

FOOTBALL WELCOMES

EVALUATION REPORT 2023

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AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

Amnesty International UK's Football Welcomes programme was started as part of the global 'I Welcome' campaign, which ran from 2016-2020 to create a better international response to the global refugee crisis by encouraging local communities to work together to create a more welcoming environment for refugees and people seeking asylum. Football Welcomes now sits within the Community Organising Team at Amnesty International UK, whose purpose is to make connections and partnerships in and with communities across the UK to help build the human rights movement. Football Welcomes encompasses the work that football clubs and community projects are doing to welcome refugees and people seeking asylum, strategically shaping, facilitating, and coordinating the development of this approach across football clubs within the UK. Through the powerful messaging of football, the programme communicates positive human rights messaging, creates opportunities for relationship building and networking, and brings Amnesty International UK closer to achieving Goals 1 and 2 of its 2022 – 2030 strategy:



Goal 1

By 2030 human rights will be better understood, valued, and defended by increasingly large sections of the public. Racist, sexist, misogynistic and other stereotypes that facilitate human rights violations will be declining in public and political discourse.



Goal 2

By 2030 more people, especially people or groups who currently have less social power, have the connectedness, access, protection, resources and will to stand up for their rights and those of their communities.

Football Welcomes encourages local communities to work together to create a more welcoming environment for people fleeing conflict and persecution and is comprised of three main components:

The Football Welcomes Month: Every April, football clubs, their foundations, County Football Associations, community groups, and others come together to celebrate the contribution that refugees have made to football and highlight the role football can play in creating more welcoming communities. Events and activities, such as matches and tournaments, are organised with and for refugees and people seeking asylum. These activities have grown from 30 clubs participating in 2017 to 160 clubs in 2022. Last year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of clubs still took part, with community football only just beginning to return after lockdown.

The Football Welcomes Community Projects: The Football Welcomes Community Projects are five three-year pilot projects funded by Amnesty International UK, which started in 2019. The aim of the projects is to establish the most effective way for football clubs and County Football Associations to work with local organisations to create more welcoming communities for refugees and people seeking asylum. Community Projects are being carried out in partnership with Aston Villa Foundation, Club Doncaster, Leicester City in the Community, Liverpool County Football Association and Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation who have been collaborating with local refugee charities, schools, councils, and other organisations to provide football activities and other opportunities for people who are refugees or seeking asylum. A participatory and inclusive approach is being taken, with the projects responsive to the interests, needs, and circumstances of participants, including opportunities for training and development, with some progressing to voluntary or paid roles within the foundations.

Engaging women and girls: In 2019, the Football Association and Amnesty International UK established a ground-breaking partnership aimed at enabling women and girl refugees and people seeking asylum to participate in football and benefit from related activities through the Football Welcomes programme and other initiatives.

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

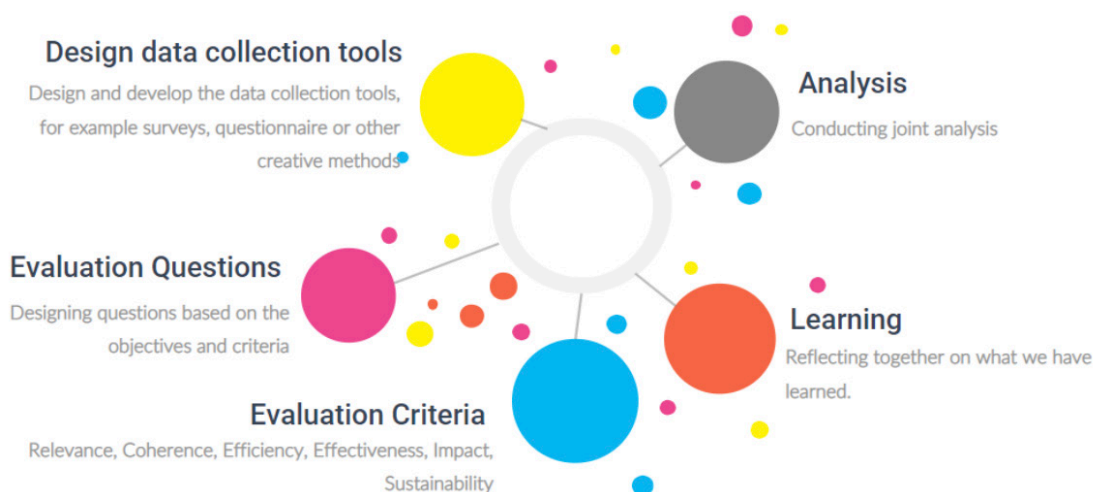
Amnesty International UK commissioned this evaluation to understand the impact of Football Welcomes on creating welcoming communities, to learn about the participants and how the programme has made them feel welcome, supported, and confident in their communities, as well as gain insight into the impact of the partnership and community alliance model. In addition, to understand the programme's ability to support Amnesty International UK's new strategy, commitment to anti-racism, and to make recommendations for increasing its impact in that area.

The Evaluation Team deployed a participant-led approach which aimed to:

- Centre the experiences, perceptions and knowledge of refugees and people seeking asylum who participate in Football Welcomes.
- Encourage participants to shape and determine the measures of success for Football Welcomes that can go on to influence future programmes and strategies.
- Shift power across Amnesty International UK's stakeholders, with particular emphasis on who makes decisions and how this manifest in project, programmes and evaluations.

PARTICIPANT-LED APPROACH

Two Participant Evaluators were hired to work as part of the Evaluation Team. Participant Evaluators made the following decisions:



EVALUATION OBJECTIVES & CRITERIA

Six objectives guided the Evaluation. The Evaluation Team collectively designed criteria and evaluation questions responding to the evaluation objectives. The table below shows the links between the objectives and the developed criteria and evaluation questions:

Objectives	Criteria	Evaluation Question
To evaluate the extent to which the aim, outcomes and objectives of Amnesty International UK's Football Welcomes programme have been achieved, and the reasons for this (as far as can be identified, including disruption to the programme due to Covid and how we adapted); and if there were any unintended consequences of this.	Relevance Effectiveness	Do the objectives of Football Welcomes match the individuals' objectives and goals of the participants?
To understand the impact of the Community Projects on participants' confidence, sense of belonging and feeling welcomed.	Impact	Have participants been able to expand their network and confidently make connections with others? How much has Football Welcomes helped participants to integrate into a new community?
To understand the impact and value of the 'community alliance' model in the Community Projects, and Amnesty's role in this structure.	Impact	What have participants gotten from the Football Welcomes programme, its added value, that they couldn't get elsewhere?
To understand how effective the programme has been in engaging refugee women and girls, and the specific impacts on them of participation.	Effectiveness Impact	How effective was Football Welcomes in engaging refugee women and girls?
To understand how effective the programme has been in gathering and telling stories of communities creating welcoming spaces for refugees and people seeking asylum.	Effectiveness	How effective was the programme in gathering and telling stories of communities that created welcoming spaces for refugees and people seeking asylum?
To understand the impact of the project on the wider community in terms of attitudes towards refugees and people seeking asylum.	Impact Sustainability	Has Football Welcomes created a welcoming community?

EVALUATION & METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The Evaluation Team tailored more traditional data collection tools to reflect the Participant Evaluators' experiences within the Football Welcomes programme. For example:

- **Match Analysis:** A one-to-one analytical discussion reflecting the participants' experiences across the Football Welcomes programme.
- **Team Talk:** A group discussion bringing together a group or 'team' of participants to discuss experiences and perceptions of the Football Welcomes programme.
- **Home or Away:** A one-to-one discussion where the participants conducted priority-ranking activities reflecting what and where Football Welcomes had met (or not) their needs.

The Evaluation Team chose to prioritise Match Analysis to discuss, in-depth, the impact and effectiveness of the programme. 44 Key Informants were interviewed across participants, community project representatives, football club representatives, Amnesty International UK staff, academics, and the Football Associations.

In addition, the Evaluation Team carried out:

Extensive **Desk Research** across the internal and external documentation, enhanced by Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDA) software to code, analyse, and visualise research data.

A **quantitative survey** was conducted among football fans to determine the impact of Football Welcomes on their attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. The survey aimed to understand whether the campaign contributed to changes in their perceptions.

DATA ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS

The Evaluation Team thematically categorised, coded, and triangulated findings across the data collection from interviews, the survey, documents, and secondary sources and carried out two sense-making sessions to challenge interpretations, identify missing information and validate findings together.

