

‘A POWERFUL STATEMENT OF INTENT’

AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE DISMANTLING STRUCTURE RACISM INITIATIVE IN MSF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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MANAGED AND SUPPORTED BY THE VIENNA EVALUATION UNIT

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OVERVIEW

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COVER PHOTO	Photograph of DSR workshop attendees, General Assembly 2025, © Shepherd Matarirano.

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The Vienna Evaluation unit started its work in 2005, aiming to contribute to learning and accountability in MSF through good quality evaluations. The unit manages different types of evaluations, learning exercises and anthropological studies and organises training workshops for evaluators.

More information is available at: <http://evaluation.msf.at>.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AROF	Anti-Racism Officer
BLA	Baobab Leadership Accelerator
DARA	Diversity and Anti-Racism Action
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DSR	Dismantling Structural Racism
EQs	Evaluation questions
GAREC	Group for Advice and Research into Ethics and Conduct
HRIS	Human Resources Information System
IMS	Internationally Mobile Staff
LHS	Locally Hired Staff
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MSF SnA	Médecins Sans Frontières Southern Africa
OC	Operational Centre
OCA	Operational Centre Amsterdam
OCB	Operational Centre Brussels
OCBA	Operational Centre Barcelona
OCG	Operational Centre Geneva
OCP	Operational Centre Paris
SAMU	Southern Africa Medical Unit
SASSU	Southern Africa Supply Support Unit
SEC	Social and Ethics Committee of MSF SnA Association
TIC	Transformational Investment Capacity
VEU	Vienna Evaluation Unit
WaCA	West and Central Africa Operational Directorate

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dismantling Structural Racism (DSR) is an initiative of the MSF Southern Africa Section Office, formulated after the International Board's mandate to embark on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives to curb discrimination and racism within MSF. Starting in 2021, Section Office staff and regional Association members took part in surveys and workshops to identify structural racism challenges affecting the Section Office and Southern Africa. As a result, a DSR roadmap and set of Gamechanger initiatives were developed: these were practical policies and actions with substantive leverage to dismantle structural racism. This evaluation reviewed the effectiveness, relevance and impact of the DSR initiative and the extent to which it has addressed structural racism challenges in the Section Office, Association and OCB field projects in Southern Africa.

RAISING AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT

Evidence from this evaluation shows that the DSR initiative has been highly successful in raising awareness of issues of structural and interpersonal racism within the MSF SnA Section Office, Association and in those OCB field projects visited by the DSR Manager. It has also been successful in motivating a wide range of people to engage with making changes to address the issues identified. The creation of safe spaces to explore issues and experiences of racism is, in itself, a significant change to organizational culture; moving the topic from something *"taboo"* to something which can be more openly discussed. Furthermore, many evaluation participants recognize the role that DSR workshops and events have played in building their own learning, changing their personal perspectives on racism, and increasing their confidence and capability to identify instances of racism and advocate for change.

As part of its work, the DSR initiative also hoped to influence the approach of OCB and the Anti-Racism TIC, and contribute to directional change to DEI work at Movement level. The DSR initiative has worked with and shared resources with DEI stakeholders, which has contributed to shaping some approaches in the Anti-Racism TIC and has offered a valuable example to inform OCB's planned leadership programme for women. However, this influence has not been as widespread as was hoped, perhaps because there has been a tension between DSR's conception as a 'disruptor' – even its name including racism being a *"powerful statement of intent"* – and its need to work collaboratively with stakeholders in the Movement in order to influence change.

DELIVERING STRUCTURAL CHANGE

The Gamechangers have delivered some important changes to structures, policies and working practices to address issues of structural racism, with the greatest number of evaluation participants rating the Baobab Leadership Accelerator (BLA) and Anti-racism policy and complaints process as the most significant. Evaluation participants have felt more mixed about the success of the Defusing White Fragility, Mandatory Participation and Accountability Gamechangers, with many reflecting that it was difficult to see or comment on the impacts of some of this work because of a lack of monitoring and evaluation data.

However, whilst many of the Gamechangers are significant achievements in their own right, the initiative has not taken a systematic approach to changing structures, policies and practices that have previously perpetuated structural racism. Nor has it undertaken any targeted work to build the skills people need to apply policies fairly and equally, or to handle concerns about interpersonal or structural racism effectively. As a result, it seems likely that aspects of structural racism persist within those structures and policies that have not been reviewed either as part of the DSR initiative or elsewhere. At OCB field project level, this is certainly the case because the DSR work here has not progressed beyond initial training workshops and conversations – and participants are clear that structural racism remains very much present in field project settings.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Many evaluation participants recognise that there is more work to be done in dismantling structural racism and there is a clear appetite to continue this work within the Section Office, Association and field projects. However, several factors are at play which are likely to influence decisions about the future of the DSR initiative. On the one hand, if plans for MSF Ubuntu are approved, this would provide an opportunity to create a radically different approach to the workforce policies and structures governing field operations under Ubuntu's control. These policies and structures could foreground diversity and anti-racism, delivering a more inclusive and equitable experience for all members of the global workforce – and creating an alternative paradigm for the wider Movement to learn from. On the other hand, the wider context is challenging, with the economic climate resulting in increasing project costs at the same time as decreasing income. So, how can the work of DSR be protected and mainstreamed in a context where resources and budget are limited?

Whilst it is not within the remit of this evaluation to recommend particular ways forward for the DSR initiative, learning from this evaluation suggests that at least some of the answers to this question lie in taking a more structured and targeted approach to the work going forward. Learnings are summarised below, alongside an outline of some key recommendations:

Several evaluation participants reflected that there was a lack of clarity about the remit of the DSR initiative and its priorities going forward. It is clear from this evaluation that a structured approach with visible progress can positively affect momentum and trust, as well as the achievement of outcomes. However, flexibility will also be needed to ensure the work meets the needs of different stakeholders and settings.



Decide on the strategic priorities for DSR and create a 3–5-year plan for delivery – including whether the initiative will retain its structural racism emphasis or take a wider DEI remit.

If work continues in field projects, develop a flexible approach to identifying and resolving issues that are relevant to different socio-cultural and legislative contexts.

Some evaluation participants raised concerns about where the DSR Unit sits within the Section Office structure and how it can drive engagement across stakeholder groups such as the Association and field projects, where MSF SnA has limited ability to influence. It is certainly the case that at its current size, the DSR Unit by itself is too small to effectively deliver a remit to dismantle structural racism across the Section Office, Association and regional field projects.



Consider representation for DSR at Management Team level, particularly if MSF SnA has ambitions to develop policies and structures for MSF Ubuntu that foreground diversity and anti-racism.

Develop ways to work more collaboratively with OC DEI stakeholders, Operations and Section Office department colleagues – to help achieve more with less.

Determine how DSR work will fit with the forthcoming safeguarding agenda.

For work such as DSR, the ability to publicly share the impact matters. So too does continued visible support for the work from leaders and key stakeholders. Both of these are mechanisms by which MSF can build and maintain trust amongst stakeholders and demonstrate that the organisation continues to take this work seriously.



Develop a simple and practical monitoring and evaluation framework to set outcome targets and plans for collecting the data needed to measure progress.

Ensure key stakeholders continue to participate in DSR workshops and events to demonstrate MSF's SnA's commitment to the work.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Dismantling Structural Racism (DSR) is an initiative of the MSF Southern Africa Section Office (MSF SnA), formulated after the International Board had given a mandate to the Movement to embark on a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiative to curb discrimination and racism within MSF. The initiative started in 2021 with a planned life span of 3 years. In line with the strategic orientations for the period 2020 – 2023, the initiative was extended due to Covid-19 and will now wrap-up by the end of 2025.

The DSR initiative was developed in consultation with staff and Southern Africa Association members. Through a combination of survey and externally facilitated workshops, participants identified a range of structural racism¹ challenges affecting the Section Office and Association. As a result, a DSR roadmap was developed, consisting of seven workstreams to address the seven categories of structural barriers identified during the consultation. Each workstream was led by a volunteer working group.

In 2022, the Management Team and DSR Steering Group then identified 5 Gamechangers arising from the DSR roadmap. These were practical policies and actions with substantive leverage to dismantle structural racism in MSF. Directors of different departments took responsibility for leading the delivery of each Gamechanger.

The aims of the project were three-fold:

- To dismantle the structures that have upheld or reinforced racial inequalities in the Section Office and Regional Association.
- To extend the work of DSR to staff in field projects.²
- To influence Operational Centre Belgium's approach to DEI and the Anti-Racism Transformational Investment Capacity (TIC) and contribute to a directional change to DEI work at the Movement level.

1.2 EVALUATION FOCUS

The objectives of this evaluation were twofold:

- To assess the extent to which the DSR initiative has achieved its intended outcomes;
- To identify lessons learned during the implementation process.

The results of this evaluation will inform decision-making about the future of the DSR initiative; including whether the initiative should conclude, continue or be integrated within future safeguarding initiatives. Specifically, the evaluation will provide recommendations and key considerations to bear in mind as MSF SnA shapes the future of this work in the region.

¹ Structural Racism: a system in which policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with "whiteness" and disadvantages associated with "colour" to endure and adapt over time. (Aspen Institute, 2016).

² A number of OCs have projects in the Southern Africa region. Therefore, the Section Office's work on extending DSR to these projects is contingent on working with OCs to deliver the initiative more widely (i.e. rather than being within the full control of the Section Office).

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The foundation of the DSR initiative has been in participatory practice, with the involvement of Section Office staff and Association members being central to the identification of issues of structural racism, as well as the development and implementation of solutions. As a result, in this evaluation we assessed the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the DSR initiative against the needs and outcomes defined by project participants, rather than relying on external or pre-determined criteria. In an ideal world, we would have replicated the project's participatory practice, involving a range of participants in the design of the evaluation. However, time and budget limitations prevented this. Instead, we took a mixed methods approach, as outlined below. Appendix 1 provides a summary of all the evaluation questions in full.

1.3.1 OUTCOME EVALUATION: EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE (EQ1; EQ2, EQ5)

We used the DSR Roadmap and 5 Gamechangers as the main sources for assessing the extent to which the DSR initiative had delivered its intended outcomes for staff and Association members. We used records and reports from the initiative (see Appendix 2), as well as semi-structured qualitative stakeholder interviews/focus groups to determine the extent to which participants thought each outcome has been achieved (EQ1) and the extent to which stakeholders felt that the achievement of these outcomes had addressed the structural racism challenges affecting the Section Office and Association (EQ2).³ We also considered the extent to which the initiative had been accessible and inclusive for the range of stakeholders who have been involved (EQ5). We analysed qualitative data from interviews and focus groups using thematic coding and triangulated between interview/focus group data and DSR records and reports where possible.

1.3.2 OUTCOME EVALUATION: IMPACT (EQ3, EQ4)

We drew on Most Significant Change methodology for evaluating the impact of the DSR initiative. This involved participants in sharing personal observations about changes that have happened as a result of the DSR initiative and about which changes had been the most significant, using semi-structured qualitative stakeholder interviews/focus groups. It was a particularly useful approach in this context because it generated learning about what people have valued about the initiative. Since the DSR initiative has engaged a wide range of groups (e.g. Section Office staff, IMS and LHS field project staff, Association members and people working in DEI roles in MSF), understanding the similarities and differences between what different groups have valued was important for understanding the effectiveness and impact of the initiative, as well as for planning the future of the initiative.

It should be noted that we did not follow the full process for Most Significant Change methodology, since this would involve participative evaluation design as well as asking participants to take part in majority decision making (e.g. iterative rounds of voting) in order to reach a consensus on the most significant changes. Whilst consensus building can be a valuable aspect of participatory research, some literature suggests that this is sometimes not suitable for sensitive topics such as racism, where each participant will bring their own personal context and direct experience. Instead, this literature suggests that an 'open dialogue' approach can be more valuable in leaving room for multiple perspectives, ensuring that each participant feels that their views are relevant and included.⁴ As a result, we asked participants to contribute their observations of significant changes and all

³ Appendix 4 includes outline scripts for semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

⁴ Borg, M., Karlsson, B., Kim, H. S., & McCormack, B. (2012). Opening up for Many Voices in Knowledge Construction. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-13.1.1793>

changes have been included in this evaluation report, alongside a thematic grouping and count of the numbers of participants identifying each type of change.

1.3.3 PROCESS EVALUATION: LEARNING FROM PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (EQ6)

We used semi-structured qualitative stakeholder interviews/focus groups to understand the range of enablers and barriers that affected the implementation of the DSR initiative. We also consulted a range of stakeholders involved in other DEI projects or related areas to identify existing good practice in relation to:

- Defining next steps (e.g. when a DEI project or initiative comes to the end of its term);
- Integrating ongoing DEI work into other frameworks (e.g. safeguarding) and/or working collaboratively with other stakeholders (e.g. HR, staff supporting IMS) to embed ongoing DEI work more widely.

