



L-Università ta' Malta  
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

# Armed Forces of Malta - Faculty for Social Wellbeing Partnership for Social Inclusion Evaluation Report

APRIL - JUNE 2022

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi, Project Manager  
Ms. Annabel Cuff, Research Support Officer  
Ms. Craziella Vella, Research Support Officer



# Partnership For Social Inclusion

## Evaluation Report



## Collaborating and bridging the gap

During these last years, the Faculty for Social Wellbeing has been working with the AFM to try and find ways to share knowledge on very complex and interesting matters around migration, radicalisation and integration. This project in collaboration with the AFM has focused on a number of areas, firstly by providing conversation between the Faculty and AFM specialised services, secondly by offering a short course to soldiers and also officials within the army and finally by using these experiences to list out what we think are the challenges being faced by the AFM in these areas. The openness of the AFM, their willingness to engage in this conversation has proved to be crucial, productive and engaging. We look forward to keeping this collaboration going.

**Prof. Andrew Azzopardi**

Dean



L-Università ta' Malta  
Faculty for Social Wellbeing



## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	9
2.	Methodology	11
3.	Lectures with First Responder and All Participants	13
3.1.	Identity and Its Implications 1: Ethnicity and Race	14
3.2.	Identity and Its Implications 2: Cultural Contexts	14
3.3.	Exploring Violence and Non-Violence: Conceptual Framework	14
3.4.	Challenges Faced by First Responders (1): Self-support	15
3.5.	Challenges Faced by First Responders (2): Accessing Healthcare	15
3.6.	Relationship Building and Cultural Diversity: Tools for Practice	16
3.7.	Public Perceptions: AFM & the Media	16
3.8.	AFM: Working with/in the Community	17
3.9.	Workshop/Assessment and Feedback Session	17
4.	Lectures with Officers	19
5.	Train the Trainers Sessions	21
6.	Feedback from Participants	23
6.1.	General Feedback	24
6.2.	The Strengths of the Programme	25
6.3.	The Weaknesses of the Programme	26
6.4.	Further Considerations and Suggestions	26
7.	Feedback from Lecturers	30
8.	Conclusions and Recommendations	33
8.1.	Recommendations	34





# 1. Introduction



Partnership for Social Inclusion is a Programme commissioned by the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing (FSW), University of Malta.

Addressing violent extremism and stemming the damaging effects of hate speech, incitement to hatred, and violence on the basis of race, culture or religion is a common priority for both the Council of Europe and the European Commission of the European Union. This programme provided psycho-educational training in social inclusion and counteracted the threats of violent extremism, hate speech, and prejudice.

Beginning from the experiences of AFM personnel, the programme aimed to invite dialogue based around a non-judgemental didactic approach by listening to the participants' needs and concerns, while exploring concepts and practices that foster self-reflection and growth in the area of social inclusion.

The programme was designed to be responsive towards participants' stories without taking ownership of them, to better explore points of tension and befriending with the programme's proposed praxis of social inclusion. The sessions for AFM First Responders also aimed to provide opportunities to gain additional understanding about their lived experiences within the role.

The training programme was contextualised to reflect national and regional contingencies, taking into account the professional situation of participants in terms of policies and protocols.

The programme also looked at ensuring that All Participants should understand the need to create a shared understanding of social inclusion in the context of their activities within the AFM, as they work with State agencies, voluntary organisations, and diverse communities.



## 2. Methodology



The Programme consisted of a series of lectures, divided into three parts:

- 1) Nine two-hour sessions, including eight lectures and one workshop session, for AFM First Responders and All Participants, to an estimated audience of around 100 attendees;
- 2) Two three-hour sessions for Officers with the AFM to an estimated audience of 15 attendees; and
- 3) A two-hour Train-the-Trainer session for proposed trainers, complemented by a Masterclass for the proposed trainers.

The programme combined expert-delivered discussion-led lectures and workshop-style reflective activities by using an interactive and practical approach combined with a theoretical framework. Case studies and sharing experiences from front liners were used and supplemented by using up-to-date materials related to the local situation, such as newspaper articles, examples from social media etc. A copy of the schedule is found as an Annex to this report.

The expert lecturers' role aimed at having a primary role of educating participants while also leading to deeper questioning in the workshops, to better forefront underlying assumptions and uncertainties.