LIMITATIONS

The primary limitations include:

Identifying Participant Evaluators that had the time available to participate was difficult within the evaluation time-period thus reducing the number of overall Participant Evaluators who were able to join the Evaluation Team.

- Due to the time it took to onboard Participant Evaluators, there was limited time or availability for participants of the Football Welcomes programme to be interviewed meaning a limited number took part in the evaluation and all identified using he/him pronouns.
- Key Performance Indicators were not monitored systematically making it difficult to identify overall trends or patterns across specific areas of the evaluation, for example media monitoring data.
- The findings present a snapshot of the achievements and challenges that took place during the Football Welcomes programme within the parameters of the evaluation timeframe, resources, and capacity.

ETHICS & SAFEGUARDING

The Evaluation Team thematically categorised, coded, and triangulated findings across the data collection from interviews, the survey, documents, and secondary sources and carried out two sense-making sessions to challenge interpretations, identify missing information and validate findings together.

- **Time and capacity:** An evolving assessment of the time and capacity of Participant Evaluators with consideration for contextual constraints.
- **Compensation:** Ethical and equitable assessment of how Participant Evaluators should be compensated for their insights and leadership.
- **Language:** Consideration for diversity across languages throughout the Evaluation.
- **Power dynamics:** Power-sensitive approach to managing dynamics between Participant Evaluators, Amnesty International UK, the Evaluation Team, Participants, and other stakeholders.

Amnesty International UK conducted preliminary risk assessments and consulted with Participant Evaluators and participants to identify safe platforms and ways to engage in the evaluation. Potential risks related to participation were collaboratively identified and contextualised with evaluation participants. Leveraging Amnesty International UK's existing policies on consent, the evaluation applied engaged consent, an enhanced approach to informed consent. The engaged consent process involved asking a series of questions drawn from the Participant Information Sheet and preamble to ensure comprehension of the evaluation's purpose, anonymity and safeguarding measures, and the scope of dissemination.

FINDINGS

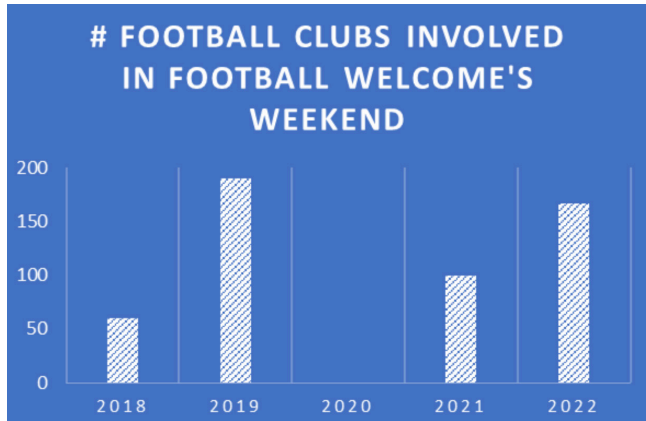
In this section, the main findings are presented in relation to the objectives and questions that guided the evaluation.

To evaluate the extent to which the aim, outcomes and objectives of Amnesty International UK's Football Welcomes programme have been achieved, and the reasons for this (as far as can be identified, including disruption to the programme due to COVID-19 and how we adapted); and if there were any unintended consequences of this.

Football Welcomes is a programme that aims to build more inclusive communities for refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK. This is achieved by utilising football, a popular sport in the country, as a tool to foster a sense of welcome among communities. The programme also supports various strategic goals, including empowering activists and expanding Amnesty International UK's reach. The evaluation assesses the success of the programme's objectives, as measured by key performance indicators in areas such as community organising, advocacy, media outreach, artist liaison, and fundraising.



COMMUNITY ORGANISING



Through the delivery of a Football Welcomes weekend, Amnesty International UK developed a celebration across diverse clubs, from the Premier League, Women's League, and English Football League to Scottish Premiership and non-league clubs. All evaluation participants interviewed spoke highly of the Football Welcomes weekend, specifically the momentum and positive atmosphere it created, and that it was a calendar event, they looked forward to every year. This is further evident in the increase in the number of football clubs that took part from 2018 – 2019 and, furthermore, the number of Amnesty International UK groups who enquired about the campaign. Since 2021, Football Welcomes has been for the whole month of April, rather than over just one weekend.

As Football Welcomes Month in 2022 coincided with Ramadan, the community organising approach made strides in considering the intersectional needs of participants from different religions. This was evidenced by the hosting of 17 Iftar events across the United Kingdom, exceeding the target of 10. Interestingly, some participants were pleasantly surprised by the inclusion of an Iftar, and these events were well-received as examples of truly 'welcoming' initiatives.

The Football Welcomes Month 2022 Evaluation report states that the following additional key performance indicators were achieved:

- Supported 10 participating foundations/county FAs to engage women from a refugee/asylum-seeking background.
- Increased capability for 12 women's teams to be more involved beyond social media support, including by working alongside the foundations of men's clubs, where possible.
- Get 10 local groups to partner with their participating football club to put on activities. - 11 local groups were found to be partnering with their football clubs in an informal way. The target was met through informal partnerships helping to build Iftar events, support fundraising, or support taking participants to events, for example, with Actonian's LFC, a club in the Women's National League.

Other key achievements include an increase in engagement from women's clubs, with 44 women's teams involved in the Football Welcomes Month in 2022, in comparison to around 11 in previous years.

BEYOND THE WEEKEND

The “Norfolk Welcomes - Football Welcomes” initiative implemented by the Schools of Sanctuary network in Norfolk serves as a standout case study for the Football Welcomes programme due to its extensive reach and impact. Nearly 20,000 schoolchildren at 61 schools participated in the programme, taking a day off from their regular curriculum to learn about the experiences of refugees, the process of migration to East Anglia, and the role that football can play in helping individuals settle into a new country. The involvement of Norwich City Football Club further reinforced the message of the programme, as they shared the personal story of one of their players who is a refugee and answered questions from the participating children. Additionally, the programme produced a school resource used by schools and football clubs across the country to support their work with local schools.

The Fylde Coast group serves as another excellent case study for the Football Welcomes programme due to their successful efforts in establishing relationships with local football clubs. Through their Regional Representative, the group was able to establish connections with Blackpool Football Club, Fleetwood Town, Preston North End, and Association Football Club Fylde. They also worked with the first two clubs to develop their Football Welcomes activities over the last year. Furthermore, the Regional Representative represented Amnesty International UK at the launch of Liverpool County Football Association’s Football Welcomes Community Project.

The Football Welcomes programme made changes to its schedule in response to feedback from participating clubs. As mentioned above, instead of being limited to a single weekend, the programme expanded to a month-long celebration. This allowed clubs to choose the best date for their participation and increased the overall level of participation. One evaluation participant said:

“Going from a week to a month was really helpful. I think that’s given us some capacity...in the past we may not have a home fixture during that time. Now we’re very likely to have a home fixture during that time.”

On the other hand, there were perceptions that what was gained externally may have been lost in bringing people together internally,

“Going from weekend to month also lost sense of joy and partnership in a concentrated time period. Bringing people from different teams internally together. Bringing ‘ourselves’ together.”

(Evaluation participant)

ADVOCACY

Early in the programme, Football Welcomes was identified as a strategic tool to engage parliamentarians on wider work around refugees. The Football Welcomes programme had mixed success in engaging with Members of Parliament. In 2019, some Members of Parliament from various political parties tweeted their support for the campaign and Kate Green (Member of Parliament) was particularly effective in working with Manchester United Foundation. However, some Members of Parliament who requested more information were from constituencies where the clubs were only supporting on social media, so there wasn't an event for them to attend. Amnesty Scotland also managed to secure supportive motions in the Scottish Parliament and Westminster before and after the weekend in 2019.

Targets and aims regarding parliamentary engagement were generally met through the launch event in 2021. The programme had plans to build on this and the Afghanistan team / Women's Parliamentary team match in 2022 was a clear example of advancing parliamentary engagement.

Some Evaluation participants felt the distribution of T-shirts was limited in terms of influence and change:

“You put a T-shirt on, and you warm up, and there's not a huge else about it.”

Campaign contributions that reportedly made more of a difference were documents or guides on how to talk about refugees and asylum seekers within the context of football, for example:

“The one thing we got at the club was like how to speak about people seeking asylum and refugees, and it was a really useful document because you sort of feel more confidence when you're addressing these subjects.”

