

SUMMER LABS: AN IMMERSIVE HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERIENCE

YOUTH CASE STUDY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ITALY



SUMMARY

Each year, Amnesty International Italy organizes several seven-day ‘Summer Labs’ for young people to learn about human rights through a first-hand, interactive experience. This is a unique opportunity for young people without prior human rights experience to take part in participatory activities to develop their understanding of human rights, speak to other young human rights defenders, and listen to speeches by right holders.



DESCRIPTION

In 2013, Amnesty International Italy decided to diversify their annual campaigning camps and transform them into educational experiences. From that year onwards they held 3 camps each year: one for people aged 14-19, two for people under 35, and one for people over 35. In 2018, two more camps for young people in new regions were added, and a total of 197 people attended the 5 camps; 75% of them were under 35, of which 38% were between aged 14 to 18. These camps aimed to grow the number of young Amnesty supporters in Italy, and to create a space for them to come together. The camps take place between June and September. They are promoted through Amnesty Italy’s website, social media, and word of mouth. For many participants attending a camp is their first engagement with Amnesty International; to attend, participants don’t need to have a human rights background or volunteering experience, just an interest in learning more about human rights. In the camps for young people there are various activities to explore and deconstruct stereotypes, prejudices and forms of discrimination. Each day the groups discuss different human rights topics and learn from experts, right holders (such as young migrants), and young human rights

defenders. The last day is focused on the participants using their learnings to take action on a campaign. Once the camp ends, participants are encouraged to become Amnesty Italy activists and form new youth groups.

“The Summer Lab is about putting yourself out there, to learn more about human rights and meet other people who want to make a change.” - Martina, camp participant

OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen human rights knowledge and activism skills, especially among young people and children.
- Grow Amnesty Italy’s youth movement by inviting young people to learn about human rights through an immersive human rights education experience, and give them the opportunity to put their knowledge and skills into practice as an activist.
- Build networks between young people, human rights defenders, and right holders.
- Create opportunities for young people to help organize the camps by incorporating activities and ideas that are appealing to young people.

IMPACT

- As a result of their experience in the camp, 25% of the young people who attend the camps become Amnesty Italy activists and participate actively in their actions.
- 3 new local groups were formed in 2018 as a result of the camps.
- 4 young people who participated in a camp in 2017 joined the organizing team of the 2018 summer camps.



TIPS AND TRICKS

- *Think big, but start small!* Amnesty Italy started with 1 or 2 camps with few participants and grew throughout the years.
- *Make the camps a well-rounded experience!* Make sure to include activities related to all areas of Amnesty's work, from advocacy to human rights education, to give young people a sense of the varied roles they could take part in as activists.
- *Involve young people in the planning!* Encourage young people to be part of the organizing team for the youth summer camps. They will bring innovative ideas that appeal to young people.
- *Create immersive and interactive camps!* Consider holding the camps in isolated areas to ensure there are no distractions, allow for sufficient time (for example a full week), and come up with fun and participatory activities.



MARCO IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Marco was a Summer Lab participant:
"The amazing experience I had at my first Summer Lab, to this day, is still unmatched by any other Amnesty activity I took part in: I got there knowing nothing about human rights, but after 7 days passed learning about them in a fun and creative way I decided that Amnesty had to be a part of my life. I believe that a project such as this one could really have a big impact, not only for Amnesty as an organisation, but especially for all those young people that believe they could make a difference but don't know how."

'Taking part of the Summer Lab Camps really changed my life, or in other words it transformed it because since the day the camp ended I've been on a constant process of learning about human rights violations and defending my rights and those of others'
– Maria Paola, camp participant

STAKEHOLDERS

- Young activists as participants, and young activists in the organizing group
- Staff from Amnesty International Italy
- Human Rights Defenders
- Rights holders
- Local and national NGOs who help organise, provide support and links to Human Rights Defenders and rights holders who could be invited.

INFORMATION

Contact Omelia, Youth Empowerment and Camps Coordinator, at Amnesty International Italy for more information: o.bignami@ai-italy.it

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