Feedback forms were distributed physically amongst First Responders during the final workshop session. The feedback forms included both quantitative and qualitative types of questions to assess the facilities and logistical aspects of the sessions, the content as well how participants feel the programme might have left an impact on themselves and their work. The feedback forms were later inputted electronically via Google forms and analysed. Feedback forms were also distributed electronically as a Google sheet to lecturers to assess similar issues from the lecturer's point of view. Copies of both feedback forms to All Participants and lecturers are included as an Annex to this report. For the purpose of this report, responses for each question were grouped into categories and a percentage of responses for each category was obtained based on the total number of respondents.

The background is a solid teal color with a pattern of small, light teal squares and dots arranged in a grid that recedes into the distance, creating a 3D effect.

### 3. Lectures with First Responder and All Participants

A series of eight lectures and one workshop session were carried between April and June 2022. The aim of each lecture and the outcomes will now be highlighted.

### **3.1. IDENTITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS 1: ETHNICITY AND RACE**

The scope of the 'Identity and its Implications 1: Ethnicity and Race' session was to present questions of ethnicity and race, particularly in terms of asylum-seeking persons and migrants who are encountered by AFM personnel in the line of duty. The lecturer aimed to unpack relevant concepts and apply them to the context of international migration, particularly the Central Mediterranean Route, which constitutes the majority of migrant fatalities and is of direct relevance to AFM activities. The workshop looked at supporting the lecture by proposing questions of what it means to be Maltese in relationship with other ethnic groups; the importance of social inclusion in contemporary society; and the experiences of race, ethnicity, and identity that are encountered by AFM participants in their professional role and personal lives.

This lecture asked attendees to reflect on who is a migrant. The lecturer explained that migrants may travel out of a need or a want and that as a human race we have always migrated. What do we understand with the term migration? What is race, and what is racism, the lecturer asked? Racism, the lecturer explained, is often a result of a sense of difference and a sense of imposed superiority.

### **3.2. IDENTITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS 2: CULTURAL CONTEXTS**

The scope of the session 'Identity and its Implications 2: Cultural Contexts' was to explore the cultural context inhabited by AFM personnel, and the relevance of their professional habitus in terms of personal expectations and professional interactions, by unpacking relevant concepts, to highlight the social and cultural expectations and perceptions regarding membership in the AFM. These include issues of mental health within the existing structure; managing aggression and societal pressures; contextualising AFM practice within the socio-cultural development of military action in Malta etc. The workshop aimed to support participants to share their experiences and attitudes around these issues, in the context of participants' professional lives and personal understanding. The workshop also looked at eliciting connections between individual experiences and the larger structural concerns raised during experts' presentations, by foregrounding a cultural constructivist perspective and unpacking its implications on the processes of social inclusion in which AFM personnel are currently engaged.

During this lecture attendees were asked to think about what happens around them. People, everyone, is made up of values and experiences, which shape who we are and who we become, and which ultimately construct our identity. People have norms, which condition what is viewed as normal within a society. Here the lecturer asked attendees to think about what is normal, and that the normal changes over time and over different contexts and situations. Finally, the lecturer explored the concept of community and the power of the community in our lives. What happens when you challenge the collective/community, the lecturer asked?

### **3.3. EXPLORING VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Exploring Violence and Non-Violence aimed to supply a conceptual framework in which participants were exposed to basic training in conflict analysis. Conflict was explored as a phenomenon with micro, meso, and macro-level implications throughout society in Malta. Experts were asked to unpack relevant concepts and their implications in the challenging context of first responders working with AFM. Participants were encouraged to consider



conceptual models of conflict, apply them to real-life situations, and consider the benefits of a nonviolent approach to social inclusion.

The lecture looked at what culture and subculture are. Subculture refers to a group which has different values and norms which are different from the majority of society. It focussed specifically on the army subculture, including the notions of (i) distance of power, (ii) masculinity vs femininity, and, (iii) collectivism vs individualism. The lecturer enquired participants to reflect on whether a culture change is possible and on what causes conflict. The conflict pyramid, was explained, which includes the elements of issues, personalities, emotions, interests and self-perception and self-esteem. Finally, the lecture also explored the different levels of conflict, namely micro, meso and macro levels of conflict. Micro conflict refers to violence between individuals, the breaking down of the social contract. Meso conflict, refers to conflict between one community and another community, or between an individual representing one community and another community, whereas macro conflict, refers to conflict between two large entities such as two countries.

