



NSW Service for the Treatment
and Rehabilitation of Torture
and Trauma Survivors



DIPLOMACY TRAINING PROGRAM
AFFILIATED WITH THE FACULTY OF LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
A training program for peoples of the Asia-Pacific region

EVALUATION REPORT



Human Rights and Advocacy Training
11-12 February 2023

WRITTEN BY

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Introduction

Advocacy is the act of challenging what is unjust by attempting to bring forth change (“Advocacy,” n.d.). In NSW, several Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities have engaged in advocacy to address the challenges they face in Australia and to help their people back in their countries of origin. The Human Rights and Advocacy Training program was a two-day residential retreat set up by STARTTS in collaboration with the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP)¹ to help CALD community leaders improve their work in advocacy by imparting the necessary knowledge and skills. The program also sought to create an environment for leaders to expand their social capital².

The training program was held on 11th and 12th February 2023 at the Edmund Rice Retreat Centre in Mulgoa, NSW. 27 leaders attended the session representing approximately 20 different community organisations. In addition to the sessions delivered by trainers, the program hosted guest speakers from diverse relevant professions to give their insights on human rights and advocacy.

Objectives

1. Develop participants’ advocacy skills.
2. Increase participants’ human rights advocacy skills and expertise.
3. Build and deepen networks between different the diaspora communities.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the impact of the training based on the objectives of the program.

Methodology

The data for this evaluation was collected in two stages. Both stages were carried out towards the end of the program. In the first stage, participants were offered surveys which sought their feedback on training and its impact based on the objectives outlined in the introduction. For

¹ DTP partners with organisations to offer individuals, communities, and other interested parties practical training in advocacy (“Diplomacy Training Program,” n.d.).

² Social Capital refers to the social connections and institutions which foster links within the community, focusing on social relations that have productive benefits (Claridge, 2004). It can also be seen as a collective resource, which can increase a community’s capacity to address problems together and enhance community wellbeing (Putnam, 2000).

stage two, a sample of the cohort was chosen to participate in a focus group discussion which sought to understand this impact in detail. The sample consisted of 27 participants. The questions are as follows:

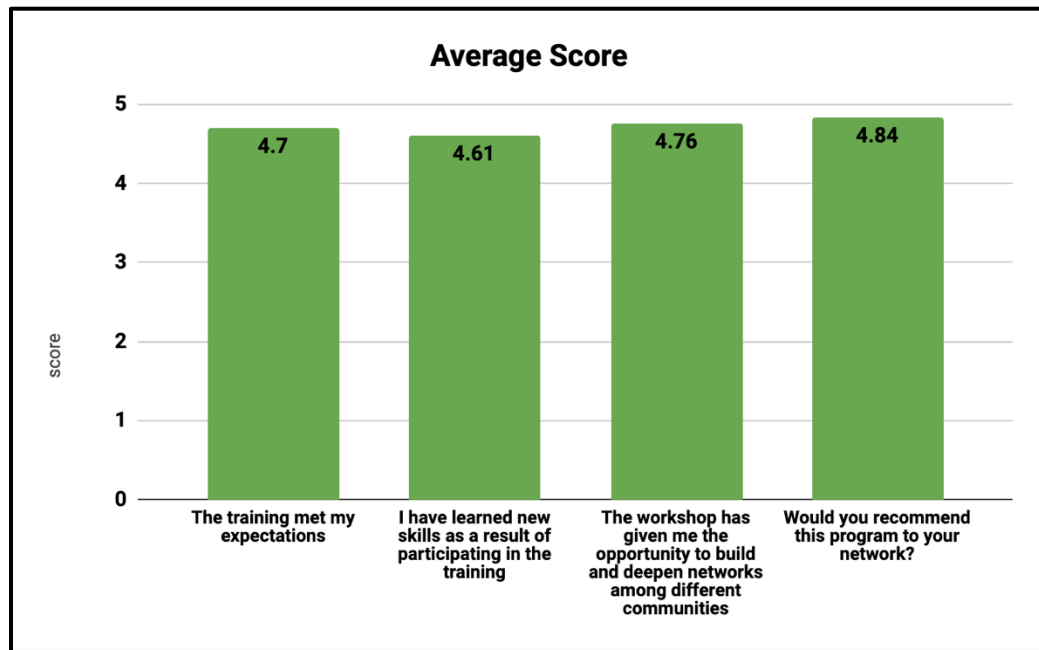
1. *Since the beginning of the training, what has changed for you in terms of:*
 - *How you feel*
 - *What you know*
 - *What you want to do*
2. *What aspects of the training did you find most useful?*
3. *What aspects of the training were least useful to you?*
4. *Looking back on what you have learned from this training, is there any knowledge or skill you would like help with building further?*
5. *Was the training a useful platform for you to build connections?*
6. *Do you prefer a residential program over an intensive program? why/why not?*
7. *How did you feel about your facilitators?*

Prior to the evaluation, the group was informed of the purpose of the evaluation, the procedure involved and assured of their anonymity throughout the entire process. Finds of the evaluation have been thematically analysed and presented in the upcoming section.

