

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE DISMANTLING STRUCTURE RACISM INITIATIVE IN MSF SOUTHERN AFRICA (2021-2025)

OVERVIEW

The Dismantling Structural Racism (DSR) initiative was launched in 2021 by the MSF Southern Africa Section following an international mandate to address racism and discrimination through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies. The initiative developed a DSR Roadmap and five Gamechanger initiatives aimed at tackling structural racism across the Section Office, Association, and selected OCB field projects. This evaluation was commissioned by DSR Unit and managed by the Vienna Evaluation Unit (VEU). Conducted between March and July 2025, the evaluation reviewed the initiative's relevance, effectiveness, and impact.

Results:

- *Over 350 staff in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Malawi participated in DSR trainings.*
- *The initiative helped shift discussions on structural and interpersonal racism from taboo to open and structured dialogue.*
- *Baobab Leadership Accelerator (BLA) supported tangible career development for several participants.*
- *Safe spaces were created that improved awareness, learning, and personal transformation on anti-racism.*
- *Limited evidence of structural policy change or long-term embedding due to weak monitoring systems.*
- *Leadership engagement and clarity on accountability structures were inconsistent.*
- *Field projects engaged only partially—mostly through awareness-raising workshops.*

Conclusions:

The DSR initiative significantly advanced awareness of structural racism and inspired individual transformation and engagement. However, structural change has been uneven, with progress hindered by limited monitoring, accountability mechanisms, and leadership visibility. The initiative demonstrated promise but requires a more structured, inclusive, and sustainable approach to achieve systemic impact.

Key Recommendations:

- **Strategic Direction:** *Develop a 3–5 year DSR plan; clarify whether the focus remains on structural racism or broadens to wider DEI work.*
- **Leadership & Accountability:** *Establish stronger leadership buy-in and consider DSR representation at the Management Team level.*
- **Integration & Collaboration:** *Embed DSR in departmental workplans; determine how to fit with safeguarding agenda.*
- **Monitoring:** *Create a practical M&E framework to track outcomes and progress.*
- **Field Adaptation:** *Develop context-sensitive approaches for field project engagement.*
- **Policy Review:** *Prioritise review of HR and recruitment policies*

Methodology:

- *Desk review of project documents and reports.*
- *Mixed-methods qualitative evaluation (Most Significant Change + thematic analysis).*
- *55 participants engaged through interviews and focus groups.*
- *Supplemented by anonymous feedback forms and surveys.*
- **Limitations:** *lack of baseline/outcome data, limited reach to field staff, and evaluative constraints due to sensitivity and remote*

Lessons Learned

Effective change requires not just individual transformation but sustained structural and policy reform, visible leadership support, and strategic integration across departments and contexts. Participatory approaches are essential but must be supported by strong systems for monitoring, accountability, and collaboration.

#participatory_evaluation #anti-racism #structural_change #leadership_accountability