

Report on Activities

Humanitarian Disarmament Forum on Intersectionality and Race

October 2020-February 2021

About this report

This is the report of the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020-2021 co-hosted by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots and Soka Gakkai International. It was prepared by the co-hosts together with Mines Action Canada, the Campaign's fiscal host and treasurer. The covers the activities provided for in Part One—the virtual forum held 19-21 October—and the guided self-learning process that comprises Part Two.

We are grateful to the donors that have generously funded and supported the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020-2021, as listed below.

Donors to the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020-2021

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
Human Rights Watch
PAX
International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
SEHLAC
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Soka Gakkai International

Overview

In 2020-2021, the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum has, for the first time, focused on diversity—particularly race—and on how to be more intersectional in working to advance humanitarian disarmament.

When this topic was proposed for the Forum at the beginning of 2020, the world looked very different. The Covid-19 pandemic had not yet emerged. The Black Lives Matter movement had existed for several years, but the large-scale global awareness and discussion of systemic, institutional and individual racism that occurred following the murder of George Floyd had not yet taken place.

These events spurred the organizing team to innovate and build on the traditional format and agendas used by the Forum in previous years. The result is a unique hybrid, three-part series of events, starting with the virtual forum, followed by an ongoing learning process, and completed by a face-to-face meeting, if possible.

As the annexed summary post and agenda show, the virtual Humanitarian Disarmament Forum held via Zoom on 19-21 October 2020 was attended by 115 activists from 40 countries. The virtual Forum sought introduce the theme of structural racism and intersectionality to the humanitarian disarmament and consider how it manifests in our work and impacts us personally. Participants who identify along racial lines participated in affinity group discussions to discuss sensitive and challenging topics, including personal experiences of racism, advantages or disadvantages faced because of one's identity(ies).

Financial Summary

The Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020-2021 has been made possible with the financial contributions of the co-hosts, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots and Soka Gakkai International, and five other non-governmental organizations: Human Rights Watch, PAX, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, SEHLAC and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). These organizations contributed a collective total of US \$29,066.

A total of \$29,042 has been spent executing parts one and two of the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum. This includes the virtual forum held in October 2020, which provided professional trainers, ensured facilitation of key sessions, enabled technical support for the virtual platform, produced visual notes recording the event, and saw live performances on musical artists. Since then, the funding has allowed the Forum to convene webinars, hold a monthly bookclub, produce online resources, to help structure and support to the self-learning process.

Immediately after the Forum, participants were invited to complete a survey to share their views on the experience. That input is provided in an annex. The organizing team continues to meet regularly to move the Forum forward and monitor its implementation.

For more information, please see the dedicated [website](#) and do not hesitate to contact the organizing team members listed below.

Organizing Team for the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020-2021

Farah Bogani
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Annex I: Published Report on the Virtual Forum

Bringing race and intersectionality to disarmament
By Farah Bogani, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
27 October 2020

A record turn-out of 115 people from 40 countries participated in Part One of the [Humanitarian Disarmament Forum](#) on 19-21 October, co-hosted by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots and Soka Gakkai International. This was the ninth annual gathering of activists working across humanitarian disarmament since 2012 and the first Forum to be held virtually. It marked the beginning of a learning process that will see campaigners spend the coming year studying and discussing racism and how to adopt an intersectional approach to their collective work.

Hayley Ramsey-Jones of Soka Gakkai International and Mary Wareham from the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots [opened](#) the Forum by acknowledging the need for the humanitarian disarmament community to commit to being race-inclusive and adopting a wider intersectional approach. Drawing on this urgency, this HDF aimed to create spaces for learning and honesty about “the ethical disconnect between what we are trying to achieve in this world and how we go about getting there.” From acknowledging low levels of participation in United Nations meetings by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from formerly colonised countries, to the unequal workplace structures and policies in our own organisations, humanitarian disarmament is not exempt from racism and inequality. The old adage of “it’s not about the weapons, but the people” is an important reminder for a community that focuses so heavily on arms issues, that sometimes we forget to look at who is in this field and how we work together.