Findings

The findings below have been presented in two parts. Part I consist of the findings from the surveys and Part II consists of findings from the focus group discussion. However, please note that responses to question 5 in the survey (asking about suggestions for improvement) have been presented under Part II.

Part I



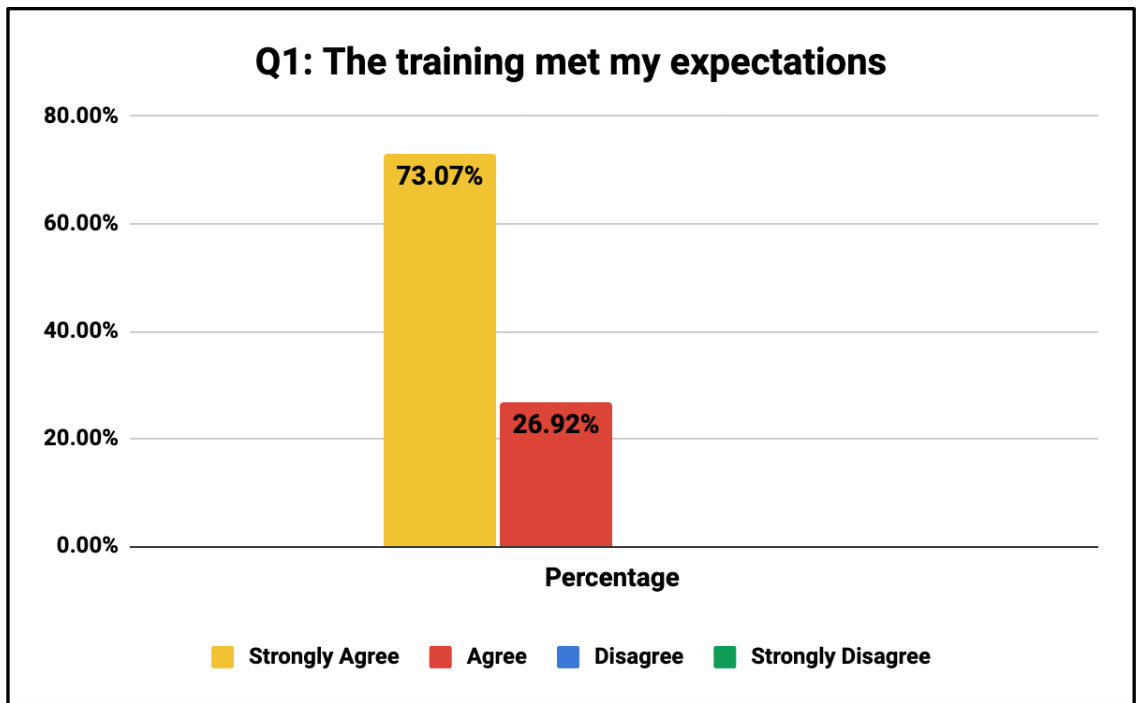
Graph 1: Average score per question

Graph 1 depicts the average score for 4 out of 5 questions asked in the survey. For each question, participants were asked to choose their answer out of the 5 options provided namely from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each option beginning with 'strongly agree' was given a score in the descending order starting from 5. Results from graph 1 indicate that the group agreed with each statement. This is evidenced by testimonies from participants which show how they felt about the program, the insights they gained and relationships they established. The upcoming graphs in this section will provide further justification for each question.

"Content was fantastic. However, a lot to take in. thank you for the notes."

"I came wanting to learn about advocacy and there was so much insight."

"I really enjoyed the training as this topic was very new to me. It was very nice to meet all the cool trainers who were very kind and friendly."



