

Q: What was the challenge?

Amnesty International's Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP) for 2004-2010 describes a vision of a world in which everyone enjoys all of the Human Rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international Human Rights standards and laws.

The International Cluster of the International Secretariat of Amnesty International is central to the delivery of the strategic plan. The Secretary General instigated a change programme to ensure the strong integration of the cluster's functions in all areas to ensure their goals can be met.

The change programme was geared to achieve organisational and behavioural change, including:

- Team reorganisation – realigning the structure of the cluster to match the focus and ways of working now needed.
- Decision making to build accountability – developing a culture of delegation to encourage decisions to be made, and owned, at the right level.
- Individual relationships and behaviour – developing ways of working where people demonstrate respect for colleagues. People are so passionate about the Human Rights Agenda that what it means to show respect to their colleagues sometimes took a back seat.
- Allowing managers to manage – giving managers the authority and support to manage (for example prioritising resources to meet strategic priorities) and understanding how this role is delivered in conjunction with their substantive role in delivering Human Rights expertise.
- Interaction and engagement with other parts of the IS – to break down silos and achieve the collective benefits that the different teams and professions offer the Human Rights Agenda.

Q: How did we work together?

- From the outset Questions of Difference challenged the expected approach. We did not want to produce yet another report on the problems the IS were experiencing. We initiated an emergent process, where the scoping conversations already engaged and challenged people – from the SG to the SLT and beyond – to work differently.
- Core to the process was the development of a group of 'Change Facilitators' to lead and support the change process from within. They facilitated conversations about the proposed changes and their impact in achieving Amnesty's goals, challenged people in their thinking and ways of working, guided the emerging change programme and role modelled behavioural changes
- The starting point was to articulate the case for change and engage people in dialogue around it. Rather than give people the option to choose to change or not, it was a given. The dialogue focussed on 'What elements of the case for change do you understand and what additional reasons for change do you see?'
- The nature of the restructure was guided by principles, or 'Direction of Travel Statements' generated by discussion about the case for change. This helped people to focus on the outcome to be achieved and to resist the urge to dive into structural details and look for evidence that no change would be possible.
- The management team were given the role of designing the new structure, based on the informal consultation and challenged to really hear the voices that supported and challenged their ideas, to use their knowledge and experience to come up with the most robust design.
- The dialogue quickly revealed a collective recognition that the new structure was only a part of the change needed. Unless people choose to start working together differently even the 'perfect' structure would not deliver the potential benefits. This recognition led to discussions and workshops on 'How we work together' and people articulated personal commitments to work differently day to day, for example in meetings and using email, well in advance of the formal consultation process.

- The complex change programme exposed a lack of clarity of the role and processes that the Human Resources Programme (HRP) had. We provided support to HRP to drive through clarity on personnel processes and establish a constructive relationship with the Union about the change required.
- The process demonstrated that it was not only the International Cluster that needed to change – the need for change was recognised across the International Secretariat. Where conflict arose the conversations that had been avoided (in some cases for years) were had, with the people involved.
- A number of issues needed to be escalated to SLT. We facilitated discussions at a senior management level to ensure the solutions were put in place at a systemic level

Q: Did the outcome meet expectations?

- The management team led the dialogue to develop the new structure, thereby demonstrating a shift in role for managers to manage.
- The reorganisation gained sign off by the SG and Senior Leadership Team to go to formal consultation
- The change programme has allowed HRP and the Union to achieve clarity on engagement processes that will benefit ongoing change in the IS.
- There has been a significant shift in how people are working together. People are enjoying getting to know others from different teams and clusters and there is a significantly higher degree of collaboration.

Q: What did Amnesty International learn from the relationship with Questions of Difference?

- To achieve change we need to start acting into the new ways of working desired. For example, the change programme was designed to engage and involve people from outside the International Cluster because there was need to increase collaboration across the International Secretariat.
- People and organisations are best able to change when we turn the spotlight on the things that are working. By highlighting examples of effective delegation, decision making, collaboration and so on people were able to recognise where ways of working needed to change – and responded positively, in a way that dramatically exceeded what they thought was possible.
- Change will only be achieved when the different voices in the system are heard. Everyone in Amnesty is passionate about the Human Rights Agenda and wants to deliver their very best. By giving people a voice to express their concerns they can be addressed – and the individuals can be challenged.
- It is important to understand what is meant rather than what is said. For example 'You are going too fast' meant 'I don't believe that senior management know what I do'.
- Consultation is about having rigorous conversations about what works and what needs to change. It does not mean design by committee and everyone getting what they wanted – that simply is not possible. It is the role of management to take informed decisions about the future, about structures, functions, responsibilities, and job descriptions. Consultation is a two way commitment that requires that when people have been heard they accept and support the decisions made – even those they have a different opinion on.