, and Arabs) - five of them were men and women with disabilities.

Indeed, Iraq is home to a diverse array of ethnic and religious minorities, including Turkmen, Shabak, Yezidis, Chaldean-Assyrian and Armenian Christians, Baha’i, Kaka’i, Sabeen-Mandaeans, Faili Kurds, Roma and Black Iraqis. According to 2014 statistics in the Initial Report (2017) submitted by Iraq under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of PWDs, the largely minority populated governorate of Nineveh has the second highest number of registered PWDs, following Baghdad.

Having been specifically targeted by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) since 2014, and largely affected by ensuing anti-ISIS coalition operations, many minority groups have experienced severe armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Previous case studies have shown that 60 percent of those recorded as injured in the conflict are suffering from permanent disabilities, such as loss of limbs, blindness, paralysis or untreatable burns.

In June 2014, the ISIS capture of Mosul and subsequent expansion into Tel Afar, Sinjar and the Nineveh Plains resulted in the expulsion of entire minority populations from their historical homelands. In addition, minorities were targeted for egregious human rights violations, including summary executions, kidnapping, rape, sexual slavery and forced conversion. Widespread destruction and looting of homes and other properties belonging to minorities was also carried out by all parties to the conflict, which include the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs), and the Kurdish Peshmerga in addition to ISIS and other armed groups.

While over 4 million people displaced by the conflict have returned to their areas of origin, more that 1.6 million people are still internally displaced. For minorities in particular, the atrocities committed in the recent conflict, combined with the continually poor security situation and lack of reconstruction in areas of origin, has led to a perception of existential threat, leading many to emigrate from Iraq. The situation of minority PWDs in areas of origin as well as displacement continues to be affected by the structural, social and economic conditions shaped by conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.

According to one informant who played an important role in the Coalition Building meeting organization, the barriers to PWDs are not only administrative or physical, but also psychosocial, with heavy stigmas attached to disability in Iraq. As a result, PWDs suffer job loss, restricted access to education, poorer health, fewer economic opportunities and increased poverty rates, as well as marginalization from social and political participation. There are laws in place that seek to address some of these challenges, but PWDs report a notable lack of implementation. The marginalisation of PWDs is furthered by legislative definitions which approach the disability as a cause of impairment, rather than a result of the impairment’s interaction with social barriers which can be altered.

The workshop brought together disability groups and minority groups and the same informant reported that all participants expressed an interest and desire to continue collaboration or communication. The implementing partner organisation also expressed eagerness to continue working on the rights of PWDs.
An informant said:

“The project helped me shape a better understanding on what constitutes a disability. In Iraq, many people have been affected by conflict and human rights abuses. Some have been left with permanent disabilities, others have mental health conditions, and it was useful to consider what is considered an illness vs a disability. On the attitudes I had expected that there was a very negative perception of disability in the country and that a large stigma exists around the issue. However, there was a willingness among civil society who engaged with the project to work on rights of PWD, signifying that the importance of the issue was recognised.”

Outcomes:

The eagerness and willingness of CSOs to engage on this matter and maintain a network of communication to undertake future work or initiatives on the issue.

Discussion and perspectives for the future:

While MRG works on the rights of PWDs as an intersectional focus, they did not have PWDs as a primary beneficiary in their Iraq-based projects. As a result, MRG partnered with organisations that were more focused on the target beneficiary groups. In this project in particular, MRG wanted an organisation with broad minority reach, as well as OPD reach to try establishing collaboration and intersectional advocacy. As such MRG partnered with IMOK which is a minority-led NGO.
International advocacy

MRG’s partners played an important role in directing and implementing a large range of the project activities and data collection as they are experts of their region and contexts. Partners can work faster as they know the local language and are well connected in their respective area. They were very effective in reaching out to different organisations working with PWDs as well as those working on minorities. This is generally seen as a depoliticised topic and so there was little problems with outreach and securing engagement and interest in the issue.

The evaluation has tried to capture what made MRG attractive in the eyes of the partners when they advocated together:

- **Value sharing and common mission:** MRG’s mission to improve rights and participation of minority communities;
- **Financial ability:** Mainly, the partners have limited staff and resources, so they are trying to juggle several priorities. They are often in need of getting grants for operations, so this is where MRG’s finance support was able to answer this need.
- **The soft skills of MRG’s staff who worked on this project:** One informant said they are “impressive”.

International Human Rights mechanism alternative reporting

During the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project, MRG jointly submitted 4 reports with partners;

- CRPD alternative reports for Bangladesh and Iraq
- UPR alternative report for Rwanda
- CEDAW alternative report for Iraq

Additionally, the CERD alternative report for Thailand is planned to be submitted in September 2021

The following 3 reports were submitted by partners, following MRG’s support but without MRG’s name on them because either MRG had had limited involvement or MRG had not been able to resolve concerns about contents or independently verify the contents to the required standard.