(Evaluation participant)

Football Welcomes also sought to encourage other sections to replicate the programme in their own countries, to make it an international event. While other sections showed interest, competing priorities and plans made this attempt at widening the programme unsuccessful. Amnesty Germany approached Amnesty International UK to feature Football Welcomes in their magazine, with a cover and double page spread dedicated to Football Welcomes as part of their communications.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Inconsistent data makes it difficult to see trends or patterns across the key performance indicators. However, in 2017, traction around Football Welcomes as a new concept was evident in the highest readership and online coverage figures. COVID-19 certainly affected the ability for events to happen and thus media figures generated in years 2020 and 2021, but there are signs that coverage is picking up in 2022.

In 2022, the parliamentary football match with the women's Afghanistan team presented a media highlight with features in The Athletic, BBC and Sky Sports.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pieces of coverage: Total number of online, and social clips	26	18	19			15
Online Readership: Combined total number of people that visit the websites featuring coverage	1.01B	425M	590M			696K
Estimated Views: prediction of lifetime views of coverage, based on audience reach and engagement rate on social media platforms						
Estimated Online Views: Prediction of lifetime views of online coverage, based on audience reach and number	703K	643K	416K			
Audience: Combined total of publication-wide audience for all outlets featuring coverage						714M
Engagements: Combined total of likes, comments, and shares on social media platforms						79
Social Shares: Number of times the online articles have been shared on social media platforms	6.67K	1.42K	194			
YouTube Views: Total number of times video content has been viewed on YouTube			150			
Average Domain Authority: A 0-100 measure of the authority of the site coverage appears on	65	6	59		70	
Offline Audience: Combined total number of people for Print, Television, and Radio.		917K				



ARTIST LIASION

Amnesty International UK has been successful in engaging high profile artists in the Football Welcomes campaign. In 2018, artists such as Judi Dench, Stephen Fry and Keira Knightley, amongst others, tweeted about the campaign helping to increase its profile. Stephen Fry's tweet performed highly with 130 shares and 1,100 likes. Eight professional footballers also showed public support through creating videos, giving interviews, and producing quotes of support. Simon Rix served as an Amnesty Ambassador and worked closely with the Football Welcomes Manager to support the campaign. He helped to set up meetings with important contacts and attended meetings with key people. He also attended two games during the Football Welcomes weekend in 2018. This engagement continued into 2019, with Anita Asante (another Amnesty UK Ambassador) as a key spokesperson for the weekend, and tweets from Gary Lineker (reaching over 7 million followers) and Dermot O'Leary.

Internal documentation reports that:

“According to the artist's team, it is in the large part down to the fact that the ask was connecting them (celebrities) to Amnesty International UK via a personal passion and that the message was celebratory or positive.”

This echoed some evaluation participants who expressed that the positive message, and possibly the positive association, with the word 'welcome' was also a standout difference and reason for increased engagement.

However, since 2020 and the onset of COVID-19, longer term and meaningful engagement with artists has been limited. Evaluation participants expressed that the connection with artists dipped and, in some cases, artists reported being unclear on their role, responsibilities and how to leverage networks.

The Evaluation evidenced ambition and enthusiasm to advance artist engagement, with consideration for what Amnesty International could offer artists who chose to become involved. However, COVID-19 and limited resources to meaningfully and sustainably connect ambassadors or artists to new opportunities within or across the programme may have limited the longer-term success of this area of the campaign. In 2022, Football Welcomes switched to digital influencers, but the Evaluation did not uncover evidence of its effectiveness.

ARTIST EDUCATION & BEYOND

Michael Morpurgo's book "Shadow" was a successful and creative way of drawing attention to the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum. Organised by Leicester City in the Community, the book was utilised during Football Welcomes month to engage young people in discussions about the challenges faced by refugees and those seeking asylum. Schools were supplied with copies of the book, which provided a unique and engaging way to raise awareness and understanding of the issues faced by refugees and people seeking asylum.

ENGAGEMENT

Relationships with the Premier League, English Football League, and Women's Super League have primarily focused on supporting Football Welcomes outside of fundraising (for example, through encouraging their clubs to get involved and supported with media coverage). This support was more active pre-COVID-19.

Some progress was made in engaging with the Premier League, with their production of a school pack about diversity in football that includes a section on refugees, potentially leading to greater involvement from them in the future. It is worth noting that the initiative was supported by the English Football League and the Women's Super League, while the Premier League offered support through several clubs. However, the Premier League required tangible action before officially backing the weekend. Given established Premier League campaigns which aim to demonstrate their commitment to human rights such as No Room For Racism and Rainbow Laces, there are entry points for the Premier League to deepen their involvement in Football Welcomes and continue leading the charge towards more inclusive sport.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising proved to be the most difficult aspect of the campaign in terms of leveraging enough financial support across donors. Evaluation participants highlighted the perception among some donors that the funding would go to football clubs rather than supporting refugees directly, which made it difficult to leverage enough financial support across donors. The association with the Premier League's finances was seen as a contributing factor to this perception. In terms of community fundraising initiatives, around 4 clubs confirmed that Amnesty International UK could do bucket collections this year, and others have indicated that this can happen next year. However, this initiative has been impacted by restricted by timing issues, as bucket collection slots for the year need to be secured before January.

BIG WINS

Reflecting on the standout cases and evidence across this evaluation, the following reasons are likely to have successfully contributed to achieving aims and objectives:

- Optimising strategic partnerships' time, advice, and contacts Kick it Out, the Football Supporters Federation, University of Brighton, and the Schools of Sanctuary Network enabled greater reach using pre-existing networks, such as schools.
- Education, guidelines, and curriculum for schools As evidenced in Doncaster, Norwich, and with the Good Practice Guide for Refugee Women's Football guidelines, guidelines and other educational materials were referenced as the most useful and helped to advance confidence, understanding and awareness which could all be contributing factors to creating a more welcoming environment. The education outputs also presented the only avenue that brings in the wider community.
- Committed support and point of contact Focal Points committed to building relationships in local areas and having one point of contact was reported by some evaluation participants to enable reliability, trust support and a useful passage of knowledge.
- Flexibility One evaluation participant reported that the programme allowed clubs or participants to participate in the way they preferred.

The Football Welcomes programme faced several challenges in achieving its aim and objectives. Some evaluation participants referenced the lack of early planning and prioritisation of the programme, which made it difficult to demonstrate the work being done and track progress towards goals. This is despite the positivity from Amnesty staff members and calls for continuation from across Football Welcomes club representatives and participants. One evaluation participant described the work as:

“... some of the most important work that Amnesty International does, as it builds up knowledge of human rights and confidence in people who may not otherwise know what they are.”

However, limitations to its strategic prioritisation, as a programme, may have limited the ability to maximise impact on a bigger scale.

Additionally, the programme may have missed an opportunity to share examples of successful club engagement more widely and build momentum. The Evaluation Team did not find evidence of how successes from Norwich or Fylde were shared or celebrated widely as part of the campaign approach to mobilising others.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant obstacle for the Football Welcomes programme, leading to the cancellation of in-person events in 2020 and hindering the ability to maintain momentum from the previous year. Despite these challenges, the programme was able to adapt in 2021 by promoting virtual activities rather than in-person events. However, this shift resulted

in reduced participation from football clubs, with many large clubs using the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) for non-footballing staff and foundation staff, and smaller clubs shutting down entirely during lockdowns.

Overall, Amnesty International UK's Football Welcomes programme has made significant strides in creating a more welcoming environment through football for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. The programme has successfully engaged a diverse range of football clubs and local organisations, promoted intersectional needs and empowered activists, resulting in an increase in the number of clubs and groups involved in the campaign. Furthermore, the programme has achieved success in advocacy by engaging with Members of Parliament and high-profile artists to raise awareness and generate support for the cause. The programme has also produced successful educational initiatives that help to engage young people in discussions about the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers. However, there were challenges and limitations, such as the difficulties in fundraising and the impact of COVID-19 on the programme's ability to maintain momentum and achieve sustainable objectives.

Do the objectives of Football Welcomes match the individual objectives/goals of the participants?

Amnesty International UK aimed to create a more welcoming environment for refugees and asylum seekers. Participant Evaluators drew attention to the fact that these aims and objectives may not match the participants' own aims and reasons for joining Football Welcomes in the first place. Together, the Evaluation Team explored any similarities or differences with the view of ensuring greater alignment with participants.

Participants interviewed were asked about their motivations and goals for wanting to participate in the Football Welcomes

programme. Participants shared the following:

- Meeting new people to reduce isolation.
- To increase or maintain fitness.
- To support mental health: “I feel better in my mind. I have more energy” (Participant).
- To advance skills through coaching courses.
- Long-term goals to become a professional football player.