### **3.4. CHALLENGES FACED BY FIRST RESPONDERS (1): SELF-SUPPORT**

The first of two lectures discussing challenges faced by First Responders focussed on self support and aimed at encouraging and normalising mental health talk, by first giving an overview of mental health and its continuum. The aim was to provide an understanding about the significance of mental health and wellbeing amongst AFM First Responders and military personnel. The workshop also aimed at exploring mental health stigma, particularly within the military culture and (toxic) masculinity, which is often a barrier towards seeking mental health support or practicing self-care. Self-care practices were aimed to be identified and the workshop also aimed at encouraging the attendees to reflect on themselves and their needs, both as professionals and personally too.

The lecturer asked attendees 'how are you feeling?' through the use of an interactive tool, whereby they could mention their feelings anonymously but where they could also see how others around them were feeling. The majority of respondents remarked they were feeling tired. It is not 'normal', or common, to stop and think how we are feeling, but it is extremely important to self-assess ourselves and our state of mind. The lecturer also asked participants 'what do you think when you hear the word 'mental health'?', using the same interactive tool, with most respondents stating the 'mind' or 'tiredness' as their main responses. The lecturer then explained that everyone has mental health and discussed the need for more awareness about the importance of mental health, since very often people do not think about their own mental health. The barriers for seeking help, namely the stigma associated with seeking support and the sense of weakness which often comes when understanding someone needs mental health support, particularly in a mainly masculine environment such as the AFM, were also discussed. The need to slow down and think and to practise self-care, that is to care for ourselves were also given consideration and discussed with the participants.

### **3.5. CHALLENGES FACED BY FIRST RESPONDERS (2): ACCESSING HEALTHCARE**

The second lecture focussing on the challenges faced by First Responders looked at accessing healthcare. The scope of this lecture was to focus on mental healthcare and its provision to AFM First Responders. Concepts of mental and emotional health, the importance of self-care, and existing services at the disposal of AFM professionals (in particular) and individuals in Malta (more generally), and when/why it is essential to make use of such services were

explored. The aim was to ask participants to consider ways in which they can enhance their self-care activities; further strengthen their networks of support; and access professional mental healthcare services if and when necessary.

During the lecture it was explained that mental health and mental illness form part of a continuum and that a person may be at different stages of this continuum during different parts of their lives. The lecturer emphasised the element of stigma associated with seeking support for mental health, repeating this from the previous lecture in order to emphasise that a stigma exists but we need to overcome this stigma and seek support when needed. Fear, and lack of information increase this sense of stigma and we thus need to be more aware to overcome this stigma and seek help. The lecturer also explored cultural differences and how these affect our perceptions of mental health, according to our own culture. During the lecture various types of mental illnesses were described in detail together with the symptoms associated with the different illnesses. The lecturer remarked the importance of recognising the symptoms and when to seek help, in order to treat as soon as one becomes aware of the need to seek help.

### **3.6. RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY: TOOLS FOR PRACTICE**

The aim of this session was to provide tools for participants to productively engage with asylum seekers, refugees, and other vulnerable groups in the line of duty. The lecture aimed to unpack relevant concepts, including the national commitment to cultural diversity in Malta; the purpose and implementation of EU and Maltese integration policies; and practical strategies for relationship building across differences of culture by highlighting local and international examples of cultural diversity and social inclusion. The workshop aimed to elicit participant reactions to the material presented by experts, including relationship-building exercises. In particular, opportunities for cultural diversity were to be explored within AFM structures as well as relationship building as an inclusive workplace competency.

