

# STRENGTHENING YOUTH MOVEMENTS THROUGH PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT



YOUTH CASE STUDY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

## SUMMARY

Amnesty International USA's youth movement has operated on a large scale throughout the years with youth and student groups actively participating in campaigning and advocacy initiatives. To coordinate such a large movement, Amnesty USA created the Student Activist Coordinator program to support and monitor youth groups across the country, and keep them active and engaged.



## DESCRIPTION

In 2018, Amnesty USA had 500 youth groups that are financially independent and self-organised. To become a youth group, young volunteers register online, attend an online orientation to learn about Amnesty's work, get their starter kit (including human rights education materials and a banner) and start campaigning! To support student and youth groups, Amnesty USA created the Student Activist Coordinator program, which is a multi-year leadership development program with progressive skill development, responsibilities, and opportunities related to movement building and human rights campaigning. Student Activist Coordinators develop the leadership of Amnesty USA's Student Group Coordinators through one-on-one meetings, facilitating the connection between groups, member leaders, and staff. The Field Organisers develop leadership of group coordinators, recruit for the Student Activist Coordinators role each year and support their day to day work. In the 2017/2018 academic year, 51 leaders were accepted into the program, and the 2018/2019 class has 65 Student Activist Coordinators. Once accepted, the entire "class" is brought together for a weekend of skills-based training, campaign and program planning, mapping out the year of activism with Field Organisers and sharing ideas with other Student Activist Coordinators.

"The program has given me the skills and support to organize actions that bring hundreds of students and community members together. Amnesty has made me a more powerful activist, amplifying my efforts to fight against human rights abuses" - Brie Dungate, (18) Saratoga Springs High School, NY.

## OBJECTIVES

- Support 500+ Amnesty youth groups (which are expected to grow to 1000+ by 2020) with highly qualified Student Activist Coordinators.
- Encourage and support youth groups to share Amnesty's campaigns and initiatives to their local communities.
- Support newly formed youth groups and strengthen connections with groups that have already been established to keep them engaged and committed.
- Create leadership opportunities for young people within Amnesty's structures. For example, many Student Activist Coordinators go on to other national leadership roles, including as members of the Board of Directors.
- Create a network of support for young activists (made up of Student Activist Coordinators, staff members, and other member leaders) to help them grow their groups and develop initiatives.

## IMPACT

- More than half of the 2017/2018 Student Activist Coordinators class remains committed to their Amnesty human rights campaigning work.
- Student Activist Coordinators who started the program while in high school often continued their work even after moving to another state for college. Some Student Activist Coordinators take a year off to adjust and get involved in their new school group. Others focus on starting a group at their new school or look at a different leadership role.
- A youth group was contacted by a senator to ask for advice on gun violence. Another group from California organised a 10.000 people's March for our Lives. This march was a sibling event of the youth-led march that took place in March 2018, in Washington D.C, in support of tighter gun control.

## TIPS AND TRICKS

- *Peer-to-peer support is important!* Young people might be able to connect with other young people more easily as they share similar experiences and struggles.
- *Provide leadership positions for young people!* Young people want to become involved at all-levels of the organisation and assume leadership roles, and they are qualified to do so!
- *Allow flexibility with the youth groups!* Young people tend to be innovative in their projects and approaches. Be flexible in understanding their concerns and the actions they want to take.
- *Let youth groups be independent!* Provide groups with a solid foundation and let them grow independently while trusting that they contribute to Amnesty's mission.



“I was introduced to Amnesty International by my teacher and mentor in the 9th grade. Seeing the impact that happens when you take action inspires me to be a leader for human rights. As an Student Activist Coordinator, I have a stronger responsibility and voice in the movement” - Lauryn Youngn (18)  
Edna Karr High School,  
New Orleans, LA

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Wamia Siddiqui, a third year Student Activist Coordinator, shares her experience: “I started an Amnesty chapter in my high school, five years ago, and within two years it grew into our school's largest club. As a Student Activist Coordinator, I hope to guide other student groups to have the same kind of success—not just in running a club, but also nurturing a movement. My journey with Amnesty has shaped me greatly as a person, equipping me with both the tools and confidence to stand up for what I believe in, and to use my voice to help others. Going forward, I am excited to see what the future has in store, as I establish a new Amnesty chapter at my university, expand the human rights movement in New Jersey, and explore different roles within the organization.”

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Student Activist Coordinators are supported by Amnesty USA's Organizing and Activism unit and the Member Leadership and Training unit.
- The Member Leadership and Training unit manages the Student Activist Coordinators program to provide consistent training, support, and accountability measures at the national level.
- The Organizing and Activism unit, primarily through staff organizers, support the recruitment, ongoing leadership development, and engagement in campaigns, programmatic work, and other forms of activism.

## KEY INFORMATION

- For more information please contact: [youth@aiusa.org](mailto:youth@aiusa.org)

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