“It’s a sport of hope that unites us. We are different. Different countries, economies. But we come together. It is only by doing this that we can learn from others. How they live. What they have to say. We have different backgrounds. Maybe if we are fighting before we come, we push that away when we come to football.”

(Programme Participant)

Football Welcomes participants interviewed tended to be more focused on what they personally got from being involved in a sport and being part of a team. The mention of skills, coaching courses, and the longer-term goal of wanting to become a professional football player could be signs of wanting to cohesively become a part of the community through the contribution of skills, but this cannot be confirmed.

The programme may want to consider the motivations, needs, and desires of participants and how these can better align with the programme’s overall aims and objectives.

To understand the impact of the Community Projects on participants’ confidence, sense of belonging and feeling welcomed.

- **Have participants been able to expand their network and confidently make connections with others?**
- **How much has Football Welcomes helped participants to integrate into a new society/community?**

Under the objective of exploring participants’ confidence, sense of belonging and feeling welcomed, the Evaluation Team sought to further explore two evaluation questions relating to participants’ ability to network, connect, and integrate.

Several theories have been proposed to explain why football and community football projects may help refugees and people seeking asylum feel more welcomed and integrated. Some of the key mechanisms that have been identified include:

- **Building social connections** According to a study by Spaaij (2012), participating in sport-based interventions, including football, helped young people in disadvantaged communities to improve their social connections and overall well-being.
- **Promoting a sense of belonging** Football is a common language that can be shared by people from different backgrounds and cultures. Playing football can help to promote a sense of belonging and shared identity among refugees and people seeking asylum, as well as between them and the members of their host communities. This is supported by a study by Eime et al. (2013), which found that sport, including football, can contribute to social inclusion and integration, particularly for migrants and refugees.

- **Providing a positive distraction** Football can provide a positive distraction from the stresses and challenges of adjusting to a new environment. It can also provide a sense of normalcy and routine, which can be particularly important for refugees and people seeking asylum who may have experienced significant disruptions in their lives. This point is supported by a study by Whitley et al. (2016), which found that participation in sports programmes for refugee and migrant youth can improve their psychological well-being and social integration.
- **Improving mental health** Football can also have a positive impact on mental health. As reported in the studies by Eime et al. (2013) and Whitley et al. (2016), the physical activity, social interactions, and sense of accomplishment that come with playing football can help to reduce symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Other literature defined belonging as attachments to people, places, practices, and institutions and a “dynamic process of establishing, maintaining and transforming relations” (Nunn, Spaaij & Luguetti, 2022).
- Football as a way to reduce isolation.
- Additionally, participants noted that being identified within the refugee and people seeking asylum narrative does not allow you to forget you are different whereas football does allow you to forget you are different.
- The Evaluation found that the community alliance model (a programme that aims to integrate refugees and people seeking asylum seekers into German society through football) also enabled confidence in participants to grow their own network and connections: “I am not as lonely as I was before.” (Participant)
- Interviewed participants expressed a general sentiment that playing football, as a team, within the Football Welcomes programme gave them individual confidence outside the programme. The comfort of having a supportive team around them presented as a key enabler for confidence in building individual alliances. Furthermore, one participant said that they were stronger and were able to express themselves in the community: “[I can now] communicate and hold conversations with other people so I can learn from them.”

The Evaluation Team identified examples of where Football Welcomes projects built social connections, promoted a sense of belonging, provided positive distractions, and promoted positive wellbeing and mental health, as referenced in the literature. Participants referred to:

- A powerful sense of belonging to football superseding everything else, “[it provides] a sense of purpose and belonging to look forward to every week.” (Participant)
- Communicating in the same language of football.
- A stronger way to express themselves in the community, talk to people, communicate, and hold conversations with other people.
- Football as a way to reduce isolation.
- Additionally, participants noted that

The interviewed participants reported that they have made connections and feel welcome in the community through the programme. However, one participant also acknowledged that acceptance and integration can vary depending on the specific location and that it is not something that can be forced. Overall, the Evaluation found that Football Welcomes was successful in creating a feeling of unity with other team members, refugees, and people seeking asylum but less so with other community members outside their immediate social network.



“We are welcome. Where I am living, it’s different. You may be welcome in some places and not welcome in other places. That’s how life is. The Football Welcomes is doing great. Every time we meet (Syrians, Ethiopians, Eritreans) they always try to make us happy. But where we are living, that’s another story. Where we are living people don’t want to know much about you.”

(Programme Participant)

Where participants are more likely to confidently connect to the community and feel welcome is through advancing their role in their community from football club or team participant to leading community projects or establishing a more consistent role. For example, participants have been invited to take more responsibility and are seen as role-models after getting jobs and attending local football matches outside the programme:

“We have 20% workforce that comes through our programmes....one participant showed great leadership quality through our Football Welcomes programme and has now come on as a casual...they will be helping to deliver some of our community programme.”

(Evaluation Participant)

“A lot of people we worked with, who were seeking asylum, got jobs, loved the club, and started coming to games and paying for tickets - being part of the community in that way.” (Evaluation Participant)

“Some asylum seekers progressed beyond their status, role-models in the community, they’ve got a job, drive around in cars, seen as a pillar of the community.” (Evaluation Participant)

Undoubtedly, the Football Welcomes programme has improved participants’ confidence and sense of belonging. However, a more comprehensive approach may be necessary to understand the barriers and challenges that refugees and asylum seekers face in access to employment, education, or other forms of social support that interact with feelings of confidence and belonging. Literature suggests that a more comprehensive approach is needed to promote the successful integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. For example, research has shown that access to education and training is critical for helping refugees and people seeking asylum develop the skills and knowledge they need to participate fully in society. Providing language training, job placement assistance, and other forms of practical support have also been shown to be effective in promoting integration (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007). In some areas, the Football Welcomes programme supports existing community English language services. For example, Middlesborough coaches help at Methodist Asylum Project Middlesborough’s English conversation drop-in, Aston Villa run their own English class in partnership with a local charity, and Doncaster partners with Doncaster Conversation Club. This is supported by the findings where refugee or asylum seeker participants were able to take up jobs or casual work because of the programme.

To understand the impact and value of the ‘community alliance’ model in the Community Projects, and Amnesty’s role in this structure.

The German ‘Willkommen im Fußball’ (‘Welcome to Football’) community alliance model on refugees and football is a programme that aims to integrate refugees and people seeking asylum into German society through football. The programme uses football as a tool for social integration and provides refugees with the opportunity to participate in organized football activities and join local football clubs. The programme is run by a network of organizations, including the German Football Association (DFB), the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), and the German Football League (DFL), as well as local and regional football clubs (EFDN, 2016).

The programme includes a variety of initiatives and activities, such as language courses, integration courses, and coaching and referee courses, all of which are designed to help refugees and asylum seekers acquire the skills and knowledge needed to participate in organized football activities (EFDN, 2016). The program also provides refugees with the opportunity to take part in football tournaments and leagues, which gives them the chance to meet and interact with people from different backgrounds and cultures (Bundesliga Foundation, 2015).

Overall, the German community alliance model on refugees and football is an example of how sport can be used as a tool for social integration and inclusion (Spaaij, 2013), and provides refugees with the opportunity to participate in a popular and widely accepted activity, which can help them to feel more welcome and included in German society.

Amnesty International UK based the Football Welcomes programme on this German community alliance model. A trip to Germany was organised in 2018 to take away lessons and apply them in the development of Football Welcomes. A participant from a football club expressed that this visit was

an excellent way to gather lessons and set the foundations. The Football Welcomes Community Projects were five three-year pilot projects, funded by Amnesty International UK, which started in 2019 with the aim of establishing the most effective way for football clubs and County Football Associations to work with other local organisations to create more welcoming communities for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Through the community alliance model, trusted relationships with women refugee organisations and hostels housing people seeking asylum were reported to be invaluable connections for football clubs to reach potential programme participants. When setting up Football Welcomes, partners used these connections as the entry point to begin engaging refugees and people seeking asylum within the Football Welcomes community projects. For example, at the Liverpool County Football Association, connections to organisations like “Asylum Link” were reported to be the first port of call to connect participants to the programme. One evaluation participant reported that trust was a necessary precursor for organisations to be comfortable that the football club would be able to create a safe space for refugees and people seeking asylum to participate. This was an important part of the programme overall, as football clubs needed to demonstrate that they could create a safe and welcoming space, evident through this alliance building.