1.3.4 SAMPLING APPROACH

This evaluation engaged with 55 stakeholders who have been involved in the DSR initiative in different capacities, including semi-structured interviews or focus groups with:

- 4 members of the DSR Unit (past and present)
- 8 members of the MSF Southern Africa Section Office leadership team, including Gamechanger leads and Heads of Departments (past and present)
- 11 members of staff from the MSF Southern Africa Section Office
- 2 IMS recruited by the MSF Southern Africa Section Office
- 12 members of the MSF Southern Africa Association
- 7 field project staff from projects in Zimbabwe
- 4 DEI and Safeguarding stakeholders from the wider MSF Movement.

We also sent an anonymous questionnaire to 7 field project staff in Mozambique (in Portuguese), because we were unable to arrange a focus group for these staff as planned, due to logistical challenges. We received 7 responses to the questionnaire.

We also sent an anonymous form to everyone who participated in the interviews and focus groups, as well as those who were invited but were unable to attend, enabling them to provide any feedback that they were unable to give during conversations (either because they could not attend or because they preferred not to give that feedback in a live conversation with the evaluator). We received 7 responses to this form.

We used purposive sampling to select the people we invited to participate from each category: i.e. deliberately choosing a sample of stakeholders that were likely to be in a good position to comment on the evaluation questions. Appendix 3 provides more information about the sample.

It is important to note that purposive sampling introduces some risk of bias in the sample. To mitigate this risk:

- The potential for bias has been clearly signalled in this evaluation report;
- The sample categories were decided jointly by the DSR Manager, Evaluation Manager and Evaluator;
- We selected individual participants in each category with a view to ensuring a representative cross-section of people (e.g. mix of demographic profiles as well as a mix of likely attitudes to DSR).

1.3.5 THE DESIGN OF DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGIES

It was important to acknowledge the context for this evaluation in the research design. The evaluation addresses the topic of anti-racism activism in Southern Africa, where the historical and political context have been heavily shaped by colonialism, separatism and - in South Africa – apartheid. Conversations during the inception phase highlighted that – in spite of the work of the DSR initiative – some staff and Association members still feel mistrust of MSF, both in relation to how reports of racism are handled and more widely in relation to decolonisation and MSF’s position as a European organisation operating internationally. In addition, the evaluation was managed via the Vienna Evaluation Unit and the lead Evaluator was a White European person, both of which factors could have contributed to a colonial power dynamic in the data collection phase of the research (i.e. when in conversation with participants).

To address this, we used principles for decolonising research in the design of data collection methodologies:

<p>We drew on indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing) that highlight how knowledge is generated collectively and in social relation to other participants (i.e. rather than Euro-American epistemologies which privilege individual knowledge generation).⁵ We did this by:</p>
<p>Positioning interviews and focus groups as individual and group conversations.</p> <p>Emphasising to participants that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This research was seeking a joint discussion around the topic and promoting participant dialogue with one another (rather than solely with the facilitators) during group conversations. • It was ok for participants to disagree with one another as long as disagreements were expressed respectfully.
<p>Reflexivity: we acknowledged the potential power dynamics during individual and group conversations and took action to maximise participant power. We did this by:</p>
<p>Openly acknowledging the challenge of a White European working as lead evaluator of an anti-racism initiative in Southern Africa, at the start of every conversation.</p> <p>Working with a person of colour to co-facilitate group conversations to change the power dynamic and ensure appropriate representation.</p> <p>Positioning the role of facilitators as people to keep the conversation flowing rather than people in charge.</p> <p>Highlighting the power of participants – how much MSF can learn from their stories and experiences – and the importance of their voices in the research.</p> <p>Leaving space during conversations for participants to share things that matter to them about the DSR initiative – i.e. rather than solely focusing on the evaluation questions.</p> <p>Making it clear that participants could tell facilitators if they would prefer not to answer any of the questions, so there was no pressure to respond.</p>
<p>We centred the voices of research participants in evaluation reporting. We did this by:</p>
<p>Using quotations as spoken (i.e. not modulating language, tone or grammar for written reporting).</p> <p>Ensuring analysis and reporting included consideration of the differences in experiences and views of different participants.</p> <p>Creating a digital tool that enabled participants in individual and group conversations to submit anonymous contributions to the evaluation.</p>

⁵ Romm, N.R.A (2015); [Conducting Focus Groups in Terms of an Appreciation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Some Examples from South Africa](#); Forum Qualitative Social Research Vol.16 No.1 Article 2 (January 2015):

1.4 LIMITATIONS

The key limitations in this evaluation are outlined below:

EVALUATING IMPACT

There are a number of factors which have made it difficult to assess the outcomes of the DSR initiative for this evaluation. Firstly, the aims of the Roadmap and Gamechanger workstreams were often expressed as outputs, rather than outcomes (e.g. Develop a Leadership Accelerator Programme, Institute Accountability Mechanisms). Secondly, the DSR initiative did not have a monitoring and evaluation framework in place during the project, so even where outcomes or impacts were identified (for example, each workstream in the Roadmap had an associated 'big impact'), there were no associated Key Performance Indicators in place to measure progress against intended outcomes. Finally, data from across the initiative has not been consistently collected throughout the lifespan of the project, so there is limited evidence to draw on.

To address this, we have used data collected from the initiative where possible and have sought feedback from a wide range of stakeholders to seek their perspectives on the impact of the initiative.

PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION: TIMESCALES AND APPROACHES

This evaluation had a limited timescale and limited approaches to draw on for primary data collection, since we could not undertake in-person evaluation sessions and were aware from the DSR Manager that it was difficult to get good response rates to data collection tools such as questionnaires. It was logistically challenging to secure attendance for focus groups, particularly for the field projects and we relied on the DSR Manager to coordinate dates and encourage attendance.

Since the DSR initiative has been founded in participatory practice, taking the same approach to evaluation – i.e. involving in-person sessions with facilitators from the region – may have enabled participants to share more in-depth feedback. We addressed as many of these challenges as possible in our research design (See Section 1.3.5), but this could be something to bear in mind for future evaluations.

FACILITATING CRITICAL AND SENSITIVE FEEDBACK

The experience of structural and interpersonal racism are sensitive topics, particularly in South Africa and Southern Africa, given the political histories and contexts in the region. As a result, some participants may have chosen not to share experiences and/or give feedback that is critical of MSF because they may be concerned about the impact of giving feedback on their employment, or because they may have found this difficult to talk about in a conversation with an evaluator.

We made it clear that conversations were confidential and that reporting would be anonymous, as well as providing an anonymous form for people to provide further feedback.

EVALUATING LIMITED INTERVENTIONS

It was important to involve staff from field projects in this evaluation, because the DSR initiative had ambitions to take this work into the Southern Africa region. However, this work only started in 2024, so staff in field projects in Mozambique and Zimbabwe had only taken part in DSR training workshops with the DSR Manager in 2024/25 and no further work has yet been undertaken there.

As a result, we focused feedback with these groups on their experiences of working in their projects, the effectiveness and impacts of the training, and what they would like to see for the future of DSR work.

2 FINDINGS: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE DSR INITIATIVE DELIVERED ITS INTENDED OUTCOMES (EQ1)

2.1 BACKGROUND

This section of the report considers the extent to which the DSR initiative has delivered its intended outcomes from the seven DSR Roadmap workstreams and five Gamechangers. It does not include analysis of the early phases of the initiative (i.e. the survey and workshops facilitated by Reos partners) which focused on exploring and identifying issues of structural racism in MSF SnA. However, it is important to acknowledge the significance of this early phase of the DSR initiative. Evaluation participants clearly identified the early phase work as a necessary and significant step which informed the creation of the Roadmap and Gamechangers. Perhaps more importantly, they also highlighted the value of this process and the lasting impact it has had in terms of raising awareness of the issues and creating safe spaces for colleagues to continue to have conversations about their experiences of the issues. This is explored more in Section 3.1 of the report.

Due to the lack of robust impact data from the Roadmap and Gamechanger workstreams (see Section 1.4), this section of the report outlines the activity and outputs from the DSR initiative and uses commentary from individual and group conversations to summarise the extent to which participants feel that the initiative delivered its outcomes.

2.2 THE GAMECHANGERS

2.2.1 ENSURING MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN DISMANTLING STRUCTURAL RACISM

Activity and outputs: This Gamechanger encouraged all stakeholders in MSF SnA to participate in DSR-related work. Most participation has not been mandatory and has taken place via three primary mechanisms:

- SANOU and other induction training: The DSR SANOU module was rolled out for existing Section Office staff and was also delivered to existing staff in some projects and offices in the region. As at December 2023, 354 people had taken part in this training in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi.⁶ Since January 2023, participation has become mandatory for new joiners.
- General Assembly annual DSR workshops. Participation is optional and is usually around 250 people.
- Other DSR training and events (e.g. training workshops, Section Office lunch & learns, pride events, Association First Thursday DSR sessions etc).⁷ Participation is optional.

There is evidence that a high number of staff have taken part in the DSR activities that have taken place since this Gamechanger was started. Furthermore, attendance rates for training workshops for existing staff in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi were generally between 80% and 100%, with the exception of in the Pemba project (in Mozambique) where the session was attended by 15% of staff due to communication misunderstandings.

⁶ 143 in South Africa (Johannesburg, Cape Town and Butterworth); 100 in Zimbabwe (Mbare, Harare and Gwanda); 81 in Mozambique (Palma and Pemba) and 30 in Malawi (Cici project).

⁷ Data from the 2024 DSR workshop shows participation in events in 2023 as follows: 25 at the Association First Thursday DSR session; 39 at the annual DEI workshop; 34 at the Pride Month conversation session; 40 at the DSR in-person workshop.

However, it is not possible to tell whether this Gamechanger has delivered on its intended outcomes because of the format in which the data has been collected:

- The DSR Unit does not have a count of attendance for all activities, events and workshops.
- The DSR Unit has not consistently tracked attendance as a percentage of all those who were eligible to attend each activity, so it is not possible to assess the overall reach of the work.
- Attendance data has not been collected in enough detail to disaggregate (e.g. by Section Office department, staff category, Association country), so it is not possible to tell whether some groups have participated more or less than others.
- No impact data has been collected, so it is not possible to tell what people have learned from DSR training and activities, what they have found valuable and if/how they have done anything differently at work as a result of attending the session.

Conversations with evaluation participants have suggested that there are two areas where this Gamechanger has not delivered on its intended outcomes:

1. **Association members:** There was an initial target for 80% of Association members to have accessed the DSR SANOU training module by the end of project. However, since this target was set, external economic conditions have changed significantly and the costs for running in-person workshops (e.g. venue, travel etc) have increased dramatically. This has made it much more difficult to organise training sessions. Efforts have been made to address this, by requesting a small number of Association members to join DSR SANOU training for Operations staff, so they could in turn disseminate training regionally. However, this has reportedly been hit and miss, and one of the evaluation participants involved in this work estimated that less than 50% of Association members have currently accessed this training.
2. **Leadership presence and visibility:** Management Team attendance at DSR workshops and activities was tracked during 2023, with eight attending the roll-out of the SANOU DSR training module and one or two of the team attending the Pride conversation, annual DEI workshop and Association First Thursday DSR session. None of the Management Team attended the 2024 Defusing White Fragility workshop in the Johannesburg office. Beyond this, Management Team attendance data for 2024 onwards is not available and one evaluation participant commented that this was because they had stopped tracking this because attendance was generally “so low.” **This lack of leadership presence and visibility in later phases of DSR work has been noticed by several evaluation participants. Regardless of the actual level of leadership commitment to DSR, it is clear that a lack of leadership visibility at DSR events has resulted in some people questioning that commitment.**



“The sessions that have been organised by the Unit are oftentimes not attended by the people who need to attend them, which are the people in higher positions. Honestly, if there isn’t any buy-in from those individuals who are ultimately the decision-makers...then definitely it's just going to be a matter of us continuously creating policies and not having any follow-through.” **SECTION OFFICE**

“There remains a need for more visible and meaningful engagement from senior management. Their active participation is critical in setting the tone and embedding anti-racism principles across the organisation.” **ANONYMOUS**

2.2.2 DEFUSING WHITE FRAGILITY

Activity and outputs: This workstream has consisted of:

- 2021-22: 4 ‘book club’ conversations with 7 members of Section Office staff and 4 members of the MSF Khayelitsha Office, facilitated by Reos Partners and using *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla Saad as a framework for exploring themes of privilege, intersectionality, allyship, white saviourism and responding to the experiences of people of colour.
- 2024: One externally facilitated workshop with around 15 members of staff from SAMU and SASSU and one externally facilitated workshop with 30 members of staff from the Johannesburg office.

