



## **NEEDS & OFFERS ACTIVITY:**

### **Strengthening Ally Relationships Between Youth and their Caregivers**

**Purpose:** This activity is designed for youth and the adults who serve as their caregivers, whether they are parents, guardians, family members, or others. It aims to explore how adults can act as allies in fostering the development, rights and independence of the youth in their care, while balancing their responsibilities as caregivers. By clarifying the needs of youth and the support caregivers can offer, the activity seeks to strengthen the allyship between them, acknowledging strengths and identifying limitations as well as areas for future growth.

**Time:** Between 2 to 2.5 hours, depending on the number of participants.

**Participants:** This activity requires a group composed of both youth (aged 12 years and older) and the adult allies that serve as their caregivers (parents, guardians, family members or others).

**Ideal group size:** 10-12 participants, including both youth and adults. The activity can be adapted for larger or smaller groups, but adults should never outnumber youth.

#### **Link to Human Rights Education:**

This activity encourages collaboration, shared responsibility, and relationship building, fostering a supportive and nurturing environment through allyship. It promotes youth autonomy and helps strengthen family relationships grounded in human rights principles such as dignity, non-discrimination, safety, and respect. Centered on the belief that youth are rights holders, it positions adult caregivers as allies who support them in upholding and exercising those rights.



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## Materials:

- Annex A - Reference Sheet: Establishing group guidelines based on child rights values
- Annex B - Flip chart 1: Needs versus Offerings
- Annex C - Flip chart 2: Matching Needs and Offerings
- Annex D - Optional note-taking template
- Annex E - Handout: A child rights-based approach to allyship
- Flip chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Sticky (post-it) notes, two different colors (e.g. yellow and blue)
- Pencils or pens

## Key considerations before starting

The '**Do No Harm**' principle must remain a central consideration when conducting this activity with youth. Facilitators are therefore expected, at a minimum, to adhere to the following guidelines to ensure this principle is upheld:

- Ensure you have established a strong rapport with the youth and taken time to get to know them before introducing this activity. If you do not have a close relationship with the youth, consider co-facilitating with someone who does.
- Reflect on your own limitations and potential biases (e.g., cultural biases), and carefully consider the context in which you'll be facilitating.
- Ensure you have the cultural knowledge and sensitivity needed to facilitate this activity, which must be done in close collaboration with the community. This requires preparation, reflection, and research. You may also consider involving an intermediary who is well-versed in the community's needs, culture, and context.
- Ask participants - whether adults or youth - to avoid personalizing their contributions. Encourage youth to speak about "parents and guardians" as a group rather than referring to their own caregivers, and ask caregivers to refer to "youth" as a group rather than speaking about their own children. This approach helps keep the focus on the broader issues rather than individual situations, and can prevent unnecessary discomfort, awkwardness or confrontations.

Finally, be sure to adapt the content and language to suit the group. Depending on participants' language abilities and their familiarity or interest in human rights, you may need to simplify the language or spend additional time (or less time) on certain parts of the activity.

## Part I: Introduction (20-30 minutes)

- 1 It is advisable that at least one adult takes responsibility for leading the activity. If two facilitators are available, they can both be adults, though we highly recommend having one adult and one youth co-lead.
- 2 Explain that the purpose of the Needs and Offers activity is to explore how caregivers can act as allies in supporting young people's development, rights, and autonomy by gaining a deeper understanding of youth needs and encouraging reflection on the types of support adult allies can provide. Mention that this activity helps foster greater collaboration between youth and their caregivers by identifying untapped opportunities and/or limitations that exist within their current relationships.
- 3 Take a moment to establish **Group Guidelines** that everyone agrees to follow throughout the activity. Participants can be encouraged to base group guidelines on children's rights values, such as the ones listed below

Children's Rights Values	Cooperation	Acceptance	Responsibility
Respect for diversity	Respect	Fairness	Inclusion

For example, the value of acceptance can help formulate a guideline like: *"We commit to staying open to all ideas, even if we don't fully agree with them."*

The group should establish 3-4 guidelines (or group norms) to help foster a respectful and supportive environment throughout the activity. It is recommended that the facilitator records these guidelines and displays them where everyone can see them, serving as a reminder to uphold the group agreements.