- CRPD alternative reports for India and Mauritania
- CESCR alternative report for Ukraine

Covid-19 Advocacy

In 2020, MRG supported partners with various Covid-19 related advocacy, including:

1. Supporting Rwandan partners to submit a report to the UN Special Rapporteurs on Health and Indigenous Peoples on the situation of Batwa, including Batwa with disabilities.

2. Supporting Nepal partners, NIDWAN, to submit a report to the UN Special Rapporteurs on the rights of persons with disabilities, the rights of women, rights of indigenous peoples and on the right to health.
3. Working with 26 other organisations on a report on Covid-19 and its impacts on Indigenous, minority and marginalised PWDs worldwide, submitted to UN Special Rapporteurs on the rights of persons with disabilities, the rights of women, rights of indigenous peoples, minority issues and on the right to health.

India CRPD

MRG financially supported an alternative CRPD report from Indian minority rights partner, the Centre for Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR) in late 2018. The deadline for submission was Jan 2019 so timing was very tight and the report was submitted without MRG’s name.

In 2020, CSNR and MRG organised a webinar on CRPD concluding observations. One participant of the CRPD Concluding Observations in India said: “it was a comprehensive process seeking comments from all stakeholders; the parallel report covered the realistic situation of persons with disabilities in India”

At the end of the process however, MRG’s name did not appear on the report so the evaluation also amid at understanding what had happened in order to explore ways to make it more effective for the future.

The connection between minorities and disability was not highlighted enough. This is understandable as intersectionality is still very new to many stakeholders. MRG had worked with the partner in 2011 and thought they had a higher capacity on intersectionality.

To the question “What measures would support you best to advance progress of those affected by intersecting disability and other discrimination factors to secure their rights in future?” on the survey, one participant said “Advocacy, legal support and awareness”. Another one expressed the need to be associated to an international organization.

Thailand CERD

Due to the pandemic, some of the reports are still works in progress such as CERD alternative report supported by MRG in Thailand. In order to collect data for the report, a coalition building meeting was held on the 27-28th August 2020, where 69 participants took part in training and data collection for a report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Participants included 32 women, 37 men, 34 PWDs from marginalised and minority communities including Malay-Thai, women, and Thai Buddhists and 22 local government officials. The CERD report was due to be submitted at the end of 2020, but due to Coronavirus, the session review date for Thailand has been moved to 2021 and so the report will be submitted before the new deadline. Key issues identified during the workshop and interviews that will feed into the report include sexual abuse of Thai-Malay women with disabilities and cover-up by community leaders, lack of employment and education opportunities and lack of access to assistive devices.

Throughout their work in Thailand during the project, MRG identified that women with disabilities were not included in the peace process. In conflict-affected Southern Border Provinces, disability is still seen as a ‘separate issue’ to ongoing peace negotiations despite the fact that many of the difficulties Malay Muslim PWDs face are directly linked to the same issues of discrimination and exclusion that have helped drive the violence.
Outcomes:

Creation of linkages between PWDs and other minorities in India:

The director of the partner in India was inspired by the project and continues to organize workshops bringing together minorities and PWDs.

Addressing the need for more participation of women with disabilities in peace processes in Thailand:

MRG is working on project proposals that will aim at including women with disabilities in peace-building processes (currently not done in the region) for 2022.

Discussion and perspectives for the future:

Throughout these activities, it is clear that MRG is putting a strong emphasis on having sustainable collaborations with its partners. In this project, MRG selected some of the partners based on successful past collaborations where no relevant partnership was currently in place. If there is an area where a partner has a lack of capacity, MRG would rather work on improving rather than stopping the collaboration.

Some of the reports that were supported by MRG were initially supposed to have their name on it as well but this could not happen due to quality issues. In order to prevent this from happening next time, one informant said that the partner could be trained on intersectionality and on the kind of data MRG was looking for.

With regard to the process of getting new partners on board, MRG could consider doing more frequent open grant calls in different languages, formats, and via different channels. This would include working on leaving sufficient time and providing reasonable adjustments to the applicants during the process. This would require good planning in terms of timing.

Supporting minority activists to engage in UN international advocacy

One of the objectives of the project was to support activists with disabilities to take part in different related international events such as the UN Forum on Minority Issues. Every year, a week before the UN Forum on Minority Issues, MRG delivers a training program for a cohort of participants. The program provides some overview on the forum and enables participants to get an understanding of the UN Human Rights mechanisms.

In 2019, the theme of the forum was “Minority Language Education”. MRG wanted to take this opportunity to advocate for more sign language interpretation at the forum. MRG approached WFD, an organization working with the DHOH communities worldwide. DHOH people are a linguistic minority with minimalized power.

For a few years already, WFD started to focus its work on DHOH people who are also part of another minority including doing some work on influencing public policies to take them into account. The starting point was that within DHOH organizations themselves, minority and indigenous people are not well represented. An informant said that in Ecuador for instance people in the deaf organizations are not going to be Indigenous people, they are mostly Spanish descents.

