

5th Academy and Conference Human Rights Go Local: What Works

“Local Governments and Human Rights-Based Budgeting: Pathways to Accountability”

2 – 5 February 2026

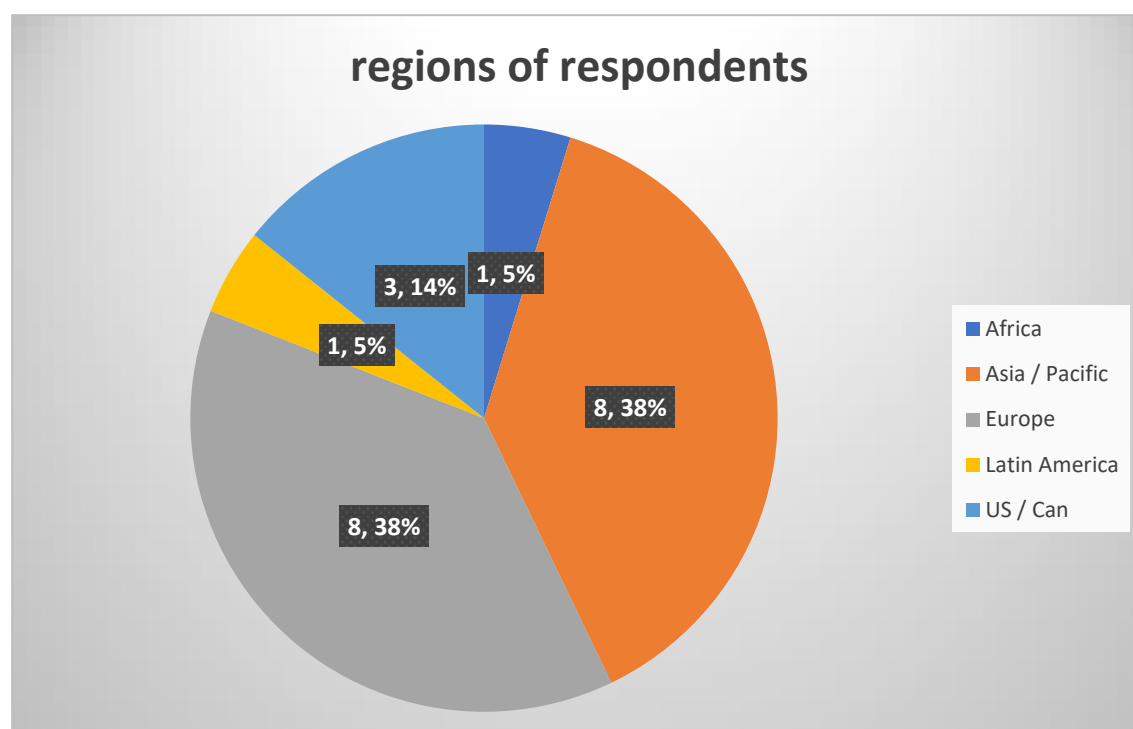
Feedback of participants

This is a brief evaluation of participants' feedback, which is based on the data from 21 responses to a feedback survey, provided by the organisers.

1. Respondents' characteristics

Region:

The majority of respondents comes from Asia / Pacific and Europe, while Africa and Latin America are underrepresented.



The participants at the Academy were distributed among regions as follows: Africa 23%, Asia and the Pacific 17%, Europe 46%, Latin America and the Caribbean 6% and US and Canada 8%.

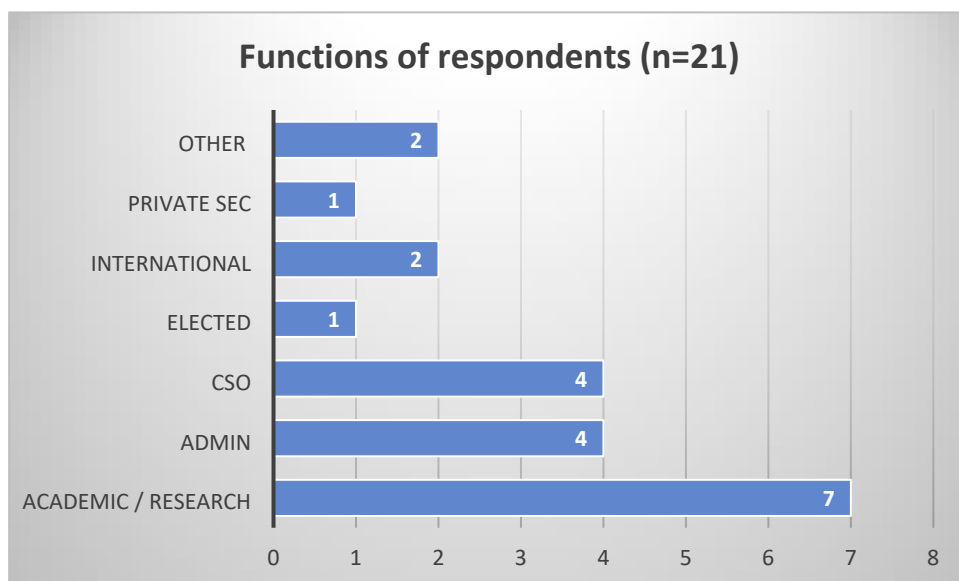
Gender:

Female: 10 (48%), male 10 (48%), prefer not to say: 1 (5%)

The distribution is similar to the one of participants (44%male, 54% female, 2%n.d.)

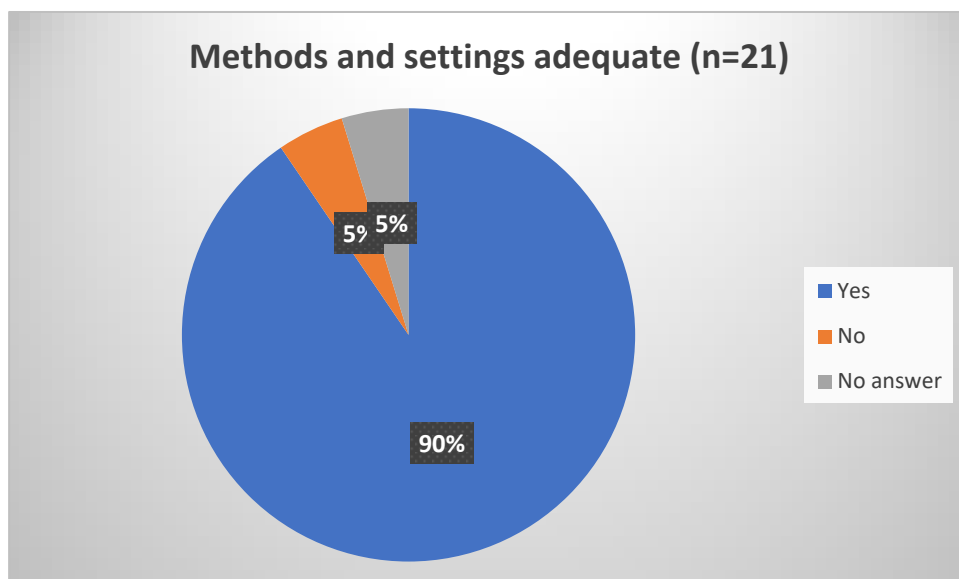
As regards the functions of respondents, the majority (33%) is academics and researchers, followed by administrative representatives of local authorities (19%) and civil society organisations (19%). Elected officials, private sector actors and representatives of international organisations form a minority of respondents. The distribution of functions among respondents is similar the one of participants: also here academics and researchers as well as local authorities in administrative functions form the majority.





2. Feedback on methods and content of Academy

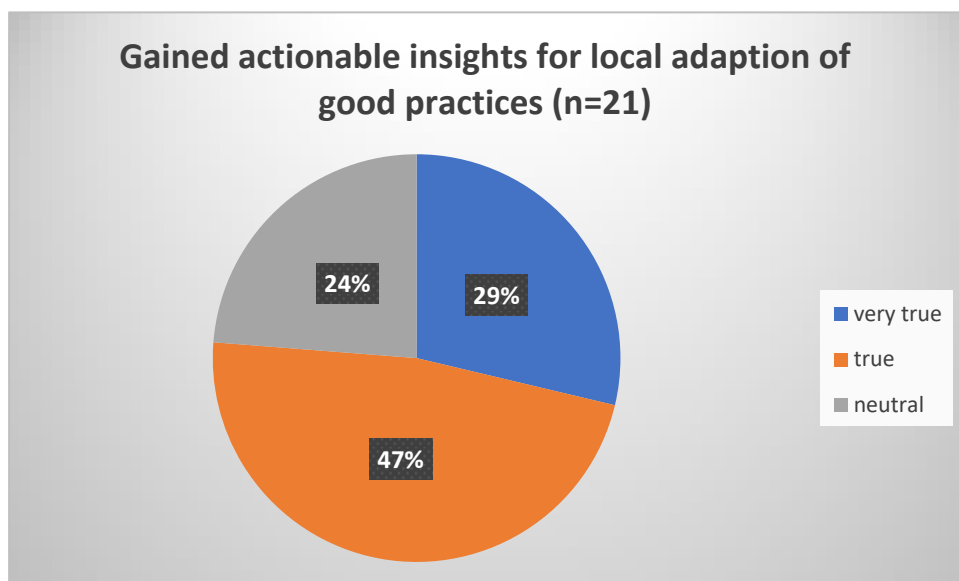
The majority of 90% confirmed the statement: „Were the methods, settings, sequences and duration applied during the Academy adequate for you?“