Amnesty International UK has a wide community organising network made up of committed voluntary activists known as ‘local groups’. The Evaluation found that local groups with established connections to refugee rights issues were instrumental in building connections for the campaign. Some groups went as far as distributing leaflets

at stadiums and initiating conversations with fans about the campaign. However, local groups received mixed responses, ranging from superficial involvement to full commitments, with smaller and women's clubs being the most positive.

“Some local community organising groups asked their clubs why they had not been involved in Football Welcomes.”

(Amnesty staff)

“One group gave out leaflets at a small stadium in Manchester on Football Welcomes. Someone from the community was talking to the fans about Football Welcomes.”

(Amnesty staff)

Despite the mixed response, Football Welcomes was successful in partnering with 10 local groups to put on activities with participating football clubs. These activities included fundraising, organising Iftar events, and even taking groups of participants to football matches. The campaign exceeded its target of hosting 10 community iftars in 2022, with a total of 17 events held. The success of these partnerships and events demonstrates the potential of community organising to promote positive change and integration.

The Evaluation Team understands that engaging clubs at a deeper level has gone some way to recognising that football clubs and foundations can often be involved in a range of social impact initiatives.

ALLIANCE FEEDBACK

The already established local groups connect clubs to refugee organisations but also, in some cases, act as a feedback channel where additional support may be required from Amnesty International UK. For example, Brighton and Hove Albion women's team is actively involved in Football Welcomes and keen to increase their level of participation. They requested to be connected to someone in the local area to help them coordinate, so Amnesty International UK put them in touch with the Brighton Amnesty group, which has strong contacts with refugee organisations in Brighton. The club and the local group were able to connect with a local organisation supporting refugees to provide free tickets for refugee women and girls to attend a game. However, refugees couldn't afford the travel to the stadium, which was fed back to Amnesty International UK via the local group. Amnesty International UK gave advice on ways to fundraise to pay for a coach for the participants' travel to the stadium. This example also demonstrates the added value of having different roles across the community alliance model to overcome barriers to participation.

Comparatively, 'Rainbow Laces' was often referenced by evaluation participants as a commitment and event that has become a staple in the football calendar. Calls for Football Welcomes to have the same level of recognition suggests that more work may need to be done to showcase the amount of buy-in across clubs and organisations. Aligning with Amnesty International UK's new strategy, Football Welcomes sits at the intersection where the opportunity exists to transition from a community organising project to movement building.

Amnesty International UK's role

Amnesty International UK comes with a brand and reputation acknowledged positively by evaluation participants for helping football clubs on their journey to social and cultural awareness, "its historical reputation was so powerful, a really positive partner for football clubs to have" (Evaluation Participant).

It was also mentioned that, through the brand and reputation, Amnesty International UK has the perceived power to call the Premier League and football associations to listen and act. Amnesty International UK's partnership with the Football Association and their work alongside some Premier League football clubs is testimony to this, although it is difficult to say to what extent Amnesty International UK's positive power was used to make long-term changes to the bigger Premier League clubs.

Assumptions that foundations attached to Premier League clubs would benefit from Premiership money was reported to have created some barriers to fundraising and engaging donors by some Amnesty International UK staff. Despite this, Amnesty International UK's role as a funder was described regarding how it supports participants to travel to football practice or to attend football games elsewhere. Suggesting that Amnesty International UK's role as the 'donor' or 'funder' cannot be overlooked as a major added value to removing barriers to participation, especially for women and girls.

Through an extensive local group and activist network, Amnesty International UK brings a vantage point that allows an overarching view of who can be connected to whom, coupled with the role of then initiating these connections. The fact that local groups already had connections to refugee organisations or other support groups meant that alliances could more quickly be established. Where connections to support organisations for refugees or people seeking asylum were already established, Amnesty

International UK took more of an advisory role on removing barriers to participation and as a funding partner.

The Football Welcomes programme also played a role in connecting the five community project partners (Aston Villa, Doncaster, Middlesbrough, Leicester City and Liverpool). Some evaluation participants reported that partners were connected via bimonthly meetings and through a peer-to-peer network. However, there were requests to be more collaborative, and opportunities to share best practice, ways of working, and how to overcome challenges may have been limited:

"I would like more collaboration with Amnesty International UK and would like to see where other foundations are right now."

(Evaluation Participant)

What have participants gotten from the Football Welcomes programme (its added value) that they couldn't get elsewhere?

This question was added following discussions with Participant Evaluators to determine the uniqueness of the programme from the perspective of the participants who reported that the added value was:

- Engagement with a diverse group of people.
- Working in a team environment.
- A connection to English lessons or to other community groups via football.
- A route to employment.
- Accessing stadiums, "Helped me to go places I never would have been to, Wembley." (Evaluation Respondent)
- Access to coaching courses.

While the benefits of the Football Welcomes programme could potentially be replicated through other means, the use of football to achieve these benefits highlights the potential of sports as a tool for social change and community building. The programme has demonstrated that football can act as a bridge between different communities, cultures, and backgrounds, and that it can provide a platform for individuals to connect, develop their skills, and access opportunities they may not have had otherwise. Moreover, the fact that the programme participants identified access to stadiums as a benefit of the programme underscores the power of sports to provide individuals with access to spaces and experiences they may not have had otherwise. This highlights the potential of sports to break down social and economic barriers and provide individuals with opportunities for personal growth and development.

To understand how effective the programme has been in engaging refugee women and girls, and the specific impacts on them of participation.

Recognising the need for a distinct approach to engaging women and girls from refugee backgrounds, the Football Association funded a full-time Women's Football Officer (WFO) at Amnesty International UK to lead the development of this area. The Officer has supported the delivery of football sessions for women participants, produced and disseminated a national guide to engaging women and girls in football, delivered an innovative online training session for coaches and volunteers, engaged women's teams in the Football Welcomes month, organised a three-day event for the Afghan women's national team, and has developed a leadership training programme for participating women and girls.

Good Practice Guide for Refugee Women's Football: The guide entitled "Good Practice Guide for Refugee Women's Football" targets both individuals and organisations seeking to utilise football to dismantle barriers and establish a more inclusive environment for refugees and asylum seekers, with particular emphasis on women and girls. This guide offers advice on organising football sessions for females and highlights the significance of football in assisting refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into their new communities, form friendships and connections, and enhance their mental and physical well-being. Developed through thorough research and interviews with various teams and individuals throughout England, the guide draws on the experiences of Amnesty International UK's Football Welcomes initiative, launched in 2017. The guide features case studies of successful projects to act as exemplary models for individuals and organisations wishing to launch similar endeavours.

This guide comprises five interlinked sections, forming a comprehensive strategy; it is advisable to utilise all of them collectively, rather than in isolation. Each section contains practical recommendations and a case study from a Football Welcomes Community Project, demonstrating the successful engagement of refugee women and girls by club foundations or County Football Associations. The provided suggestions serve as useful starting points, however, as the case studies illustrate, every community is unique, making it crucial to adapt to the local context. The guide encourages engaging in conversations with refugees and people seeking asylum within local communities and employing the gained insights to customise your sessions according to their needs.

As the guide explains, engaging women and girls in football presents several challenges, particularly for those who have fled conflict or persecution. Having endured traumatic journeys to safety, they must reconstruct their lives in a foreign country.

Although support is available from community groups and charities, mastering a new language, adapting to a distinct culture, and navigating unfamiliar legal, housing, health, and education systems pose significant difficulties. Many encounter racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Furthermore, refugees and asylum seekers often face family separation during their most vulnerable moments, increasing loneliness, isolation, and mental health challenges.

Community Projects have some support mechanisms to enable the engagement of women and girls in football. The Officer role funded by the Football Association is a point of contact for community projects looking to better engage refugee women and girls. This role provides critical educational and practical support across the Football Welcomes programme.

Football Welcomes Community Projects take inconsistent approaches to engaging women and girls, largely due to the decentralised nature of its overall programme model. Community projects are given some guidance, though not prescriptive, to maintain some level of consistency across Football Welcomes. However, the remit of how to engage women and girls is largely left to the Community Projects. This inconsistency was evidenced by some Community Projects having more advanced programming for women and girls than others.

Engaging women and girls also requires careful consideration of how they may be experiencing their participation. For example, evaluation participants note that there may not be a particular remit for Football Welcomes to ensure the safety of women and girls travelling to and from matches. However, when community projects are providing tickets for women and girls to participate, there should be a duty of care, particularly around their travel to and from night games. Out of concerns for the women and girls' participation in their programme, one evaluation participant noted that they feel compelled to follow their participants part of the way home after leaving night games out of concern for their wellbeing.