WFD welcomed MRG’s support and in this regard, during the evaluation, one informant of WFD stated: “One thing that made collaborating easier is that they were very clear on access needs, they were aware of that, that showed they were motivated and they have respect for our mission”.
MRG supported Dr Joseph Murray, current director of WFD. Along with his colleague Victoria Manning to submit a statement on education of deaf women and girls. Dr Joseph Murray was also a panel member in MRG’s side event. Since then, MRG colleagues have met twice with Dr Murray, most recently discussing opportunities for WFD and MRG to collaborate on work on Indigenous sign languages and other joint activities in the future.

For the first time in its history, the UN Forum on Minority Issues included official sign language interpretation. Even when sign language interpretation is provided in conferences and events, it is also necessary to ensure this remains constant in all side events, panels and all spaces where there is an opportunity to network. This is particularly important in order to ensure full participation of sign language users and to make sure they have the same networking opportunities as others. MRG provided sign language interpreters for Joseph Murray out of the meeting rooms and also at the side event they co-organised.

In this matter MRG booked different interpreters but there was a limited time to do it so they contracted different service providers. Perhaps, as one informant suggested, it may be more effective and less costly to book the same team for the whole event.

MRG’s advocacy work at the 2019 FMI also included collaborating with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. In addition to his call for having more sign language interpretation at the forum, Dr Fernand de Varennes had put a strong emphasis on sign language users being recognized as linguistic minorities. His interventions include advocating for constitutional recognition of each country’s sign language(s) as a full-fledge language together with other linguistic minorities.

Outcomes:

The need for having systematic sign language interpretation at the UN Forum on Minority Issues was strongly addressed with the support of the UN Rapporteur on Minority Issues. In addition, since the UN Rapporteur on Minority Issues started his mandate shortly before the Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project, he was not aware of all its components. Since he was interviewed during the evaluation process, this gave him a good overview of the numerous activities conducted during the two years the project took place.

Supporting PWDs minority/indigenous advocates from Rwanda to gain UN exposure and experience.
Discussion and perspectives for the future:

Throughout the discussions on MRG’s collaboration with WFD in the UN Forum on Minority Issues and previously described work, it is noticeable that this part of the project was satisfied. Since then, MRG colleagues have met twice with Dr Murray, most recently discussing opportunities for WFD and MRG to collaborate on work on Indigenous sign languages and other joint activities in the future. When taking this work forward, MRG could consider two interconnected and complementary aspects in its work:

On the one hand, even though the DHOH community is highly organized, the network is not always fully inclusive of other minorities and indigenous people. Sometimes, some DHOH organizations still need to build an intersectional approach within their organization so this is an area that MRG could support.

On the other hand, MRG could explore how to collaborate with Indigenous or minority organizations and look for ways to make them collaborate with DHOH activists who are also Indigenous or part of another minority. This is also a powerful way to empower these activists as one informant said they would be doubtful of any Indigenous organizations reaching out DHOH people to involve them in their projects.

Both approaches are complementary and shall always be applied to all the work done by OPDs.

Another thing to consider would be ensuring that structural inequalities do not impact the possible reach of the project, when MRG contacts DHOH audiences they have not communicated with before. When the audience is part of an Indigenous group, finding a sign language interpreter who both knows this language and English might be challenging. In this case it is possible to empower someone from the community to provide the service but on the one hand, this person would need to be paid for it, and on the other hand, the speaker may lose their privacy.

These are some considerations to be taken into account based on discussions with some of the informants of the evaluation.
Directory updates on disability

5 completed  4 in progress  owing to Covid delays

Blogs, articles etc. on disability intersectionality

examples:
Building back better: toward a minority, indigenous and disability-inclusive post-Covid-19 world
Ultra Poverty, Multiple Discrimination: The experience of Historically Marginalised People with disabilities in Rwanda during Covid-19
Dalits with disabilities hit hardest by lockdown in Nepal (Part 2)
Reaching the most marginalized: an intersectional approach to minority rights
Minority and Indigenous Trends Report: Nepal and Indigenous people with disabilities
Minority and Indigenous Trends Report: Belgium and sign language users

Communications

MRG Events
Technology to 'leave no-one behind'?  (with ISL interpretation)
video of the event with 3 speakers and sign language interpretation

event engagement:
responses to the event: 300+
likes on the video: 34
comments under the video: 17

Social Media Engagement

disability/intersectionality original posts (2018-2020): 63
people reached in total: 29,197
engagements: including clicks, reactions, shares, comments, follows
Description of the infographic:

The graphic shows different communication outputs from the project. In the middle on the left is a blue box with the title “Communications”. Above this is the title “Directory updates on disability” with the text “5 completed, 4 in progress (owing to Covid delays)”. On the right is the title “Blogs, articles etc. on disability intersectionality” accompanied by a picture of a megaphone. Below this is detailed that there were 11 in total and these examples are listed:

“Building back better: toward a minority, indigenous and disability-inclusive post-Covid-19 world;

Ultra Poverty, Multiple Discrimination: The experience of Historically Marginalised PWDs in Rwanda during Covid-19;

Dalits with disabilities hit hardest by lockdown in Nepal (Part 2);

Reaching the most marginalized: an intersectional approach to minority rights;