Dominique Day, Chair of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, took the virtual stage as the Forum’s keynote. With strong encouragement for the HDF, Day stressed the importance of self-analysis. She urged everyone to question the racialised assumptions that have come from a legacy of normalising white supremacy and violence against Black bodies; noting that otherwise, criticisms of racism and bias in disarmament and emerging technologies ring hollow. Without taking steps to understand what systemic racism looks like, we delegitimise and compromise our campaigns and work. Day urged the need to renegotiate our worldview and interrogate ourselves about the ways that we have been complicit in, and perpetuate, systemic and structural racism. She called on participants to recognise that the racialised nature of policy and decision-making has an impact on disarmament spaces because “how we act internally absolutely impacts and reflects our external priorities and vice versa.”

Judy Blair and Reagan Price, co-founders of Anti-Racism at Work (ARAW), provided a warm welcome with virtual open arms to participants, and acted as facilitators of breakout sessions throughout the HDF. They emphasised that anti-racist and intersectional work can be powerful tools, as the concept of intersectionality asks us “to examine how each of our identities shapes the power we have to determine our own realities, as well as the realities of others. More specifically, the term intersectionality describes the way people’s social identities overlap to expand or contract their power.”

Throughout all three days of the Forum, participants broke into three affinity groups (Asian/Brown/Indigenous/Mixed, Black, and White) for discussion sessions. During these affinity group sessions, participants shared their experiences of power, privilege, and oppression. Discussions considered the complexity of identity, and evaluated how to apply learnings to the broader disarmament movement.

The [closing plenary](#) brought participants together to report back from the affinity group discussions. Gen Hidari presented reflections from the Asian/Brown/Indigenous/Mixed group, which included the complexities of holding these identities in relational power to whiteness and blackness. The group discussed colonial history and impact, and the way intersectionality can inform disarmament work today. Diana Prado represented the Black group. She shared the need for everyone to question who is not at the table and why, and to make visible those who are often invisible. Exchanging experiences of power and oppression across countries was also a fundamental part of the learning. Maaïke Beenes added the White group's discussions about how identities influence the way we work, how to grow representation in the movement, and how privilege can be used to platform voices that are not being heard. All attendees were then invited to share their questions and personal reflections to the wider group.

In the final session, Blair and Reagan from ARAW left participants with important lessons for continuing anti-racism work. They highlighted that the perpetual nature of doing anti-racist and intersectional work calls for constant self-reflection, and that solidarity is only one part of the process. When we commit to learning, we learn to “know better to do better”. Co-hosts Ramsey-Jones and Wareham provided brief closing remarks on what to expect next in the collective learning process of the Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020-2021, with thanks to all who made the event possible and to participants for their engagement.

The event also featured moving musical performances from British soul singer-songwriter Amahla and Afro-Colombian rapper Katerin Moreno (also known as Kryn o soul). Amahla opened the HDF with a live performance of her original song “Apathy”, inspired by acknowledging the power of self-care and privilege of being able to turn off or turn away from overwhelming and difficult news. Kryn o soul ended the forum on a high note, with a rap about her personal experience of being Afro-Colombian, and the power of identity.

While the goal of humanitarian disarmament work is to prevent and mitigate human suffering from weapons, this field is not exempt from being complicit in, perpetuating, and suffering the inequalities of power. This HDF has only been the first step in the long and collective journey to do anti-racist work. As Day said in her keynote “[t]here is no scenario where we can dismantle systemic racism without dismantling the enabling environment for it, and we all live in that environment.” As a result, “[i]f we want to make change, we have to commit to do it. We have to commit to do it by any means necessary.”

This article was first published in WILPF Reaching Critical Will's [First Committee Monitor](#), Vol. 18, No. 3 on 25 October 2020.

Annex II: Agenda

AGENDA

Racism and Intersectionality

Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020-2021

Part One: 19-21 October 2020 (online)

DAY 1, 19 October

Plenary (1 hour, recorded)

6:00am PDT/9:00am EDT/3:00pm CEST/4:00pm EET/EAT/9:00pm PHST

- Hosts welcome & Music performance
- Keynote speech
- Introduction to theme and affinity groups

Concurrent Affinity Groups (1 hour)

7:00am PDT/ 10:00am EDT/ 4:00pm CEST/5:00pm EET/EAT/ 10:00pm PHST

Our facilitated “affinity groups” are breakout group workshops where participants will self-identify along racial lines and meet together to discuss issues around racism and intersectionality. Participants will self-select which affinity group they wish to partake in. Each group will be assigned trained facilitators who will facilitate discussions on key terms, concepts and questions about racism and intersectionality. *For more info on affinity groups check out the [HDF 2020-2021 webpage](#).*

- Affinity Group: Asian/Brown (ex. of Asian descent; Middle Eastern/of Middle Eastern descent; Indigenous; Mixed)
- Affinity Group: Black (ex. African/of African descent)
- Affinity Group: White (ex. of European descent)

DAY 2, 20 October

Participants can choose their preferred time slot to attend, or they can attend both slots if they choose (however the content may be repeated).