During the lecture the lecturer explored what attendees understand by the term culture, often referring to the group or communities with whom we share common experiences that shape the way we understand the world, including race, class and religion. Culture is not nationality and we belong to many cultures at once. The lecturer emphasised that culture is complicated and that when different cultures meet, sometimes they clash, especially due to certain stereotypes that we might have ingrained mentally which can leave us exhausted and which we need to overcome. We need to be open to listen to people telling their stories. The lecturer also explored how to build useful relationships, and how relationships help us achieve community goals. The need to become culturally aware, with the first step being that of learning about other people's cultures. The lecturer also explored why we build relationships, namely because of conscious decisions we make and the barriers in building relationships. In order to build relationships with people from other countries we need to place ourselves in settings where we can actually meet people from different cultures, examine our biases and ask questions. We need to listen to people's stories, risk making mistakes and not assume that the way the majority thinks is necessarily the 'right' way.

### **3.7. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS: AFM & THE MEDIA**

The aim of this lecture was to explore the ways in which media, including social media in particular, constructs contextual narratives about the phenomenon of migration, and how AFM is emplaced within these narratives. Attention was placed on the ways the relationship between AFM and the public is affected by media, and general perceptions of the work carried out by First Responders engaging with refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. High



profile media incidents involving AFM, for example, were presented for discussion, including a space for participants to discuss their own perceptions of public attitudes towards the AFM; concerns about the way their role is portrayed or mis/understood; opportunities and aspirations for mutually enriching connections between AFM and society.

The lecture explored the term 'perception' and that what we see is not always, necessarily, reality. Public perceptions may include misperceptions and bias. The lecturer also explained the use of the media to share content and messages, including the 'Me Too' and 'Black Lives Matter' movements as two movements which used the media to share their messages worldwide. Politics and political culture were also discussed and their use of the media, including politicians using social media platforms to share their messages. Ultimately, the lecturer explained that the message is the medium, and the importance of using the right media for the right audience. The media and our relationship with the media is very important and we need to be aware that what the media shows is not always the (full) reality. The discussion session focused on videos from local media showing different instances involving the AFM to entice discussion with First Responders to comment on how they see the media portray different instances and to discuss whether the story told is the full story or only one part of the full picture.

### **3.8 AFM: WORKING WITH/IN THE COMMUNITY**

The aim of this lecture was to explore how members of the AFM can engage with their local communities and with the civilian community in general and discuss how public understanding of the issues faced by the AFM can be nurtured and how issues affecting the general public can also be taken on board by the AFM. The workshop aimed to encourage discussion about how the local community can be encouraged to interact and engage with the AFM and explore ways in which activities that integrate the AFM into civilian life can be encouraged, whether through joint projects or other forms of engagement.

The lecture looked at exploring the term 'us versus them'. The lecturer asked participants to answer 'what is a community?' with respondents using an online, interactive and anonymous tool to answer in real-time. The main response revolved around a community being a group with 'common interests' according to the attendees. The lecture then explored the term of public perception, tying in with the previous lecture and specifically the public perception of the AFM. Another question posed to the attendees using the same tool was 'how can the AFM be closer to the community?' with the main response being by promoting more the AFM's work within the community, and thus through positive media exposure. Finally the last question asked was 'how does the AFM contribute to the community?' with respondents mainly answering that the AFM contributes to the local community by providing protection. It thus transpires that the community needs to understand why the AFM is there in the first place and the AFM's role is. The need for cultural training also transpired from the discussion during this lecture.

### **3.9. WORKSHOP/ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK SESSION**

The training program built towards a final presentation, where the participants established newly acquired skills. Therefore, the final session aimed to focus and to reinforce a curious attitude where the participants are not afraid to ask (open) questions, without judging or moralising and being aware of one's own opinions, whilst engaging with colleagues in experiential discussions. The scope of this session was also to allow participants to use the skills developed during reflective practice to reflect on how they can work with any type of



individual at risk and being aware of how they are feeling, their own needs and the situations around them.

Participants to this session were presented with a summary of the previous sessions. Questions were asked to remind them of what was explored but also a way to allow them to further think, and sink in, the knowledge received and the discussions which were held. Participants were also asked, (i) what struck you mostly during this programme? and (ii) do you feel your perceptions changed? Three case studies were then presented. These case studies did not refer directly to the AFM but were chosen specifically as a tool for reflection for situations in which the First Responders themselves might find themselves in. These referred to (i) situations where responders are asked to obey orders without necessarily agreeing, because these might go against their own principles or because they might consider this as morally wrong, (ii) traumatic situations which may result in the need for responders to seek mental health support, and (iii) the Milgram Experiment, reflecting the conflict between obedience to authority and personal conscience and the need to stop and think and reflect. Feedback forms were handed out during this session. These will be analysed in section five of this report.

