

Treaty Application Case Study: Save the Children New Zealand

In Save the Children New Zealand we focus on partnerships with service providers and on development education, advocating for children's rights both in New Zealand and overseas. We have had someone employed to run a domestic programme only since November 2001. With the domestic programme we work at a different level in New Zealand to how we work internationally. It became pretty evident early on that as a New Zealand-based organisation, and an organisation working directly in New Zealand, that there needed to be something in our organisation that reflected our policy with regard to the Treaty.

There was also certainly an acknowledgement that while the Treaty is between two parties (Māori and Government) not involving NGOs (Non-Government Organisations), that as an NGO working in those communities we cannot ignore the fact that it does have an impact on the work we are doing. There was also a role within the organisation to understand better what the Treaty meant for us at an operational level, regardless of whether it was domestic programme work or our work as a whole. We are a New Zealand organisation therefore we have a responsibility to understand what the Treaty means to us.

In three and a half years we've made quite a significant inroad into trying to get some buy-in, commitment and implementation of how we determine our policy on the Treaty as an organisation. We began to explore ways to bring this into play at an organisational level — you had to get an understanding individually about what the Treaty meant for you and then how that might be relevant to the organisation's work. That happened fairly quickly and there has been a positive response to what the Treaty might mean both personally and organisationally.

There were a number of reasons that allowed Save the Children to be quite responsive to Treaty issues: we are a rights based organisation and internationally in our work we practice development principles and cultural appropriateness. These made a lot of sense when put into a New Zealand context because the Treaty is rights-based and it is about Māori culture and development. It's that old adage of 'practice what you preach' — if we apply certain principles internationally, then they need to be applied at home too. So it was quite easy to shift that understanding relatively quickly.

The first step really was that the Treaty was presented as something that policy needed to be developed around and a proposal was submitted to the Board. This was debated and engaged with on some levels, but probably not engaged with across all the levels hoped for. What did come out of that was that the management team embarked on a Treaty training workshop through CID in 2003. At that point we had 15 staff, of which four out of a management group of five did the training.

So we had a multitude of shifts. There has been management training that filtered down to the rest of the staff. Also, a change in Board members meant that we were able to reintroduce a new policy suggestion that wasn't about making the Board undertake Treaty training. It was about ensuring that the Board incorporate a process for determining Save the Children New Zealand's policy on the Treaty. The Board agreed that they wanted to see a commitment to developing a policy in relation to the Treaty in the strategic plan over the next five years. So it has been taken to that policy level and the Board are definitely committed to that.

We're a voluntary organisation, now with 19 paid staff. The vast majority of our workers are volunteers and there is an extensive network of branches throughout the country. We're in the middle of a rapid growth

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period at the moment and it is very positive that Martin, our Board President, is leading by example by doing Treaty training himself. There is a culture of internal change within the organisation.

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NOTE: The views expressed here are the participants' own, at the time of the interview, and do not necessarily represent their current views or those of their agencies.