Affinity Group: Asian/Brown (ex. of Asian descent; Middle Eastern/of Middle Eastern descent; Indigenous; Mixed) (1 hour)

- Session One: 7:00am PDT/ 10:00am EDT/ 4:00pm CEST/ 5:00pm EET/EAT/ 10:00pm PHST, or/and
- Session Two: 5:00pm PDT/ 8:00pm EDT/ 2:00am +1 CEST/3:00am +1 EET/EAT/ 8:00am +1 PHST

Affinity Group: Black (ex. African/of African descent) (1 hour)

- Session One: 7:00am PDT/ 10:00am EDT/ 4:00pm CEST/ 5:00pm EET/EAT/ 10:00pm PHST, or/and
- Session Two: 10:00am PDT/ 1:00pm EDT/ 7:00pm CEST/ 8:00pm EET/EAT/1:00am +1 PHST

Affinity Group: White (ex. of European descent) (1 hour)

- Session One: 7:00am PDT/ 10:00am EDT/ 4:00pm CEST/ 5:00pm EET/EAT/ 10:00pm PHST, or/and
- Session Two: 10:00am PDT/ 1:00pm EDT/ 7:00pm CEST/ 8:00pm EET/EAT/1:00am +1 PHST

DAY 3, 21 October

Concurrent Affinity Groups (1 hour)

6:00am PDT/9:00am EDT/3:00pm CEST/ 4:00pm EET/EAT/ 9:00pm PHST

- Affinity Group: Asian/Brown (ex. of Asian descent; Middle Eastern/of Middle Eastern descent; Indigenous; Mixed)
- Affinity Group: Black (ex. African/of African descent)
- Affinity Group: White (ex. of European descent)

Closing Ceremony (1 hour, recorded)

7:00am PDT/ 10:00am EDT/ 4:00pm CEST/ 5:00pm EET/EAT/ 10:00pm PHST

- Hosts welcome
- Brief affinity group feedback by trainers
- Opportunity for participants to share remarks to the whole group
- Further learning from the trainers
- Closing remarks & what's next for HDF Part 2 & 3
- Music performance

Annex III: Participant Survey

Humanitarian Disarmament Forum

Survey results on the Forum held 19-21 October 2020

A summary of the first part of the Forum is [available on the website](#) of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. This survey provides the views of participants.

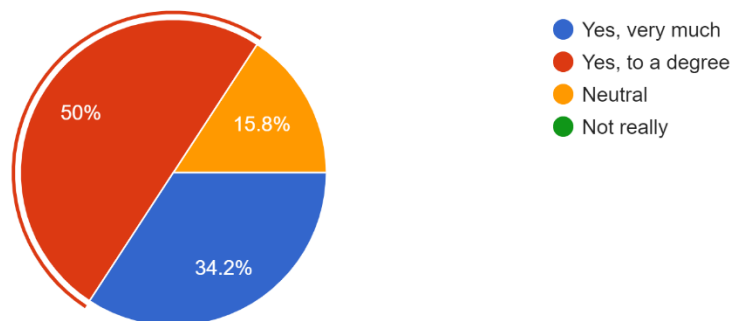
I. Responses

A total of 38 of the 115 participants attending the virtual Humanitarian Disarmament Forum conference held on 19-21 October 2020 completed the survey emailed out afterwards.

I. Biggest takeaways/learnings

As a result of attending the Forum, did your understanding of race and racism as it relates to humanitarian disarmament evolve?

38 responses



What were your most important takeaways/learnings from attending the 2020 Humanitarian Disarmament Forum?

Feedback:

- Impact that class has on our work at an international level, where the UN is built for white men but others can find space if they are well off and well educated elites in their own country.
- Impact of the category "age."
- Getting into this collectively and in a structured way was really important and valuable. Many people want to discuss these issues and take forward these important discussions, but we don't always create the platform to do it.
- Realizing colleagues in my affinity group have similar views and barriers. Many of us feel similarly and we shouldn't be afraid of being the ones to speak out or call out inappropriate comments and behaviors. Sense of community and to know that other people have faced a similar experience.

