

# FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS YOUR RIGHT

Throughout the world individuals face harassment and imprisonment as a result of exercising their right to freedom of expression. Everyone has the right to receive and impart information without fear or interference.

Freedom of Expression is essential for everyone to work without fear of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, open expression of a free and open forum.

potential demonstrators engaged in Galschiert and a number of other activists expressed fears that their activities would be the most moregenerous.

Ensure that the right of expression is protected under the ICCPR. "Do not clamp down on human rights."



## NEW MEMBERS

FIND THEM, KEEP THEM

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**



# Convenor notes

## PURPOSE

To provide knowledge and ideas for the recruitment and retention of new group members.

**Time:** Approximately one hour

## FINDING NEW MEMBERS

Ask group members what they would like your group to look like in six months:

- How many people are attending the meetings.
- What the meetings are like.
- How many people are attending group actions and events

Discuss how new members have joined the group in the past. People could also contribute examples from other community groups they have been a part of. Ask someone to write the answers on butcher's paper or a whiteboard.

Give each group member a copy of handout one. Ask which of the ideas listed might help find new members for your group. Ask someone to write the answers on butcher's paper or a whiteboard.

Using handout two, identify people and organisations you network with already, or ones you would like to make contact with, in order to potentially recruit new members.

Narrow the list down to the five most effective actions for finding new members that can be achieved in the next three months.

Guide the group in delegating who will be responsible for each aspect of the actions.

## RETAINING NEW MEMBERS

Ask each group member to discuss a time when they voluntarily joined a group (community group, social group, sporting group etc).

Have them consider:

- How they felt at the first meeting.
- How the other group members treated them as a new member.

Whether they went to more meetings. If so, what made them stay with and contribute to this group? If not, what put them off returning to the group?

Hold a brainstorming session with the group on ways to make a new member feel welcome and included in the group. Ask someone to write the answers on butcher's paper or a whiteboard.

Give each member of the group a copy of handout three and discuss any points not covered in the brainstorm. Explain each point as needed and ask for any examples from people's own group experiences.

Break up into smaller groups and develop ideas for a guide for new members. Each team can then read their ideas to the group for discussion and feedback.

Work towards completing a simple action list for welcoming and including new group members for presentation and discussion at the next meeting.

Queensland activists celebrate Harmony Day 2009. © Private



Cover: The Asia-Pacific Youth Activism meeting in Hong Kong, May 2008. © AI















## HANDOUT 1

# Finding new members

All groups need members to be active. It is difficult to keep a group going when there are only a few members, and even harder to organise functions and activities to achieve human rights impact.

Below are some tactics for finding new members and making your meetings and activities interesting. This will help keep your new and existing members interested and active.

## Ways of finding new members include:

-  Asking your community campaigner for the contact details of any Amnesty International supporters in your area.
-  Encouraging people to join your contact list when they attend a group event, visit a stall or sign a petition. Follow up with a phone call or email inviting them to your next meeting.
-  Placing a free advertisement in the community news section of your local paper. Include the group's name, one sentence describing your main activities and the group's meeting time and location.
-  Researching local community websites for opportunities to list the group's details and activities.
-  Hosting a group social event, to which each member brings along at least one guest.
-  Sending invitations to other community groups in the area who share common goals.
-  Placing a notice on community noticeboards located in libraries and shopping centres.
-  Sending group members out to attend local community group meetings.
-  Submitting media releases to the local papers about any events your group is organising or participating in. Include your group's meeting time and location. Consult your community campaigner about this.
-  Introducing your group to schools in the area by attending Parents & Family meetings.
-  Having flyers with information about your group, including its activities and meeting times, available at your events and functions.
-  Recruiting through stalls, events, film nights, demonstrations etc.
-  Placing posters advertising your group in local cafes and businesses.
-  Putting your group's details on the Amnesty International Australia website.



## Good idea

Make sure that people in your community know your group exists!

We know that most people hear about and join a group through word of mouth. This means that people are likely to bring along like-minded friends, neighbours, colleagues and family members to your group.

## HANDOUT 2

# Community networking

Think about all the potential contacts you bring with you to your group – your friends, acquaintances, family, other organisations you are involved with ... even the partners and family of all these people.

Using the categories below as a prompt, write down people you know in each category that might be interested in joining your group. Add other categories if you wish.