Graph 2: Percentage response for Q1

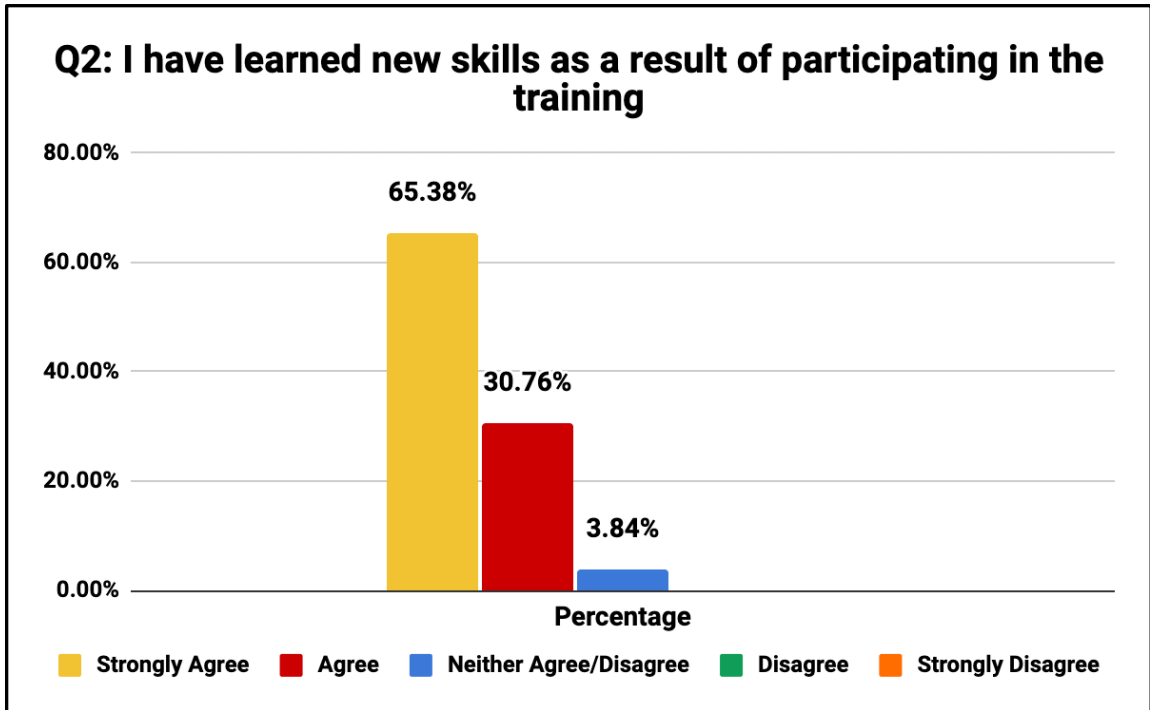
The graph above shows the percentage response for question 1. The results indicate that the entire cohort agreed with the statement that the training met their expectations. When asked to elaborate, participants reported that they came to the training with the expectation of learning more about human rights and gaining the knowledge and skills required to advocate for their respective communities. The testimonies below indicate that the expectations were met.

“I expected to form skills in campaigning, media skills and meeting with MPs. These expectations were met. I wished to learn more on the UN system.”

“I learned about media skills and advocacy skills to promote our cause. So it met my expectations.”

“All my expectations were met. I was able to learn new skills. It was good to meet professional individuals and have an insight on certain aspects of how to advocate.”

“The training was exactly what our community needs to learn, we are passionate with the human rights, sometimes we feel our voice is not heard or did not delivered.”



Graph 3: Percentage response for Q2

“I have learned through other people’s experiences when they share their advocacy experience.”

“Better understanding of levels of government and politics. I feel more confident.”

“I have learned how to approach certain projects and go down to one idea. Also how to organise efficiently. The approach to media helped me become more aware of information.”

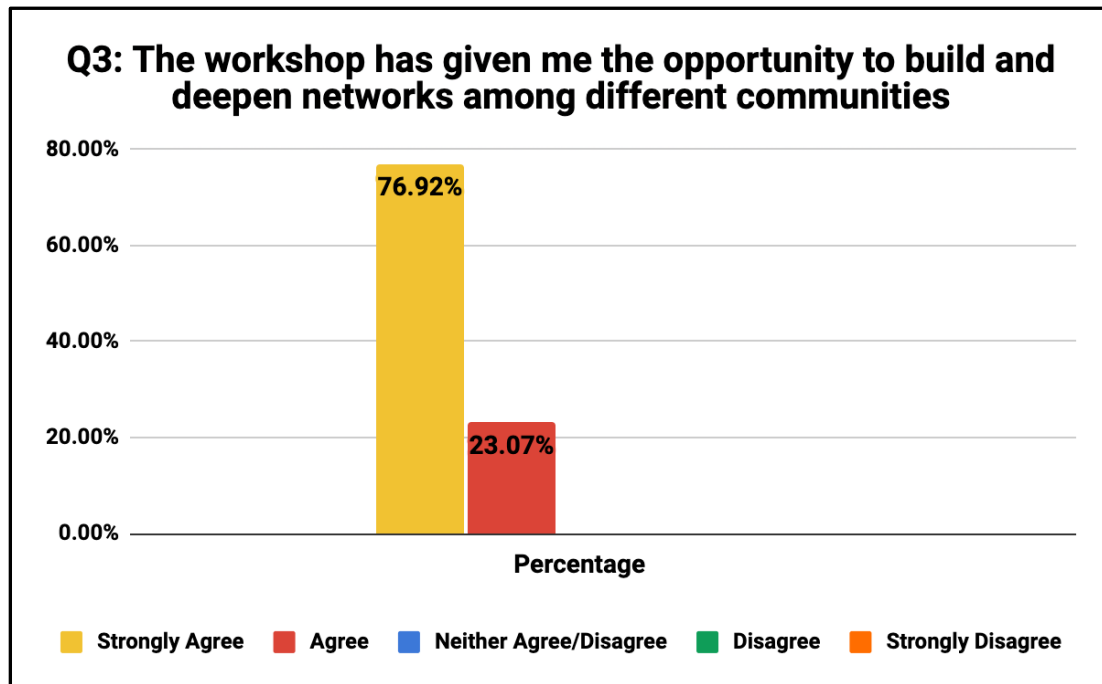
“From the local MP. She explained well what I wanted to know.”