## 4. Lectures with Officers



Two lectures were carried out with a selected group of Officers from the AFM. The two lectures focused on 'Identity and Its Implications' and 'Public Perceptions' with the same lecturers delivering these lectures to the First Responders also delivering these lectures to the Officers. The two sessions were of a longer duration when compared to the lectures carried out with the First Responders, allowing a longer time for discussion and interaction with the attendees.

## 5. Train the Trainers Sessions



The Train the Trainers sessions were delivered to a selected group of Officers who also attended the two lectures for Officers. A Masterclass for Trainers was delivered in April 2022 by Prof Fred Bemak. Prof Fred Bemak is a Professor and Academic Program Coordinator of the Counselling and Development Programme in the College of Education and Human Development and founder and Director of the Diversity Research and Action Center at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA. He has published in the fields of cross-cultural and multicultural psychology, working with at-risk youth, group counselling, and immigrant and refugee mental health and adjustment and gave an introduction to the Officers in terms of these topics, their work with the AFM and their role as trainers themselves. A final Tools for Practice session was then delivered in June 2022 following the lectures delivered to the First Responders and Officers, the latter lecturers being attended also by the selected Trainers who attended this Train the Trainers session.

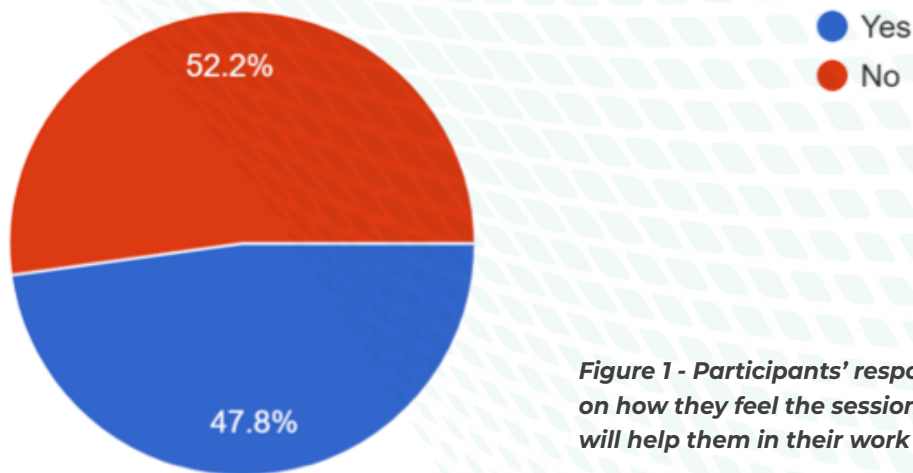
## 6. Feedback from Participants



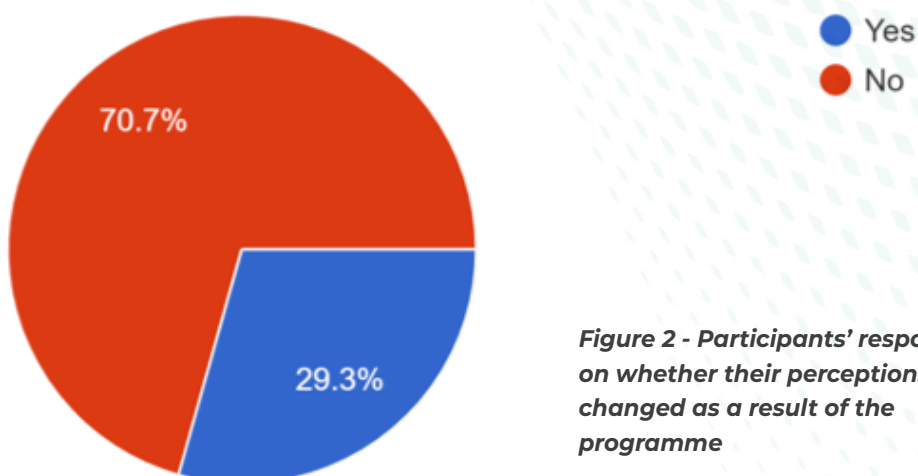
A total of 93 feedback forms were collected during the final workshop session which was delivered to the First Responders. Feedback forms were handed out during the session and were then inputted electronically and analysed. Below is an analysis of the feedback received.

