Theory of Change

Building evidence and momentum on engagement-based alternatives to detention, to reduce immigration detention at the national and regional levels in Europe.

October 2019
Regional-level Theory of Change

At the regional level, our goal is to reduce immigration detention and end it for vulnerable groups by building evidence and momentum on engagement-based alternatives to detention (ATD). The Network links NGOs running case management-based ATD pilot projects in Europe with regional advocacy organisations, and conducts and facilitates advocacy, peer learning and evidence generation among Network members.

So that

MORE KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND INFLUENCE
We increase our own knowledge and confidence to advocate for and implement ATD. More voices talking from practical experience about ATD implementation and advocacy give us collectively more authority and influence. The strengthened evidence base makes our arguments more persuasive, helps us reframe “effectiveness” and shows that ATD are a possible and worthwhile strategy to pursue. There is strengthened national-level advocacy around pilots for detention reduction.

MORE PRACTICE AND COLLABORATION ON ATD
Further NGOs in Europe explore and implement ATD pilot implementation as a strategy for reducing immigration detention. There is more sharing and collaboration among NGOs and governments around pilots. Government officials involved start to change their thinking, seeing the benefits of engagement-based ATD to resolve cases in the community and moving away from the need to detain.

SHIFT IN NARRATIVE AND GROWING MOMENTUM
Our European alliance expands with more NGOs motivated and able to advocate for ATD, amplifying the network’s messaging. There is a feedback loop as more voices, practice and evidence on ATD reinforces the confidence of stakeholders. We see a shift in narrative as a growing range of NGOs, regional and international organisations start to emphasise engagement-based ATD implementation in reports, policy documents, and recommendations.

So that

The European Commission is willing and receptive to work on ATD. ATD are increasingly on the agenda at Commission meetings. The Commission develops guidance and funding programmes on ATD. It shifts its focus in terms of ATD away from increased return rates to fair and timely case resolution. The Commission encourages and supports Member States to use engagement-based alternatives before detention.

More Member States pilot ATD programmes drawing on the Network’s approach, sharing positive practice of pilots involving civil society with other governments and regionally. New models are expanded as part of detention reform and reduction programmes. Engagement-based approaches become the norm, forming the basis for fair and transparent systems of migration governance which do not rely on detention. Detention is used exceptionally in Europe, as a measure of last resort.
At the national-level, alternative to detention (ATD) pilot projects aim to reduce immigration detention and end it for vulnerable groups and contribute to increased and improved case management. We have three main interlinked strands of work on this.

**CASE MANAGEMENT**

We set up pilot projects by identifying groups at risk of detention who could be managed in the community; developing criteria, procedures and frameworks; and partnerships and pathways for referral. In implementing pilots, we deliver quality holistic case management, so that our clients are supported and empowered to make informed decisions towards resolving their cases and we demonstrate that assessment and case management can be effective in achieving increased engagement and case resolution.

**ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS**

At the same time, we develop a shared narrative of change with European ATD Network partners, and tailored messages and communications tools. We mobilise key audiences in civil society and government and our alliances expand. We undertake solutions-based advocacy through doing, speaking to target stakeholders’ interests and influencing through the process of collaborating around shared objectives. This includes developing day to day communication with front line officers through case management on individual cases so that we build collaboration and trust relationships with the authorities and start to get releases onto the pilot.

**MONITORING, EVALUATION AND SHARING**

We communicate and exchange with other pilots in the Network, develop shared data collection tools and feed into M&E. We generate learning and build our expertise and authority on ATD implementation and advocacy, so that there is strengthened evidence on ATD and increased knowledge of ATD and their benefits among our targets. We support the Network’s EU-level advocacy and contribute to a growing regional evidence base on ATD.

So that

There is a shift in mentality among individual officers at different government levels away from the need to detain, and the scalability of the piloting process is established. At the same time, we achieve the support of key decision-makers on engagement-based alternatives and there is increased support, funding and pressure from the EU to develop alternatives so that there is more government/NGO case management practice nationally and increased political will to test and roll out engagement-based alternatives and reduce detention.

So that

There is policy and practice change, e.g. on specific groups, reducing and ending immigration detention and expanding engagement-based alternatives in the country meaning increased and improved case management.