Most evaluation participants felt that this Gamechanger had not fully delivered on its intended outcomes, not least because there has not been a high level of activity over the duration of the initiative. There have only been a small number of conversations and workshops and these have been sporadic, partly because the initial Gamechanger lead left the Section and those taking over struggled to find any records of the early book club work, which meant they were having to effectively re-start from scratch. In addition, there were significant delays in agreeing workshop dates with SAMU⁸ and the 2024 SAMU workshop was generally not well-received – the content did not fully “hit the brief” in terms of addressing the issues of white fragility within MSF’s context.

Furthermore, this Gamechanger has not included any sort of structured approach to embedding practices that address white fragility outside the book club/workshop training environments. This work relies on individual reflection, behaviour change and skill development to drive organisational change;⁹ all of which takes time and deliberate effort. Without this kind of strategic approach, it is highly unlikely that work in this area will ever be as impactful as MSF SnA would like.

In relation to the work that has taken place, for some SAMU staff the sporadic approach has contributed to feelings of “fatigue” and scepticism – a sense that “we’ve already done it”. It is certainly the case that a lack of sustained plan and forward momentum can affect staff engagement with any type of change initiative.¹⁰ However, it may also be that some members of staff have also misunderstood this work as a one-off intervention, rather than as something which requires ongoing engagement over time.

Perhaps most significantly, there is a widespread perception from staff outside SAMU that very little has genuinely changed in terms of addressing white fragility in the Cape Town office. In the words of one member of staff from the Section Office “we all get the idea where this programme is blocked. Is it because people are resistant to working on this Gamechanger? Is it a matter of privilege? They choose to disengage because they can.” This sense is reinforced when staff from the Johannesburg office see very few SAMU staff attending other DSR events and when it takes a disproportionate amount of time to arrange DSR training workshops with SAMU. Whilst it is not possible to know how much of this is due to SAMU’s working patterns and how much might be the result of personal choice or lack of prioritisation, the outcome is the same: a perception that these colleagues are not “putting in the work” needed to address their own part in structural racism in MSF SnA.

⁸ The SAMU workforce is predominantly international, with a much higher proportion of white staff members compared to the Johannesburg office - hence the decision to focus the work of this Gamechanger here.

⁹ i.e. white members of staff habitually reflecting on how racial differences might be affecting a work situation or environment; actively seeking the perspectives of people of colour and developing the skills to enable them to respond constructively to issues or instances of interpersonal or structural racism.

¹⁰ Prosci (undated), Desire: How to positively influence a person’s desire to embrace change

2.2.3 INSTITUTING ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Activity and outputs: This Gamechanger focused on holding both management/leadership and staff/Association members accountable for moving DSR activities forward. The following regular accountability mechanisms have been put in place for monitoring activity under the DSR initiative:

- Annual General Assembly DSR workshops and reporting to the Social and Ethics Committee SEC;
- Quarterly DSR updates via Staff Weekly Info Session (WIS) and at Management Team meetings.

In addition, although it does not fall within this Gamechanger, the Employment Equity Plan is also an accountability mechanism, which holds MSF accountable for setting and delivering affirmative action measures to redress disadvantages in employment, in line with South Africa's Code of Good Practice for Black Economic Empowerment. The HR Director is the Employment Equity Manager and there is an Employment Equity and Skills Development Committee in place.

It is clear that this Gamechanger has succeeded in putting some accountability mechanisms in place for ensuring progress with the DSR initiative. However, many evaluation participants thought that these mechanisms had not resulted in enough genuine accountability for DSR – particularly for leaders and managers. For example, some participants asked whether mechanisms like the annual DSR workshops could really be an effective mechanism for accountability when there was insufficient data shared to really track the progress of all aspects of the initiative. One anonymous participant reflected that the annual DSR workshops *“have all been the same, have not added anything new and even more there has not been ways to track its impact in the section or the region.”* Others have also noted that these workshops have provided a space for Association members to *“ventilate”* or air concerns, but that the concerns raised have been the same year on year, which suggests a lack of progress on DSR in the region and therefore also a lack of accountability for the lack of progress.

Importantly, many evaluation participants have questioned who is really accountable for the DSR initiative and what that accountability means in practice.



“What’s not clear for me and many other people is the people with whom the buck stops...The initiatives are there, the policies are there, but we still see some blockages...Who has to now be taken to task for failing to break those barriers?” SECTION OFFICE

“If there are no consequences for not making things happen when it's in your power to make it happen, then forget it. If not, it's a nice story to tell but it's nothing more than that.” SECTION OFFICE

For several Section Office and Association member participants, the lack of clarity around accountability has stemmed from the way the DSR Unit has been positioned within the organisational structure, in particular the fact that the DSR Manager role is a middle-management position and that there is no director-level representation for this work. Several participants noted that the DSR Manager *“drives the initiatives”*, but the challenge comes if there continue to be barriers to implementation that are beyond the remit of the DSR Manager to resolve.

Others also noted that there has been a lack of clarity about the respective responsibilities of the DSR Unit and the HR Department, which has had a negative impact on accountability. One good example of this is the positioning of the Employment Equity Plan under HR. This makes sense from a legal and regulatory perspective,

since HR has responsibility for many of the measures in the plan to address employment inequality. However, there is significant overlap in this and the intended remit of the DSR Unit, which is confusing. One member of staff from the Section Office commented that *“Normally these things fall under Human Resources. Right now, it’s very, very unclear where the DSR falls, whose responsibility is it. So there is a clash, in my opinion, in terms of who is really taking accountability here for the whole of what DSR is doing. Then there is a diffusion of responsibility.”*

Significantly, some members of the Management Team have said that they have not felt held to account in relation to DSR. One said that they could not remember the last time DSR had come up in a leadership team meeting, even though it’s a regular item on the weekly office meeting agenda. Another reflected that they thought there would have been more engagement from senior leadership (both Board and Management Team) in relation to DSR accountability, and that it has been difficult to sustain early enthusiasm, perhaps partly because of competing priorities and time pressure.

Finally, whilst it is entirely appropriate to hold members of staff and Association members to account for their own behaviours in relation to interpersonal racism (e.g. via the DSR complaints process and the behaviour code), it probably is not appropriate to seek to hold them more widely to account for progressing DSR activity – as planned by this Gamechanger. Most members of staff and Association members do not have the remit or position to make, influence or advocate for DSR decisions directly. In addition, for staff, DSR responsibilities are not included within job descriptions and are not included as a measure within a performance management framework.

2.2.4 DEVELOPING AN ANTI-RACISM POLICY & EMPLOYMENT OF AN OMBUDSPERSON

Activity and outputs: The Anti-racism policy was put in place in 2023 and has recently been supplemented by a shorter outline of the DSR complaints process and infographic. An external ombudsperson¹¹ was contracted by MSF SnA between June 2023 and September 2024. During this time, no complaints were raised using this procedure. Since September 2024, the position has been vacant and the DSR Unit is looking for a replacement.

Several evaluation participants recognised that the Anti-racism policy and DSR complaints procedure have been *“a great milestone”* because they have provided pathways to address issues when they arise and offered greater clarity about what is meant by terms such as interpersonal and structural racism and discrimination. For some Section Office staff and Association members, the approach has felt more *“educative and proactive”* than it did when complaints were only handled via HR grievance pathways.

However, the impacts of the policy and ombudsperson have been limited as a result of a number of factors:

1. **There were issues with the employment of the ombudsperson**, who was contracted on a retainer regardless of the number of cases they handled. Issues over fees also arose when negotiating the ombudsperson’s support for work beyond case management (e.g. their participation in DSR workshops), which contributed to the severing of the contract.
2. **No complaints were submitted to the ombudsperson during their tenure.** The reasons for this are likely to be complex and multi-faceted, but several evaluation participants suggested that one significant

¹¹ The role of the ombudsperson is to independently and impartially review complaints of structural or inter-personal racism and to support the resolution of complaints through investigations, hearings, mediations, or recommendations for implementation by MSF.

factor may be a lack of trust in the independence of the process because the ombudsperson's fees were paid by MSF.

3. **There are multiple mechanisms in place for reporting workplace complaints of discrimination or abuse.** Some evaluation participants commented that this could be confusing for people in terms of knowing which processes to use in which circumstances. For example, one member of staff from the Section Office asked, *"If we have a bullying policy that sits under HR, do we really need to have the same thing under DSR?"*, whilst another said the many reporting procedures had become *"tangled"* rather than being integrated into existing systems. In addition, if any complaints had been dealt with under the DSR procedure, these would be reported to the SEC and therefore may not be captured by standard HR reporting processes, which are used to track complaints at an international level.
4. **Regional field projects are governed by the HR and complaints procedures for their respective OCs, so field project staff do not have access to the DSR complaints process or ombudsperson.** Whilst there are plans to train some field project staff to support others through the OC complaints process, this has not yet taken place.

It is also notable that the policy document itself is 16 pages long and covers a wide range of areas relating to MSF's commitments to dismantling structural racism. This makes it difficult to access and navigate. In addition, aspects of the policy – particularly in relation to accountability and consequence management – have either not been actively monitored and/or have not been put into practice in a meaningful way. For example, one clause suggests that failure to complete briefings on the policy and the DSR programme will result in disciplinary action, even though participation in most of the DSR initiative's events has not been mandatory. This aspect of the policy may need to be reviewed to ensure that the accountability measures are appropriate and reflect the reality of what is expected from staff members in relation to DSR work.

2.2.5 DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

Activity and outputs: The Baobab Leadership Accelerator BLA started in 2023 and has had a cohort of 9 people each year since then. Each year, the target for the cohort has been 3 IMS, 3 LHS and 3 Section staff. These targets have consistently been met, with the exception of in 2023, when only one participant was from the Section and five were LHS.

Members of each cohort have taken part in a wide range of coaching, training, job-shadowing and detachments, with each curriculum tailored to individual needs and aspirations.

Most evaluation participants felt that this Gamechanger had substantially delivered on its intended outcomes. Indeed, the BLA was identified as one of the most significant changes resulting from the DSR initiative (see Section 3.1), perhaps because it is a very tangible and visible output, compared to some of the other Gamechangers.

In terms of outcomes, the BLA has also had a demonstrable impact. Baseline and end-of-programme psychometric testing for the 2024 cohort provides evidence of individual personal and professional development experienced by participants. Furthermore, three participants have also achieved career progression (one moving from Health Promoter to Field Coordinator role; and two into Director positions from Field Coordinator and Manager roles), and two have been accepted for the LEAP post-graduate programme in humanitarian practice.

However, it is clear that some evaluation participants had expected more of the BLA, with some noting that there is not a pathway after the initial 12-months of the programme to help BLA participants achieve the career development they are looking for. In the words of one member of staff from the Section Office, after the programme finishes *“there’s a feeling of now you’re on your own. Go out there and make it happen for yourself.”* Another said they would extend the term of the programme to 3-5 years, and *“hold [BLA participants’] hands, to try to make them actually penetrate where they would have been disadvantaged.”*

It is worth noting that the impact of the BLA is probably limited in relation to the number of participants achieving career development because it was never set up to offer this type of support for career development itself. Furthermore, MSF does not have a strategic approach to talent management and career development within and across OCs. As a result, there are no clear frameworks for supporting BLA participants to develop their careers within MSF. Instead, there are some set development pathways for key roles such as Coordinator positions, which can sometimes be restrictive for BLA participants who may have substantial MSF experience and expertise already, but who have not yet been through any of the specific development pathways needed to reach the role they aspire to.

Furthermore, there are other factors which may have restricted the impact of the BLA in terms of career development for its participants. For IMS, the BLA lead notes that it has been challenging for the BLA to gain traction with OC Pool Managers, observing that it had been difficult to get this group to understand the position of the BLA as a programme which is different – but complimentary to – existing IMS development pathways. As a result, participants’ BLA experience is probably not as well valued as it might be or systematically factored into resource planning and role selection decisions for IMS roles. For LHS and Section Office staff, the challenge is also often one of low turnover in local management or leadership roles, meaning that positions may not come up as often. For example, although some Section Office leadership roles have moved onto a set-term basis (2x 3 years), others have not, so some staff may feel *“what’s the use?”* of participating in the BLA because leadership roles come up so rarely.

2.3 BEYOND THE GAMECHANGERS

2.3.1 THE ROADMAP

The five Gamechangers emerged from the seven workstreams of the DSR Roadmap. The original intention had been to revisit the Roadmap before the end of the project to address any areas that had not been covered by the Gamechangers; however, this has not happened. This section will therefore not deal with areas of the Roadmap that overlap with the Gamechangers but will identify key areas of the Roadmap that have not yet been addressed.