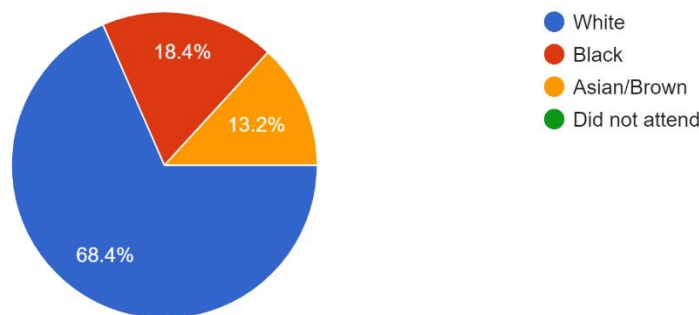
- We have a lot to learn, including about the language we use and the implications of this and how we may be reinforcing undertones of colonialism and racism in our public-facing communications and in our personal lives.
- Be more aware of power dynamics and intersectionality and some complex reasons of discrimination.
- Reframe racial identities from an international point of view and reframe racial relations as power relations. Call for anti-racism in all spheres of life.
- While preparing for it, the deeper realization of how white disarmament campaigns are - especially their leadership.
- Importance of starting with learning and understanding before trying to 'fix' anything.
- Ways to talk to someone when they behave in problematic ways.
- Willingness within the affinity group to do better, though also some nervousness/insecurity.
- Surprised I have never thought of applying such an intersectional perspective in my work. Over the long run will be more successful in creating free and safe spaces, which is ultimately what we try to do in disarmament work!
- I wasn't entirely conscious of the privileges that I had in certain context and communities. I was unaware of how some elements of my privilege impact the way I move through the world, and the actions I am able to take safely. Learned what a dominant position I have or in what kind of dominant bubble I currently live. Partly knew this before, however never really realized this.
- Progress in disarmament requires genuine recognition and understanding of diverse voices, that systems of power intersect and create layers of disadvantage, that solidarity is required with those whose voices are not currently being heard.
- A beginning understanding of the concept of intersectionality. New ways to approach the issue of intersectionality.
- Insightful tools, thoughtful conversations, better understandings of colleagues.
- Added to my ongoing thinking about how to tackle racism, gender-based violence, militarism and exploitation of people and nature.
- We need to be open-eyed and intentional in working for peace. Our teams must reflect the breadth, scope, experiences, and insights derived from the richness of our human family.
- It's not wrong to question and voice our concerns surrounding race and intersectionality.
- Different layers of social identity and how these are critical in decision making and for the promotion of more inclusive environment.
- Micro-aggressions.
- Power dynamics and what that means for me, with regards to whose voice is heard the most and whose contributions are valued in respect to decision making.
- There is need for not just assimilating people in groups for representation only but that those representatives be armed with decision making power , to effect change.
- Deepened understanding of intersectionality and how they are entangled in multiple processes simultaneously that impacts differently on different groups. Also, learned that an understanding of the self, and for example the most dominantly represented within an organization also reflects how an organization speaks to different groups and people.
- Forum members see value in discussing race relations. Anti-racism work requires collective effort. We must built a network across our work spaces to fight all form of racism

- Gave me a lot to think about.
- Feel more engaged and more aware of some of the detail around race and power dynamics in society.
- There is work to be done. Made me appreciate how much work we have to do on anti-racism within the peace movement. At the start of something -- it feels good to have the solidarity of doing this with a whole community of people, and beginning to have these conversations among ourselves, but I'm still shy in broaching the issues with others who weren't in the room; but at least I recognize that, and feel like I'm starting to grasp the tools we need to make change.

Affinity Groups

Which affinity group did you attend?