### 6.1. GENERAL FEEDBACK

Whilst only 52.2% of respondents stated that this programme will help them in the work with the AFM (Figure 1), 70.7% of respondents confirmed that they feel that this programme helped them change their own perceptions in respect of most topics (Figure 2). This discrepancy in results may be a result of the fact that topics discussed during the programme may have affected participants on a personal level more than on a professional level. This may be confirmed by the fact that the two sessions on the 'Challenges faced by First Responders', which focussed on self-care and mental health illnesses were amongst the sessions which struck participants most and the topics which respondents mostly noted they learnt more from.



*Figure 1 - Participants' response on how they feel the session will help them in their work*



*Figure 2 - Participants' response on whether their perceptions changed as a result of the programme*





**Figure 3 - Rating of facilities, presentations, relevance of sessions, discussions and workshop**

Figure 3 highlights Participants' feedback to a number of factors during the programme. The vast majority of respondents, 54%, highlighted the facilities as 'good' with many adding on manually to the feedback form that the choice of venue was not ideal particularly because it was relatively hot. The venue was then changed to a more comfortable and cooler venue for the last few sessions. Responses also included that the lecturers' presentation was mostly 'good' (42%) or 'very good' (34%) whereas the relevance of the sessions to the First Responders' work was 'good' (44%) or 'fair' (35%). 47% of respondents considered the discussion during the session as 'good', and likewise the final workshop session, also considered mostly as 'good' (51%) by most respondents.

Approximately 38% of respondents commented that the time was relatively 'good', 'reasonable' or that there was 'enough time' in these sessions. Whilst this was the vast majority of responses, another 28% commented that time of the sessions was not ideal, being most sessions held on a Friday afternoon with mostly commenting that this was a bad time and that they would have preferred an 'earlier session'. Other respondents also commented that they were 'not paid overtime' particularly since attendees had to attend the sessions on an obligatory basis even if this was on their day off.

## 6.2. THE STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAMME

There was an overwhelming response with regards to the two 'Challenges faced by First Responders' sessions, with 41% of respondents highlighting that those sessions were the sessions which they feel really worked. 14% of respondents also mentioned the 'Identity and Its Implications 1: Ethnicity and Race' session as a session which worked well in the context of the programme.

When asked 'what struck you mostly during the programme' 19% of respondents referred to the two 'Challenges faced by First Responders' as the sessions which struck them most during the whole programme. 9% of respondents were also positively struck by the lecturers' preparedness, knowledge and the way some lecturers could face the heated discussions which sometimes happened. Participants also appreciated the open discussion. The lack of knowledge about the AFM and the length of the sessions were other factors which were once again highlighted by respondents.

Participants were asked to reflect on what they learnt from these sessions. Whilst it must be noted that 28% of respondents chose not to answer this question, another 26% replied

that they learnt aspects in relation to mental health care, mental health illnesses and the importance of self care. The programme seems to have been successful in opening up participants' understanding that everyone is different, as 14% of respondents noted that people have different opinions and that these need to be respected, understood and accepted. Other responses referred to the fact that some participants learnt more about different cultures and migration, including Maltese migration.

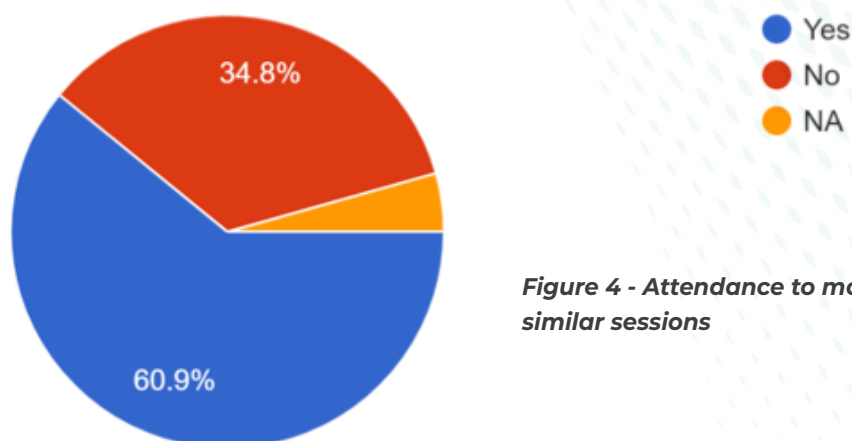
### 6.3. THE WEAKNESSES OF THE PROGRAMME