“I learned how to approach state MPs and federal MP.”

The percentage response for graph 3 suggests that the majority of the group (96.14%) attested to the statement that they learned new skills as a result of their participation in the program. Participants reported learning a number of skills including who to approach and how to build their campaign, how to identify their specific cause and organise a campaign efficiently, the

various levels of government and the impact of politics on advocacy. One participant stated that they were able to learn a lot from the experiences shared by others in the field. Another applauded the local MP who was invited as a guest speaker for her ability to explain concepts that the participant wanted to learn more about.

A marginal portion of the group (3.84%) were undecided in their response.



Graph 4: Percentage response for Q3

Graph 4 depicts the percentage results for question 3. One of the objectives of the program was to encourage participants to build and deepen networks between different diaspora communities. To that end, the group agreed that the training provided them with the opportunity to build their social capital. Testimonies from participants show an increase in their bridging social capital (with other community leaders) and linking social capital (with government officials, media professionals and experienced human rights advocates).

“Community leaders who attended this training were very keen on staying in touch and working together.”

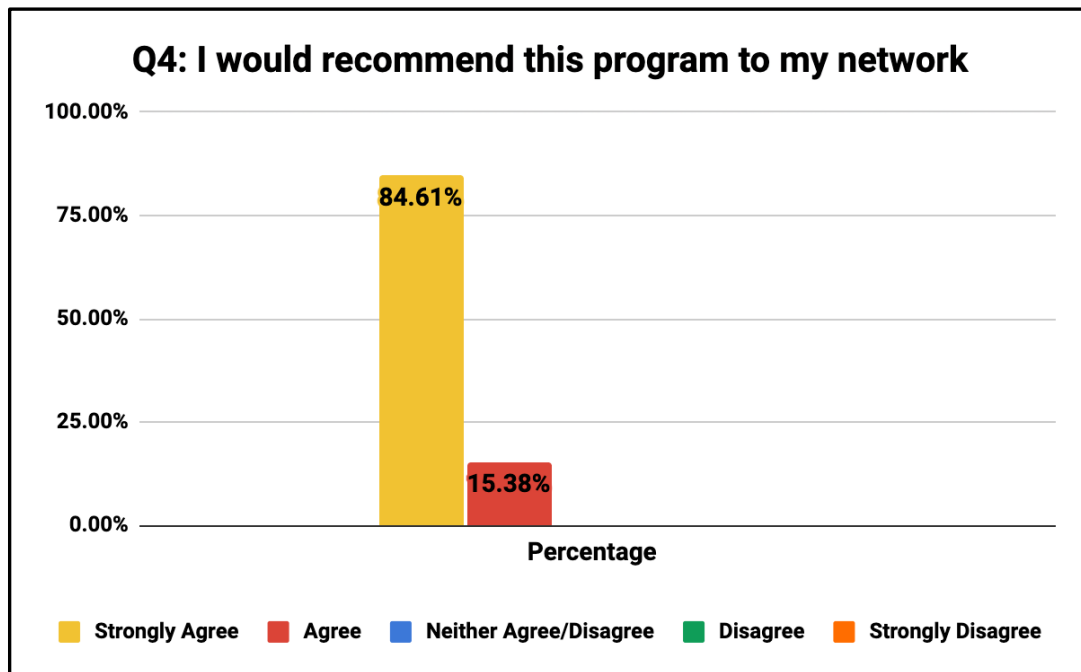
“Facilitators, guest speakers willing to share contact information and knowledge or follow up.”