For more information on **Children's Rights values and guidance on establishing group guidelines**, refer to the Reference Sheet in **Annex A**.



### Important note:

Caregiver-youth relationships often carry emotional histories that can impact the activity. Therefore, creating an accountable space - a space that is as safe as possible - is essential for ensuring everyone feels comfortable sharing and for facilitators to effectively manage sensitive discussions. It may prove helpful to:

- Encourage participants to share only what they feel comfortable with, or allow them the option to refrain from speaking altogether
- Remind participants that they can take a break whenever they need to
- Let participants know they don't have to have all the answers, or even any answers
- Reassure everyone that the group is about learning together by discussing shared challenges and working collaboratively to find solutions
- Reinforce the importance of trust and mutual respect between caregivers and youth

**4** To introduce the theme of the activity, invite all participants to raise their hand and respond to the questions:

- ***"What is an ally?"***
- ***"Can caregivers (parents, guardians, family members) be allies to youth? How so?"***

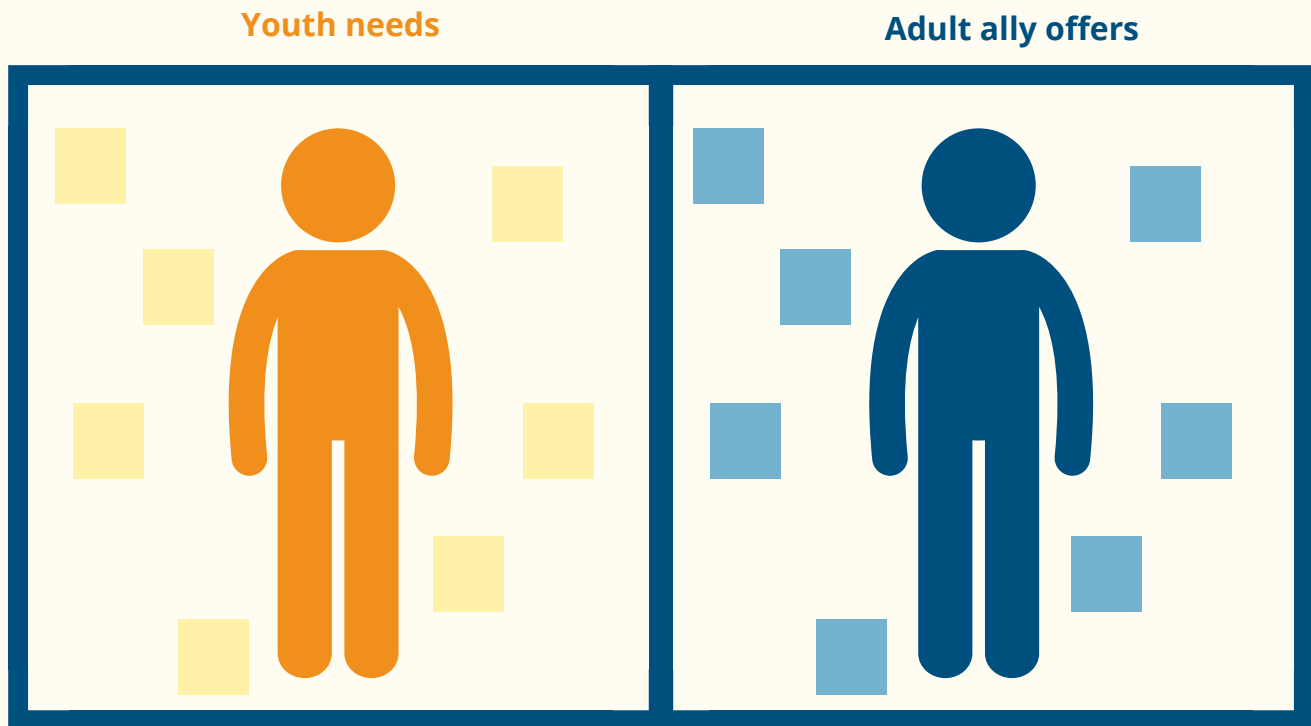
Highlight any similarities or differences that arise between the adult and youth responses, and consider noting them for reference. Use responses to define adult allyship within the context of family and caregiver relationships.