Minority and Indigenous Trends Report: Nepal and Indigenous PWDs; Minority and Indigenous Trends Report: Belgium and sign language users”

Below this is the title “Social Media Engagement” with a picture of a network of people (connected by lines). The following data is given: “disability/intersectionality original posts (2018-2020): 63; people reached in total: 29,197; engagements (including clicks, reactions, shares, comments, follows): 1,320”

Left of this (below the blue box) is the title: “MRG Events” with a picture of two speech bubbles next to it. The text below says: “Technology to ‘leave no-one behind’? (with ISL interpretation) - video of the event with 3 speakers and sign language interpretation. Event engagement: responses to the event: 300+; likes on the video: 34; comments under the video: 17”
Impacts of the project

Overall, the activities planned for this pilot phase were successfully delivered and the aimed results met their purpose.

Understanding of disability rights and disability/minority intersectional discrimination internally at MRG has grown substantially since the start of the project at the end of 2018. One member affirmed “my understanding on how/what can constitute disability evolved as well as my knowledge of civil society attitudes toward PWD in the country of implementation”. Much of this has occurred via direct learning through partnership with OPDs at the local, national, regional and international levels.

In November 2020, 9 MRGA staff members engaged in disability intersectionality training, which had been requested following initial meetings with OPDs in Uganda at the end of 2019. The training was provided by Uganda country officer for DRF, Ms. Kyozira Esther, and Executive Director, CBR Africa Network (CAN), Dr. Busuulwa Abdul and MRG project officer, Lauren Avery.

As MRG started to shift towards a disability inclusive rights-based approach, some practical steps have been made, evaluating the accessibility of MRG’s communications, including the website and social media and incorporating these reflections into the new communications strategy for 2021-2024. For example, including sign language interpretation for online events will help to ensure that the sign language user linguistic minority can access MRG’s events. MRG are also in the process of reviewing approaches to recruitment to encourage and enable PWDs to apply to their job vacancies.

The rights of Indigenous and marginalized groups that live with a disability are now being expressly addressed in CRPD society reporting.

Internal and external factors affecting performance

Due to security issues, work in Egypt was suspended in 2019 until the end of the project. MRG switched to Tunisia instead and was involved in a wider project including LGBT and other minorities.

Initially, MRG was planning to support a deaf activist from Burundi who was put forward by WFD to participate in the UN Forum on Minority Issues, but the person had some visa issues and could not make it to Geneva on time.

When the funding of the project was approved, MRG approached some of their partners to provide grants to draft civil society reports. Sometimes, the time between the grant allocation and the deadline for the submission was a constraint in terms of data collection. In the case of Bangladesh, there was three months left in between, which may have left little time to the partner to organize enough focus group discussions for data collection purposes.

Over the past year, the number and frequency of digital conferences, meetings and events have significantly increased while technological inequalities remained constant. MRG had to adjust its activities accordingly and a couple of them happened virtually. Even though remote work may remove barriers for some, it can create them for others.

Furthermore, some alternative report submissions are still pending due to the UN committees’ sessions being postponed because of the pandemic.
In addition, the project faced some operational barriers due to conceptual issues related to the lack of understanding of intersectionality. OPDs are affected by the political sensitivities surrounding some minority and indigenous issues.

In Iraq, one informant stated “as far as I am aware, people generally struggled to grasp the concept of intersectionality in the workshop, and this included the partner organisation of this workshop. MRG sent the partner various guides and had several discussions to try strengthening their understanding of the concept. This was not specific to PWD but also to gender, and even minority intersectionality. However, this was not due to a rejection or denial of the concept, but rather unfamiliarity with it ».

In Thailand, participants and partners also found understanding the concept of intersectional discrimination challenging as it was the first time to work on intersectionality for most. They requested more training on this in the future.

In the basis of their expertise and experience in terms of defence of minority rights, MRG also selected an AIMPO staff and another person from the Conflict Management Committee with an intellectual disability to attend the UN Forum on Minority Issues (including MRG’s preparation training session before hand). They were able to meet the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority issues and to deliver a message on empowering Historically Marginalized PWDs to be part of decision-making processes. Due to some health conditions, the person could not attend the forum and they were at the hospital.

In general, the visibility of MRG’s support involvement did not reach the partners of partners: In case of Rwanda, in front of government officials who could be perceive the project as promoting ethnicity in the country. The partner would rather highlight SIDA or the EU as a funder.

The question of international visibility was raised in case of Ukraine, where in order to verify if getting funds from an international NGO can be sensitive, but it resulted to be quite the opposite. A key informant said: “It is seen as a positive to have MRG visibly associated with the project. Engagement with an international NGO, or international networks, was an actual incentive to many local authorities in particular”.

The sensitivities, pros and cons of association with different international actors are therefore very context specific.