Tradespeople \_\_\_\_\_

Politicians or their staff \_\_\_\_\_

Government departments \_\_\_\_\_

Media \_\_\_\_\_

Unions \_\_\_\_\_

Churches or religious organisations \_\_\_\_\_

Local businesses \_\_\_\_\_

Schools and education centres \_\_\_\_\_

Local council \_\_\_\_\_

Financial services \_\_\_\_\_

Legal services \_\_\_\_\_

Publishing \_\_\_\_\_

Arts and cultural organisations \_\_\_\_\_

Libraries \_\_\_\_\_

History or heritage groups \_\_\_\_\_

Community groups (eg women's groups, environment, ethnic communities, sports, community development) \_\_\_\_\_

People with significant spare time \_\_\_\_\_

People with other special skills or attributes \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## HANDOUT 3

# Keeping new members

- If someone new arrives, welcome them and talk to them – don't ignore them.
- Bring a friend or neighbour to the group. Word of mouth and encouragement are the most effective ways of involving people.
- Allocate a mentor or buddy for a new member, to explain things and make sure they are comfortable.

## GIVE MEMBERS SOMETHING TO DO

- Share out tasks among members. If you are working on something, try to include someone who has not done that particular task before.
- Create small working groups to do particular jobs and report back to the main meeting. Make sure new members are invited to join the sub-group they are most interested in.

## REMEMBER THE GOOD NEWS STORIES

- Acknowledge and celebrate your successes. Create posters or newsletters to show existing, new and potential members the human rights impact you have achieved.
- Thank people when they do something well or show initiative – people like to feel appreciated.
- When things are going well, say so.
- Bring good news stories from Amnesty International Australia's website or the Human Rights Defender magazine to meetings – show people what Amnesty International does.
- Invite guest speakers to meetings – other Amnesty International activists, human rights experts or local community group members with human rights concerns.

## CONSIDER ACCESSIBILITY

- Regularly reassess the practicalities of your meetings. How accessible or easy to find are your meeting places? When and how often do you hold your meetings? Ask group members what suits them best and try different times and places. Make sure you consider the needs of parents and carers.
- Make sure you recognise the value of each person's life experiences.
- Take the time to give background information on an issue, especially if there are new members present. A brief revision from time to time is good for refreshing people's memory.
- Take account of each group member's ability to commit time and energy to different tasks.
- Make an effort to explain things in simple language and try not to use too much jargon. Explain what all the acronyms mean!

## HANDOUT 4

# Action focused meetings



## GOOD MEETING PRACTICES

- Have an agenda for each meeting and distribute it to members.
- Have a minute taker for each meeting to record what is agreed and any action points to be followed up. You could have each person do this in alphabetical order or their first name.
- Try to keep meetings as informal as possible. Be welcoming and friendly and make all members feel they are an important part of the group.
- Give everybody an opportunity to speak – rather than the convenor doing all the talking.
- Include actions and followup – people quickly lose interest if meetings are all talk and no action.
- Let people have conversations. If there is an interesting, relevant discussion happening at the start of the meeting, you can delay the start of the meeting by a few minutes to let the discussion continue. However, be mindful that people's time is valuable and don't let meetings run too long.
- Recognise personality conflicts within the group and try to resolve them early.
- If someone makes critical or discriminatory remarks, do you address them? Does your group have an understanding of non-discriminatory language and equality of opportunity? If not, set aside time during a meeting to consider these issues and how they affect your group.
- Agree basic rules for the running of your group (such as how meetings are run, how decisions are made, what the structure is) as a group. Write them down and make sure everyone has a copy, including new members. A group that runs transparently encourages involvement.



## TASK DELEGATION

- Delegate tasks. This not only reduces the burden on key members and helps to prevent burn out, but also helps group members feel they are an important part of the group. Remember that some people may really want to do something but feel too shy to offer their help.
- Create groups of people who work together to look after particular aspects of work. This way if the tasks to be completed are substantial, they are not falling on one person to complete.
- If your members are primarily interested in letter writing, you can sometimes dedicate whole meetings to letter writing. You can also email sample letters around to your group members for writing outside meeting times.
- Try having a different person chair your meetings each time you meet (and make sure they know how to – see Facilitating Meetings module). This can prevent the convenor being overworked and gives people a feeling of ownership of the group.
- Partner new members with more experienced ones, who can share their knowledge and experience.