**Variation:** Another way to engage participants in exploring the concept of adult allyship is to present the following definition, inviting them to modify it to reflect their own experiences and perspectives: ***"Caregiver allies listen to, support, and actively help youth meet their needs, while also helping them build confidence and achieve their hopes and dreams".***

Working together to define allyship from their own perspectives will encourage participants to focus on the unique dynamics, expectations, and needs of their group.

## Part II: Sharing Needs and Offers (15 minutes)

- 1 **Display Flip Chart 1: Needs and Offers**, which should be prepared in advance (refer to **Annex B** for instructions on creating this flipchart).



-  Post-it notes completed by youth participants
-  Post-it notes completed by adult allies (caregivers)

- 2 Invite youth to share their **NEEDS** in relation to adult allies by responding to one or more of the following questions. Youth should write their answers on yellow sticky notes (one need per note) and place them in the "Youth Needs" section of the visual.

### WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM THE ALLIES WHO SUPPORT AND CARE FOR YOU [SPECIFY CONTEXT\*]?

- What do you need from your parents, guardians or family members to feel safe and secure?
- How can caregivers help meet your needs? How can they support you in achieving your hopes and dreams?

- 3 Invite the adults to reflect on what they can OFFER youth in their role as allies. Adult allies should write their responses on blue sticky notes (one need per note) and place them in the “**Adult Ally Offers**” section of the visual.

**AS AN ALLY, WHAT DO YOU OFFER THE YOUTH YOU SUPPORT AND CARE FOR [SPECIFY CONTEXT\*]?**

- What do you do to help youth feel safe and secure?
- How do you help youth meet their needs? How do you support youth in achieving their hopes and dreams?




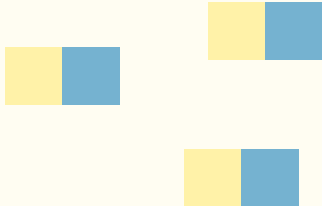
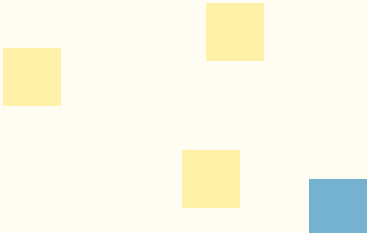

*\* You may want to define a specific context or focus on a particular area (e.g., in relation to school-related activities, social life, home life, online activities, etc.). Establishing a clear and specific objective for the discussion helps prevent it from becoming too broad and ensures that the needs and offers shared remain relevant and actionable.*

At this stage of the activity, *Needs* and *Offers* are kept separate whilst remaining visible to all participants.

### Part III: Matching Needs and Offers (45 minutes)

- 1 Using a popcorn-style approach (a discussion technique where participants speak spontaneously and without a set order), invite both youth and adults to share aloud the needs and offers they have posted. Encourage brief contributions to ensure everyone has a chance to participate.
- 2 Display **Flip Chart 2: Matching Needs and Offers**, which should be prepared in advance (see **Annex C** for instructions on creating this flipchart).
- 3 Lead youth and adult allies through a collaborative matching exercise, reviewing both the needs and offers for the purpose of identifying:
  - **Alignment:** Youth needs that are being addressed by adult offers.
  - **Misalignment requiring attention:** Youth needs that are not being addressed but can and should be. Offerings that do not match any youth needs can also be placed here for review.
  - **Misalignment due to limitations:** Youth needs that cannot be fully addressed due to limitations such as lack of time, lack of resources, or other factors.

In the matching exercise, the facilitator can start by matching an offer to a need; or begin with a need and find the corresponding offers. Some overlap or repetition between needs and offers may occur. The facilitator’s role is to guide the group in sorting each need and offer into one of three categories, as shown in the diagram below.

Aligned 	Misaligned and require attention 	Misaligned due to limitations 
		

- 4 As the matching process unfolds, the facilitator guides a discussion between the youth and their adult allies, focusing on the reasons behind the alignment or misalignment of needs and offers. While the perspectives of adult allies are valuable for understanding the context, it is important that youth voices take priority in this conversation.
- 5 During the matching process and conversation, it may be helpful for either a youth participant, youth worker or an adult ally to take notes. The **note-taking template** provided in **Annex D** can be used for this purpose.