Areas that were identified but not covered by the scope of the project

In Ecuador, MRG visited some Indigenous families where there were high rates of intellectual disability and visual impairment, which was suspected to possibility linked to water contamination on the Colombian border. MRG legal team looked into the possibility of doing some legal work to prove a link between impairments and water contamination in the region, but there was very little evidence, and not enough budget to cover the costs that would be incurred, nor time for the legal team to dedicate to exploring this link.
Recommendations for MRG

- Providing an introduction session for the new partners with some background information on MRG, its work and strategies
- Training the partners at the beginning of the project even in cases where there was an existing collaboration
- Having an access envelop for reasonable adjustments on top of the regular project costs
- Ensuring that sign language using minorities are included in MRG’s outreach and programs (addressed by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues)
- Foreseeing sufficient time between the grant approval from the donor and the start of the project activities in order to increase participation
- Continue to build on existing methods of specific outreach in virtual activities
- Training all MRG’s staff on disability on a regular basis and supporting them to adopt a twin track approach

Summary of key learnings

MRG’s Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project has created some linkages between OPDs and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities as well as Indigenous people, while presenting the idea that none of them is a homogenous group and that it is possible to collectively engage in Human Rights advocacy. Our findings indicate that the intended outputs and early outcomes of this pilot project have been met despite the pandemic and greater impacts are yet to be realized. The following points are a summary of key learnings in response to the evaluation questions:

The Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination project has contributed to a stronger cohesion between OPDs and other minority and Indigenous organizations and increased data available on mapping number of persons belonging to several minorities at the same time. Moreover, the project has led to improved capacities of target groups to claim their rights at local, national, regional and global level.

The project has brought together diverse and marginalized PWDs from within minority and/or indigenous communities, including with government officials.

The project supported activists with disabilities from within minority and/or indigenous communities to gain UN exposure through the process of collecting data and drafting civil society reports, as well as through their participation in the UN Forum on Minority Issues. This is not surprising given MRG’s long term focus and its history of advocacy at the UN in Geneva. There is more work to be done in order to achieve a more meaningful participation of more activists with disabilities from within minority and/or indigenous communities, including to ensure the provision of reasonable adjustments as a sustainable measure.
There is more work to be done to consolidate the shifting of MRG to a disability inclusive rights-based approach and to achieve more commitment of each staff member to include the disability component in their daily work and all mainstream activities, programmes and strategies. The pilot phase of the project has been a corner stone for this and there is more work to be done to build on recent achievements and to turn the lessons learnt into actions for the future. In this regard, MRG aims to collaborate more closely with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) in order to benefit from its experience in this matter as well as with a growing number of OPDs in order to meaningfully involve PWDs across all cycles of next project phases.

Conclusion

The Disability/Minority Intersectional Discrimination Project illustrates MRG’s initiative to be a gateway between different minority groups in line with their principles and promotion of intersectionality. It is the first time for MRG to include the disability aspect in a wide project and this has opened the way for continuous actions in this regard. The results have indicated that there is room for more work in each of the aspects of the project: Capacity building, international advocacy and communication. It may take time and efforts to develop and consolidate transformative actions based on this project. It is key to get to meaningfully engage marginalized people in such processes, but this will be evolving as MRG accomplishes its transition to a more disability inclusive rights-based approach.

Appendix A TOR
Appendix B Methodology
Appendix C Survey
Appendix D Set of evaluation questions used for participants of Coalition Building meeting in Thailand
Minority Rights Group International

Final Evaluation – Terms of Reference and call for Expressions of Interest
Minority/Disability Intersectional Discrimination Project

Elements of the project implemented in or benefitting those in project countries will be evaluated mainly remotely but provision to evaluate in person is possible (Covid-19 and location permitting).

Project duration: 1 January 2019 – 31st December 2020

1. Background of the project

This project brings together minority and Indigenous activists and persons with disabilities within these communities, providing support to bring issues of intersectional discrimination to the circle of human and minority rights and disability activists, and ensuring effective and meaningful participation of Indigenous and/or minority persons with disabilities by applying the principle “nothing about us without us”. This project has supported Indigenous and/or minority persons with disabilities in Ukraine, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Mauritania, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Thailand, Ecuador and Iraq.

More details about activities will be shared with the appointed consultants.

2. Evaluation Objectives

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 the proposal documentation (whilst respecting security and risk avoidance protocols.)

B. Provide MRG with an opportunity for ‘structured evaluative learning’, with the aim of learning from the design and implementation process.

C. Make recommendations to any other stakeholders as appropriate.
3. Key evaluation questions

Output level

Referring to the project documentation, did we complete all of the activities covered by this evaluation as planned to a reasonably high quality? What problems were encountered at this level? How did changes on the ground in project countries affect our plans and was our reaction and changes to plans appropriate and timely? How did any problems affect the activities and to what extent were they overcome?

Outcome level

Where completed as planned, did the activities covered by this evaluation contribute to the planned results? Where this was so, refer to evidence. Where not so, what factors intervened and explain how they impacted. Suggest ways that MRG, partners and grantees 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 achievement of results. Discuss the extent to which changes were foreseeable and the extent to which the programme design took into account foreseeable risks and context changes. If there were any unplanned results (positive or negative) explain what these were and how they came about.