Whilst 14% of respondents highlighted that the 'Identity and Its Implications 1: Ethnicity and Race' session really worked, another 14% noted that they would have changed the same session. Another 12% also commented on the need to have smaller groups attending these sessions, where participants may discuss more freely certain sensitive topics. There were other comments related to the relevance of the session focussing on the media to this group, since First Responders are limited in what they post on social media and their influence on their work to the media. Other respondents highlighted the need that lecturers should be more aware and informed of the AFM, its structures and work so as to know better the audience to whom the lecture is being delivered.

Whilst 23% of respondents chose not to answer the question 'what would you have changed from this programme', 16% answered about logistical aspects which had already been mentioned previously in the feedback form handed out. This reiterates that participants felt that these sessions would prove more beneficial if they were delivered to smaller groups. Providing a choice to attend, that is making the sessions optional, were also mentioned by 12% of respondents, highlighting that only interested participants should attend, to ensure that attendees are motivated to learn and that other attendees do not end up disturbing the rest of the group. Time was also mentioned once again by 11% of the group as not being the ideal for these sessions. Other attendees commented on the fact that sessions should be more condensed rather than spread out over a number of weeks.

### 6.4. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Respondents were asked whether they would consider attending similar sessions, if given the option. Whilst attendees were selected to participate and attendance was not on a voluntary basis, 60.9% of attendees responded 'yes' to attending similar sessions in the future (Figure 4).



**Figure 4 - Attendance to more similar sessions**

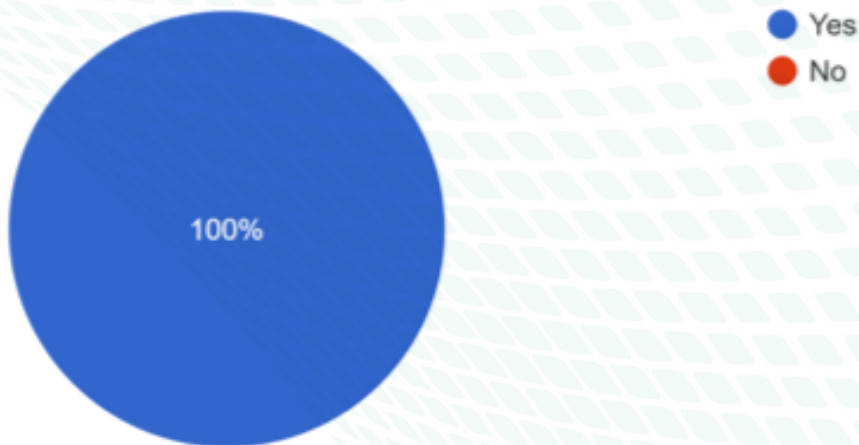
When asked 'what would you have liked to see in this programme', 46% of respondents chose not to reply to this question. Out of those who chose to reply to this question, 40% highlighted those sessions should be more interactive, include more discussion time and videos related to the topic being discussed. 18% of those who responded highlighted that such sessions should focus more directly on the work and experience of people working in the AFM, including experiences from Officers, whilst 14% looked at the logistical aspect such as more breaks, earlier sessions, smaller groups, etc.

Finally respondents were asked to mention any suggestions they might have. Whilst logistics related to the course were mentioned once again, some suggestions for future sessions included sessions on management, the women in the AFM, different cultures and more sessions about mental health. Participants reinforced the end for these sessions to be attended on a voluntary basis, being held for smaller groups and ensuring that whilst lecturers are experts in their fields they allow for discussion and interactivity and are also aware of the role of the AFM.



## 7. Feedback from Lecturers

Lecturers delivering the sessions to First Responders and Officers were sent a digital feedback form to analyse their perspective with regards to the programme. Below is a summary of the feedback received. In total eight lecturers were engaged to deliver all lectures, excluding the workshop session which was delivered by the programme coordinators, and feedback was received from all except one lecturer, totalling the number of responses received to seven.