#### Part IV: A child rights-based approach to allyship (30+ minutes)

Allyship, from a child rights perspective, means respecting young people's freedom to make choices, treating them with dignity, and supporting their well-being. It is about creating spaces where young people feel important, listened to, and empowered to take part in society, while also making sure their rights are protected.

In this segment, participants are encouraged to explore allyship from a child rights perspective and to compare their reflections with the findings from the earlier matching exercise.

- 1 Distribute the handout entitled: **A child rights-based approach to allyship**, which should be prepared in advance (refer to **Annex E** for a copy of the handout).
- 2 Ensure that participants familiarize themselves with the contents of the handout, either through a quick overview or a more in-depth review (depending on group needs and interest). The facilitator can determine whether this is best done individually, in pairs, small groups, or as a whole group. Allow some time for reflection.

**Key points to highlight:**

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an important agreement between countries that sets global rules to protect children's rights. It upholds the rights of young people under the age of 18 in areas like safety, health, education, and culture, and helps to ensure that all children are treated fairly, no matter where they live.
- The CRC views children as individuals with their own rights and responsibilities, based on their age and development. It recognizes that children are not just owned by their parents or guardians, and they are not just people who receive help - they have their own voice and aspirations.
- The CRC's principles also apply to young adults (aged 18 and over), and many countries use these guidelines to support youth as they transition into adulthood.
- Caregivers (parents, guardians, family members and others) who are dedicated to supporting children's rights can become stronger allies for young people.

- 3 Once participants have become familiar with the contents of the handout (**A child rights-based approach to allyship**), encourage them to consider how allyship can be leveraged to promote and protect youth rights.
  - Ask youth: ***"Does a Child Rights-Based Approach bring to mind any additional needs that are important to you or other youth?"***
  - Ask adult allies: ***"Does a Child Rights-Based Approach highlight any new areas where your support is especially needed?"***
- 4 Following the discussion, the group may choose to add post-it notes to **Flip Chart 2**.

## Part V: Closing discussion (20 minutes)

Using the prompts below, engage participants in a discussion to evaluate the activity and to help both youth and adult allies plan their next steps.

### FEEL



#### How do we feel?

- Did you enjoy participating in this activity? Why or why not?
  - What parts did you find easy or enjoyable?
  - What aspects did you find challenging or uncomfortable?
- 

### THINK



#### What did we learn?

- In which areas are caregivers most successful as allies to youth? How can we celebrate these moments of connection and ensure they are sustained over time?
  - What unmet needs do youth have that their caregiver allies should address? How can caretakers improve their allyship in this area?
  - What unmet needs of youth fall beyond the support that caregiver allies can provide? Identify areas where caregiver allies face challenges or limitations.
  - Was it helpful to reflect on allyship from a child rights perspective? Why or why not?
- 

### ACT



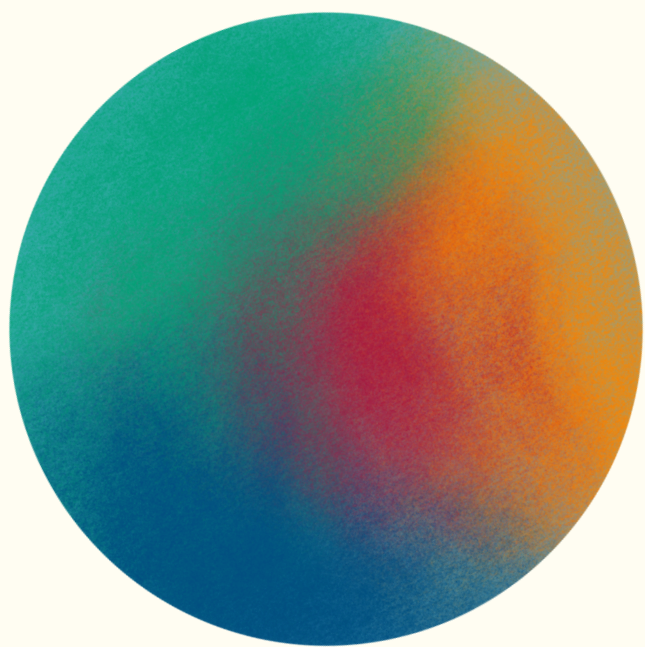
#### How can we work better together?

