

OPENING UP INCLUSIVE ADVOCACY SPACES FOR ALL

YOUTH CASE STUDY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEW ZEALAND



SUMMARY

As part of its Welcoming Communities campaign, Amnesty International New Zealand (NZ) is calling on the NZ government to continue its pilot refugee community sponsorship programme. Amnesty International NZ's volunteers are meeting with decision-makers, including members of parliament and mayors, to promote the continued resettlement of refugees. Young people, known as youth advocates, have instigated or led over half of these meetings.



STORY OF CHANGE

The NZ government is currently resettling refugees through a one-year pilot community sponsorship programme. Amnesty International NZ wants the programme to become permanent, with a continuous intake of refugees. To achieve this, they are bringing together delegations of up to six volunteers, including youth advocates aged 25 and under, to meet with decision-makers and promote the continuation of the programme. Youth advocates are at the forefront of these visits, with each member of the delegation having a designated role to play. Some youth advocates have previous experience with Amnesty International, whilst others are new to the organisation, having been identified through Amnesty Community – Amnesty International NZ's community organising outreach project. The youth advocates come from diverse backgrounds and the project prioritises youth advocates from a refugee background where possible. In preparation for the meetings, advocates take part in Amnesty International NZ's online and offline training on the Welcoming Communities campaign. In addition, in 2018, youth advocates were sponsored to attend Amnesty International NZ's Annual General Meeting, where they participated in advocacy and public narrative workshops ahead of meetings with members of parliament. Pre-

meeting briefings are also provided, giving information about the decision-maker being visited and detailing outcomes sought and issues to raise with decision-makers. Post-meeting debriefs ensure that Amnesty International NZ gets optimal feedback. Advocates are informed when their meetings have assisted in achieving outreach.

“Advocacy is so much easier and more empowering than you would have imagined... it will show you that you can really do anything” – Katherine (Youth Advocate)

OBJECTIVES

- Educate and influence decision-makers on the issue of community sponsorship.
- Build relationships across the political spectrum.
- Encourage decision-makers to publicly support Amnesty International's I Welcome campaign.
- Develop the advocacy skills of advocates.
- Open up inclusive spaces for all, including young people, to get involved in advocacy.

IMPACT

- The positivity, enthusiasm and hope of young people has inspired older members to engage in advocacy meetings.
- Outreach by advocates has given Amnesty International NZ access to members of parliament and mayors that they would not have otherwise reached.
- Members of parliament and mayors who may have known little about community sponsorship are now informed on the issue.
- Mayors or mayoral representatives in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin have come out overwhelmingly in favour of their cities welcoming refugees.
- All advocates have learnt valuable skills. Youth advocates in particular have grown in confidence.
- Many youth leaders in schools and universities are now on first-name terms with their members of parliament, some of whom have attended their events.

“Being a youth advocate, you have a very unique perspective and outlook, different to older generations, so we have a lot of nuanced ideas to bring to the table” - Zak (Youth Advocate)

TIPS AND TRICKS

- *Just do it!* Don't let fear hold you back.
- *Be well prepared!* In this project young people went into meetings with decision-makers feeling confident and well-prepared, having attended pre-meeting briefings.
- *Speak from the heart!* This will help to inspire decision-makers to support your campaign.
- *Use social media to celebrate!* Share successes on your social media platforms.
- *Emphasise the value of young people's participation!* Ensure young people feel valued for their part in the project.
- *Promote intergenerational collaboration!* This project engages with people of all ages to promote the continued resettlement of refugees.



ALVA IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Activism is a way of life for Alva Feldmeier. Formerly the leader of an Amnesty high school group and now leading the Otago University group, Alva (19) says she cannot imagine not being engaged with human rights, even with the constant juggle of life, study, work and activism. Alva's passion and persistence has paid off through the meetings she has instigated with members of parliament and mayors, briefing them about community sponsorship of refugees. Alva's advice for other youth advocates is simple – go in there, treat decision-makers as fellow human beings and speak from the heart.

STAKEHOLDERS

- Amnesty International New Zealand
- Youth advocates who visit decision-makers, along with other Amnesty volunteers.
- Members of parliament and mayors are the decision-makers targeted by the project, under the advocacy component of the Welcoming Communities campaign.

“I've previously always thought that they would never take us seriously, that they would think we're naïve, but it was the complete opposite”
- Alva (Youth Advocate)

INFORMATION

- Contact Margaret Taylor at Amnesty International New Zealand for more information:
margaret.taylor@amnesty.org.nz

SHARE STORIES OF IMPACT
#YOUTHPOWERACTION