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 and comment on whether this is likely to be sustained. If it is unlikely that all or part of the purpose will be achieved, or even if achieved, may well not be sustained, why is this and is this something that could have been foreseen or overcome?

Additional evaluation questions:

1. What effect has the project had (if any) on communities and partners’ capacities to represent the rights and interests of persons with disabilities within the target communities? Detail progress made but equally identify gaps or constraints that are still impeding progress. What input have other organisations or individuals had in supporting and developing partners’ capacities in addition to or alongside MRG’s input? Assess the MRG contribution to any capacity gains vis a vis the work of others. Which capacity building methods were more or less effective and why? To what extent are any gains in partners’ capacity sustainable over the longer term? To what extent have any improvements in capacity translated into benefits for the community on the ground? Are minority or Indigenous-rights partners more accessible and disability-rights-aware than when the project started? Are DPO partners more minority or Indigenous-rights aware than when the project started? Have their governance structures been strengthened?
2. What sort of partnership relationship has developed between MRG and the partners and amongst the partners? What aspects of this have been more or less helpful?

3. Did MRG and partners incorporate women’s issues and gender in the way envisaged? If not, why not? If yes, how was this achieved? What can MRG learn from this in the future in similar programme?

4. Covid-19 has been a major challenge for this programme. How has MRG handled this aspect and what can it learn from this?

4. Key deliverables

1. Evaluation workplan/inception report in English.

2. Preliminary findings (max. 5 pages) at mid-term of the evaluation period in English.


Based on MRG’s prior experience, we anticipate that the following tasks will be needed but we are open to suggestions for alternative methodologies;

- Read all project materials, review feedback from project partners (including notes of meetings, reports of campaigns, training evaluations, capacity assessments, email correspondence.)

- Speak to a sample of 7 MRG project staff (face to face or on secure virtual channel).

- Hold detailed discussions re project implementation, results and impact with staff in 3 organisations involved in the project.

- Correspond with a sample of 20 activists trained to gather feedback (questionnaire).

- Independently identify and get opinions from at least 3 additional expert/well informed sources.

- From a list of people the project sought to influence targets speak to or correspond with at least 3 people to seek out opinions on the project, attribution and impact.
Please note that due to COVID 19, we are working on the assumption that all interviews can be carried out by phone or on virtual platforms and that no travel is absolutely essential for this process to be successfully completed.

5. Experience and Expertise required

* Extensive knowledge and experience of working on human rights, disability rights, gender, minority and Indigenous rights, NGO capacity building, including knowledge of relevant debates and international standards

* Good knowledge of at least some of the project countries (Ukraine, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Mauritania, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Thailand, Ecuador and Iraq).

* Good knowledge of disability rights and intersectionality particularly as applied to minority or Indigenous populations.

* Good knowledge of relevant international human rights mechanisms, including CRPD, CERD, CEDAW, CESCR, UPR.

* Experience and demonstrated flexibility in facilitating accessible communication with people with different types of disabilities. Experience creating accessible documents would be an advantage.

* Experience of comparable evaluations and strong track record of evaluations carried out on projects with similar elements

* Ability to speak, read and write English fluently. Knowledge of project country languages, including sign languages, would be an advantage, in particular French and Arabic. Experience working with interpreters, including sign language interpreters, would be an advantage.

* Experience of carrying out or evaluating training, capacity building, human rights defender support, advocacy and work with smaller NGOs in difficult contexts.

The evaluator will need to be independent of MRG, its donors, partners, the project targets and participants and will need to demonstrate that no perceived or actual conflict of interests would arise during the evaluation.

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4 International Disability Alliance; RIADIS – Red Latinoamerica de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de Personas con Discapacidad y sus Familias; Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network; SOS Esclaves, Mauritania; Institute for Peace Studies, Prince of Songkhla University, Thailand; Southern Association for Disabilities, Thailand; Ngorik Udyogg, Bangladesh; Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, India National Indigenous Disabled Women’s Association Nepal (NIDWAN); Nepal Association for the Physically Disabled; African Initiative for Mankind Progress Organisation (AIMPO), Rwanda; First People’s Disability Organisation, Rwanda; Independent Media Organisation Kurdistan, Iraq; Chiricli, Ukraine
The evaluation team will all need to be able to demonstrate that they will be able to gain the trust of the partner organisations, individuals and the minority communities targeted in this programme.

6. Report submission, timeframe and budget

The evaluation field work should be carried out between March 2021 and April 2021. An inception report should be submitted within one month of contract signature, a 5-page statement of preliminary findings should be submitted no later than 9th April 2021, a draft evaluation report should be submitted no later than 19th April 2021. MRG will submit comments within 10 working days and the final full detailed report responding to all comments must be submitted by 14th May 2021.

The evaluator/members of the evaluation team may also be required to participate in a recorded interview discussion about the evaluation to create an audio record or podcast which will be available on MRG’s website to make the evaluation findings available in more accessible ways.

The total budget for the entire evaluation including fieldwork costs and any necessary travel is £4,000.