The main activities from the Roadmap which have not been addressed to date fall under the following workstreams:

1. **Dismantling injustice in MSF’s HR system:** This workstream focused on revising HR policies (e.g. reward, recruitment, development, performance management) to tackle inequality and exclusion within existing processes and procedures. Some policy review work is being addressed by other projects whose remit is wider than the Southern Africa region (e.g. the Reward Review), and other aspects – such as revising local recruitment approaches – are included within the Employment Equity Plan. It is not within the scope of this evaluation to evaluate the effectiveness of the Employment Equity Plan. However, it is clear from this evaluation that **there hasn’t been a full review of HR policies with a DSR lens, and some**

participants noted that some ideas for tackling policy inequality that had emerged during the DSR process – such as anonymising job applications – had not been taken forward. Furthermore, whilst there have been changes that have increased the racial diversity of the Section Office leadership team since the start of the DSR initiative, it isn't clear to what extent these changes have been influenced by DSR as opposed to other factors relating to individual appointees (e.g. succession planning, skills).

This is a complex area, since some aspects of HR policy are within the remit of MSF SnA and/or regional field projects to change, whereas others (e.g. Compensation and Benefits) belong to OCs and cannot be changed locally. Furthermore, there has not been clarity about the respective responsibilities of the HR Department and DSR Unit for this work (see Section 2.2.3), and the timetable for reviewing HR policies sits with the HR Department, so the DSR Unit cannot input into this work until policies are raised for review by the HR Department. However, **evaluation participants are clear that it is a vital piece of the ongoing work that is needed to dismantle structural racism in MSF SnA and the region.** This is covered in more detail in Section 3.3.3.

2. **Equity of Culture in MSF and We Are All MSF:** These workstreams focused on creating spaces for staff to learn about and appreciate the cultures of colleagues in MSF offices and regional projects, as well as dismantling divisions between different groups, offices and positions across the Movement. **Some activities under these workstreams (e.g. changing 'White Saviour' imagery in MSF communications) are being addressed by other projects whose remit is wider than the Southern Africa region. However, those with a more regional focus (e.g. rotating teams who visit the field to create greater mobility between HQ and field roles) have not yet been taken forward.**

Some evaluation participants commented that they would like the DSR initiative in future to broaden its focus to address more of the complexities of racism in South Africa and the region – for example to explore how different groups within South African society – such as black people, multiracial people or Indians – might experience racism differently and what that might mean for MSF's work on dismantling structural racism. Other participants also specifically mentioned having witnessed or experienced examples of xenophobia at work and were keen for the DSR initiative to address xenophobia as part of its work, given the context of migration from other African countries to South Africa.¹²



“People in South Africa have experienced xenophobia for the longest time as a huge big rock in their hearts. It shouldn't be tolerated.” **SECTION OFFICE**

“It's a lot to ask MSF to address the nuance of this, but it is an important caution to the DSR work that the balancing [i.e. reducing the experience of structural and interpersonal racism] won't happen automatically for everyone” **SECTION OFFICE**

¹² Shandré Kim Jansen van Rensburg (2024), *Foreign national are facing multifaced xenophobia in South Africa*; <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2024/06/27/foreign-nationals-are-facing-multifaced-xenophobia-in-south-africa/>

2.3.2 DSR IN DEPARTMENT PLANS

One of the intentions in inviting members of the Management Team to act as Gamechanger leads was that this would encourage the team to work together across the DSR initiative and to embed DSR activities into their own departmental plans. There is clear evidence that the DSR Unit has worked collaboratively with – and received support from – a range of departments. For example, one member of staff from the Section Office noted that the DSR Unit had *“tried so much to involve other departments in their planning”* and highlighted the collaboration that took place with the Communications department around creating some memorabilia to support the Pride event. In addition, the Association team have been integral in supporting the DSR Unit with DSR Association events and activities.

Department Heads themselves have reported a range of approaches to DSR within their local plans, with some areas being more proactive than others. For some departments – such as the Association team – this has been an area of focus because it naturally aligned with their wider plans. Some others, such as the Finance team – have reviewed some departmental policies with a DSR lens. By contrast, some departments such as Operational Support have discussed DSR as part of their planning process but haven’t put concrete objectives into the plan, whilst others have recognised that in retrospect, they could have done more: *“DSR will only be successful if we continue the work and not just say ‘the work is done now.’ I can say I have not done the work around continuing the focus on DSR.”*

This variation in approach is perhaps not surprising, given that Departments have not been asked to report on how DSR is included in their local plans and nor has this been actively monitored. However, it is important because departmental work to embed DSR locally is an essential part of changing organisational culture over the longer term. Lack of oversight of how this work is or isn’t happening at a departmental level makes it difficult to track progress and to hold departments accountable for local DSR activity.

2.4 HOW ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE HAS THE DSR INITIATIVE BEEN FOR STAFF AND ASSOCIATION MEMBERS? (EQ5)

This section of the report focuses on the accessibility and inclusivity of the DSR workshops and events (e.g. early phase workshops, training workshops, events and annual General Assembly sessions). A wider analysis of the extent to which the DSR initiative has addressed issues of structural racism for different groups of staff and Association members can be found in Section 3.3.

Evaluation participants from all staff groups and Association members recognised how much effort the DSR Unit has put into making the DSR initiative accessible and inclusive.



“The Unit has tried so much to carry the Association along, even though it’s mostly an executive initiative” SECTION OFFICE

“Tandi has made it easy to feel included - SAMU can sometimes get forgotten because of where it's based, but not for DSR.” SECTION OFFICE

“Tandi has done a lot of work travelling into the field, raising awareness amongst the individuals and the staff.” ASSOCIATION

Evaluation participants felt that these efforts had been effective, most particularly in:

- **Creating safe spaces for learning and conversations about issues and experiences of racism that were inclusive for attendees** (See Section 3.1), including offering workshops in translation for field projects in Mozambique and securing good levels of attendance for workshops and events (See Section 2.2.1).
- **Delivering workshops and events that were relevant and grounded in practical examples**, enabling people to learn and grow in confidence in identifying and addressing issues of structural and interpersonal racism in their contexts (See Section 3.1).
- **Enabling people to contribute to shaping the programme of work**, for example by using feedback to inform plans and enabling Section Office staff to get involved with their choice of Roadmap and Gamechanger workstreams, based on personal interest.



“Although the concepts were not totally new to me, it was easier for me to relate it to reality during the training.” **FIELD PROJECT**

“SAMU has probably engaged more [with the Johannesburg Office] on DSR than on a lot of other things.” **SECTION OFFICE**

In relation to First Thursday webinars *“You were constantly informed of what is going on and you feel, yes, even the input that I put or the feedback that I gave...you know it is going somewhere or being utilised.”* **ASSOCIATION**

Of course – given the wide scope of initiative across the Section Office, Association and Region – there have been challenges with making DSR workshops and events accessible and inclusive for all. The table below gives an outline of the main challenges to access and inclusion raised by evaluation participants:

Section Office staff, including SAMU and IMS recruited by the Section Office

In early workshops, some evaluation participants observed that some people tended to participate more than others, and in different ways. For example, some noticed that some staff – particularly people of colour – felt easier sharing ideas than experiences – perhaps partly as a result of fear of recrimination and partly related to a sense of tension about speaking out when white people may have been experiencing guilt.

In more recent events, some participants perceive inequality in representation at DSR events. For example, one anonymous participant commented, *“One thing I felt is still missing is good representation across races, these discussions are most of the time only attended by black people and not white counterparts.”* This may be partly related to overall patterns of attendance being higher from the Johannesburg Office than from SAMU and the differences in the demographic profiles of each office (See Section 2.2.2).

Keeping IMS members engaged with DSR has been difficult. There is a WhatsApp group, but this is not well-used and IMS members have found it *“difficult to keep up”* with DSR progress, particularly whilst on missions.

Association members

In early workshops, one evaluation participant commented that Association members who no longer worked for MSF may have felt freer to “speak out” than those who still worked for MSF, who may have feared potential consequences.

It has not always been easy for Association members to attend some DSR events. For example, the General Assembly workshop has been held on the same day as the Board meeting, meaning that the Board and leadership team could only attend up to 90 minutes of the DSR workshop. First Thursday webinars have also been held when *“a lot of people will be going home from work because it’s usually after hours, so some may have missed that.”*

Field project staff

In one of the field projects, there were mixed views about participation in the DSR training. Whilst some valued the fact that the training covered all staff, others thought that having staff and managers in the same session can *“prevent the staff from opening up and exposing their concerns and observations regarding structural racism.”*

One evaluation from one field project also commented *“For the next few times, it would be good for this training to involve all employees without exception of race and origin,”* suggesting that in this project, there may not have been representation from all members of staff.

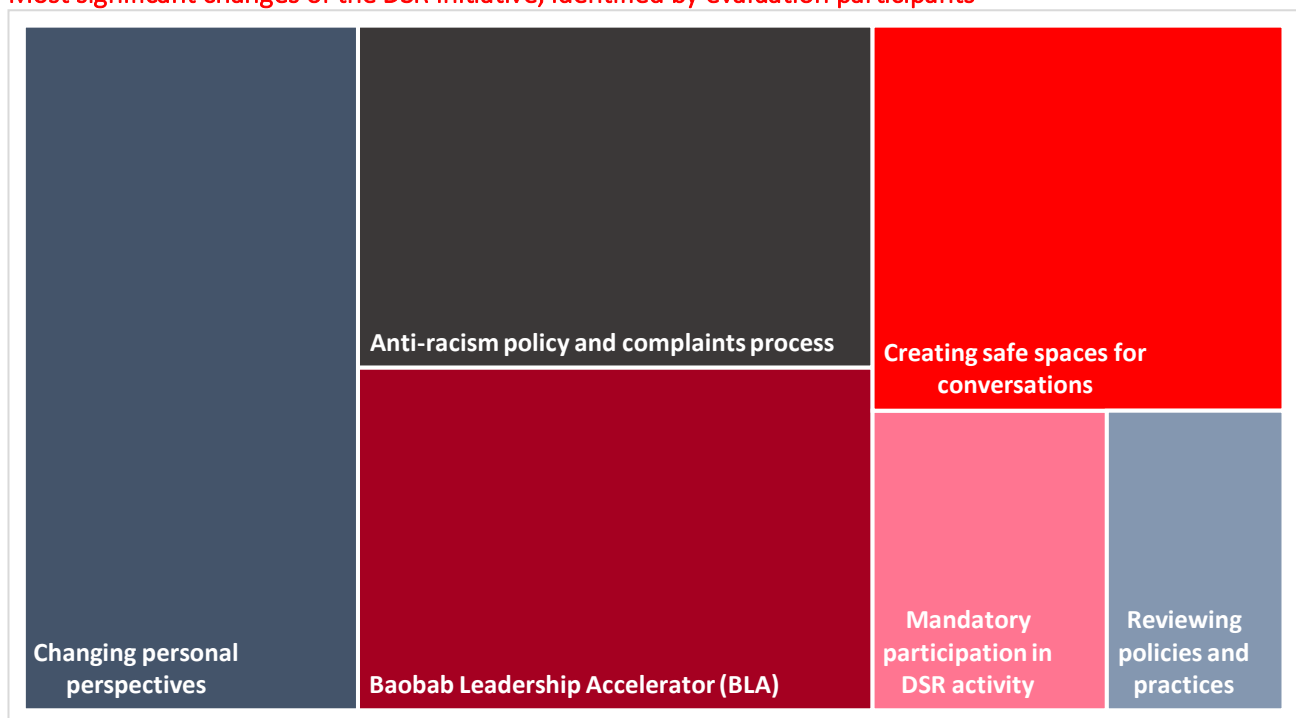
Overall, the accessibility and inclusivity of DSR workshops and events has been one of the initiative’s key strengths. Whilst the challenges outlined above are useful learning points, they are not unexpected in a project of this size and a project which addresses emotive and sensitive issues.

3 FINDINGS: THE IMPACT OF THE DSR INITIATIVE

3.1 WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS THINK HAVE BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES THAT HAVE RESULTED FROM THE DSR INITIATIVE? (EQ3)

Participants in this evaluation identified a range of significant changes that have resulted from the DSR initiative. Interestingly, whilst some of these were associated with the outputs of the initiative, others were much more related to the process of taking part in the initiative itself. Thematic analysis of individual and group conversations shows that the top four most significant changes identified by participants were changing personal perspectives; the Anti-racism policy and complaints procedure; the Baobab Leadership Accelerator; and creating safe spaces for conversations about structural and interpersonal racism. This is outlined in the tree map below.