The guide emphasises the significance of representation in promoting diversity in football, particularly for refugee women. It underlines the importance of awareness and education to address barriers such as cultural restrictions, lack of trust, and fear of the unknown. The guide suggests building relationships through simple activities and breaking the process into smaller steps. It also highlights the need to make football accessible to everyone.

The Good Practice Guide for Refugee Women's Football makes the following critical points:

- Engaging women and girls requires a strategic direction, considering individual preferences and cultural norms.
- Opportunities should be provided to advance skills that interest them. Identifying convenient locations and times is crucial for reducing barriers to access.
- Women's clubs can support increased engagement by adopting an intersectional approach to address unique challenges.

Although Amnesty International UK aims to engage women and girls, a consistent approach across community projects is lacking. Monitoring the efficacy of the guidance remains unclear.

Leadership Training: Leadership training has been developed and delivered for 12 refugee women from the Football Welcomes Community projects, the Afghan Women's National Team - Development squad and the FA's Women's EURO's legacy community project. The Women's Football Officer leads the training, engaging in one-on-one and group sessions with the participants, who are dispersed throughout the UK. Over a six-month period, the WFO has weekly communication with the participants to gain insight into their experiences and aspirations within the football space, with the goal of assisting them in achieving their goals.

To understand how effective the programme has been in gathering and telling stories of communities creating welcoming spaces for refugees and people seeking asylum.

The Football Welcomes programme has been effective in promoting welcoming spaces for refugees and people seeking asylum in communities through positive campaigning. In addition to the Iftar events in 2022, there were 34 tournaments for refugees and people seeking asylum, and the number of participating women's clubs increased. The programme has also secured media coverage in national and regional outlets, and produced social media graphics and T-shirts that were popular among participating clubs. However, there have been challenges in executing regional media work due to late confirmations from clubs, and difficulties in producing new content for national broadcast coverage. Nevertheless, the programme's approach of showcasing positive stories has allowed participating Community Projects to take ownership of their involvement, resulting in varied social media content and strong regional coverage. The programme's success in promoting community work by football clubs was complemented by a YouGov survey in 2019, which showed that the majority of football fans agree that football clubs should be a 'force for good' in their local community. While there are significant positive achievements in how the stories of Football Welcomes participants are gathered and shared, Football Welcomes may be reinforcing the perception that worthiness is only afforded to individuals based on whether they are competent athletes. Evaluation participants describe conversations wherein the wider community begins to welcome refugees and people seeking asylum once it is recognised that they are strong football players. This message is reinforced through in some campaign outputs that draw attention to professional athletes who were formerly asylum seekers. The message of athletic exceptionalism may be problematic, and

Football Welcomes should continue to share stories of individuals within the programme regardless of their proficiency as an athlete.

To understand the impact of the project on the wider community in terms of attitudes towards refugees and people seeking asylum.

The evaluation conducted a survey of 23 individuals, including local community members, fans, participants, and foundation/club staff or volunteers. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into the impact of the programme on the wider community, particularly regarding any changes in attitudes towards refugees. Participants were asked to rate their attitudes towards refugees living in their community on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicated strong opposition and 10 indicated strong support. Of the respondents, 15 indicated a score of 6 or above, while 8 scored between 4 and 5. Importantly, there were no responses below 4.

Respondents were also asked whether the involvement of the club foundation in the programme and its support for refugees had changed their attitudes towards refugees and people seeking asylum. Of the respondents, 11 reported that there was no change, 4 were unsure, and 7 responded positively. Additionally, one respondent did not provide a response.

For those who reported no change in their attitude or were unsure, the majority stated that there was no corresponding change in their likelihood to support human rights. However, for those who reported a change in attitude, all respondents indicated that they were more likely to support human rights.

Of the 23 respondents in the survey, 8 were unsure or responded negatively to the question about whether refugees and people seeking asylum should be given equal access to housing, education, and

employment opportunities. However, 15 respondents responded with 'yes'. These responses were based on various reasons, including the belief in equal opportunities for all, the provision of fair assistance to those in need, the importance of education and workers contributing positively to the economy, the belief that ethnicity should not hinder equal opportunity, and the idea that everyone deserves a helping hand at some point. Additionally, some respondents highlighted the importance of refugees being able to create normality in their lives, contribute to the wider community, and be treated with respect and dignity.

The responses to the question of how individuals feel about refugees living in their community were varied. Some supported taking in 'genuine refugees' but not 'economic migrants' and 'criminals', while others expressed no personal objections. Concerns were raised about housing and National Health Service (NHS) resources, as well as the fact that many refugees are male with no immediate dependents. However, many individuals expressed the belief that refugees are human beings who deserve safety and a place to live, and that helping them is the right thing to do. Some also stated that a diverse community benefits everyone. Despite this, there were also concerns raised about the allocation of resources and the presence of antisocial behaviour in some areas.

The findings of this small sample size are somewhat reflected in a YouGov survey of 1,690 adults in Great Britain, which showed differences in public opinion regarding refugees from different conflict-affected areas. The survey asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with allowing refugees fleeing conflict-affected regions to come and stay in the UK. The question was posed three times with varying conflict-affected areas including Ukraine and Afghanistan. Results showed that 71% of respondents agreed to allow refugees to come and stay in the UK in the neutral version of the question. However, when the question was posed with Afghanistan as the conflict-affected area, the agreement rate

dropped to 50%, a decrease of 21%. The gap in support was particularly pronounced among Conservative voters, with 67% supporting refugees from Ukraine and only 36% supporting refugees from Afghanistan. (Opinion: Research reveals British people feel very differently about some refugees than others by Dr Paolo Morini and David Hudson).

In 2019, Amnesty International UK commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey on the experiences of racism in football among fans and their views on the role of football as a force for good. The key findings showed that 41% of football fans believe that racism has increased in the sport over the last three years, with 34% reporting an increase in xenophobia. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) personally witnessed an increase in racism and/or xenophobia, and 12% reported experiencing an increase themselves. The majority (90%) of fans agreed that football clubs have a responsibility to tackle the issue. Additionally, the results indicated that 92% of football fans believe that football clubs should be a "force for good" in their local communities, with 37% proud of their club's community work and 44% stating that football provides a sense of belonging.

Most respondents in this survey were aware of their club foundation's participation in the Football Welcomes programme, and the majority had a positive perception of this involvement. Although a smaller number of respondents reported a change in their attitudes towards refugees, those who experienced a change were more likely to support human rights. This suggests that there is a positive correlation between the programme and the Community Projects' contributions towards positive changes in attitudes.

Reflecting back on the Amnesty International UK Strategy and Theory of Change

As part of this evaluation, Amnesty International UK also wanted to understand how the Football Welcomes programme can help meet the objectives of its new strategy and support commitments to anti-racism, as well as receive any recommendations to increase its impact in these areas.

The Football Welcomes programme aligns with two strategic goals within Amnesty International UK's 2022 – 2030 strategy:

- Strategic Goal 1: Increase knowledge and change attitudes.
- Strategic Goal 2: Build a powerful movement.

This Evaluation has shown that Football Welcomes remains highly relevant and contributes to achievements under these strategic goals in the following ways:

A new but conscious narrative: The strategy highlights that there is a decline in support for human rights across the public, media, and political discourse. Football Welcomes invites a new narrative around human rights that engages an entirely new audience in human rights education. The Football Welcomes campaign allows for continued engagement with the UK public on issues relating to Human Rights without feeling that it is directly touching on polarising issues. Football Welcomes was also thought by some respondents to keep Amnesty International UK relevant.

This Evaluation identified that the addition of education support or guidelines within the campaign was seen as a contributing factor to achieving objectives. This suggests that there is much more scope to align Human Rights Education within and across a campaign like Football Welcomes. This validates and aligns with feedback on the Human Rights Education work in the strategy

“that it can have a transformational impact on people's lives”.

Furthermore, Football Welcomes exemplifies the multiplier effect, with examples of teachers and schools in Norwich or football staff moving to new clubs and encouraging these new clubs to engage with the campaign. This shows that the campaign has the potential to reach and engage a broader audience.

Challenging systems of oppression: It is crucial for the Football Welcomes campaign to ensure that its new strategy does not perpetuate oppressive systems. While the campaign aims to promote human rights education and inclusion, it must be acknowledged that the language used to discuss human rights can sometimes be oppressive in itself. The use of exceptionalism and labelling, for example, can reinforce harmful stereotypes and power dynamics by suggesting that refugees and people seeking asylum must be exceptional to be welcomed. The evaluation conducted on the campaign did acknowledge this issue, but more needs to be done to address it.

