

YOUTH-LED FREEDOM CHALLENGE

YOUTH CASE STUDY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEW ZEALAND



SUMMARY

Young people all over New Zealand have been taking up the Freedom Challenge for 10 years. In the week of 12 August, which marks International Youth Day, students are encouraged to engage, inspire and educate people in their school and community on a human rights issue. The Freedom Challenge focuses on a different human rights issue every year.



DESCRIPTION

The Freedom Challenge seeks to encourage young leaders and activists to engage in campaigning. Each year, participating Youth groups brainstorm ideas together, plan and hold their own independent events all around New Zealand as well as collecting actions and donations. The challenge is about developing leaders and growing campaigning capacity. Through the Freedom Challenge youth activists are encouraged to remain involved with Amnesty International in the long term. The Freedom Challenge has proved very successful in introducing a whole new range of students to human rights issues and to Amnesty International. For instance, in 2016 the estimated 2,225 students engaged have reached out to an estimated 20,000 peers. For the local Freedom Challenge events, young people undertake the entire process, from planning to evaluation, supported by the Youth Team from Amnesty International New Zealand. The creation of a Freedom Challenge kit, which is easily accessible for students on the Amnesty International New Zealand website, makes it easy for students to understand the relatively complex issue they are presented with, and helps them to engage with the actions.

“At the end of our school assembly we got everybody in the whole hall to shout ‘ignite minds, not bombs’, which was a really effective way of making everybody remember the slogan. I was really proud to see the school get so involved,” - Student Co-ordinator Olivia Salmon

OBJECTIVES

- To develop and mentor leadership skills among youth activists.
- To provide young activists the tools and resources with which they can take action.
- To get young people involved in human rights activism.
- To attract media coverage for Amnesty International and youth activism.

IMPACT

- Exceeded our target of 5000 actions by 226 in 2016.
- Five new school groups sparked into existence in 2016.
- In 2016, more than 70% of registered Amnesty International school groups took part in Freedom Challenge.
- In 2016, the theme – and plane action – led to an increase of engagement from boys' schools and boys within our co-education schools.
- Leadership skills among junior members were strengthened to assist with group succession as leaders move on.
- In 2015, Freedom Challenge participants petitioned for New Zealand to double its annual refugee quota from 750 to 1,500. In June 2016, the Government announced an increase to 1,000.

“Freedom Challenge is a great way to empower youth to realise that their voice is powerful, and that they can make use of it in positive ways.” - Freedom Challenge Coordinator 2016, Briar Wyatt

TIPS AND TRICKS

- *Provide easy access to relevant tools!* Having access to the useful digital and physical Freedom Challenge kit resources played a big part in allowing new groups to get started, by providing them all the information required to start.
- *Use social media for coordination!* There were some challenges with reaching youth groups on email; social media and other forms of digital communication outside of email proved to be much more effective.
- *Encourage multi-school collaborations!* Larger events with multiple schools involved seemed to be the most effective at engaging students as a wider group.
- *Think beyond a standard petition!* Youth activists were encouraged to use paper planes for petitions which was a fun and effective way to raise awareness and gather visually attractive messages.
- *Make it personal!* In 2016 Freedom Challenge focussed on the disruption of children's and students right to life and education in Yemen. This was very effective in engaging young people as it was a topic with which they could directly relate. This led to high levels of engagement.

KEERA IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Keera was the leader of an Amnesty International high school group in 2014 and 2015 and took part in the Freedom Challenge. “The experience with Amnesty International has been one of the most meaningful and worthwhile. I learnt that teamwork and a sense of awareness goes a long way, as it brings out the creativity, passion and leadership in others as well as myself. I am now studying a conjoint degree in Law and Arts and I intend to carry Amnesty's values in my approaches to daily life and future career, having been involved in fair-trade projects and also Amnesty's activism at university.”



STAKEHOLDERS

- The Freedom Challenge is run by Amnesty International.
- The target audience for Freedom Challenge are students (11-18 years) within school groups and Amnesty International youth groups.
- Members of student and youth Amnesty International groups play a key role in realizing the Freedom Challenge. The bulk of these groups are within high schools who often operate as external partners.
- The participating teams are encouraged to outreach to rights holders when relevant to the campaign.

KEY INFORMATION

- Learn more about the Freedom Challenge [here](#).
- Find the Freedom Challenge kit with resources [here](#).
- Contact Amnesty New Zealand for more information: margaret.taylor@amnesty.org.nz.

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