“1. Meeting with the trainers who show us gratitude and respect. Hearing and reading their stories gives us very good insight into what we plan to do. 2. Meeting up with other community leaders was also the greatest.”

For some, the conversations led to the identification of similar experiences which in turn, built solidarity among them and their causes. For others, it gave them a deeper understanding of the issues affecting different communities. It was also observed that there was an exchange of invitations to community events among the group seeking support in furthering their cause.

“I was able to meet with other communities that provide me with a deeper understanding of what they went through. It was also a good opportunity to share dates of important events.”

“Met a lot of people from other communities with similar experiences that we can build solidarity with.”



Graph 5: Percentage response for Q4

Results from Graph 5 show that the group explicitly agreed to recommend the program to their network. Having attended the program themselves, the participants found the training to be relevant as it

empowered them with the tools and knowledge necessary to advocate for their community. Hence, several individuals believed that the training would be equally beneficial to their network.

"I can post and promote these kinds of programs as (illegible) to the communities."

"Definitely. This training will give other leaders the tools to start or go on with their advocacy work."

"These advocacy skills are important in our everyday life."

"Of course. It is so beneficial."

Part II

Increase in knowledge of advocacy.

The Human Rights and Advocacy program was designed with the objective of helping community leaders develop their skills and expertise in advocacy and human rights. During the discussion, the group observed an increase in their knowledge of advocacy and spoke about some of the skills they picked up from the training. These include how to gather information for their campaign, who to approach to further their efforts and how to engage with the media. One participant shed light on the insights they gained from each guest speaker. Examples include how they learned to present their case to politicians in terms of its impact on matters that are crucial to the economy, governance and politics. From the media professional, they learned the importance of building sustainable relationships with journalists who shared their passion.

"I gained a lot of information about my advocacy-the process, how we have to gather the information and who to approach and then also the media, how to engage them. So the topic is kind of new for me or I lack the knowledge of these things. So I find it very helpful to me. I gained a lot of knowledge and information networks, and it motivated me to contribute more to my community."

"I mentioned when the lawyer stated, you need to decide what channel and what person of influence that you're going to target to make your work easy to reach the decision-making stage. And also, the politician when she said when you go and approach an MP you have to do your homework. Get your statistics ready with figures, especially in regard to the economy and the impact on the economy. And then the media person emphasised that it's very good for a community leader to build a very sustainable relationship with journalists who have the same interest in the topic of interest that we are advocating for. These three tips for me are very much the golden ones that I have learned through this training."

"I think just in terms of how to be more structured, like I think about what I've been doing just spending hours, trying to organise rallies and spending hours to write Facebook posts and things like that and trying to get onto journalists, but I wonder how effective we've been. And this (training) at least just gives us a foundation to take a really structured approach that makes better use of our time makes us feel like 'okay, we have tried in a really targeted way, whether we succeed or fail, we've given ourselves the best chance and we can feel happy about that', rather than just not knowing and just scattergun just trying everything and being really random in our approach."

One participant reflected on the effectiveness of their work in advocacy in light of the training they attended. Prior to the training, the participant described the nature of their work as time consuming with no structure in place to guide them. However, the training has reportedly offered them a foundation to rely on to build their campaign in a targeted and efficient manner.

Increased confidence

The evaluation has found that the increase in knowledge observed by participants in the previous finding has inspired confidence in them as leaders and as advocates. Participants disclosed that having the necessary skills and tools has not only helped develop their self-confidence but has also emboldened them to do more and pursue avenues that may not have been available to them before. Examples include expanding their network with leaders from diverse communities towards a collaborative effort in the future and finding the right kind of champion to advocate for their cause.

"I'm more confident about how I should go about doing advocacy. And I have been given the tools-how to do a successful advocacy. And the media training was good. And so were the MPs talking about how we should engage and what we should do and shouldn't do, which was very, very helpful."

"In relation to how I feel, I feel more confident to do more activities for our cause. I have more knowledge in relation to tactics for campaigns, for example, tools, ways to approach the media, or more effective ways of taking our issue to the MPs by finding the right champion. I want to do more activities to promote our issue naturally, through conferences working with other communities, especially building relationships with other well-known organisations or communities. And again, visiting MPs and all that to find the right champions right one or two or three persons to take our issue to the Parliament."

Relevance of training

Participants unanimously agreed that the content of the training was highly relevant to their work and applauded the organisers for the way in which it was designed and delivered. One participant stated that the collection of diverse presenters which included a lawyer, an MP and a journalist was crucial as it gave them extra tips on how to go about their campaign effectively and an understanding of advocacy from different perspectives, they otherwise might not have access to.