Most significant changes of the DSR initiative, identified by evaluation participants



Since participants expressed a range of perspectives about how and why each of these changes were important, the box below provides more detail about how participants described the significance of the changes.

Type of change	Participants' perspectives
Changing personal perspectives	
Increased awareness and understanding of the topic and terminology of structural and interpersonal racism.	"We learned...the difference between Racism, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Abuse of Power." FIELD PROJECT
Greater understanding of how individuals' behaviours and biases could contribute to racism within MSF.	"DSR bought a lot of awareness on our contributions as individuals...What are we contributing to the perpetuation of racism itself?" ASSOCIATION
Increased confidence in MSF's approach to tackling racism.	"People know that MSF takes anti-racism seriously, as a direct result of DSR sessions." SECTION OFFICE

Anti-racism policy and complaints procedure	
Improved ability to identify instances of structural and interpersonal racism at work.	<i>"The training made it easier for me to identify inappropriate acts in a work environment."</i> FIELD PROJECT
Increased understanding of and access to reporting mechanisms.	<i>"All the channels one can use to get help when confronted with an incidence of racism are so great."</i> ANONYMOUS
Baobab Leadership Accelerator (BLA)	
Evidence of increased career and development opportunities for staff from the region.	<i>"People have moved from manager to director roles. There's been visible progression."</i> SECTION OFFICE
Increased confidence in MSF's long-term commitment to increasing opportunity for staff from the region.	<i>"Baobab felt ambitious at the start, but it is now in its third year."</i> SECTION OFFICE
Creating safe spaces for conversations	
Increased openness to sharing experiences of racism and injustice at work.	<i>"People have started talking about injustices we are facing whilst we are working for MSF."</i> ASSOCIATION
Increased shared responsibility for structural and interpersonal racism.	Since the workshop, <i>"we have created a committee that watches over this issue for the good of our staff in general and the project."</i> FIELD PROJECT
Increased confidence to advocate for issues in the Movement	<i>"Most of the confidence that Asso members have to speak out about issues...is because we've had a DSR unit that is actually also helping to build, especially people who experienced structural racism in MSF in the past. You know, to give them a space to see that...their views matter."</i> ASSOCIATION
Mandatory participation in DSR	
Consistency in sharing DSR training with new staff.	<i>"SANOU is really important, because it's something every new joiner does."</i> SECTION OFFICE
Reviewing policies and practices	
Increased contribution from staff in the development of new policies and practices	<i>"Before DSR, conversations about racism were like treading on eggshells... now people will make comments on new policies, consider the potential for discrimination and are open to feedback."</i> SECTION OFFICE

Two key themes to emerge from the conversations in relation to DSR's most significant changes were:

1. **Participants were clear that the early DSR workshops were fundamental to motivating people to take part in DSR work as it evolved.** By raising awareness of the topic of interpersonal and structural racism, these workshops allowed participants to develop more of a shared language and created a space to explore issues and share experiences. This then encouraged people to get involved with the Roadmap and Gamechanger workstreams and contribute to delivering key outputs such as the Anti-racism policy and the BLA. As one member of staff from the Section Office commented, *"Giving people the space to tell their*

stories was a major, major achievement...and [the Gamechangers] were inspired by the stories that come from the people."

2. **Some participants said they found it difficult to comment about the most significant changes resulting from DSR because of a lack of evidence about the impact of the initiative.** Whilst many participants acknowledged that there were regular DSR updates – for example, at the annual DSR workshop at the General Assembly meetings – several noted that they hadn't seen enough data to demonstrate the impact of key aspects of the initiative, such as the complaints process and the BLA. For example, in relation to the ombudsperson, one member of staff from the Section Office said *"I don't know whether they still exist. Do we have any cases?"*, whilst others wondered whether the BLA had had any impact in terms of tangible career moves or promotions for members of the first cohorts, because they had not heard of any examples.

This matters for staff in the Section Office and Association because it undermines accountability and trust in the DSR initiative and in leadership – if there's no agreed way of measuring impact, people cannot be held accountable for lack of progress. One member of staff from the Section Office summarised this connection clearly, reflecting that *"trust comes from things happening...You know, these are the stories we told. These are the complaints we have brought forward. These are the actions that have been taken...If people see their stories are being taken seriously, they slowly begin to trust the system."*

This also matters for staff in regional field projects because it negatively affects the visibility and credibility of the DSR initiative – if there's no robust impact data to share, it's difficult to create a compelling case for field projects to adopt DSR. Both IMS members and DEI stakeholders commented that in their experience, DEI and/or DSR were not currently valued by missions and that it was difficult to get the buy-in of senior staff to commit to prioritising actions in these areas in their mission and projects. One IMS member said they wanted the impacts of the DSR initiative to be *"visible like a television that everyone's watching"* because if people saw more of what was happening, this could build a greater momentum for change within projects.

3.2 TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE DSR INITIATIVE INFLUENCED MSF'S WIDER APPROACH TO DEI? (EQ4)

3.2.1 EXAMPLES OF INFLUENCE

At its inception, one of the aims of the DSR initiative was to influence OCB's approach to DEI and the Anti-Racism Transformational Investment Capacity (TIC) and contribute to a directional change to DEI work at the Movement level. However, the DSR initiative did not articulate in more detail what it wanted to achieve in this area – perhaps because it would have been difficult to know what might be possible. As a result, the DSR initiative has not taken a systematic approach to working with OCB's DEI lead or with other DEI stakeholders in the Movement. Rather, the approach has been more ad-hoc, with the initiative's influence being largely reliant on personal networks and organically growing collaborations, rather than a purposeful plan.

Nevertheless, the DSR initiative has had some influence on MSF's wider approach to DEI, achieved mainly through sharing learning and good practice, and collaborating with MSF DEI stakeholders. The graphic below provides more detail and examples of this work.

Sharing learning and good practice

DEI colleagues from OCA, OCB, the Anti-racism TIC project and MSF Brazil joined the 2022 DSR workshop in South Africa. One described being *“inspired”* by the practical approach to the topic, using case studies to allow people to *“address the topic from different perspectives.”*

The Anti-racism TIC project lead was impressed by the *“strong and deep”* DSR process to address the issues in the region, which had been supported by Reos Partners. This led to the Anti-racism TIC project working with Reos Partners to develop a range of anti-racism learning journeys for staff. It also helped the Project lead to advocate for anti-racism work with senior leaders in MSF. She says, *“that wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t seen the DSR project.”*

The BLA lead has widely shared good practice and resources from the BLA with colleagues across the Movement, including sharing its resources and learnings with OCB in the development of its leadership accelerator programme for women. The BLA is well networked with L&D departments in OCs, and with other development programmes such as LEAP and WoW. The BLA lead is also a member of the Women in Leadership group, which focuses on addressing inequalities in access to development opportunities for women.

The Regional HR team leader has been involved in the MSF Rewards Review and has shared her knowledge from the DSR initiative in this project.

Collaboration

Collaboration with OCB’s DEI lead has given DSR a *“foot in the region”* - i.e. permission to visit OCB regional projects and provide DSR and DARA training to staff.

Plans are in development with the OCB DEI lead and Anti-racism TIC Project lead to provide anti-racism training in the Southern Africa region for field project leads and DSR/DARA ambassadors, with content provided from the Anti-racism TIC project and training supported by the DSR Manager who has the *“people and presence locally.”*

The drafting of the Anti-racism policy involved a number of OC DEI leads, and the DSR Manager has shared other policy drafts (e.g. Anti-Sexual Harassment policy) with OCB’s DEI and Safeguarding leads for feedback and input.

Most of these examples are small-scale and participants in the evaluation generally found it difficult to articulate the tangible impacts of sharing learning or collaborative working on the wider Movement’s approach to DEI. However, it is important to note that:

- Some of the learning shared from the DSR initiative has had a demonstrable impact on the approach taken by the Anti-racism TIC project and on OCB’s planned leadership accelerator.
- Sharing DSR learning in the Rewards Review has allowed DSR perspectives to contribute to addressing wider issues of inequality in MSF, that are outside the remit of the DSR initiative itself to address.
- Collaboration with OCB’s DEI lead has been vital in enabling the DSR Manager to start to spread DSR work to field projects in Southern Africa. This is a critical foundation if the DSR initiative is to extend its work to support more staff in regional field projects and influence the approach to structural racism in projects that are outside MSF SnA’s governance and oversight.

- MSF SnA has also benefitted from collaboration with OCB's DEI and Safeguarding leads. Seeking feedback on policy drafts has enabled the DSR Unit to benefit from people with subject-area and policy-writing expertise, which is likely to mean that policies are more robust and fit for purpose.

3.2.2 BARRIERS TO INFLUENCE

It is clear that many participants in this evaluation wanted the DSR initiative to have a greater influence on the Movement's approach to DEI than it has had – and recognise that more active collaboration will be necessary to achieve this:



"I feel the DSR Unit is at times speaking to its own self and its own constituents...How can the Unit speak to the IB? How can the Unit speak to the OC Boards?" ASSOCIATION

"For the BLA, we're trying to accelerate people into leadership positions, but there's only so many leadership positions that exist in Southern Africa...For them to occupy other leadership positions, we rely on the willingness of other entities to accept our people into their missions and so forth...We have to find a way to influence, to negotiate spaces...to increase our influence for the rest of the Movement to see that there's something happening here, something that we [other entities] can benefit from." SECTION OFFICE

"Positions of influence are still disproportionately occupied by individuals who may appear disconnected from the realities of designated groups or local staff. This reinforces concerns of structural inequality...Addressing this requires coordinated efforts both regionally and globally to ensure the DSR agenda is not only locally relevant but globally owned and implemented." ANONYMOUS

During evaluation conversations, some participants reflected on the factors which might have stopped the DSR initiative having as much influence in the Movement as they may have hoped. These are summarised below:

CONTEXT: Some participants noted that the Southern Africa context for DSR is very specific and quite different to other global contexts in relation to racism, particularly South Africa's history of segregation and apartheid. This has resulted in some differences in the DSR complaints procedure, compared to other procedures operating in MSF. For example, the DSR complaints procedure draws on principles of Deep Democracy¹³ to create transparency in the process, with the complainant getting to find out about any sanctions put in place from disciplinary procedures that were instigated as a result of their complaint. This is different to OCB's GAREC procedure, where confidentiality is prioritised and the complainant does not usually find out about the outcomes of disciplinary procedures against perpetrators of abuse, unless an exception is made for particularly severe cases.

These specific and cultural differences in principles may have made it more difficult for the DSR initiative to influence wider complaints procedures in MSF. Furthermore, evaluation of MSF's People, Respect and Value project¹⁴ demonstrates that issues of workplace discrimination – as well as approaches to resolutions – are

¹³ Deep Democracy was an approach to group facilitation and conflict resolution which was developed in post-apartheid South Africa. First implemented in South Africa's national utility company, Greg and Myrna Lewis were asked to help build a new workplace environment where people could cooperate as team members, overcoming the deeply rooted racial, cultural and gender-based tensions in the workforce. Today, the methodology is used in different sectors of society and in over 20 countries.

¹⁴ [Strengthening Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the MSF Movement through a Grassroots-led Approach: Evaluation of the MSF Intersectional Project "People, Respect, and Value" Phase II \(2019-2023\)](#)

often culturally specific, meaning that in principle, some of the DSR initiative's approaches may not be widely applicable beyond the Southern African context – or even within countries in the region other than South Africa.

GOVERNANCE: MSF SnA is a partner section of OCB and is governed by the Southern Africa Association and Board. It is located in a region where there are OCB, OCG and OCA field projects in operation and also hosts SAMU, which has reporting and budget lines into OCB's Medical Department. **As a result of this governance context, the remit of the DSR initiative to drive change (e.g. to policies and practices that may perpetuate racial inequality) has necessarily been restricted to the Section Office and – to some extent – the Association, since field project policies and practices are owned by their respective OCs.**

Whilst the DSR initiative has had some success in delivering DSR training to OCB field projects in the region, this has taken some time to arrange, which has slowed progress and limited the initiative's impact in the region. The question of the accessibility of the DSR initiative to field project staff is covered in more detail in Sections 2.4 and 3.3. However, it is worth noting here that delays in negotiating project access have been partially the result of workload (the OCB DEI lead is a team of one, covering all of OCB's 9 departments and 37 countries!), logistical challenges for travelling to regional projects, and some internal resistance within parts of OCB because of differences in structures and approaches between OCB and DSR.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT: Although DEI leads were familiar with the content of the DSR initiative's work, they found it difficult to comment on the impacts of initiative and the extent to which tangible change had occurred, perhaps as a result of the lack of monitoring and evaluation data for the initiative (see Section 3.1). Although they did not directly make this connection, it seems possible that **having better impact data for the initiative – and being more proactive in sharing this widely – could increase the influence of the DSR initiative within the Movement in future.** This could provide the evidence needed for DEI leads to advocate for DSR approaches in their own networks and sections more proactively, and lead to more opportunities for collaboration.