38 responses



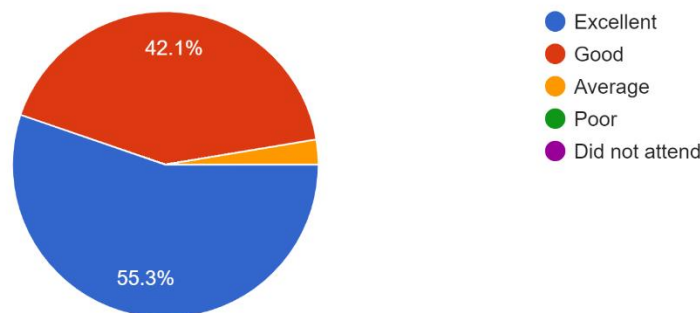
Feedback:

- Happy to hear other people's experiences and action specially those living in multicultural communities.
- Pace of the sessions was excellent, it didn't feel rushed or pushed at any point. The pace enabled thought and reflection, the repeated question with different groups was appreciated.
- Great structure, interesting use of break out rooms.
- Overall a good experience.
- Discussions were healthy and respectful and I am grateful to all of us who participated.
- Nice talks in small groups, sometimes with people you knew, sometimes with new people.
- A rich experience, much was learned during different conversations.
- Really gained many things from the training - fitted to my expectations.
- Expected that our group might be a bit quiet and awkward, but the trainer did a very good job in facilitating and moving things along, and I appreciated the openness, thought and lack of defensiveness that most people put into the discussions.
- We realized how many we are - too many.
- Trainers in my affinity group were awesome. Trainer was clear and created an open environment. The combination of oral and chat interventions worked well.
- Wasn't sure how dividing us in affinity groups would work, but thought it was very effective and conducive to more open discussions.
- Allowed for a lot of reflection and interaction.

- Sometimes it was a bit difficult to start in the group sessions, but this is more a result of difficulties with digital meetings than the arrangement as a whole.
- Enlightening and helped put a lot of issues into perspective.
- White identity, especially for women, involves many different experiences of power and privilege, disempowerment, oppression, silencing and violence, and we have to own what this means in our own lives in order to move forward progressively in campaigning for justice, peace and disarmament.
- Instrumental to connect our social identities to intersectional power dynamic to highlight the influence on daily relations
- Really good. I liked the way disarmament was woven in.
- Glad to be connected with new friends and allies.
- Very inspiring.
- Linking intersectionality to multiple racism (if one can say) was very effective in my point of view.
- it was very interesting about Class, when you feeling empowered , when you are feeling unempowered, Vulnerabilities and when felling strengthening Body and mind and so on.
- Especially found getting into connecting things to our sector and work very engaging, though it was just the start of the conversation.

How was your experience in the Affinity Group sessions overall?

38 responses



Suggestions/comments:

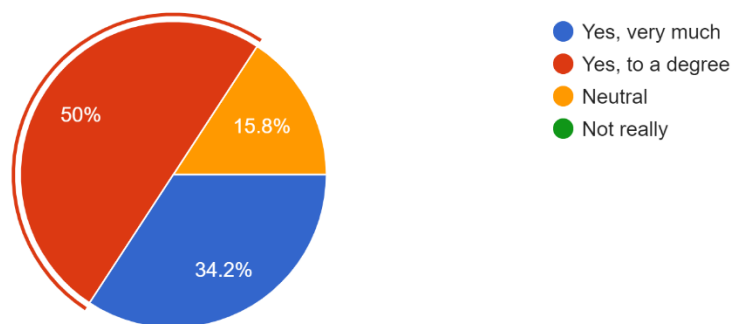
- Affinity group sessions were too short. One hour did not seem enough to really deal with these complicated issues. Would have been interesting to have somewhat longer the break-out sessions. Discussions stopped just as we were getting into it!
- Expected the affinity group to be more challenging and have more room for small discussions.
- A chance for more exchange with the members of the affinity group would've been very useful.
- Sometimes it felt more like a lecture rather than a conversation.
- W A rich experience, much was learned during different conversations.
- Really gained many things from the training - fitted to my expectations.
- It may have been harder for those who did not clearly fit into one category.
- Sessions were a bit slow at times, and the later sessions repeated some of earlier ones.

- Frequently our comments were off topic since we were meeting for the first time in small groups for quite a while and the groups ended before we really got into the assigned theme/topic.
- It might have been good to have more breakout group time, particularly for the disarmament section which required more strategizing.
- Short length of the breakout groups did not really allow for in-depth discussion.
- Last session could have been more focused on seeing racism and on how to fight racism within our work field.
- Important issues dealt with, but repetition over the days in terms of content. Need more than an hour per session to get in to the level of detailed required.
- More time can be spent on “anti-racism” and disarmament.
- Organize them for 1-2 hours as discussions are very rich and we all would like to discuss more.