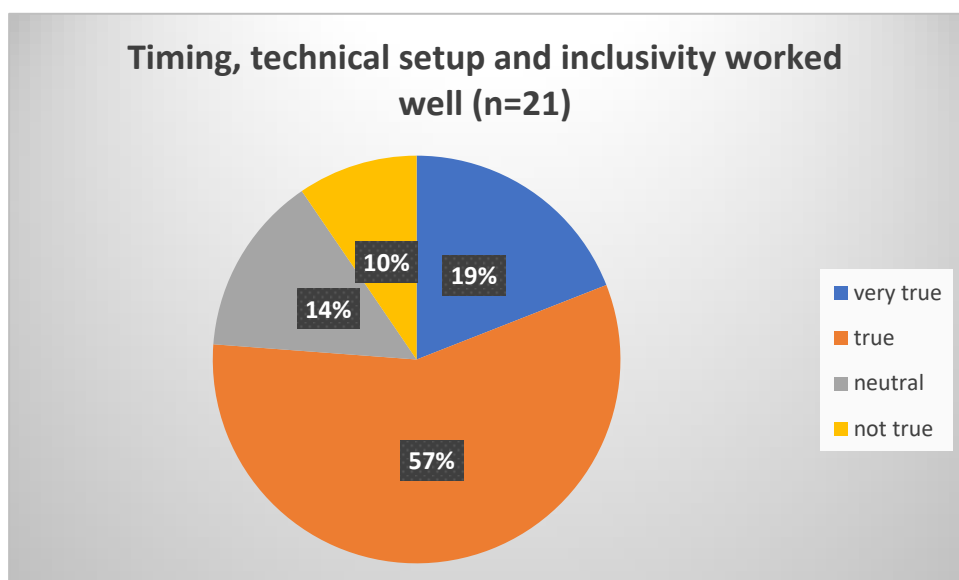
All 21 respondents confirmed the statement: „Will you use the knowledge shared during the Academy in your daily work?“

The statement „I gained actionable insights for local adaption of good practices“ was confirmed by the majority of respondents: 29% ticked „very true“ and further 47% „true“. The options „not true“ and „not true at all“ were of course given as well, but not selected.





The statement „Timing, technical setup and inclusivity worked well“ was confirmed by the majority of respondents as well. Still, the organisers are aware about the challenge of attending a virtual event from allover the world with a diversity of time zones. This can be seen as a high committment of the participants to the Academy and its topics and methods.



As regards technical setup and inclusivity, respondents provided several suggestions, which will be outlined below.

2.1 Most appreciated by the participants

The respondents were asked to provide information on what they liked most at the Academy and why this is the case. This section provides a summary of narrative responses.



2.1.1 Interactive and inclusive format

Respondents appreciated the opportunities to contribute actively to the Academy, even without having a speaker's role. More concretely, the opportunities to speak, use the chat, and to engage in open exchanges in workshops and panels were mentioned as particularly appreciated.

„The open discussions and pragmatic access to the topics“ (participant, academic/researcher, secret gender).

The participants appreciated the applied methods of peer-to-peer experience sharing, that fostered an equitable participation (including non-panelists). Furthermore, a trusting, glocal participation atmosphere was mentioned by respondents.