- What commitments can both youth and adult allies make to improve alignment between youth needs and adult ally offers?
- What additional support, resources, or strategies are needed to address unmet youth needs more effectively? Consider identifying other potential allies who could offer assistance in areas beyond the capacity of caregiver allies.
- How can we ensure that youth and their caregiver allies continue to share and adjust their needs and offers as their relationships evolve?



## Possible variations

- Facilitators may choose to divide this activity into two sessions. First, host an introductory session to explore the concept of allyship and present the child rights-based approach (using **Annex E**). This foundation can help participants engage more meaningfully in the second session, where youth and caregivers come together to take part in the Needs and Offers activity- after the key concepts have been clearly introduced and reflected upon.
- Part II of the activity (**Sharing Needs and Offers**) can take place in two separate rooms - one for youth to reflect on their needs and another for caregivers to reflect on their offers - if this setup feels more comfortable for participants. Alternatively, it can be done anonymously in a shared space, with the facilitator reading aloud ideas written on post-it notes.
- Young people don't need to focus solely on their needs; facilitators can also invite them to share what they have to offer - whether in support of one another or of their caregivers. This approach can empower youth by highlighting their agency and their potential to support both themselves and others.





## ANNEX A – Reference Sheet: Establishing group guidelines based on child rights values

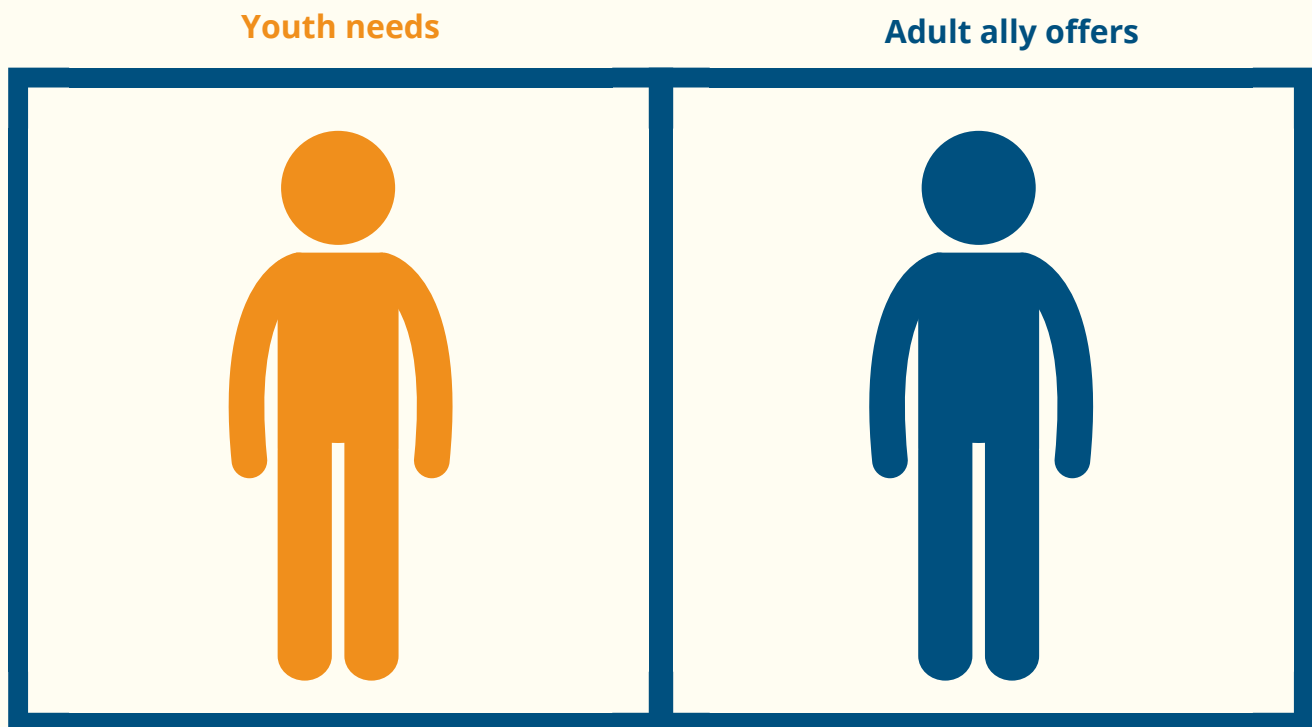
### What are children's rights values?