Applying the learnings

As a result of attending the Forum, did your understanding of race and racism as it relates to humanitarian disarmament evolve?

38 responses



Personal:

- Be more understanding and improve my relationship at community , national and international level.
- Be more conscious about whose voices are heard & whose are missing, and to change that balance where I'm able to do so.
- Be humble about what I know & what I've yet to learn.
- Prioritize listening to Black, Asian, indigenous & other minoritized peace activists, survivors and communities.
- Campaign against racism in whatever little or small ways that I can. Preach peace and unity. Encourage and help victims of racism.
- See the underlying power and race dynamics in everyday life and also our sector of disarmament.
- Consider how my intersectionality is connected to my own position in society and different spheres.
- Keep learning, integrate it in my daily work, seek for changes in structures I work in.

- Still processing it. Ask me after Phase 2 :-) Not sure yet, but an underlying awareness is important.
- Champion the involvement and inclusion of everyone in decision making.
- See with different eyes, and listen with different ears.
- Bring the discussions into other space and sharing resources broadly.
- Look around the 'room' to see if I'm always speaking to the same people and if so, asking why, and seeking out other voices that I need to work with and hear from.
- Hold power to account more fiercely, ensuring that diverse voices are heard, become more confident in challenging systems of privilege.
- Be more conscious in meetings and events.
- Bring intersectionality and race to every analysis and position.
- Be more open to seeing the connections between the topics I am working on and an intersectional, antiracist perspective. Try to be more vocal within my own work on these issues and be more inclusive, avoid all-white panels, etc. Learn to listen better to other's experiences.
- Discuss problems with people around me (in my work and private life), make more effort to speak up when I see problematic behavior, and try to contribute to making my work space more accessible and diverse.
- Call out the racist comments and "jokes" among friends, family and colleagues.
- Challenge my own biases, recognizing that change starts within individuals.
- Keep these learnings and concepts at the forefront of my mind in my work in general, particularly my research, advocacy and interaction with others.

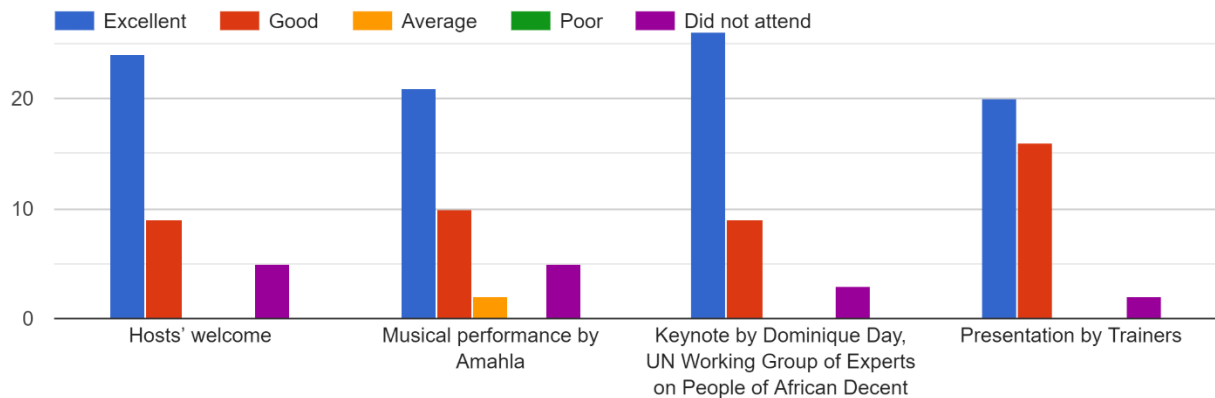
Organizational:

- Started the process of systematic learning and responding to these issues for our organization and sector.
- Consider how dominant intersectionality impact my organization, how it is represented, who it speaks to and for, and how those understandings can help contribute to exploring underlying structures and how my organization can work towards being more inclusive.
- Shared some of the conversations and resources with staff from my organization.
- Will seek opportunities to engage with other people from the HDF community to explore opportunities for alliances.
- Impart lessons learned from the training to others at my workplace.
- Incorporate the different level or layer of identity to change policies in our program as well as department. Bring an intentional focus to how I organize meetings within my organization.
- Our organization had a meeting right after the forum to discuss the outcome. We plan to be more sensitive on race and racism and to carefully take intersectionality into consideration on each project.
- Apply it in my work every day.
- Review practice of my organizations and networks, I am more empowered to raise my voices on these issues at international level.
- Advocate more for anti-racist systems and organisations; Challenge the status quo when it comes to racism and inclusion at work.

