INTERIM EVALUATION OF THE ANTI-RACISM PROJECT
Building Awareness and Changing Practices

BACKGROUND

The Anti-Racism Project: Building Awareness and Changing Practices is a Transformational Investment Capacity Project (TIC) Incubator project which was initiated in mid-2021.

In 2022, the Anti-Racism Project implemented two learning and development pillars to provide an entry point into anti-racism awareness, practices and actions for MSF staff:

- Pillar I The Conversational Cohort: eight monthly conversation spaces about racism and anti-racism, and the Conversation Navigation training to build capacity to have and host conversations about racism in MSF.
- Pillar II The Accompaniment Sessions: six sessions to provide tailored advice and support to any staff member, group, or team that is working on anti-racism efforts.

The project is co-sponsored by nine MSF entities, which includes CAMINO, MSF Brazil, MSF Canada, MSF East Africa, OCBA, MSF SARA, MSF Southern Africa, OCB and WaCa.
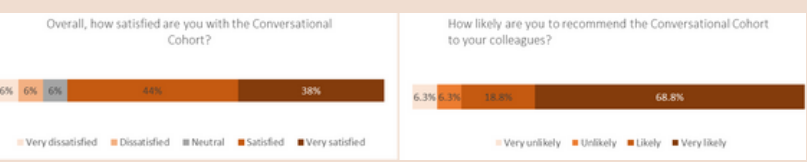
OBJECTIVES

1. To assess to what extent the Conversational Cohort increased evidence-based knowledge and understanding of racism and anti-racism among the participants.
2. To explore how the project created a conversational framework to discuss racism in MSF and to identify the enablers and barriers to a productive conversation space.
3. To analyse how far the Conversational Cohort and the Conversation Navigation training strengthened the capacity of participants to host conversations about racism.
4. To examine whether the Anti-Racism Project provided a journey with different entry points into anti-racism awareness and actions.
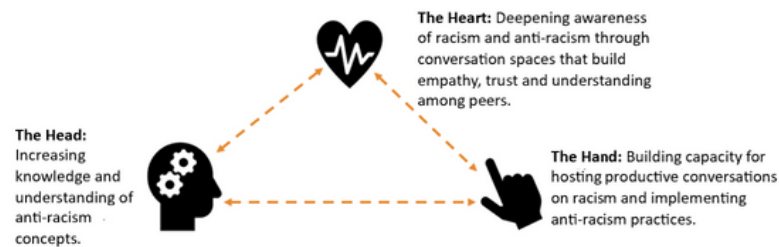
PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The interim evaluation assessed the first phase of the Anti-Racism Project from April to December 2022. By providing lessons learned on the implementation of the first two pillars, the evaluation aims to inform the development of future learning initiatives in the Anti-Racism Project.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a theory-based approach underpinned by a Theory of Change developed in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Project Lead. The Theory of Change outlines the conditions that need to be in place to achieve the objectives of the Anti-Racism Project.

The evaluation findings are presented using the project's implementation framework which outlines how the project aimed to build anti-racism capacity in three areas outlined below.

The Heart: Deepening awareness of racism and anti-racism through conversation spaces that build empathy, trust and understanding among peers.

The Head: Increasing knowledge and understanding of anti-racism concepts.

The Hand: Building capacity for hosting productive conversations on racism and implementing anti-racism practices.

DATA COLLECTION

Early-phase survey: 51% response rate (n=22)
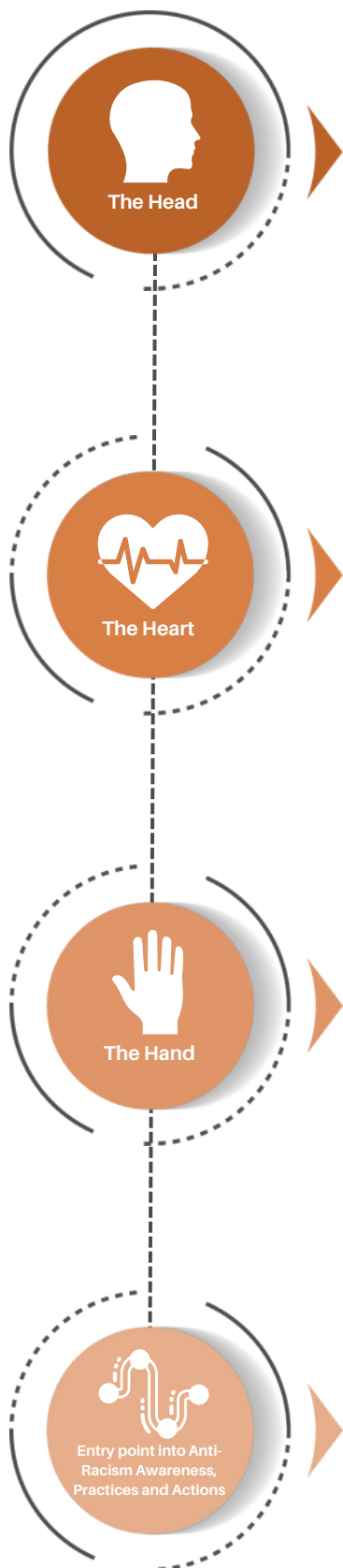Post-course survey: 37% response rate (n=16)