Communications around Football Welcomes is often described in the following way:

Our Football Welcomes programme celebrates the contribution players with a refugee background make to the beautiful game, and the positive role football can play in bringing people together and creating more welcoming communities.

Followed by:

Everyone wants to live in a place where they feel safe and welcome. For people fleeing conflict and persecution, football can play a hugely important role in helping to settle into a new country and culture, to make friends, learn the language and get to know the local area.

However, A 'How To' Guide to Football Welcomes for Sections provides the following messaging guidance:

Football Welcomes is about celebrating the contribution refugees make to football and the important role football clubs have in promoting community cohesion and integration.

Press Release Templates reinforce this message of refugees contributing to football:

... joining football clubs across the country this weekend...to celebrate the contribution refugee players make to the game, as part of Amnesty International's Football Welcomes campaign.

Football Welcomes...highlights the role of refugee players in UK football. From a group of children fleeing the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s who became some of the first refugees to play professionally here...

This message is echoed across media coverage, which also focuses on the proficiency of the players:

The National [March 30, 2022]: Afghan women beat UK parliamentarians on the football pitch: The matches were part of the yearly Amnesty International's (sic) initiative to celebrate the contribution of refugees to the game.

One respondent reflected on the atmosphere around refugees who are proficient in football.

..it's more of a celebration [of the player] rather than highlighting that people seeking asylum are in our communities. They are friends that we share space and place with. But because of the restrictions put on them, they are unable to access and do things and are... excluded from society against their will. It's about going beyond just celebrating.

Even if there were no professional footballers that were refugees, this is something that we need to be pushing.

(Evaluation Participant)

by refugees and asylum seekers to football is a logical entry point, there needs to be greater reinforcement across events of the message that everyone deserves to live in a safe and welcoming environment.

The framing of Football Welcomes as a vehicle to create more welcoming communities is a useful mechanism for dismantling subtle undercurrent of exceptionalism as a precondition for being welcomed:

Liverpoolfc.com [July 30,2019]: ...initiative to harness the power of the beautiful game to create more welcoming communities for refugees and people seeking asylum across the UK."

Football and Human Rights: Football has come under scrutiny recently for its role in perpetuating human rights violations and violence, with some stakeholders in the sport, such as the Football Association, being criticised for failing to challenge such violations. It is vital for Football Welcomes to navigate these tensions and ensure that their engagement with such actors does not compromise their commitment to human rights. It is worth noting that Amnesty International UK's contractual agreements with football clubs include explicit mention of the organisation's role to speak out against such stakeholder groups, demonstrating how Amnesty International UK is committed to holding football clubs accountable.

Linking shorter-term change to longer-term systems change: Amnesty International UK's 2022 – 2030 strategy has taken a longer-term systems approach to contributing to human rights change. This Evaluation shows that Football Welcomes is at the intersection of taking achievements at a local level into a system thinking approach. For example, extending a very successful Football Welcomes month into a more concerted effort to change attitudes of fans and community members of football fans and community members.

Football Welcomes does need to pivot towards focusing on the root causes for it to streamline with the longer-term approaches within the new strategy. This could include advancing the YouGov survey to be more directed at fans or community members' attitudes towards refugees and people seeking asylum, and how this has changed over time. Asylum seeker and refugee issues in the UK are interconnected struggles, and Football Welcomes has the potential to offer a deeper understanding of this interconnectedness in a way that does not polarise UK opinions and brings a more comprehensive approach to the overall community model.

Decentralising and diversifying the movement: Football Welcomes has been and will undoubtedly contribute to Amnesty International UK's goal of building a larger and more diverse movement, with particular emphasis on diversity. Football Welcomes reaches a new group, for example, football fans, to engage with on human rights issues and allows for more diversified feedback channels on how people perceive Amnesty International UK.

Furthermore, Football Welcomes presents how local groups, and the community alliance model, can be supported and mobilised to generate action for a human rights issue beyond advocacy or fundraising asks (such as emails).

Furthermore, Football Welcomes programme is a valuable tool in Amnesty International UK's efforts to decentralise and become a less London-centric organisation. The programme's engagement with football is spread throughout the UK, making it an effective way to activate local networks and build momentum in diverse communities. By focusing on local knowledge and expertise, Amnesty International UK can gain a deeper understanding of the barriers that prevent refugees and people seeking asylum from engaging with football in specific areas. This approach helps to break down the notion that Amnesty International UK's knowledge and expertise are exclusive to staff or people in London.

By elevating the importance of community-based solutions, Football Welcomes highlights the value of local perspectives and promotes a more inclusive approach to activism.

Priority Issue 2: Anti-racism – the role of Football Welcomes in tackling racism: Amnesty International aims to:

“play a role to promote anti-racism, including through influencing the movement to prioritise this work and through collaborating with Amnesty International Sections across the world.”

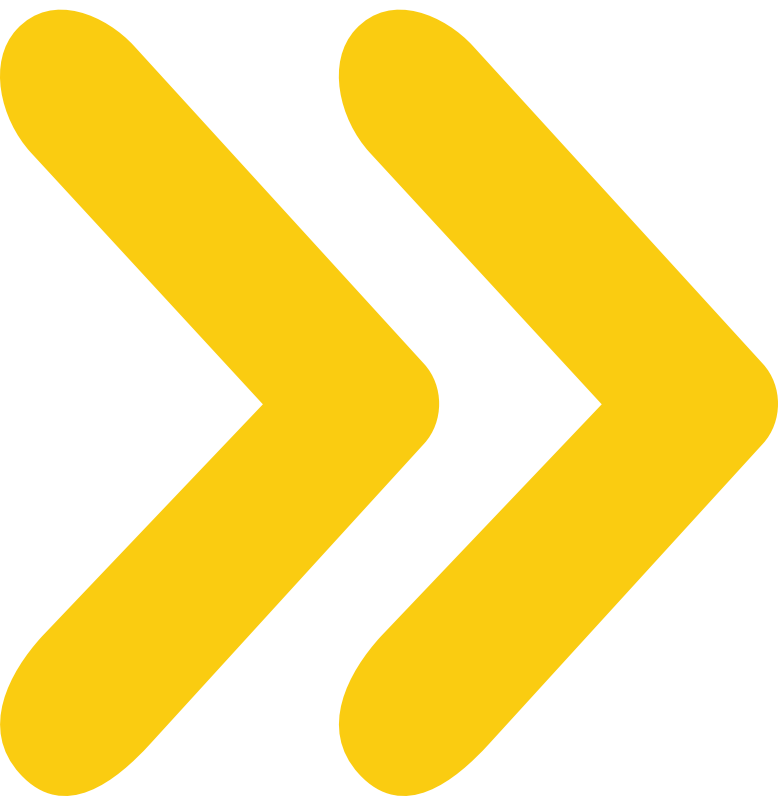
A 2019 report by the Institute of Race Relations found that refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK are at higher risk of racist attacks, and that these attacks often go unreported.

Similarly, a 2016 report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that refugees and asylum seekers across Europe are subject to discrimination and racism. By engaging with football fans, clubs, and players, the campaign helps to raise awareness of the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers and promotes a message of welcome and inclusion.

Where does Football Welcomes fit into the Theory of change?

Football Welcomes fits into Amnesty International UK's Theory of Change by working towards engaging people in positive solutions to systems and practices that violate human rights. The campaign focuses on building connections and engaging with diverse groups of people through football, which helps to create a sustainable and powerful network of people and organisations calling for change. By bringing together football clubs, fans, and community groups, the campaign works towards building a movement that is bigger and stronger than those opposing human rights. Through this, the campaign aims to compel those with the power to make changes to act and bring about the necessary changes. Overall, Football Welcomes supports Amnesty International UK's efforts to build a movement that can create real and lasting change in human rights.

Critically, Football Welcomes is a vehicle to help Amnesty International UK challenge and better understand the assumptions embedded in the Theory of Change through its closeness to communities and fans that can help determine attitudes towards human rights issues.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

In the 2022 – 2030 strategy, Amnesty International UK states that “Data, Research and Analysis will inform all our work, help us understand our stakeholders and be accessible to them, inform the design of our human rights solutions, our communications, and our resource allocation. Data will enable us to monitor the diversity of our governance bodies, staff base, activist movement, and individual financial supports,” AND “Monitoring/Evaluation and Learning will ensure we are monitoring and evaluating the right measures to understand our progress and impact against our strategic goals, applying our learning to adapt our plans and approaches.”