“The ability and encouragement to engage even if not a panelist, demonstrates equity in practice and creates a safe space while building trust. This experience means we are applying human rights principles in the conduct of the quite substantive HRGL Academy, which is why I look forward to this Academy and Conference, and continue to recommend it to others. The resource links are freely shared and provide motivation to continue the momentum inspired by excellent presentations, once we depart this convening. thus applying the principles and expanding the movement”. (a female participant)

Participants appreciated a well-designed course structure, including a humanitarian and inclusive approach and freely shared resources in the framework of an equally open and safer space. Finally, participants observed a clear application of human rights principles throughout the Academy.

2.1.2 High-quality content and diversity of speakers

Respondents stated that they liked the relevant content, that is addressed broadly at the Academy most. Moreover, the high-level presentations, which offer a holistic view of human rights in local government was appreciated.

„I liked a) the variety of topics presented so as the approach is holistic, showing different aspects b) the combination of presenting best practices and examples that may inspire ideas. Last but not least, the speakers provided food for thought, were high-standard. In most of the cases, the workshops provided time for exchange and interventions - very much appreciated!“ (participant, administrative staff, female)

„I appreciated the topics covered, as they approached the issue from multiple perspectives and were very enlightening.“ (participant, private sector actor, female)

2.1.3 Strong practical orientation

Real cases, best practices, and tangible examples that support local government implementation and make learning directly applicable, was appreciated as well.

„What I liked most about the Academy was the combination of high-quality content and the opportunity to exchange experiences with peers. The sessions were very practical and grounded



in real cases, which made the learning immediately relevant and applicable. I also valued the diversity of perspectives, as it enriched the discussions and helped me rethink my own approaches". (participant, administrative staff, female)

This is particularly gratifying because that is precisely one of the Academy's goals: to deal with the topics from a very practical point of view in order to serve local authorities.

2.2 Not appreciated by the participants

Participants were also asked for sharing critics. The aspects, they least liked at the Academy are summarised in the following.

2.2.1 Not enough time and space for interaction

Several respondents expressed their wish for more time for communication, networking, and raising questions. Having smaller group sessions or more audience-driven outcomes were suggested to address this challenge.

„Overall the experience was very positive; if anything, I would have appreciated slightly more time for interaction and reflection during the sessions“ (participant, administrative staff, female)

„I struggled a bit to find space to ask questions. I mean, there surely was some but maybe some smaller group sessions, with participants divided by function, could work better for me.“ (participant, administrative staff, male)

Moreover, the volume and intensity of inputs were experienced as too dense to fully absorb, especially when sessions were not recorded for later review.

Balancing the possibility of packing a lot of content into a short period of time while also allowing for plenty of interaction will be considered by the organisers. Moreover, the organisers could consider recording of plenary sessions (upon consent of speakers) to offer a better reflection and absorbing of the rich content shared. Recording the interactive sessions remains however out of discussion, as providing a safe space for participants to openly share their views and experiences remains a priority.

2.2.2 Online format and timing challenges

Some respondents mentioned the lack of physical contact provided by the online Academy. This critic is understandable, however addressing it would be at the expenses of accessibility and efficiency. Furthermore, the early / late starting times for persons in certain time zones mentioned, are for sure a challenge. However, the organisers are aware that there is no satisfying solution to this challenge, as the Academy aims to include participants from all over the world in the framework of a digital event at the same time. The Academy times were selected carefully, so that they are accessible as possible for anyone. Having convenient Academy times for anyone is simply not possible.



2.2.3 Gaps in practical implementation focus

One participant felt that practical solutions for local implementation of human rights frameworks were not addressed sufficiently. However, this person acknowledged that many practical solutions relate to deeper structural preconditions and political-will.

2.3 Suggestions for improvement

Participants' suggestions for improvement can be grouped into five core improvement points.

2.3.1 Stronger diversity in participation

Respondents mentioned the representation and participation of African experts as success in this year's Academy (compared to the former ones this is an upgrade). Still, the missing representation of Black Indigenous women as keynote speakers and panellists was criticised. Some respondents would have wished for more community practitioners and mayors in the programme of the Academy. Following up this suggestions, points of contact for cooperation will be further established.

One respondent suggested to continue and improve exchanging ideas with an intergenerational lens. Exchange between the youth and elders, as well as those in their primary active working years is suggested in addition to the specific networking programme for the next generation. As people of all generations live in communities together, they could generally benefit from continued cooperative work in order to support/build even more resilience and positive impact regarding human rights. Intergenerational networks could influence the localized human rights culture and practices. These suggestions will be considered in the framework of the networking and next generation programme.