The seven children's rights values below stem from children's rights and human rights as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). By promoting the values of cooperation, respect, fairness, inclusion, respect for diversity, responsibility, and acceptance, and by bringing them into our everyday behavior, we can demonstrate respect for human rights and children's rights. As such, these values can be used to create group guidelines and norms that foster respectful discussion.

Children's Rights Value	Definition	Example of a group guideline
<b>Cooperation</b>	Cooperation is working together to achieve a common goal, as well as helping one another achieve personal goals.	<i>"We will work together to achieve common goals and keep each other accountable throughout the discussion"</i>
<b>Respect</b>	Respect is recognizing that every person is important and must be treated with dignity. In the context of human rights, respect does not need to be earned; it is the right of every person in all circumstances.	<i>"We will avoid offensive language or insults and be mindful of our body language"</i>
<b>Fairness</b>	Fairness is giving everyone the same value, the same rights, and the same opportunities.	<i>"We will give everyone an equal opportunity to speak; and will take care not to take up too much space (leave room for others)"</i>
<b>Inclusion</b>	Inclusion is acting to ensure full participation from everyone, without exception.	<i>"We will allow individuals to choose when and how they participate, without pressuring anyone"</i>
<b>Respect for diversity</b>	Respect for diversity is recognizing and appreciating individual differences.	<i>"We will strive to understand each other's perspectives, recognizing we can all learn from one another"</i>
<b>Acceptance</b>	Acceptance is recognizing that each person is a full member of society and of the group.	<i>"We commit to staying open to all ideas, even if we don't fully agree with them"</i>

## ANNEX B - Flip Chart 1: Needs and Offers




Prepare this visual by either using chart paper or drawing on a whiteboard. On one side, draw a figure and label it "Youth Needs". On the opposite side, draw another figure and label it "Adult Ally Offers". Ensure both areas are large enough to accommodate post-it notes from participants (the larger the group, the more space will be needed).



## ANNEX C - Flip Chart 2: Matching Needs and Offers

Prepare this visual by either using chart paper or drawing on a whiteboard. You can use the terms "match" (instead of "aligned") and "mismatch" (instead of "misaligned") if you feel that simpler language is needed.




Ensure that all three sections are large enough to accommodate post-it notes from participants (the larger the group, the more space will be needed).

<b>Aligned</b> 	<b>Misaligned and require attention</b> 	<b>Misaligned due to limitations</b> 

## ANNEX D – Note-taking template (optional)

During the matching process and conversation, it may be helpful for either a youth participant or an adult to take notes. This template is provided for that purpose.

Participants must be asked for their consent, and all data must be collected in an anonymous fashion to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

<b>Aligned:</b>  Youth needs that are being addressed by adult offers	
<b>Misaligned and require attention:</b>  Unmet youth needs  +  Actions, commitments and resources required to address these needs	
<b>Misaligned due to limitations:</b>  Unmet youth needs that cannot be addressed due to limitations.	
<b>Additional reflections or questions</b>	

## ANNEX E – A child rights-based approach to allyship



This clear-language version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was produced by UNICEF. For more information, consult the UNICEF website: [www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version](http://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version)

## **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

The CRC, the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, sets universal standards for the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children. Signatory states implement the Convention by incorporating its principles into their laws, policies, and programs, ensuring that children's rights are respected and upheld in all areas of life. This legally binding document ensures that children are at the center of policies and decisions affecting them. It views children as individuals with their own rights and responsibilities, appropriate to their age and development, and not as the property of their parents/guardians or mere recipients of charity. The Convention also emphasizes the shared responsibility of governments, society, communities, and caregivers to protect and promote children's rights and dignity.

### **How is the CRC relevant to youth?**

While the CRC primarily protects children under 18, its framework also influences the protection and support of youth beyond that age. By addressing rights like education, healthcare, protection from violence, and participation in decisions, the CRC principles extend to the needs of young adults. Many countries adopt CRC-inspired policies to support youth, particularly those in vulnerable situations, as they transition into adulthood.