- See how we can use our learning as it develops to develop our policies and work to institutionalise an anti-racist approach as much as we can.
- Introduce these topics to youth campaigners.

Opening plenary

How would you rate the following elements of the opening session on 19 October?

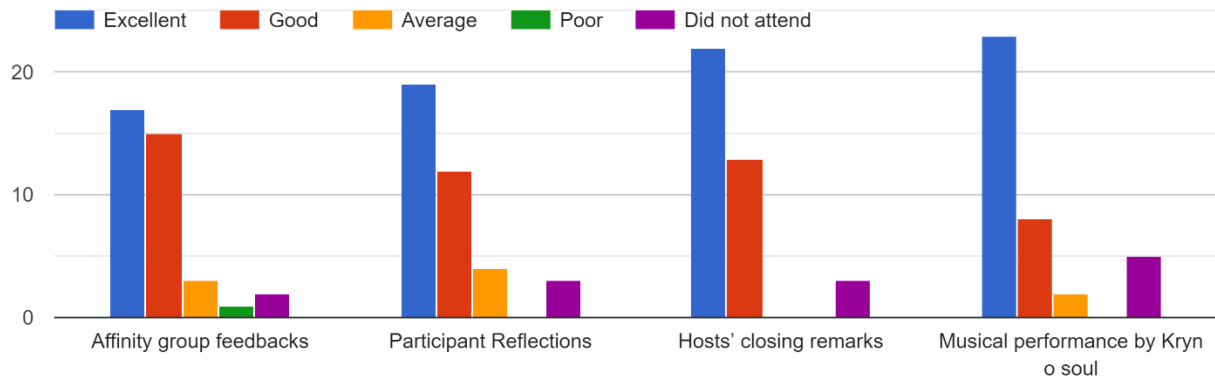


Feedback on the opening plenary:

- Excellent, fabulous, wonderful, really nicely done.
- Remarks from co-hosts were especially good. Powerful introduction, courageous recognition of the need to tackle race, and bold vision. Helpful to give a context for the forum. Strong to recognize that the language gap was overlooked
- Clear and inviting, informative. Set a professional and thoughtful tone for the week.
- Loved the inclusion of music, and the keynote was pretty electrifying.

Closing plenary

How would you rate the following elements of the closing session on 21 October?



Feedback on the closing plenary:

- A great way to end, really emotional, thought-provoking and eye-opening, good atmosphere, harmony.
- Summarizing main findings or discussions specifically with other affinity group was amazing. Good to have group feedbacks although they varied in form so some were more informative than others.
- Good that the performances were as inclusive as possible as well.
- Seemed a bit rushed, it was like OK we got here, what next?
- I felt uncomfortable about the 'affinity group' set up when I registered for the event. It became much clearer as the process unfolded, and especially when other groups reported back, just how important those spaces had been for everyone. Thank you for using this format.
- I left curious to learn more on the discussions of the Asian and Brown affinity group as it is a theme about which I find very few online resources.
- It was good to have the space for feedback at the end and I think everyone used it thoughtfully - there was a lot more to say, but of course this was only part 1!

Suggestions:

- Speakers giving feedback should be 'approved' by the group to ensure that what is said reflects indeed the discussions in the group.
- People who gave the feedback should have asked for input from the participants to prepare the feedbacks from the affinity group.

Self-learning resources



Feedback on self-learning resources available from [the Forum website](#):

- Excellent selection. Kimberle Crenshaw rocks. Absolutely incredible. Very good. Really excellent. Eye-opening resources. Interesting.
- Great set of resources presenting different aspects of the issue to help our learning.
- I continue to go back to them and recommend them to others. Still reading and learning.
- Shared with others. I am sharing with others.
- Self-learning resources shared prior to the Forum helped me evolve a better understanding on race, racism and intersectionality.

Suggestions:

- Include resources on how race and racism relate to humanitarian disarmament.
- A lot of videos, would have also appreciated more readings.
- Some were a bit too long (both the documentary and the TED talk)
- Include resources that are not so US focused. Quite a few were from or focused on the North American context - which may be a product of where much academic work/activism is being done on these concepts and so where explainers are easily available. See how that can be examined/expanded.