

Bystanders and healers 25 min



ACTION PLANNING FOR FORB

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

PLENARY EXERCISE

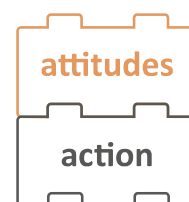
About the exercise

TARGET AUDIENCE

Best suited to grassroots-level groups/faith communities, civil society organisations, human rights defenders and faith leaders.

PURPOSE

- To help participants move from problem identification towards action planning.
- To help participants recognise that each of us has, at some point, acted both as a ‘bystander’ – keeping quiet when we see injustices and a ‘healer’ – standing up for our own or somebody else’s rights, in however small a way.
- To help participants identify the deliberate choices and steps they can take towards becoming more active ‘healers’ in relation to rights violations.



DESCRIPTION

In this exercise, participants reflect individually on times they have intervened to stop injustices (however small) and times they have done nothing, discussing in plenary the factors that make us more likely to act. This exercise works well as a follow-up to ‘[A FORB map of our town](#)’ on page 144.

Instructions

RESOURCES

- One A4 sheet of paper per participant.
- Enough ordinary pens or pencils for every participant to have one or two.
- Flipchart/whiteboard and marker pens.

This exercise is available in multiple languages in the facilitators guide to the Local Changemakers Course, Session 6. www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-languages.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 2 MIN

Give each person a blank A4 paper and ask them to fold it in half and write the word ‘Bystander’ at the top of one half and the word ‘Healer’ at the top of the other half.

Explain the following:

- We are going to do an exercise that helps us think about our experiences of making change.
- A bystander is someone who keeps quiet and does nothing when they see an injustice happening – for example bullying or discrimination.
- A healer is someone who speaks up or does something to support the person or people affected by the injustice.
- Emphasise that we have all played both these roles at different times.

HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 20 MIN

- **WRITE OR DRAW** (5 MIN)

Ask each participant to write or draw an example of a time when they played these roles on their sheet of paper. This could be an everyday situation, for example a time when they called for help when they saw a classmate being bullied, or when they spoke up when a family member or colleague was mistreated. Or a time when they were a bystander and didn't call for help or speak up in such a situation for whatever reason.

- **PLENARY DISCUSSION** (15 MIN)

Begin by emphasising that everyone plays both roles at one time or another, then ask two or three volunteers for an example of a time when they were a bystander or healer. Don't discuss the specific incidents as that is not the point of the exercise. Simply affirm people's experiences.

Then ask the group the following questions:

- What feelings came up during this exercise?
- Why did you sometimes take action and sometimes not? What made the difference?
- What would help you to move from being a bystander to a person who stands up for your own rights and the rights of others?

Write their answers on a flipchart sheet/whiteboard.

Try to draw out the following points from people's answers to the final question, or to prompt people to give these answers, using questions related to these points:

- We are more inclined to act when we have a relationship or feel empathy with the victim.
- We tend to be more confident in taking action when we are not alone, especially as part of an organised group.
- We tend to be more confident if we have knowledge about the topic and the 'system' – what the rules are and who to complain to or ask for help.
- We tend to be more confident if we are prepared – if we have thought through the situation and planned how we want to act in advance or if we have done it before. Role-play can be a great way to practice!

HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE 3 MIN

Conclude the discussion by highlighting the following:

- We can take conscious decisions to become healers instead of bystanders, for example by building relationships with people who are affected by rights violations, getting organised in groups, seeking out the information we need and planning how we want to act together.
- We won't always be able to act – it won't always be safe or constructive to do so! But we'll be more likely to act and more effective if we build relationships, work together etc.
- In our action planning process, we are going to think about HOW to go from being bystanders to healers in relation to some of the violations of freedom of religion or belief we have discussed.
- If you have conducted a problem identification exercise (for example 'A FORB map of our town') then refer to the problems identified – for example looking at flipchart sheets listing problems. Ask people to silently think about which of the problems identified they would like to be a healer for. (Allow a moment for people to think, but don't invite responses.)

Source

Adapted from [The Human Rights Education Handbook](#) : Effective Practices for Learning, Action, and Change, p90. Human Rights Resource Center, University of Minnesota