“Probably most of the community leaders here know what this is. However, this training was very beneficial and well designed by inviting three crucial people from the sectors that are really related to advocacy and human rights. Having a lawyer and a politician, and also a specialised person in media, a journalist to give us those extra tips to make the campaign more effective rather than wasting energy seeking channels which might not lead to what we want or to create the positive change that we are after. So I believe that the collection of presenters was really relevant. And I congratulate you for this wonderful design for the program.”

Expectation vs reality

“Everything that I expected and even more, okay, even more than what I expected. We don't even have enough time to cover everything that is in the text. Yeah, we were supposed to do so. It's plenty, plenty plenty to take in.”

As a course on advocacy, participants expected to learn the tools and skills necessary to advocate for their communities effectively. Testimonies from Part I- Graph 2 also indicate that there was

an expectation from participants to expand their network by meeting professionals in the field and leaders from other communities. Findings from the evaluation suggest that the majority of the group was of the opinion that the program met their expectations.

“In regard to the training. I think I came with some of the (inaudible) knowledge of the UN. It was a good opportunity for me to understand how the whole system works and how to approach and how to advocate using the information that the people (trainers) were providing. I think in my opinion, I was expecting a training. But this is a workshop. So, it's a bit different. And if you look up the definition of what is training and what is workshop, you will probably find that this is actually a workshop. So maybe the wording needs to be changed or change the approach of the delivery of the training program.”

Impact of having a diversity

During the discussions, participants expressed their appreciation of being part of a diverse cohort and spoke about the different kinds of impact it had on them. By having the opportunity to interact with individuals from other cultures, the group collectively agreed that it helped them understand the issues affecting other countries.

*"I think everyone needs to be here to gain this knowledge. We did it because we are from different ethnic and different countries. So, we need to know different cultures. I appreciate that I am here."
"It certainly gave us the opportunity to learn about what is happening in other countries."*

One participant reflected on aspects of her own culture and how it differed from other cultures. According to their customs, individuals were expected to remain silent in situations where they were invited to learn. However, the participant observed that the group was encouraged to share their thoughts and clarify their queries throughout the duration of the Human Rights and Advocacy Training. As refreshing as it was, the participant expressed her appreciation for the rich diversity which offered her a different perspective on their role and stated that the training must continue to run.

"I know we all have different backgrounds, and different cultures, like my culture, you go somewhere else you need to sit down and only listen. But when they come here, they want to be open and tell us 'Oh, go for it. I want them to continue with this. This training.'"

Appreciation for the organisers of the program

The group unanimously applauded the organisers from STARTTS and DTP for putting up a residential training program that was well organised in general and relevant to their work. Participants hoped that the program would continue to run in the capable hands of the organising team and with the same level of success.



"I appreciate and I am thankful for the people that make this program successful. What I mean is Loan was very good and organised. Actually, more than well organised. And Patrick there he was so good."

"The program was so successful and very well organised and I hope it will keep this level of success."

"The organiser was amazing. Thanks."

Appreciation for residential program

During the focus group discussion, participants were asked if they preferred the two-day residential program over a one-day session either in person or via Zoom. The group unanimously expressed their preference for the former. For most, it was a welcome distraction from their day-to-day lives and responsibilities. Additionally, participants were impressed by the location of the retreat, the accommodation, hospitality and the opportunity to get to know one another.

"But from my personal point of view, it's nice to do a residential course as it's a way to take us out from our commitments. We can just be at this beautiful place."

"Great accommodation and great hospitality. I think it's, for me as a woman, as a mother, as a sister, and as a volunteer worker I'm so grateful to be here regardless of time. I appreciate it very much."

"It's time away from everything day to day and then we meet someone new. It's a different atmosphere altogether. Yes, we are here to learn as well. Yeah, it's amazing. Can't ask for more."

Challenges

Notwithstanding the positive reviews about the training, the group also experienced a few challenges which affected their ability to engage and retain information. The following shed light on these challenges:

a. Time management

Participants found the lack of time management on the part of the guest speakers challenging as it deprived them of the opportunity to learn more about different topics thoroughly and engage

in discussions to address their queries. Though the group was asked to give short introductions, the reality was anything but that. As a result, participants opined that they lost out on precious time which could have been utilised to absorb pertinent information. To avoid this in the future, participants suggested that it would be beneficial for speakers to be assertive with regards to the time allocated to the introductions.

“Because of the way they use their time to deliver the information I think-I’m an educator for 25 years and when you deliver training you are more prepared for it and you have a structure and you use some background visual aid. But in this case it was just the next person and the next person and we end up hearing stories that were quite long. So it makes it difficult to actually pay attention to the actual content of the delivery.”