7. How to Apply

If you are interested, please apply submitting the following by Friday 26th February 2021 to Lauren.avery@mrgmail.org and/or claire.thomas@mrgmail.org :

Brief Team members’ CV(s) – max 3 pages per person

Brief statement of evaluation principles and methodology, workplan and budget

Examples of completed evaluations with similar elements completed

Cover letter setting out the evaluator or team’s suitability

In case of any questions or accessibility adjustment requirements please contact Lauren.avery@mrgmail.org and/or claire.thomas@mrgmail.org
Appendix B – Methodology

The methodological approach involved triangulating multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources to meet the evaluation objectives and goals reflected in the evaluation questions.

More specifically, the evaluation methods include:

a. Reviewing all documents provided by MRG:

Document review from the package provided by MRG including:

- All project material including feedback from project partners, concept notes and reports for all activities, training material and evaluations;
- MRG reports, tables with training and activities conducted; tables with projects supported for submission for funding, tables with actions implemented in relation to the project, etc;
- Action plans and strategies developed and adopted at the local level;
- Advocacy statements and MRG website accessibility audit;
- Visibility and media records on the project including blog posts, articles, documentaries, photo stories and testimonies.

Key informant partners, organizations and experts selected for the evaluation were chosen using a criterion based purposive sampling strategy. This means that targeted interlocutors were selected purposely because they had previous or current knowledge and experiences in the disability area and with Indigenous minorities or because they had an important role in the project implementation.

This strategy was also critical in elaborating the criteria to use when choosing a set of three countries that were covered in-depth throughout the evaluation:

Political background:

This criterion is important to understand the situation of minorities in the focus countries and aims at giving context elements on political threats they may face, when those are identified or can have an impact on the project. It can also look at on-going conflicts, post conflict phases and peace building processes.

Concentration of minority and Indigenous groups:

This introduces the role of MRG’s partners in the covered area, providing their identity and outreach as organizations.

Presence of OPDs:

Considering the establishment of OPDs in the country may give an overview on their level of involvement in the Disability Rights Movement. The focus countries are chosen for their different situations on the presence of minority groups among OPDs.

Concentration of Indigenous or Historically Marginalized People:

This criterion looked at how the targeted minorities identify, including in terms of ethnicity. These minorities could have different literacy levels. When relevant, their position of power and economic inequality as well as discriminations they may face when accessing education, health care services and the labour market will be highlighted.
Geographical context:

This examined the location of the communities in the country (suburban or not) and the presence of the same communities/groups/minorities in surrounding regions or countries. This may help creating linkages with advocacy methods to use in context.

b. Conducting semi-structured interviews and surveys with the targeted stake holders:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the identified stakeholders.

A survey was sent to the 49 participants (20 women) and the 30 participants (13 women and transgender people), who attended the virtual webinars on the CRPD Concluding Observations held in August and September 2020 in India and Bangladesh. Participants were representing Dalit, Indigenous, Transgender, Tea community and Linguistic minorities and including representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister, national and international OPDs and NGOs, and women’s rights organisations.

The survey was designed to capture people’s experience on discrimination as part of one minority group and of a range of different minority groups intersecting together. The idea was to understand the prevalence for each and for both, so the frequency was scaled for each one. The consistency in the way the questions were worded could help to see if the webinar could bring out such differences.

In order to emphasize inclusiveness and accessibility, participants were offered the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire by completing through a range of mechanisms that were most appropriate for them. This included: signing in a video, recording a WhatsApp message, requesting an interview or writing an email.

The survey aimed to collect more detailed demographic data on the participants, as well as checking if the activities conducted were in line with their understanding of the project’s objectives and content.

The questions reflected relevant criteria of accessibility and inclusiveness, in order to determine potential participation barriers and help MRG and partners in removing them in future events. (The accessibility elements of the survey may be utilized by MRG to assess this aspect of future events).

In addition to the survey prepared by the evaluator, a set of six questions was communicated to a sample of 10 participants of the Coalition Building meeting held in Thailand in August 2020. The partner was in charge of contacting them by phone and asking the questions in Thai as well as of reporting the answers in English for the evaluator. In order to make the process easier for the partner an existing set of questions were utilised instead of the one that was sent to the participants of the webinars in India and Bangladesh.

In summary, the content of these interactions and questionnaires was critical in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) in the data. This means that the evaluator examined the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that came up repeatedly.
c. Using Case Studies:

The case studies highlighted in the part entitled “Coalition Building and Training” were selected based on the criteria elaborated during the desk review period, namely Bangladesh, Rwanda and Iraq. The activities held in these Three (3) countries were analysed in depth, in the form of case studies, with the purpose of collecting data for furthering MRG’s work.

The lessons learned from the case studies fed into the process of formulating the recommendations of the Evaluation Report.