11 virtual semi-structured interviews

Desk review of 9 key background documents

PROGRAM FEEDBACK

Overall, participant feedback on the project was positive. The majority (82%) of the respondents in the post-course survey reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the Conversational Cohort and 88% said that they were likely to recommend it to their colleagues.

According to participant feedback, program benefits included: i) the expertise of the facilitators from ReosPartners in moderating the conversations on racism; ii) the creation of psychological safety in the conversation spaces; iii) the diversity of learning materials and methods provided in the Conversational Cohort; iv) hearing participant testimonies from across the movement deepened understanding of racism in MSF and led to a sense of solidarity for people with similar experiences; and v) the opportunity to learn from a diverse group of peers.

Program challenges included:
i) Difficulties faced in accommodating the diverse learning needs of participants in the Anti-Racism Project's learning initiatives.
ii) The limited engagement from MSF leadership and decision-makers in the project. Feedback suggests this created a barrier to engagement in the project for some participants.
iii) The need for further guidance on developing practical steps to address racism and advance anti-racism work for participants in the Conversational Cohort and the Accompaniment Sessions.
iv) Challenges related to the implementation, design and contextual factors that limited the capacity of the Accompaniment Sessions to advance the development of anti-racism initiatives in MSF.
v)) High attrition rate (over 50%) in the Conversational Cohort and the fluctuation in participation in the Anti-Racism Project in general.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the Conversational Cohort?

6% 6% 6% 44% 38%

Very dissatisfied · Dissatisfied · Neutral · Satisfied · Very satisfied

How likely are you to recommend the Conversational Cohort to your colleagues?

6.3% 6.3% 18.8% 68.8%

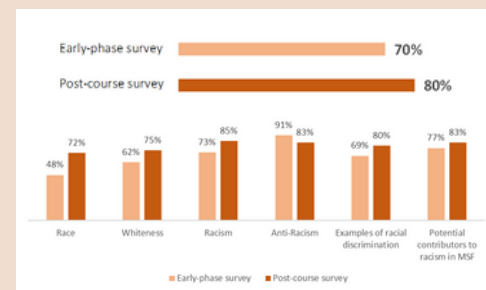Very unlikely · Unlikely · Likely · Very likely

The Head

Survey results indicate that the Conversational Cohort increased the understanding of racism and anti-racism concepts among participants. There was a **10% increase** in understanding of concepts among the survey respondents in the Conversational Cohort between the early-phase and post-course surveys. Concepts included Race, Racism, Anti-Racism and Whiteness.

Participant perspectives

"Having been part of this cohort and of this learning process, I realized what I don't know, and I really pushed my boundaries... It opened up an entirely new world to me"

"The main shift is about...understanding how this kind of system of power is operating all the time. You can't be neutral."

Early-phase survey — 70%
Post-course survey — 80%

	Race	Whiteness	Racism	Anti-Racism	Examples of racial discrimination	Potential contributors to racism in MSF
Early-phase survey	48%	62%	73%	91%	69%	77%
Post-course survey	72%	75%	85%	83%	80%	83%

■ Early-phase survey ■ Post-course survey

The Heart

The Conversational Cohort and Conversation Navigation training provided a conversational framework that enabled many participants to engage in productive conversations about racism and anti-racism, however findings suggest that some participants experienced barriers to engaging in conversations.
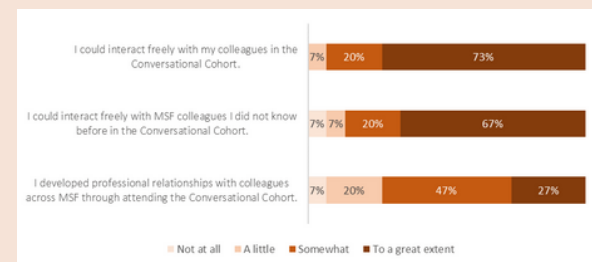
Analyses revealed **five enabling factors** to engaging in a productive conversation space, which include i) Psychological safety, ii) Acknowledging differences and commonalities in the understanding and experience of racism, iii) Discomfort from learning and unlearning concepts, iv) Empathy, and v) Empowerment.

Reflections on the conversation space

"Over time and even though it was hybrid we managed to develop a personal connection and... a sense of belonging in the group and that was so valuable in itself".