“People when they get the microphone-they are really passionate about their case, so they talk and talk but there’s nothing offending about using a fixed time in a friendly way. So we can all be committed, stay within the time limits so we can give a chance for the whole lecture.”

“We’ve missed out on value, like now we had to contact him individually to learn more because the time was taken the wrong way.”



In addition to the introductions, one participant observed that the Q&A sessions proved to be time consuming. According to them, had the presenters received the questions from the group the night before and perused the bios of each participant prior to the presentation, their sessions could have been carried out efficiently in a targeted manner. Due to the lack of time management, the participant reportedly felt underwhelmed by the rushed and generalised presentation of the UN; a topic they were eagerly looking forward to.

“They could have asked us about the issues and questions we could have sent to Nick the night before. He could have already had those beforehand and then he could have said ‘okay, these are the things everyone sent to me, let’s touch on those.’ So that could have saved time or he could have looked at our bios, we could have forwarded the participant bios, because I guess we do need to be a bit smart with the time we’ve all taken out the weekend. We want to learn as much as possible. And sometimes I feel a bit short changed when Patrick’s like ‘I’m going to rush through the UN in half an hour’ and I’m like, ‘Oh my gosh, I really want to get more detail and I want some structure. I do want some didactic teaching at this sort of thing.’”

b. Lack of clarity on what was expected from the group activities.

“Sometimes, like in the little group sessions, I felt like maybe what we were doing wasn't clearly explained enough in a way that the task wasn't very clear sometimes to make effective use of that. So I think we almost did the same thing a couple of times breaking down, analysing campaigns and things, but I guess we did have those questions, but I felt confused a little bit in terms of what we were trying to do. I don't know if other people felt the same in some ways as well. But maybe that could be a bit more structured.”

“Some group work sessions were not adequately explained, and the handouts were not clear on what the task was.”

Few participants spoke about not having a clear understanding of what was expected of them during the group sessions. This proved to be a challenge to their engagement as it was borne out of confusion with no real benefit in sight. The handouts were also not of much use as it too was ambiguous with regards to detailing the specifics of the task.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were provided by the group in order to help the training improve for its next iteration.

a. Suggestions for time management

Given the difficulties participants faced caused by the lack of proper time management, suggestions were made asking the organisers of the program to allow more time for each session in order to avoid cutting content

“1. Allow adequate time for sessions as several had to be cut short and possibly vital content missed. 2. Ideally get participants to write down their issues beforehand to circulate to presenters or ensure participants stick to the time with introductions and articulating issues.”

delivery short. It was also recommended that the group should be asked to hand in their questions/statements and bios prior to each session so that the presenters can approach their sessions in a timely approach knowing what exactly to address.

An alternative to the process of participants making multiple introductions was offered. The recommendation was for the program to set aside an hour at the beginning for the introductions to take place in the presence of all the guest speakers and trainers. The participant emphasised

that it was important for people to be heard. Hence, this suggestion was offered to give the group a chance to express themselves without wasting time or having to repeat their introductions.

"I guess on that point about us sharing our stories, I think it's very important. I think maybe they just need to look at ways of making it more efficient. Whether all the presenters could have been there at the start when we do an introduction. So they all kind of hear the stories at the same time because we had to introduce ourselves each time and maybe that wasn't very efficient. I think it's important to give everyone a platform. They probably just need to build more time for that introduction part and just accept that we need to allow one hour for that."

b. Request for recognised qualification

"There is a sufficient amount of time we spend here, and we end up with a certificate which is good but it's not a qualification. Not recognised qualification or unit. There should be some units that STARTTS should be able to deliver as part of the training and/or on top of it. So the person who received this training can end up with something more formal as well. There is enough time to do it, and I think STARTTS should partner with some RTOs to provide that because we're all spending quite a lot of time- 16 hours on delivery more or less and it's more than enough to actually receive at least one of these."

Towards the end of the program, the group was presented with certificates for their participation. Though the gesture was well received, few participants expressed their wish to be awarded a recognised qualification or unit of study which would add value to their career. The participant pointed out that the group had spent a significant amount of their time (approximately 16 hours) at the training

which qualified them to receive formal recognition. To that end, it was recommended that STARTTS should partner with RTOs (Registered Training Organisations) to offer formal qualifications in the VET sector (Vocational Education and Training).

c. Incorporate self-care into the residential program

As mentioned earlier, the Human Rights and Advocacy Training was a two-day residential course in which participants attended numerous sessions on advocacy and human rights delivered by the trainers and guest speakers. For its future iteration, a suggestion was made to include elements of self-care into the program. To that end, it was recommended that the program allow intervals for participants to engage and expand their networks, explore the grounds and participate in team building activities. It was also recommended that the group arrive at the

venue on Friday night so as to let participants have enough time to familiarise themselves with everyone and get ready for the first day.

