

On the occasion of the 11th edition of Peace Days, we are encouraged to **Build a Better Future by Uniting for Peace**. This call to action underscores the importance of nurturing healthy relationships rooted in trust, respect, understanding, equity, and reciprocity - especially with youth who will help sustain peace. Acting as allies to young people is therefore essential to building more inclusive and peaceful communities.

It is in this spirit of peace and allyship that Equitas and its partners offer a self-reflection activity to help adult allies consider how they support youth by practicing **rights-based allyship**.

RIGHTS-BASED ALLYSHIP WITH YOUTH



Being an **ally to youth** means listening, offering support, and helping young people build confidence, take the lead, and thrive. It involves standing in solidarity with youth as they take charge of their own lives.

A **human rights-based approach to youth allyship** respects, upholds, and promotes young people's rights. It involves challenging systemic barriers, addressing power imbalances, and speaking out against injustice to advance equity. It goes beyond tokenism by requiring allies to take risks, create space for youth, and act with purpose. It also calls for allies to continuously self-reflect on their strengths, areas for growth, and blind spots.

The various **dimensions of youth allyship** are illustrated in the diagram shown here and are further defined on page 2.



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As illustrated in the diagram on the previous page, rights-based allyship is not a fixed state but an evolving practice shaped by broader social, political, cultural, economic, legal, historical, and institutional contexts. Within this complex system, **five key dimensions define rights-based allyship**. These dimensions function as active and interconnected elements, reinforcing that allyship requires continuous engagement, adaptation, and accountability to truly support young people’s rights.



Take a moment to familiarize yourself with each of the five dimensions.

Dimensions of rights-based allyship	
	<p>Building relationships focusses on creating strong, lasting connections with youth based on trust, safety, and empathy. This requires consistency, open dialogue, non-judgmental support, and fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. Trust reinforces the partnership, creating a safe space for growth and paving the way for advocacy and action.</p>
	<p>Learning and self-reflection involves staying attuned to evolving realities and continuously educating oneself on the socio-political and historical experiences of youth, especially marginalized groups. This requires ongoing self-awareness, humility, and cultural competency, recognizing that allies bring their own biases and limitations. It also entails self-care, ensuring that allyship is sustainable.</p>
	<p>Sharing power refers to the intentional redistribution of power and influence in decision-making processes. It involves leveraging power to amplify the voices of marginalized youth and mediate in ways that provide authentic, intersectional support.</p>
	<p>Enabling participation means actively involving marginalized young people in shaping efforts and outcomes, and fostering inclusive environments where their voices are genuinely respected. It supports meaningful participation by honoring youth agency, encouraging engagement while respecting their needs and desires, nurturing motivation, and empowering each person’s capacity to contribute.</p>
	<p>Collaborating across networks emphasizes the importance of collaboration between individuals and collectives to reach shared goals. It involves forming partnerships, building solidarity, and creating spaces where allies can support one another, recognizing that allies often need their own networks to better serve young people.</p>

SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY: INSTRUCTIONS



INTENDED AUDIENCE Adult allies who support youth in professional, mentoring, or other roles.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW The reflection activity on pages 4–5 is designed to help adult allies reflect on their actions across five dimensions of rights-based allyship. It aims to deepen their self-awareness, set clear goals to strengthen their practices with youth, and foster meaningful progress in their allyship journey.



STEPS TO FOLLOW

1. Select your focus: Identify a specific human rights issue or situation relevant to your context, such as supporting the right to youth participation on your organization’s board or increasing the involvement of vulnerable youth in weekly programs. Write it in the space titled “*My Human Rights Focus*” (page 4).

2. Complete the self-assessment exercise: Review the actions listed for each dimension and assess your level of engagement with each one (pages 4-5). Indicate whether you never or rarely take these actions, do so sometimes, or do so regularly or often. Always consider these actions in relation to the specific human rights issue or situation you identified at the start.

3. Set goals: Choose the dimensions of rights-based allyship you want to focus on and define personal goals accordingly. Record your goals in the spaces titled “*Commitments*.”

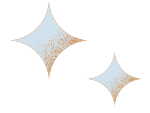
4. Reflect on the activity as a whole: The reflection activity is intended to provide a visual snapshot of your overall strengths and areas for development as an ally to youth. Notice whether your level of engagement is consistent across all dimensions. Consider if there are areas where further involvement is needed or where you are already thriving. Deepen your reflection by adding additional actions, as the activity offers only a limited number of examples.

5. Track your allyship journey over time: The Rights-Based Allyship with Youth Self-Reflection Activity helps you identify your current position. Reassess yourself after a set period (e.g., six months or a year). By regularly repeating this exercise, you can track your allyship journey and measure your progress (or setbacks) over time.

What are my strengths as an ally, and where do I need to grow?



RIGHTS-BASED ALLYSHIP WITH YOUTH: SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY



Start by identifying a specific human rights issue or situation to focus on. Then complete the reflection exercise with this focus in mind.

My human rights focus:



My human rights focus:

Building relationships: Actions I take as an ally	Never - Rarely - Sometimes Regularly - Always
I foster mutual trust by providing a steady and dependable presence, without imposing myself on youth or pressuring them in any way.	
I seek to develop empathy for young people's diverse experiences and challenges.	
I am committed to spending meaningful time engaging with youth.	
I aim to provide a sense of safety for youth to better connect with each other.	
I talk to young people with the same respect and attention that I afford to adults.	
My commitments	

Learning and self-reflection: Actions I take as an ally	Never - Rarely - Sometimes Regularly - Always
I strive to continuously build knowledge about youth-related issues.	
I acknowledge and address my own biases and privileges.	
I am willing to be challenged by and learn from youth.	
I consider my self-care in an effort to provide lasting support.	
My commitments	

Sharing power: Actions I take as an ally	Never - Rarely - Sometimes Regularly - Always
I support youth influencing decision-making.	
I use my position to amplify youth concerns.	
I advocate for youth rights to decision-makers.	
I mediate power dynamics between decision-makers and youth.	
My commitments	

Enabling participation: Actions I take as an ally	Never - Rarely - Sometimes Regularly - Always
I create opportunities that empower youth to engage meaningfully in ways that meet their needs and best interests.	
I transform spaces to be safe, inclusive, and supportive for youth.	
I do not make assumptions about what young people need or deserve. I remain attentive to their need for autonomy or guidance and recognize which is required.	
I actively involve youth in the ideation and ownership of initiatives.	
I help motivate youth to engage in spaces aligned with their interests and desires.	
My commitments	

Collaborating across networks: Actions I take as an ally	Never - Rarely - Sometimes Regularly - Always
I seek to build connections with individuals, community organizations and youth groups that extend beyond my networks.	
I participate in community initiatives to help build solidarity around different issues.	
I partner with other community actors to better inform my work with youth.	
I see myself as part of a collective effort to protect and promote youth rights.	
My commitments	