### **How is the CRC relevant to caregivers as allies?**

Caregivers, including parents, guardians, and other family members, play a unique and crucial role in ensuring that youth experience their rights daily within the home. By recognizing young people as rights holders and being aware of adult privilege, caregivers can become effective allies. This allyship involves respecting young people's autonomy, promoting their dignity, and supporting their well-being. With a strong commitment to children's rights, caregiver allies can foster loving, respectful, and mutually dignified relationships that empower young people to navigate challenges confidently.




### **What does it mean to be a rights-respecting adult ally?**

Below, you will find selected CRC articles (left column) for parents, guardians and family members to consider, alongside reflections (right column) designed to spark thinking and dialogue that can help strengthen the allyship between caregivers and youth.

**Facilitator Note:** The depth of exploration of this document should be guided by the capacity and interest of the participants. You may choose to provide a brief overview of the selected child rights (left-hand column) or engage participants in a deeper reflection by considering the questions in the right-hand column. The aim is to encourage reflection on allyship through the lens of children's rights.

Child Rights	Reflection questions
 <p><b>No discrimination</b></p> <p>All children have the same rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, regardless of their gender identity, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their families are.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are young people being discriminated against due to their age? Are they being treated unfairly due to factors related to their identity?</li> <li>• Are youth marginalized in certain spaces that are weighted towards adults?</li> <li>• Are young people being treated with the same respect and dignity that we expect for all adults?</li> <li>• Are allies ensuring that young people's needs and desires are given the same weight as those of adults?</li> <li>• Are young people recognized as rights holders in their daily environment?</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Best interest of the child</b></p> <p>When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are decisions affecting young people made with their best interests as the primary concern?</li> <li>• Are decisions affecting youth based on an understanding of what is developmentally fair and appropriate for young people?</li> <li>• Are adults determining what is in the best interest of young people by consulting them? Is the opinion of youth taken seriously and acted upon in these matters?</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Family guidance as children develop</b></p> <p>Families and communities guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights in the best way. The more children grow, the less guidance they will need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are young people benefiting from direction, boundaries, clear structure in an understanding and supportive environment?</li> <li>• Are youth being supported in working out solutions rather than being controlled? Are adult allies guiding youth and trusting them to make their own choices?</li> <li>• Are young people being encouraged to develop their sense of autonomy and self-confidence?</li> <li>• Are youth benefiting from adult connection in ways that are meaningful to them? Are they receiving the unconditional love and acceptance required for them to thrive?</li> <li>• Are young people being shown how to be leaders that inspire, challenge, support, empower and motivate others?</li> </ul>



	<p><b>Life survival and development</b></p> <p>Every child has the right to survive and develop in the best possible way. This includes the right to be protected from all forms of physical and psychological harm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the needs of young people - beyond necessities like shelter, nourishment, health, and education - being met?</li> <li>• Are adult allies actively working to protect young people's emotional and mental health, ensuring they feel happy, secure, and valued?</li> <li>• Are adult allies using an empathetic and respectful approach when communicating with youth, rather than an authoritarian one?</li> <li>• Are the expectations and requests of adult allies considerate of young people's emotional and physical development?</li> </ul>
  	<p><b>Respect for children's views</b></p> <p>Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children's views seriously.</p> <p><b>Sharing thoughts freely</b></p> <p>Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do adult allies take the time to listen to youth perspectives? Are they responsive to young people's communication?</li> <li>• Do caregivers withhold action before hearing young people's views and withhold judgement after hearing it?</li> <li>• Do young people feel safe and respected in sharing their thoughts, opinions and feelings with adult allies?</li> <li>• Do adult allies trust youth and respect their will?</li> </ul>



### Aims of education

Children's education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.

- Are young people being encouraged and supported to pursue their interests and passions?
- Are adult allies fostering a supportive environment for youth to explore new opportunities, push boundaries and confidently pursue their learning goals?
- Are young people being granted the right to play, rest, and relax?
- Are young people being supported to connect, participate in society, and build relationships with others and the environment, with adult allies facilitating this?
- Are young people encouraged to learn about their rights and the rights of others?



### Rest, play, culture, arts

Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities.



### Everyone must know children's rights

All children and all adults must know about this Convention so that everyone knows about children's rights.