All lecturers agreed that participation in this programme will support and help participants in their work with the AFM (100% of responses) as can be seen in Figure 5. Resistance and openness were two factors which, whilst contradictory in themselves were remarked by a number of lecturers. This being since participants were often resistant, particularly at the start of each new session, but a part of them were willing to open up and participate in the discussion. Eagerness to learn and contribute and willingness to learn were also remarked by participants, namely, “the fact that although the attendees were forced to attend, they were not particularly resistant”. One lecturer also commented on the fact that, “staff mental health issues are not being taken into consideration by AFM ” in line with feedback received by participants and also to reiterate the interest in the area by participants and their request for more sessions focussing on mental health.

Lecturers commented that the informal approach of the lectures allowed for a greater discussion and audience participation during the lectures. The interaction of participants and the interactivity of the sessions was also remarked. One lecturer commented that “the fact that this collaboration actually happened is a positive” factor in itself.



Lecturers reiterated the participants' responses in terms of allowing such sessions to be attended by participants who choose to attend on a voluntary basis, in smaller groups and in a better venue. Nonetheless lecturers reiterated the participants' concerns about the length of the sessions and the fact they were spread out over a number of weeks, with one lecturer suggesting that the programme "should be delivered as workshops over two full days not over weeks and we should offer participants a decent lunch. That would have surely helped uptake of information and enthusiasm towards the training", and that the lecturers should be "more participant oriented, visual and interactive material. They reacted really well to videos that exemplified course content."

Another lecturer suggested that, "the programme needs to be more army focused - this is the only way that the soldiers would see a value in it", whilst two lecturers commented that the Communications/PR staff and Human Resources within the AFM should have been present for some of the sessions. Two lecturers commented that the same programme should also be offered to Government employees.

Participants to this programme commented that lecturers, whilst being experts in their field, were often unaware of the work of the AFM. Lecturers themselves noted in their feedback that the lectures helped them to learn more about how the AFM works and the AFM culture in general. This was remarked by five out of the seven responses received.





## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations



The ultimate aim of these lectures were to address the needs and concerns of members of the AFM and allow them to sit down, think and reflect as an opportunity for self-reflection and growth. The mindset for delivering these lectures was not to tell AFM members what they should think or do, but rather to allow them to listen, learn and explore, concepts and ideas which they might not be too familiar to or which they would have not have given too much attention to, exposing them and making them more aware of both their everyday as well as new realities around them.

The delivery of the FSW-AFM Programme for Social Inclusion was originally planned to take place in 2020. In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme was postponed a number of times to ensure that this programme could take place in person to ensure that the objectives of the programme are reached and that participants reap the full benefits from the sessions.

An estimated number of 100 First Responders attended First Responders sessions, with the sessions for Officers being attended by approximately 15 Officers. The vast majority of participants were engaged in the sessions, with the sessions focussing on 'Challenges faced by First Responders' being those which generated particular interest in the attendees.

Below is a list of recommendations which is based on the feedback received by participants and lecturers as well by observation during the coordination and delivery process of this programme:

### 8.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Participation should be on a voluntary basis and ideally during working hours, in order to encourage and motivate participants to attend but also so as not to diminish the limited time off AFM members have available;
- Sessions for First Responders and officers should be kept separate to facilitate discussion particularly by First Responders;
- The sessions in the programme offered to First Responders should also be made available to a wider number of Officers;
- Sessions should be mostly based on discussions and be interactive;
- The relevance of certain topics to certain members of the AFM should be reassessed;
- Lecturers should be more aware of the AFM and the way the AFM is structured and works; Sessions should be condensed into shorter sessions;
- Sessions should take place in smaller groups, to enable discussion and involvement by all attendees;
- It would be ideal if sessions take place over a few days, rather than spanning over three months;
- Should sessions be held separately, a morning time slot is preferred by the vast majority of the participants;
- A comfortable, cool venue should be made available, particularly if sessions take place in the hotter months of the year;
- Other topics which would be of interest include:
  - More sessions on mental health;
  - Learning about different cultures;
  - Sessions focussing on management;
  - Women, and mothers, and the AFM.