“On the residential part, I guess, part of being here, coming away, there should always be I guess an element of self-care built into the course a little bit of time for that and not just the full on training. So maybe that's just something to make allowance for. Not packing the program with too much so that there is adequate free time or even breaks for the networking and also some exploring or doing some activities towards team building. Otherwise, we can just do an intensive workshop in Sydney. We've come out here for a reason. We should appreciate the environment, make use of it, and I think maybe even think about coming on the Friday night as a late start in the evening at 7:00pm or 8:00pm and enjoying a bit of group things together, have the introductions that night, so that we can get stuck into it on the Saturday.”

d. Suggestion to offer structure of the presentations to participants.

During the discussion, one participant requested to be provided with information on the structure of each session so that they could follow up on it. Upon clarification with the Senior CiCT Project Officer it has become clear that some of the sessions carried out in a conversational style with no formal Power Point presentation. Hence the request was made so that participants could recall what they have learned and follow up if needed.

“Campaign topic. Provide a structure of the session to be delivered so that participants can follow up.”

e. Cater to people with varying levels of learning needs

A request was made for the program to curate its content for those with learning needs. One suggestion was to provide visual aids to help such individuals understand and connect with the content more easily.

“Perhaps the use of proper media aides to facilitate others (illegible) with learning needs.”

f. Request for a follow up training

Given the relevance of the program, participants requested to have follow up workshops to catch up on the progress of their skill development and/or to expand their knowledge of topics they touched upon in the training.

“Follow up workshop in 3 months time to catch up on skills development and improvement.”

“I hope there will be a program that is linked to human rights which can build up my skill and knowledge to extend what we have learned in the past 2 days.”

g. Cater to individual communities.

One participant opined that it would be beneficial for individual communities to attend the training. According to them, the space provided by the training was a good avenue for members of the community to convene, set aside their differences and unite behind a common cause.

“For each community separately. This may give the opportunity to parties in the communities to come together and iron out their difficulties and find a way to work together for the common good of the community.”

h. Recommended topics for future iterations.

Throughout the evaluation, participants spoke positively about the content of the training and the subsequent increase in their knowledge and skills. When asked about what they would like to learn more of in the future, the group offered a variety of recommendations. The recommendations included international human rights law and social media marketing. Request for the latter received strong support from the rest of the group as they were aware of the importance of social media platforms and its potential to spread information and widen a campaign’s reach.

“On top of that the open channels of further learning. Like most of us probably are interested to know about the international laws of human rights, UN structure of dealing with things and that's amazing.”

“Plus, effective use of social media. I'm personally not very good at using social media efficiently.”

One participant stated that they wished to learn more about the United Nations, its structure and its role in advocacy around humanitarian issues. Though these topics were on the agenda, the trainers were unable to offer an in-depth presentation due to a lack of time. Hence, in its next iteration, the participant requested specifically for the UN system to be covered.

"I wish to learn more about the UN system."

"Also on the UN issue. I think this is a good opportunity to say we've even covered the UN therefore we should have a special session. Just the UN to catch up with what we miss out."

"Find another presenter to talk deeply about human rights and what structure to use to create a campaign."

"More depth on the UN."



Conclusion

The Human Rights and Advocacy Training program was organised to empower community leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to be heard and to make an impact through their advocacy work. Findings from the evaluation explicitly indicate that the program had a positive impact on those who attended. Participants applauded the design of the program, the content and the team from STARTTS and DTP for their organisational skills. By the conclusion of the program, the group collectively observed an increase in their skills and knowledge of advocacy and the expansion of their social and professional networks which in turn facilitated the discussions to develop a shared vision for advocacy and future human rights capacity building programs for diaspora. These findings indicate the program has made significant strides in achieving its objectives.

The evaluation has also produced additional findings that were derived from personal introspections from the group. As a result of an increase in their knowledge and skills, several



individuals reported feeling increasingly confident to carry out their work more efficiently and more loudly. Similarly, being a part of a diverse cohort had a significant impact on them as it helped them to look beyond their differences in order to understand one another and their struggles, to find similarities in experiences and to build a bond based on mutual respect and support.

Notwithstanding the positive impact of training, participants also faced a few difficulties which prohibited them from maximising the value they gained from the retreat. Several suggestions were offered to remedy these challenges including cater the training to those with different learning needs, to ensure avenues for self-care and to have the training offer formal qualifications. Overall, participants were deeply satisfied with the Human Rights and Advocacy Training and expressed their wish to attend training similar to this in the future.

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