To move towards these aims, and based on evidence in this report, the Evaluation Team recommends:

- Conducting YouGov survey, twice a year, to be more directed at fans’ or community members’ attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers and how this has changed over time to pivot the campaign towards a focus on the root causes and to streamline with the longer-term approaches within the new strategy. (Based on the finding of a need to link shorter-term change to longer-term systems change.)
- Increase opportunities for local groups to learn from each other’s experiences of engaging with football clubs through online learning events or spaces. These opportunities should be supported by more consistent engagement or support from Amnesty International UK in the early stages of establishing these relationships to contribute further to the strategic goal of building a movement. (Based on the finding of varying success in engagement with football clubs.)
- Conduct an assessment or timeline of political events across the project period to determine interactions with successes and failures, particularly with cross-over themes of football and human rights. (Based on the finding of vulnerability to political events and media influences.)
- Develop a clearer framework for how Football Welcomes fits into Amnesty International UK’s Theory of Change, using the relationships with communities and fans to determine attitudes towards human rights issues and thus identify and understand assumptions embedded in the Theory of Change.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

(Based on the finding of the critical role of Football Welcomes in challenging and better understanding the assumptions embedded in the Theory of Change.)

- Develop a more robust monitoring framework that includes clear indicators and targets for each objective. This will help track progress and assess the effectiveness of the campaign. (Based on the finding that the Football Welcomes campaign lacked a clear and comprehensive monitoring framework.)
- Monitor the efficacy of guidance provided in the Good Practice Guide for Refugee Women's Football to ensure a consistent approach across community projects and address any issues that arise. (Based on the finding that a consistent approach across community projects is lacking and the need to monitor the efficacy of guidance provided.)
- Conduct a longitudinal study to track changes in attitudes towards refugees and people seeking asylum. To better understand the impact of the Football Welcomes campaign on attitudes towards refugees and people seeking asylum over time, Amnesty International UK could commission a longitudinal study. This study could involve surveying football fans and community members before and after the campaign to track changes in attitudes over time and identify areas for improvement.

Programme Approach

- Create a clear and detailed plan for the programme that outlines specific goals and targets. This should include a timeline for implementation, key stakeholders involved, and clear metrics for measuring success. (Based on the finding that there was a lack of early planning and prioritisation of the programme.)
- Work to better align the motivations, needs, and desires of participants with the programme's overall aims and objectives. This can involve gathering feedback from participants on their goals and incorporating these into the programme's strategy. (Based on the finding that participants may have different objectives and motivations for participating in the programme.)
- Deepen understanding of the barriers and challenges refugees and asylum seekers face in access to employment, education or other forms of social support that interact with feelings of confidence and belonging through a more comprehensive assessment of the lives of refugees and asylum seekers who join Football Welcomes and in particular talking to individuals who have left the Football Welcomes programme.
- A comprehensive approach to supporting refugees and asylum seekers should go beyond the initial period of resettlement and consider the transnational lives of forced migrants. Football Welcomes should consider supporting those who are moving or transitioning, as refugees and asylum seekers tend to move frequently in the first stages. The focus should be on the diversity and fluidity of belonging and sports engagement among refugee-background young people across time and place.
- Foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among partners. The report notes that partners were connected via bimonthly meetings and through a peer-to-peer network, but some participants expressed a desire for more collaboration and sharing of best practices. To address this, the programme could consider holding more structured knowledge-sharing sessions, such as workshops or webinars, where partners can share their experiences and learn from each other. The programme could also explore the use of online platforms to facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration among partners.
- The new strategy should consider alternative support models, such as having local groups support each other, or incorporating Football Welcomes participants into the programme as community support roles to help other local groups or refugees and compensating them accordingly. Additionally, Amnesty International UK should explore its role as a strategic partner, from the role of donor and funder to supporting local groups in the regions.
- Strengthen the partnerships with local community groups: While the report notes that the Football Welcomes programme was successful in partnering with 11 local groups, it also highlights the mixed response and varying levels of commitment from these groups. To build stronger partnerships, the programme could consider providing more support

Programme Approach

and resources to these groups, such as training or funding for outreach activities. Additionally, the programme could work on identifying local groups that have a more established connection to refugee rights issues and may be more invested in the programme.

- Continue to leverage Amnesty International's brand and reputation. The report notes that Amnesty International's brand and reputation were viewed positively by participants in the Football Welcomes programme and that the organisation's perceived power was seen as an asset. To leverage this further, the programme could consider more actively engaging with Premier League clubs and football associations to advocate for more inclusive policies and practices. Additionally, the programme could work to build stronger relationships with corporate sponsors and other partners

that may be interested in supporting the programme and its goals.

- Foster connections with other community members. While the Football Welcomes programme has been successful in creating a sense of unity among participants, there is room for improvement in fostering connections with other community members outside of the immediate social network. One way to achieve this could be to invite community members to attend Football Welcomes matches or events and to actively encourage interaction and dialogue between participants and community members.
- Develop pathways to education and employment. While the Football Welcomes programme has helped participants to build confidence and feel welcome in the community, a more comprehensive approach is needed to promote the successful integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. This could involve developing pathways to education and employment, providing language training and job placement assistance, and other forms of practical support to help participants develop the skills and knowledge they need to participate fully in society.
- Ensure safety and duty of care. When providing tickets for women and girls to participate in matches, ensure their safety and well-being, particularly when travelling to and from night games. (Based on the finding that safety during travel to and from matches can be a concern for women and girls, and that some evaluation participants may feel compelled to follow their participants part of the way home after night games out of concern for their safety.)

- Deploy a systematic strategy across Football Welcomes to address unique challenges faced by refugee women and girls by adopting an intersectional approach and providing opportunities for skill development that align with their interests. (Based on the finding that there are inconsistent approaches to engaging women and girls and the absence of monitoring on the uptake and utility of the Good Practice Guide for Refugee Women's Football.)
- To address concerns about the use of oppressive language and the perpetuation of oppressive systems within the campaign, Amnesty International UK could work with partners to review and update the language used in communications surrounding Football Welcomes. This could involve updating and regularly sharing the 'How to Talk About Football Welcomes' Guide that is shared with clubs to include guidelines for the use of language that promotes inclusion and avoids harmful stereotypes. Additionally, Amnesty International UK could continue to hold football clubs accountable for their commitment to human rights and speak out against stakeholder groups that perpetuate human rights violations.
- Establish a clear process for addressing problematic language and messaging and clear guidelines for language and messaging in the campaign to ensure that it is inclusive and does not perpetuate harmful stereotypes or power dynamics. This can be achieved by setting up a working group to review language and messaging in the campaign and provide recommendations for improvement.
- Collaborate with local networks to further decentralise and diversify the movement, mobilize community-based solutions, and generate action for human rights issues beyond traditional advocacy or fundraising asks. This could involve working with local football clubs and community organizations to identify barriers that prevent refugees and people seeking asylum from engaging with football in specific areas and developing solutions to address these barriers.
- Amnesty International UK could foster collaboration with other Amnesty International Sections across the world to strengthen its anti-racism efforts. This could involve sharing best practices and resources, collaborating on joint campaigns or initiatives, and working together to influence the movement to prioritize anti-racism work. Additionally, Amnesty International UK could continue to raise awareness of the challenges faced by refugees and people seeking asylum and promote a message of welcome and inclusion through engagement with football fans, clubs, and players.
- Incorporate anti-racism messaging into the campaign. Set a goal to increase awareness of the challenges faced by refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK due to racism and discrimination. This can be achieved by working with clubs and fans to develop messaging and campaigns that specifically address issues of racism and discrimination.
- Create a steering committee comprising of local groups, fans, and Amnesty local groups to ensure local ownership and decision-making. This committee will help in the effective implementation of the Football Welcomes programme at the local level and promote community-based solutions. Additionally, it will provide a platform for diverse perspectives and help build momentum in the community.

Fundraising

- Increase efforts to promote the programme and share successful club engagement examples more widely. This can include leveraging social media and online platforms to highlight successes and build momentum. (Based on the finding that the programme missed an opportunity to share examples of successful club engagement more widely.)
- Explore alternative fundraising strategies to leverage greater financial support from donors. This could include partnering with corporate sponsors or developing a crowdfunding campaign that is more targeted towards supporting refugees and asylum seekers. (Based on the finding that fundraising proved to be the most difficult aspect of the campaign.)

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