2.3.2 More practice-oriented and bottom-up formats

Another suggestion targeted the offer of formats to include the audience better. This would deepen interactive and practice-focused work on concrete challenges in the implementation of a human rights-based approach to local budgeting. Moreover, more participative formats would strengthen bottom-up mechanisms, whereby affected rightsholders could participate in or lead processes.

„Maybe a focus on bottom-up mechanisms, where affected rightsholders participate in or lead processes, could help to create yet more traction/impact of the conversations“ (participant, academic/researcher, gender not revealed).

„Although implementation aspects were included, a more interactive and practice-oriented approach could make the sessions more engaging and facilitate deeper discussion on practical challenges“ (participant, private sector actor, female).

Exploring options for rightsholders and researchers to share their findings and views will be considered.

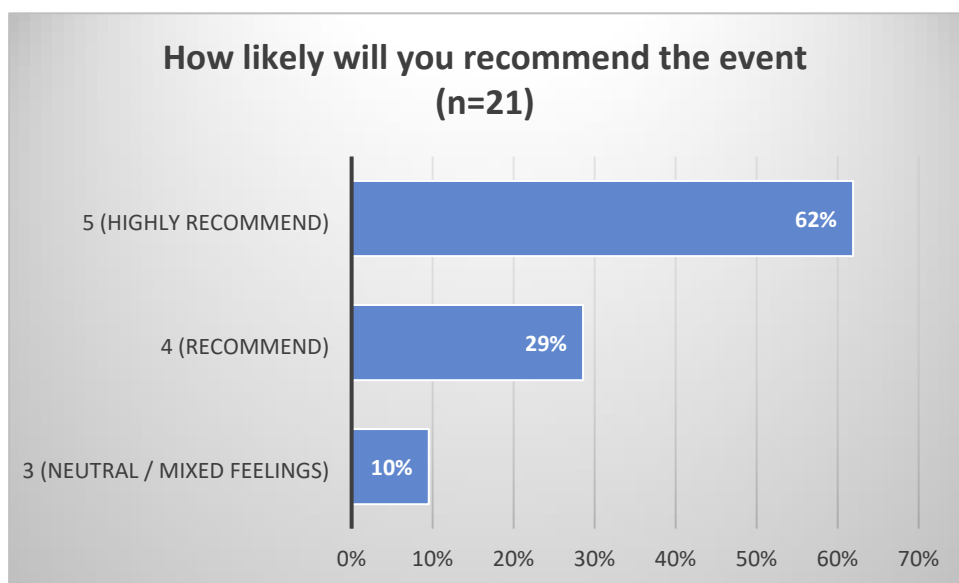


2.3.3 Improved linguistic and accessibility support

Participants requested more materials and simultaneous or written translation in languages such as French and Spanish. English interpretation could also be considered for non-native English speakers with different accents. The organisers could further explore tools to facilitate interpretation / written translation – at least for plenary sessions.

2.3.4 General assessment

The question on how likely participants recommend the Academy on a scale of 1 (strongly not recommended) to 5 (highly recommended) is a good indicator for its overall relevance for the participants. The responses are as follows:



The vast majority of respondents (90%) would either recommend or even highly recommend the Academy. The options of not recommending the Academy were not selected.

3. Networking opportunities

Participants were also asked for feedback on the networking opportunities offered. Networking opportunities included the networking space, offered in “Academy’s living room” via Gather town as well as the programme for the next generation human rights experts.

When asked if the networking programme met their expectations, 10 respondents agreed, 2 refused to answer and 9 stated that they did not participate in it. No user of the networking programme indicated, that expectations were not met.

The following suggestions for improvement regarding the next generation networking event were provided by the respondents:

- Provide an alumni or follow-up communication opportunity to know how the participants are faring in their career development in the human rights local work over time. Follow-up



communication or other means to continue support, collaboration or to celebrate the achievements of the next generation could be offered as well.

- Provide a greater diversity of mentors, particularly Black Indigenous people.

The following suggestions target the networking opportunity in Gather town:

- Allowing more dedicated time for informal exchange in Gather and providing clearer guidance on how to engage with others would help participants connect more meaningfully.
- The option to see, who is in the room before entering would be good.
- The networking opportunities could be further strengthened by providing more structured and facilitated networking sessions, such as thematic breakout groups or guided introductions.
- The organisers should provide more information on the aim of the networking sessions and which contribution is expected from participants. Some participants were reluctant to participate, as these aspects were not clear to them.