Participants

- A sample of 7 MRG project staff (via Zoom, WhatsApp and email);
- Field staff members in 3 organisations involved in the project (via Zoom, WhatsApp and email).
- A sample of 20 activists (5 from Bangladesh, 5 from India and 10 from Thailand);
- 5 additional experts/well-informed sources (via Zoom, WhatsApp and email);
- 5 people from a list of people the project sought to influence targets and to seek out opinions on the project, attribution and impact (face to face and via zoom);
Appendix C – Survey

Questionnaire for participants who attended the online webinar on the CRPD concluding observations, held on June 29th, 2020

This survey is anonymous. If you face any accessibility issue, please contact Güler Koca, who is currently evaluating this project and is independent from MRG, its partners and its donors.

The evaluator’s contact details are:

Email: inclusion@gulerkoca.com
WhatsApp: 00336 08 63 00 19

To complete this survey, you can also request an interview, record a WhatsApp message or use any other methods that would be more suitable to you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

How would you describe your gender?
- Male
- Female
- Non binary
- Prefer not to say

Can you specify your age group?
- 25 or less
- Between 25 and 35
- Between 35 and 50
- Between 50 and 75
- 75 or +
- Prefer not to say

Do you belong to any group which may suffer discrimination?
- Yes
- No

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1 This is the survey template used for the online webinar held in India. The one in Bangladesh was held on September 7th, 2020, but the survey questions used were the same as shown here.
If yes, which one(s) of the following would you self-identify as? (Tick as many as apply)
- Indigenous
- Religious minority
- Ethnic minority
- Linguistic minority
- Affected by Caste discrimination
- Persons with disabilities
- Prefer not to say
- Other: …

Are you part of an organization defending the rights of any of the following? (Tick as many as apply)
- Indigenous
- Religious minority
- Ethnic minority
- Linguistic minority
- Affected by Caste discrimination
- Persons with disabilities
- Prefer not to say
- Other: …

Before the Webinar on CRPD Concluding Observations, were you aware that persons with disabilities may also face discrimination on other grounds such as those above?
- Yes
- No

Did you engage in the process of drafting the CRPD shadow report?
- Yes
- No

If yes, can you provide any feedback about your participation?
If no, why not?

Have you experienced forms of discrimination because you live with a disability?
- Yes
- No

If yes, how often?
- Not very often
- Frequently
- Daily
- Consistently
Can you give an example?

Is this discrimination affected by whether you face other forms of social exclusion?

Have you experienced forms of discrimination because you are part of an Indigenous or ethnic, religious or linguistic minority group?
   □ Yes
   □ No

If yes, how often?
   □ Not very often
   □ Sometimes
   □ Frequently
   □ Daily
   □ Consistently

Can you give an example?

Is this discrimination affected by whether or not you live with a disability?

Have you experienced forms of discrimination because you are part of another socially excluded group?
   □ Yes
   □ No

If yes, how often?
   □ Not very often
   □ Sometimes
   □ Frequently
   □ Daily
   □ Consistently

Can you give an example?

Is this discrimination affected by whether you face other forms of social exclusion?

How did you become aware of the Webinar on CRPD Concluding Observations?

What motivated you to participate in the Webinar on CRPD Concluding Observations?
Did any problems interfere with your ability to participate fully during the Webinar?

□ Yes, if yes please specify ..................
□ No

Were you offered the chance to request reasonable adjustments to allow your full participation ahead of the webinar?

□ Yes
□ No

During the webinar?

□ Yes
□ No

If yes, was it taken into account?

□ Yes
□ No

Were you offered an opportunity to shape the content of the webinar before it happened?

□ Yes
□ No

If yes, was your contribution taken into account?

□ Yes
□ No

If no, which elements or changes would you have liked to suggest for the webinar?

Did you develop peer relationships or built networking opportunities during the webinar?

□ Yes
□ No

Have you stayed in touch with anyone that you met for the first time during the Webinar?

□ Yes
□ No

If yes, please tell us what, if anything, you have gained from this new connection..................
Did the webinar develop your awareness of Disability Rights?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please explain how:
If no, please explain why not:

Did the webinar develop your awareness of disability and intersecting forms of discrimination?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please explain how:
If no, please explain why not:

Has your involvement in the webinar increased your capacity to engage with Disability Rights in your community?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please explain how:
If no, please explain why not:

Has your involvement in the webinar increased your capacity to engage with issues related to disability and intersecting forms of discrimination in your community?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please explain how:
If no, please explain why not:

What measures would support you best to advance progress of those affected by intersecting disability and other discrimination factors to secure their rights in future?

Do you want to make any other comments?
Appendix D – Set of evaluation questions used for participants of Coalition Building meeting in Thailand

Minority/Disability Intersectional Discrimination Project

Survey for Participants

1. Name of your organisation:

2. Has your organisation previously worked on issues of intersectional discrimination for minority and indigenous people with disabilities? If yes, please provide brief details.

   • If no, would this be something your organisation might consider working on after this event?

3. Is your understanding of intersectional discrimination better now than before the event?

4. What element of the event did you find most relevant or useful?

5. What could have been improved or changed?

6. What types of joint activity (if any) would your organisation be interested in following this meeting?

Please continue any further detailed comments or suggestions on the back of this form. Thank you for your feedback and participation.