"You have to feel it so that you can almost tell people, 'I have been there. It was really uncomfortable, but I was able to get out of that.'"

The **main barriers to engaging** in the conversation space included: i) the challenges accommodating different learning needs; ii) participants' fear of being vulnerable; iii) the need for acknowledgement that anti-racism is a priority for MSF including the need for more engagement from MSF leadership in the Anti-Racism Project; and iv) the need to develop the practical side of anti-racism work to accompany the emergence of anti-racism awareness and a sense of urgency to act among participants.

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	To a great extent
I could interact freely with my colleagues in the Conversational Cohort.		7%	20%	73%
I could interact freely with MSF colleagues I did not know before in the Conversational Cohort.	7%	7%	20%	67%
I developed professional relationships with colleagues across MSF through attending the Conversational Cohort.	7%		20%	47% / 27%

■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Somewhat ■ To a great extent

The Hand

The Conversational Cohort and Conversation Navigation training strengthened the capacity of participants to have and host conversations on racism and related topics with mixed results.

Respondents' **confidence in explaining anti-racism and racism concepts increased** between the early-phase and baseline surveys, however there was a **decrease of 14%** in the confidence to discuss racism and related topics with colleagues at MSF.

Over half (56%) of the respondents who attended only the Conversational Cohort reported **engaging in conversations about racism with their colleagues**. A further **50%** of the respondents who attended the Conversation Navigation training **reported hosting conversations about racism** with colleagues since attending the training.
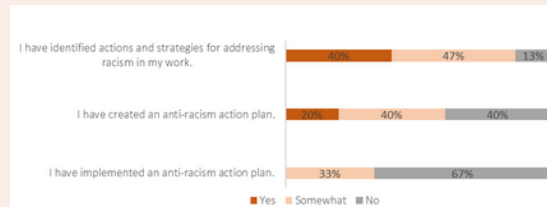
Since attending the Conversational Cohort have you engaged in conversations about racism and anti-racism with your colleagues?

Yes	No, but I plan to
56%	44%

■ Yes ■ No, but I plan to

How did the Anti-Racism Project prepare participants for conversations about racism?

"I would never have dared to conduct a conversation around racism had it not been for the Conversation Navigation training."

"I think the main way that it prepared me was through providing a sense of solidarity - that there are a lot of other people in MSF who care about the fight against racism and being able to share experiences of these conversations with other people in the cohort."

Entry point into Anti-Racism Awareness, Practices and Actions

The Anti-Racism Project provided an entry point into anti-racism awareness for participants at different stages of their anti-racism journeys. However, findings suggest that there was a need for more practical guidance for anti-racism actions in the Accompaniment sessions and the Conversational Cohort.

	Yes	Somewhat	No
I have identified actions and strategies for addressing racism in my work.	40%	47%	13%
I have created an anti-racism action plan.	20%	40%	40%
I have implemented an anti-racism action plan.		33%	67%

■ Yes ■ Somewhat ■ No

Two challenges contributed to the limited progress on anti-racism actions:
i) **The scope of the Accompaniment Sessions** was broadened to accommodate any MSF staff who was interested in learning more about anti-racism practices. This decision was taken after the project team realised that the majority of interested participants were motivated by clarifying and deepening understanding about anti-racism topics rather than seeking guidance on specific strategies.
ii) **The Conversational Cohort faced the challenge of accommodating diverse learning needs** of participants at different stages in their anti-racism journeys. The project initially prioritized providing a baseline knowledge to all participants over guidance anti-racism actions, creating a barrier to building capacity for anti-racism action for those further along in their journey.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from the evaluation illustrate that the Anti-Racism Project supported the anti-racism journeys of participants with diverse learning needs and motivations. The project was successful in deepening awareness and understanding of racism and related concepts. In addition, the project provided practical experience of engaging and facilitating productive conversations about racism with colleagues from across the movement. However, the project faced several challenges to providing an entry point into anti-racism work for all participants which is evident in the project feedback and high attrition rate. To the right are four recommendations for future learning initiatives.

Recommendations for the development of future initiatives include:

- **Conduct a learning and development needs analysis** to design future learning events which will strengthen anti-racism capacity for staff with a diversity and range of needs and motivations for engaging in anti-racism work.
- Where possible, **design learning initiatives** with **separate and shared spaces** for participants at different stages of their anti-racism journeys to accommodate diverse learning needs and encourage peer-to-peer learning and collaboration.
- **Continue investing in the cohort of former participants** who are strongly engaged in the issue and motivated to advance anti-racism in the organisation.
- **Conduct research to identify the consistent barriers** to holding and having conversations about racism for former participants to design further capacity building training. This could include a community of practice for participants to share best practices and brainstorm solutions to the challenges faced in having and holding conversations about racism in their workplaces.