

Minority & indigenous key trends

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Introduction

- MRG was founded in 1969 by David Astor, proprietor of *The Observer* newspaper.
- Focusing on minorities to fill gap in the individual-focused work of other NGOs being started at that time.
- Initially a network of minority rights groups.
- Throughout its first decades, functioning as a publishing house issuing books, reports and newsletters.

Key trends

minority
rights
group
international

Persecution and discrimination of minority and indigenous communities often at the heart of people's difficult decisions to leave their homes.

But marginalization follows them in transit and upon arrival.



Flight due to persecution

- Over 700,000 of **Myanmar's Rohingya** fled neighbouring Bangladesh last year after being targeted by the country's security forces.
- By 2017, as many as 89 per cent of **Ethiopians** arriving in Yemen were **Oromo**, fleeing violence.
- **People of Haitian descent** in the Dominican Republic long been stigmatized. Recent crackdown by the authorities led to thousands of Haitians, including many with rights to Dominican citizenship, expelled and denied entry.

Hidden stories

Governments draw a distinction between refugees and migrants, which may ignore the underlying reasons:

- For instance, people fleeing gang-related violence in **Guatemala** belong disproportionately to **indigenous communities**.
- Despite 2016 peace deal in **Colombia**, displacement continues due to armed groups. Disproportionately affects **Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities** who made up 26 per cent of 139,000 forcibly displaced between January and October 2017, double their share of the national population.

Discrimination in transit

- **Sub-Saharan Africans** in North Africa, for instance, even those who were not minorities originally, now find themselves targeted in countries like **Libya**.
- Such discrimination leaves them **vulnerable** to trafficking, sexual exploitation and even enslavement.

Discrimination upon arrival

- **Yezidis** displaced by ISIS had to be protected from other refugees in separate camps in **Greece**.
- More than 600,000 **Afghans** were deported or returned from **Pakistan and Iran** in 2017. Persecuted **Hazara** in **Iran** face social exclusion & pressure to fight alongside pro-Assad forces in Syria or be forcibly returned.

Discrimination in new countries

- **Denmark's new 'ghetto laws'** targeting low-income immigrant districts and which include the separation of children from the age of one for 25 hours a week of compulsory education on 'Danish values'.
- **UK's 'hostile environment'**, beginning in 2012, resulted in the targeting of many elderly British residents who, despite having spent most of their lives there and paid taxes, suddenly excluded from public services and even deported.
- Hate crimes against **US Muslims** rose 15 per cent in 2017 - following a 44 per cent increase in 2016 – an increase attributed to Trump's divisive language.

Securitisation not an answer

- EU given USD 200 million since 2015 to **Sudanese government**, which leaves large-scale ongoing displacement in Nuba mountains and Darfur unaddressed while encouraging corruption.
- Large numbers of **Afghans** returned by EU – 23 charter flights in Dec 2016-Dec 2017. But civilian casualties have increased to record levels: highest six-month (1,692) death toll in first half of 2018 since 2009.

Trends - Europe

- The response by political leaders to the 2015 'migration crisis' frames current public policies towards minorities
- The impact is felt by 'settled' as well as 'new' communities.
- The largest increase in intolerant attitudes is focused on Muslims. But, this runs parallel with increases in Anti-Semitism, Anti-Gypsyism. The nature of these narratives of intolerance, re-inforces as a world view.
- Narratives on migration, have had a direct impact on policy and attitudes towards Roma.

Need to think long-term

- In **Central African Republic**, 80 per cent of the **Muslim minority** forced out since fighting broke out five years ago.
- Previously comprised 15 per cent of total population.
- Issues include ensuring their safety and reintegration extend beyond immediate issues of security to also securing land rights, restitution of property, compensation and reconciliation.

Need to think long term

- Recognise that refugee and other migrant communities in host countries are themselves minorities, in need of specific rights protections
- Empower migrants and minorities to articulate their own perspectives and solutions to discussions around migration
- Ensure a rights-based framework for Labour migration
- A long term perspective. Migrant and Refugee communities – will be future national minorities

A Minority Rights Based Approach to inclusion

- **Recognition and preservation of minority identity**
- **Non-discrimination and Equality**
- **Inter-cultural Dialogue and Tolerance**
- **Public Participation**