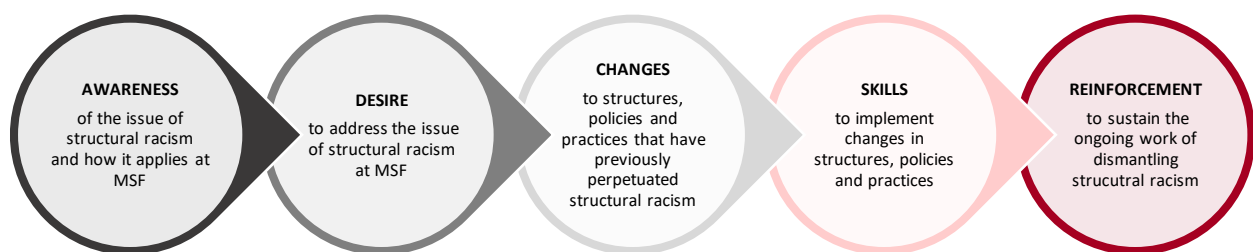
CHALLENGES: One of the DEI leads noted that the use of the ombudsperson for handling complaints could have been “groundbreaking” for the wider Movement, since other complaints processes are usually managed internally. However, the challenges with contracting and managing this service – as well as the lack of use of the service by staff – has meant that there has not been an opportunity to ‘prove’ this as a potential alternative approach to managing complaints (see Section 2.2.4).

In conclusion, the DSR initiative has occupied a unique space within the Movement. Its founders conceived of the initiative as a *“disruptor”* – i.e. not necessarily a model to share with the Movement, but a demonstration of how to take tangible action to resolve locally identified issues of structural racism. Indeed, a number of evaluation participants noted that the name – Dismantling Structural Racism – had been a provocation because it is one of only two DEI initiatives that specifically name racism as their focus (the other being the Anti-racism TIC). One person from the Section Office noted, *“It's a highly controversial term – a problem that some people might want to run away from”*, making the name *“a powerful statement of intent.”* However, there is an inherent tension between the initiative's disruptor status and its need to collaborate and become integrated with other parts of the Movement in order to do its own work in the region and to have a wider influence beyond the region. **It may be that the initiative could have a greater impact in future if it took a more strategic and transversal approach to working with the wider Movement, enabling the initiative to pool resources and expertise to increase its reach and influence within and beyond the region.**

3.3 TO WHAT EXTENT DO STAKEHOLDERS FEEL THAT THE DSR INITIATIVE HAS ADDRESSED THE STRUCTURAL RACISM CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN THE SECTION OFFICE, ASSOCIATION AND REGION? (EQ2)

3.3.1 BACKGROUND

Organisational change is a complex and difficult process – even more so with an initiative such as DSR, which spans multiple stakeholders, a wide geographical region and addresses the emotive and significant topic of structural racism within an organisation rooted in post-colonial traditions. Organisational change initiatives tend to be most successful when they incorporate a number of key elements that enable individuals and groups to deliver the intended outcomes. The diagram below outlines these elements in relation to the DSR initiative.¹⁵



This section of the report will use this model as a basis for assessing the extent to which the DSR initiative has addressed the structural racism challenges experienced in MSF SnA and the Region.

3.3.2 AWARENESS AND DESIRE

Evaluation participants from the Section Office, Association and field projects were clear that the DSR initiative had been highly effective in raising awareness of the issue of structural racism and in generating the desire to engage and participate in the change. This is illustrated by the comments below and in some of the examples provided in Section 3.1:



The DSR workshop gave “life, motivation, courage and support to everyone who participated...to defend and watch over their human rights to at least try to achieve equity for all.” **FIELD PROJECT**

“I see [the DSR Unit] pulling the other younger ones also into the space so that they can start the conversation and not be scared.” **SECTION OFFICE**

This work has also been supported by the Regional Support HR Team Leader, who is acting as the lead for the newly created Gamechanger of taking DSR to the field. By incorporating DSR conversations to existing visits to field projects, this has provided a platform to explore some issues within the projects as well as to increase staff

¹⁵ This model is based on the ADKAR framework for managing change. It has been adapted to reflect the needs of the DSR initiative, in particular the requirement to deliver tangible changes to structures, policies and practices that have previously perpetuated structural racism in MSF SnA.

awareness of the reasons for some of the differences between LHS and IMS terms, such as MSF's legal obligations in this area.

However, evaluation participants have noted that there have been some challenges for the DSR initiative in generating the awareness and desire to participate amongst different groups:

1. From within the Section Office, it has been more difficult to raise awareness with IMS members and some evaluation participants have questioned SAMU's desire to participate (see Sections 2.4 and 2.2.2).
2. Several members of staff from the Section Office have noticed some reduction in engagement with the DSR initiative over time. Early on, one person commented that support for the initiative was widespread, but that it experienced "*push back*" from some departments when it required a commitment of time and/or resources. This may have been exacerbated by the position of the DSR Unit in the structure of MSF SnA (see Section 2.2.3) and the fact that the Unit has had to rely heavily on others to deliver change (e.g. Gamechangers, Association team, HR), rather than being in a position to decide and implement change in its own right.

More recently, some evaluation participants have noticed DSR momentum reducing, and awareness about the direction of travel has not been as strong or as widespread. For example, one member of staff from the Section Office commented that from last year, "*there hasn't been as much engagement, and I see that we are now trying to get other things [e.g. Pride] onboard as well...I think they can touch on some of these things but it slightly shifts our focus in a way.*" It may be that this is partly because of the contrast in approach between the early phases of the DSR initiative (where people were directly involved in identifying issues of racism that they wanted to tackle) and more recent work in the wider DEI space, which has not been driven by 'grassroots' feedback.

3. Some Association members and members of staff from field projects have also reflected that the DSR initiative has not been as successful in generating awareness and desire amongst key decision makers in regional projects, such as those in Operations or Coordinator and Head of Mission positions.¹⁶ Their comments make it clear that without operational awareness and engagement at the appropriate level, the DSR initiative is unlikely ever to get to the stage of addressing structural racism issues within regional projects, because the work will not be prioritised.



"Even if we empower the people in the fields, there is little or nothing they can really do to change the situation...[so] in this initiative, we are targeting just the recipients of structural racism [i.e. rather than those with the power to make changes]" ASSOCIATION

"It has happened more from the associative side than from the Ops side...the project leadership don't see it as a priority." FIELD PROJECT

"It's not been taken seriously by Operations, unlike when we talk about Safeguarding. Already we have got an officer in – we're already spearheading that. When it comes to DSR, nothing's actually happening." FIELD PROJECT

¹⁶ This is perhaps not surprising, given the context of the 2023 open letter from the Intersectional Operations Initiative: *From Patients to Paperwork: The Tale of MSF's Institutional Direction*. While this demonstrates operational support for workforce development projects such as the DSR initiative, it also highlights the burdens that project involvement can put on operational activity.

3.3.3 CHANGES TO STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The DSR initiative has resulted in some changes to those structures, policies and practices that have previously perpetuated structural racism. These changes have tended to take place more within the Section Office than within the Association or regional field projects. However, there has not been a systematic approach to achieving structural or procedural change in any of these settings.

I. EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE CHANGES TO STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Examples of positive changes to structures, policies and practices include:

Section Office

- Delivery of the BLA to promote professional development and the SANOU DSR module and induction training for new staff.
- Creation of accountability structures for DSR, including the annual DSR workshop at the General Assembly and SEC reporting.
- Development of Anti-racism policy and introduction of ombudsperson complaints process. This work is not yet complete, as issues with the ombudsperson process are yet to be resolved and Anti-racism Officers¹⁷ have not yet been fully trained. However, this policy and procedure is a key milestone nevertheless.
- Development of a new Harassment policy. Although the remit of this policy extends beyond racism, the DSR Unit has contributed to the working group and policy to ensure it aligns with the Anti-racism policy.
- Review of Finance Department policies and procedures. The terms of the supplier contract in relation to racism¹⁸ have also been invoked in MSF SnA's contract with its auditors, which has resulted in MSF SnA appointing new auditors.

Association and field projects

- DARA rep committees have been identified in OCB projects where the DSR Manager has run the initial DSR training workshop. They are not yet operational because follow-up training has not yet taken place.
- Some small changes have taken place in one rural field project in South Africa, including providing larger transport to enable both IMS and LHS to travel to the nearest town for shopping (previously this had only been available to IMS). In addition, a cook has been brought in so that any member of staff can get a meal at lunchtime (previously only IMS had been able to go home for lunch). Whilst it is not possible directly to attribute these changes to the DSR initiative, it does seem likely that DSR conversations may have had a ripple effect, influencing the choices of those in management positions in the project to change systems and policies to be inclusive, as situations arose.
- DSR conversations in projects have also often used the example of changes to the living wage benchmarking approach piloted in Southern Africa (and since adopted to the wider Movement) to encourage teams to have formal conversations about concerns of inequalities, rather than keeping those concerns unspoken or hidden.

¹⁷ Previously, this was called the Anti-Racism Officer (AROF) role.

¹⁸ These terms state that if there is evidence of racism within the supplier's own organisation or from the supplier to members of MSF SnA, this can be grounds for terminating the contract.

II. LIMITATIONS TO STRUCTURE AND POLICY CHANGES IN THE SECTION OFFICE

These positive changes are significant in their own right, but even within the Section Office – where MSF SnA has the greatest control over policies and practices – there has not been a holistic review of policies and procedures with a DSR lens. A number of Section Office staff commented that when policies were being reviewed or created, more people were willing and able to provide feedback on the potential for structural racism as a result of the DSR initiative. However, most evaluation participants could not give examples of policies or procedures that had changed as a result of this type of feedback.



“The outcomes of the discussions are also not fully integrated in HR policies which I have felt like misses the whole point. There is no form of integration into MSF's existing structures, and I find that pointless, if whatever comes out of the DSR will not help inform any institutional policies.” **ANONYMOUS**

“This entire process was more like rich in theory, but poor in practicalities. Yes, we’re doing a lot of practical things, but the actual going back to the workplace and trying to actually address these stories...the wheels are turning very slowly on that.” **SECTION OFFICE**

Furthermore, some evaluation participants noted that there were aspects of changes to policies and practices that have not fully addressed the nature of structural racism experienced by members of staff. For example:

- The ombudsperson procedure has not been utilized, suggesting issues remain with trust in the process (see Section 2.2.4).
- Few tangible changes have been made to support IMS staff recruited by the Section Office. Whilst anti-racism briefings are offered and debriefings via psycho-social support can cover experiences of racism, the Section Office can only ‘accompany’ IMS through a complaint, because this has to take place through the OC procedures that apply to the project or mission setting where they are placed.
- The BLA provides opportunities for development, but only from managerial level upwards. For those joining MSF in lower role levels – who are likely to have less privilege and power than those in higher role levels – there are no equivalent accelerator programmes to develop skills and experience to drive progression. As a result, this only addresses the issue of structural racism in relation to career development for some groups of staff and not others.

III. LIMITATIONS TO STRUCTURE AND POLICY CHANGES IN THE ASSOCIATION

Within the Association, the Board approved the Anti-racism policy and members are covered by those aspects of the policy which apply to the Association. Beyond that, internal Association structures and policies have not been reviewed as part of the DSR initiative. Association members do have access to avenues such as the SEC or DSR Unit if they have a complaint of structural or interpersonal racism (e.g. if the complaint is between Association members, rather than in an office or project setting where the relevant Section or OC procedures would apply).

IV. LIMITATIONS TO STRUCTURE AND POLICY CHANGES IN REGIONAL FIELD PROJECTS

Finally, it has been time-consuming for the DSR Unit to negotiate access to regional field projects run by OCs. As a result, DSR work in field projects is less advanced than had been hoped and has not yet got far enough to have delivered changes to structures, policies or practices at a local level. There have also been delays between holding the initial DSR workshops and follow-up training for the DARA reps (which has not yet taken place at the time of writing).

A number of evaluation participants commented that over time, they had seen some positive changes to policies and practices in MSF that addressed issues of structural racism or other aspects of disadvantage.¹⁹ However, it is clear that structural racism is still prevalent in many field projects. Appendix 5 provides a summary



“There hasn’t been much traction or much initiative since the unit was created. Our colleagues say it’s just a token.” **FIELD PROJECT**

“There have not yet been significant changes in terms of racism because there is still no implementation of the principles learned during the workshop, because the workshop is not yet complete.” **FIELD PROJECT**

“While DSR has brought a positive shift in the mindset at some levels, the impact in the field is still limited.” **ASSOCIATION**

of examples of structural racism in field projects provided by participants during this evaluation.

Importantly, for some evaluation participants, the slow pace of the work and the delays to future training sessions have eroded trust in the work. As one participant commented, *“what happened was that they promised the workshop to take place in February and after that there was no credible and official information. This has raised doubts about the serenity of the Project itself.”*

3.3.4 SKILLS AND REINFORCEMENT

Dismantling structural racism not only requires changes to structures and policies themselves but also needs people to have the skills and behaviours to put these policies into practice, as well as the continued focus to embed new approaches into ongoing working practices (i.e. reinforcement). Examples of this might include:

- Training for managers and others in how to handle complaints of racism or abuse – both the procedures to follow and the interpersonal skills to manage the issue with sensitivity and compassion.
- Unconscious bias training to help identify how and where personal biases might cause someone to apply a policy or procedure differently to different people.
- Collective focus on embedding a DSR lens into regular working practices (e.g. strategic and operational planning; approaches to meetings) so that equality and inclusion are habitually considered as part of decision making.

Whilst the DSR initiative has successfully continued to offer awareness training – most particularly in the Section Office – it has not had a focus on developing skills and reinforcement behaviours for staff and managers, because this has not been a part of any of the Gamechanger workstreams.

¹⁹ The changes they referred to were not the result of the DSR initiative but had emerged from other initiatives and projects to tackle policy change.

Several evaluation participants commented on the impact that interpersonal skills and behaviours have in perpetuating structural racism, even when robust policies or procedures are in place. It may be that an increased focus on developing safeguarding interpersonal skills and embedding new ways of working could help the DSR initiative in future to effect deeper and more widespread change.

”

“In X mission, I have witnessed a colleague being fired from work in a party, outside working hours...without [being] given a fair disciplinary hearing, according to the Internal Regulations.” **FIELD PROJECT**

“I’ve had instances where I’ve really had to push back on decisions that were just taken emotionally, and people using their positions to sort of put pressure on the junior employees.” **SECTION OFFICE**

“There is some improvement on the national staff, but there are still some behaviours that need to be better on expatriates, especially those of the white race.” **FIELD PROJECT**

In relation to people selected for the BLA, *“We need to acknowledge the importance of having buy-in from the managers themselves...having line managers being actively involved in the inception of that person being identified will also ensure that the same manager sees value in creating a space for this particular person [for example] to be sent on a detachment...where they can practice what they have learned.”* **SECTION OFFICE**

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DSR INITIATIVE TO INFORM DECISIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF DSR WORK IN SOUTHERN AFRICA? (EQ6)

The evidence from this evaluation shows that DSR initiative has been highly successful in raising awareness of issues of structural and interpersonal racism within the MSF SnA Section Office, Association and in those field projects visited by the DSR Manager. It has also been successful in motivating a wide range of people to engage with making changes to address the issues identified. Most evaluation participants have valued early phase workshops, ongoing training and events in the Section Office, field project workshops and accountability moments at the General Assembly as safe spaces to explore issues and experiences of racism. This in itself is a significant change to organizational culture, moving the topic of racism from something “*taboo*” to something which can be more openly discussed. Furthermore, many evaluation participants recognize the role these events have played in building their own learning, changing their personal perspectives, and increasing their confidence and capability to identify instances of racism and advocate for change.

The Gamechangers have also delivered some important changes to structures, policies and working practices to address issues of structural racism, with the greatest number of evaluation participants rating the Baobab Leadership Accelerator and Anti-racism policy and complaints process as the most significant. Evaluation participants have felt more mixed about the success of the Defusing White Fragility, Mandatory Participation and Accountability Gamechangers, with many reflecting that it was difficult to see or comment on the impacts of some of this work because of a lack of monitoring and evaluation data. Other concerns were also raised about accountability and participation, with some Section Office evaluation participants observing less visible engagement from leadership and SAMU after the early stages of the initiative. Furthermore, some participants wondered whether the position of the DSR Unit in the organizational structure really allowed for accountability mechanisms to function properly. This was partly related to the DSR Manager role being a middle-management position, and partly to some confusion over areas of accountability between the DSR Unit and HR Department.

However, whilst many of the Gamechangers are significant achievements in their own right, the initiative has not taken a systematic approach to changing structures, policies and practices that have previously perpetuated structural racism. Nor has it undertaken any targeted work to build the skills people need to apply policies and structures fairly and equally, or to handle concerns about interpersonal or structural racism effectively. Since policy review/change has not been addressed holistically, it seems likely that aspects of structural racism may persist within structures and policies that have not been reviewed. At field project level, this is certainly the case because the DSR work here has not progressed beyond initial workshops and conversations.

Given all this, it is perhaps not surprising that many participants recognise that there is more work to be done. Indeed, there is a clear appetite to continue this work within the Section Office, Association and field projects – and an accompanying concern that this work does not get lost amongst other priorities.



“I don’t want DSR to be packed into a box. We’ve got to make time for repeated conversations and engagement on topic. The conversation never ends.” SECTION OFFICE

“I believe that the creation of a unit at mission level to follow up on reported cases would be very valuable.” FIELD PROJECT

4.2 “WHAT’S NEXT?”

The “*what’s next*” question was one which several participants asked during this evaluation, recognising that the initial work of the DSR initiative was coming to a close. The context for this question is important. Assuming plans for the new operational directorate, MSF Ubuntu²⁰, are approved, this would provide an opportunity for MSF SnA to create a radically different approach to the workforce policies and structures governing field operations under Ubuntu’s control. These policies and structures could foreground diversity and anti-racism, delivering a more inclusive and equitable experience for all members of the global workforce – and creating an alternative paradigm for the wider Movement to learn from.

However, the wider context is challenging, with the economic climate resulting in increasing project costs at the same time as decreasing income (for example, as a result of USAID cuts). So, how can the work of DSR be protected and mainstreamed in a context where resources and budget are limited?

Whilst it is not within the remit of this evaluation to recommend particular ways forward for the DSR initiative, learning from this evaluation would suggest that at least some of the answers to this question lie in taking a more structured and targeted approach to the work going forward. Key areas of learning and recommendations are outlined in the sections below.

4.2.1 A MORE STRATEGIC AND STRUCTURED APPROACH

Several evaluation participants reflected that there seemed to be a lack of clarity about the remit of the DSR initiative and its priorities and plans going forward (see Section 3.3.2). As one anonymous participant commented, “*When DSR started - it was meant to be a short-term project...and would eventually become part of the daily operations and be incorporated into HR practices and ways of working. It does not look like there is a plan for this from Management and it’s just continuing without real justification and plans for the future.*” It is clear from Sections 2.2.2 and 3.3.3iv, when a structured approach to this type of work is lacking, it can negatively affect momentum and trust, whereas regular progress – even in small ways – can help keep conversations alive.

R1.1 Decide on the strategic priorities for DSR going forward and create a 3–5-year plan of work to deliver those priorities. Here, it will be important to consider:

- **Will the work focus on the Section Office, Association and/or regional field projects?**
- **Will the work continue to focus on racism, or will it encompass a wider DEI remit?** In this evaluation, participants have expressed different views about this. For example, whilst some have wondered whether the recent Pride work has shifted the focus from racism, others have been keen for the work to take a more nuanced approach to racism (e.g. looking at xenophobia and the experience of people from different races at work), and others have noted the intersectionality of people’s experiences of structural or interpersonal discrimination. One of the strengths of the early phases of DSR work was that it engaged people in identifying which aspects of their experience felt relevant and important to address. Perhaps further consultation now could help to inform future direction in this area?
- **If work continues across the region, how will you ensure it is relevant and meaningful to the different contexts and issues experienced?** Whilst it is clear that there are some commonalities in experience across different settings, the DSR Manager has observed that levels of literacy around the topics of DSR and DEI vary significantly within field projects – as do the aspects that feel most relevant, depending on the socio-cultural context for each country. Furthermore, legislation across different countries also varies, so solutions to issues of structural racism will need to

²⁰ MSF Ubuntu will be a collaboration across MSF East Africa and MSF Southern Africa.

account for these differences. A flexible model for this work, which enables issues to be locally identified and resolved, will be important to ensure the work is meaningful and relevant across different contexts.

- **What do you want the outcomes of future work to be?** Findings from this evaluation suggest that it could be most useful for future work to focus on taking a more systematic approach to policy/structure change, and on developing interpersonal skills to apply new policies and structures effectively.

R1.2 Manage the expectations of yourselves and others about what is achievable, given the governance structures and other factors that affect where and how MSF SnA has influence over work within and beyond the Section Office. There are risks in failing to deliver DSR work, perhaps particularly in field projects if people feel empowered to speak out as part of a DSR process but then face recrimination afterwards if they do so.

4.2.2 HOW THE DSR UNIT WILL WORK

Some evaluation participants raised concerns about where the DSR Unit sits within the Section Office structure and how it can drive engagement across stakeholder groups such as the Association and field projects, where MSF SnA has limited ability to influence. It is certainly the case that at its current size, the DSR Unit by itself is too small to effectively deliver a remit to dismantle structural racism across the Section Office, Association and regional field projects. With that in mind, it will be important to review the resourcing for the unit, its position in the organisation structure and its model of work, to find an effective way forward.

R2.1 Consider whether there should be greater representation for DSR at Management Team level, particularly if MSF SnA has any ambitions to develop policies and structures for MSF Ubuntu that foreground diversity and anti-racism.

R2.2. Explore where DSR work should sit within the organisational structure. There is merit in reviewing whether this work could be connected to the forthcoming safeguarding agenda. In its fullest sense, the safeguarding work can cover both the proactive creation of safe and inclusive working environments, as well as the reporting of abuse or discrimination. However, because the safeguarding agenda has a primary focus on sexual harassment and abuse, it could be easy for this work to lose the wider anti-racism and DEI agenda, so it is likely to be valuable to structure the roles and work here to ensure DSR and/or DEI is a consideration which spans the safeguarding agenda.

R2.3 Work more collaboratively, to help you achieve more with less. Different collaborations will be needed, depending on which areas of work the DSR initiative focuses on going forward:

- **Developing stronger relationships with OC DEI stakeholders will be needed to continue to develop work in regional field projects and can also bring additional resource and expertise to the region** (for example, plans currently in development for Anti-racism training in the region).
- **Developing stronger relationships with people in Operations roles and in project/mission leadership roles (e.g. HoMs, Coordinators) will also be needed to get genuine engagement and commitment to deliver DSR work at field project level** (see Section 3.3.2). For example, this would probably require someone in a mission/project leadership role to take on DSR lead responsibilities as well as local representatives to drive the work forward and act as a support system for members of staff who want to make a complaint. It could be good to identify one mission or project who would be willing to partner with you in this way. This would be a manageable piece of work with plenty of learning involved which you could apply to future work. You could also use successes achieved here to spread the word across the region and get more missions and projects interested in doing the work.
- **In the Section Office and/or Association, more collaboration with policy owners would be needed to deliver more widespread changes to policies and structures to dismantle structural racism.** Whilst there are some good reasons why the DSR initiative did not sit within the HR department, the lack of clarity around accountability and inconsistent collaboration has probably slowed progress substantially in this area to date.
- **A circle model of accountability could be useful within the Section Office and/or Association.** Here, a small working group would take shared responsibility for embedding DSR work across different departments/areas of the

Association. This could draw on safeguarding approaches taken in MSF UK, where the lead would undertake DSR risk assessments with each department/area and then the group would work collectively on putting in place actions to address issues. In this approach, it would be important for circle group members to be holders of relevant policies and structures, so that group members have the ability to effect change directly.

R2.4 Review the skills needed to deliver this work going forward. A major strength of the DSR initiative to date has been that it has been led and supported by people with lived experience of racism. This remains hugely important to delivering work that is meaningful and grounded going forward. However, if the work takes on a more structured approach and/or has a greater emphasis on systematic structure/policy review in future, you may also need to draw on wider skills sets – such as change management and policy expertise – to support the delivery of your intended outcomes.

4.2.3 WHAT GETS COUNTED, GETS DONE AND WHAT DOESN'T GET SEEN, GETS NOTICED

Several evaluation participants wanted to see more monitoring and evaluation of the DSR initiative, to understand the extent to which the initiative has been effective. For work such as DSR – which has a direct and tangible impact on people's working lives in MSF, and which must necessarily happen over a long period of time – the ability to publicly share the impact of the work matters. It is part of the mechanism by which MSF can build trust amongst stakeholders and demonstrate that the organisation continues to take this work seriously.

Furthermore, this evaluation has shown that building and maintaining trust in DSR work also relies on ongoing and visible engagement of key stakeholders. Where evaluation participants have observed less engagement, this has caused some to question whether colleagues are really *“putting in the work”* needed.

R3.1 Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to set targets for the outcomes you want to achieve and plans for collecting the data you need to measure progress. This should be simple and practical in design, accounting for the challenges of collecting data across different stakeholder groups. Some good practice ideas include:

- Consistently tracking attendance at DSR events to help measure the reach of the initiative and monitor whether events are reaching expected attendance targets. If these data allow you to track attendance by different factors (e.g. country, staff category, level of seniority), this will help to show whether the initiative is reaching all stakeholder groups.
- Incorporating data collection into existing structures and events. For example, SANOU training or the GA DSR workshop could include live polls or short surveys for participants to track the quality of events and perceptions of progress. This can help increase response rates significantly, compared to sending out surveys at different times.
- Using a 'You Said We Did' approach: reviewing monitoring and evaluation data at least once a year, then sharing the data and the follow-up actions with stakeholders will help to demonstrate accountability and build trust.
- Working with the Communications department to proactively promote DSR initiative work internally and externally.

R3.2 Ensure key stakeholders continue to participate in DSR events to demonstrate MSF's SnA's commitment to the work.

R3.3 If the defusing white fragility or other work continues with SAMU, engage some members of the SAMU team directly in the planning and delivery – so that this work can have greater ownership here.

In conclusion, the DSR initiative has successfully made a start in dismantling structural racism in MSF Southern Africa. The first years of this work have strongly developed people's awareness of structural racism and have created some of the tools to start addressing the issues of structural racism in the Section Office and Southern Africa region. This is a strong foundation, but the work is not done. There is a clear appetite from evaluation participants to continue to build on DSR work and a clear opportunity to do so – particularly if and when MSF Ubuntu comes into being. This could enable MSF Southern Africa to further transform the DSR initiative's *“powerful statement of intent”* into a deeper and more systemic plan of action for the future.

APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

EQ1: To what extent has the DSR initiative delivered its intended outcomes from the DSR Roadmap and Gamechangers?

EQ2: To what extent do stakeholders feel that the DSR initiative has addressed the structural racism challenges experienced in the Section Office, Association and region?

EQ3: What do stakeholders think have been the most significant changes that have resulted from the DSR initiative?

EQ4: To what extent has the DSR initiative influenced MSF's wider approach to DEI?

EQ5: How accessible and inclusive has the DSR initiative been for staff and Association members?

EQ6: What can we learn from the implementation of the DSR initiative to inform decisions about the future of DSR work in Southern Africa?

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

MSF Southern Africa Strategic Orientations 2020 – 2023

Reos Partners DSR analysis and project reports

Annual DSR workshop summaries (2022, 2023, 2024)

MSF Southern Africa DSR Roadmap

Gamechanger specific reports, records and documentation (e.g. Anti-racism policy, DSR and Baobab participation records, DSR SANOU training module)

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT SAMPLE INFORMATION

DSR Unit	Semi-structured interviews with 4 members of the DSR Unit, past and present.
Section Office staff	Semi-structured interviews and focus group with 19 members of staff in total, including Heads of Departments, Gamechanger leads and staff from a range of departments.
Association members	Semi-structured interview with one Association member for inception planning. Focus group with 11 Association members from eSwatini, Zimbabwe, South Africa Malawi, and Lesotho, including a mix of Board members and non-Board members. NB: members from Zambia were unable to participate and were sent an anonymous form for feedback. We were unable to make contact with members from Angola and Mozambique as planned.
IMS recruited by the Section Office	Semi-structured interviews with 2 IMS members.
Field project staff	Focus group with 7 field project staff from Zimbabwe and anonymous questionnaire sent to 7 field project staff from Mozambique.
DEI stakeholders	Semi-structured interview with 4 DEI and Safeguarding stakeholders from the wider MSF Movement.

APPENDIX 4: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

INDIVIDUAL CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

SECTION A: FOR GAME-CHANGER LEADS & HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

YOUR GAME-CHANGER WORK OR DSR INVOLVEMENT

1. Tell me about the process of working on this game-changer OR Tell me about your involvement in the DSR initiative so far?
2. Looking back now on what you wanted to achieve at the start, to what extent do you feel that you delivered what you set out to do?
3. For you, what have been the biggest successes for this game-changer and why? What were the enabling factors that made your work possible / easier?
4. For you, what were the most challenging aspects of this game-changer and why? What were the barriers or limitations that made your work more difficult?
5. As I understand it, one of the intentions of involving the leadership team with implementing the game-changers was to encourage team members to work together and to integrate DSR into their own departmental plans and activities. Was that also your understanding? If so, how successful has that been?
6. What would you like to see happen in future with this gamechanger?
7. As part of this evaluation, we'd like to find out whether the DSR initiative has had any influence on MSF's wider approach to DEI. In your work on this game-changer, to what extent have you had any contact with people beyond MSF Southern Africa? If so, who and in what capacity?

THE DSR INITIATIVE OVERALL

8. To what extent do you think the DSR initiative has been successful in addressing the challenges of structural racism in MSF SnA? Have some been more successful than others? If so, which and why?
9. Looking across the whole of the DSR initiative – from early workshops exploring the issues to the roadmap, game-changers and current activity – what do you see as the main changes that have resulted from this work? Which of these changes do you think is the most significant and why?
10. What would you like to see happen in future for the wider DSR initiative?

WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?

11. What else – if anything – would you like to talk about in relation to DSR? For example, if I'd asked you before we started what were the most important things for you to share about the DSR initiative in our conversation, what would you have said and have we talked about these things? If not, let's do that now.

SECTION B: FOR DEI STAKEHOLDERS

NB: Questions were selected and tailored to each different person in this group

YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE DSR INITIATIVE

1. How and when did you first hear about the DSR initiative?
2. What has been your involvement with the DSR initiative since it started?
3. Based on your experience and looking across the whole of the DSR initiative – from early workshops exploring the issues to the roadmap, game-changers and current activity – what do you see as the main changes that have resulted from this work? Which of these changes do you think is the most significant and why?

4. Based on your experience, what do you see as the main challenges that the DSR initiative has faced?
5. To what extent do you think the DSR initiative has reached the different groups it was intended to reach – e.g. Section Office staff, IMS, field project staff, Association members?

THE WIDER INFLUENCE OF THE DSR INITIATIVE

6. As part of this evaluation, we'd like to find out whether the DSR initiative has had any influence on MSF's wider approach to DEI.
 - Are you aware of any aspect of the DSR initiative being adopted by other parts of MSF or of work in this area influencing the work of other parts of MSF or influencing attitudes/behaviours of others involved in related areas of work (e.g. GAREC, DEI roles)?
 - How – if at all – has working with people involved in the DSR initiative affected you?
7. What – if anything – do you think can be learned from the initiative to inform future work in this area? For example, are there aspects of the design and implementation of the initiative that were particularly successful, or aspects that could have been done better or differently?

THE FUTURE OF THE DSR INITIATIVE

8. What would you like to see happen in future for the DSR initiative?
9. Do you know of any other DEI initiatives or projects where the initial phase has come to an end? If so, what has happened in these cases? In what ways – if at all – has the project's work been embedded and integrated into everyday ways of working? How successful has this been?

WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?

10. What else – if anything – would you like to talk about in relation to DSR? For example, if I'd asked you before we started what were the most important things for you to share about the DSR initiative in our conversation, what would you have said and have we talked about these things? If not, let's do that now.

SECTION C: ANONYMOUS FORM (SENT TO ALL PARTICIPANTS IN INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP CONVERSATIONS)

You have been sent this form because you have taken part in an individual or group conversation for evaluating the Dismantling Structural Racism (DSR) initiative.

We understand that there may be reasons why you may not have felt comfortable sharing all of your feedback about the DSR initiative during the conversation. For example, if you were taking part in a group conversation, you may not have wanted to share some of your feedback in front of your colleagues. So we have created this form for you to use if you would like to share any feedback that you did not share during the conversation.

The feedback you give using this form is completely anonymous. You will not be asked for your name or any details about yourself. The form is also set-up so that no data is captured about the IP addresses which have been used to submit the responses.

If you would like to share any feedback or thoughts about the DSR initiative which you did not share in the conversation, please use the space below to do so.

GROUP CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

SECTION A: SECTION OFFICE STAFF, IMS & ASSOCIATION MEMBERS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What has been your involvement with the DSR initiative? 2. When you think about your experience of the DSR initiative, what do you think are the most significant changes that have resulted from this work and why? 3. Whatever your level of involvement in DSR, you will have views on what has worked well about the initiative and what hasn't worked so well. It would be great to share this so that other people in MSF can learn from it if they are working on new anti-racism or DEI projects. So, let's imagine that MSF SnA was starting the DSR initiative again from the beginning and that you were in charge. What would you do the same and what would you do differently this time round? 4. What would you like to see for the future of anti-racism activity in MSF SnA? 5. What have we missed? Is there any other aspect of the DSR initiative that you'd like to talk about now? Anything that is important that we haven't had a chance to explore?
SECTION B: FIELD PROJECT STAFF / DARA REPS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What has been your involvement with the DSR initiative that Tandi came to introduce? 2. Before this work started, how would you describe the approach to anti-racism or diversity, equity and inclusion in the project? 3. What 3 words would you use to describe the training that Tandi delivered when she visited the project? 4. Do you think anything has changed as a result of the work so far? Which of these changes do you think is the most significant and why? 5. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, how important do you think it is for this project to be involved in DEI initiatives for staff? 6. What would you like to see for the future of DEI activity in your project? 7. What have we missed? Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about now in relation to this topic? Anything that is important that we haven't had a chance to explore?
SECTION C: FIELD PROJECT STAFF – ANONYMOUS FEEDBACK FORM
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you participate in the training on Dismantling Structural Racism that Tandi facilitated? 2. If you answered yes, what did you think of the training on Dismantling Structural Racism that Tandi facilitated? You can think, for example, if you have learned something new from training; which parts of the training were most relevant to you and your project; or if there was any aspect of the training that you consider could have been done differently or better. 3. Do you think anything has changed as a result of the training? You can reflect on whether the training has changed the way you and others think or talk about racism, diversity, equity and inclusion. You can also consider if there have been changes in policies or working practices in your project because of the workshop. 4. What would you like to see in the future of anti-racist and diversity, equity, and inclusion work in your project? You can think, for example, what you consider to be the biggest challenges in these areas in your project, or what behaviours, policies and working practices you would like to see change to combat racism and discrimination. 5. If you would like to share any comments or thoughts about the DSR initiative that you have not shared during the conversation, please use the space below to do so.

5 APPENDIX 5: EXAMPLES OF STRUCTURAL RACISM IN FIELD PROJECTS

The examples of structural racism in the table below were given by participants during this evaluation. It should be noted that some of these examples clearly demonstrate the intersectional nature of disadvantage, where multiple factors such as race, gender, level of seniority or contract type can combine to create different experiences of discrimination and privilege.

Career and professional development

"I still feel that if you are contracted from the Section Office of South Africa or Africa, you're still given the worst missions...they use the justifications of visas and stuff, but still I feel it's a bit of a lame excuse." **FIELD PROJECT**

"Why is it that when I am white, it's very easy for me to get the next mission when I'm still on another mission. But when So and So is black, it will take him three to four months?" **FIELD PROJECT**

"When applications were done for the Regional Support Team positions, one of the key requirements was the knowledge of the region, but none of the people that were hired had...ever worked in the region." **ASSOCIATION**

"MSF must stop using field experience as a reason to block African staff from progressing. You know, if someone is skilled and experienced, that should be a reason to support their growth, not to keep them stuck." **ASSOCIATION**

"Short contracts, fewer chances to expatriation and a feeling that our contributions are less." **ASSOCIATION**

Benefits

"There is still a racial separation during the activities as well as in free time." **FIELD PROJECT**

"Some of us have lived experiences where we know that we had to sleep in the office because expats could not stay in the same compound, even though I was a professional in my own right. We know experiences where you cannot sit in the front seat of a car because it's reserved for an expat. National staff is to sit at the back, right?" **ASSOCIATION**

"Some people get opportunities for career development based on the position they occupy in the project...three or five times the person goes for some training, whilst the other people have been marginalised." **FIELD PROJECT**

Decision making

"It took a lot of justification for people to approve that the national staff can get to a point of Coordinator kind of level, and also even when I got there, there were some meetings which, though I was a Coordinator, I wouldn't be allowed to attend." **ASSOCIATION**

"In large meetings, on whatever the subject I do not see the participation of any national or coloured official, in the decision-making process or opinion consultation, everything is done in closed rooms by foreign colleagues." **FIELD PROJECT**