



# PARTNERSHIPS &

# COMMUNITY MAPPING

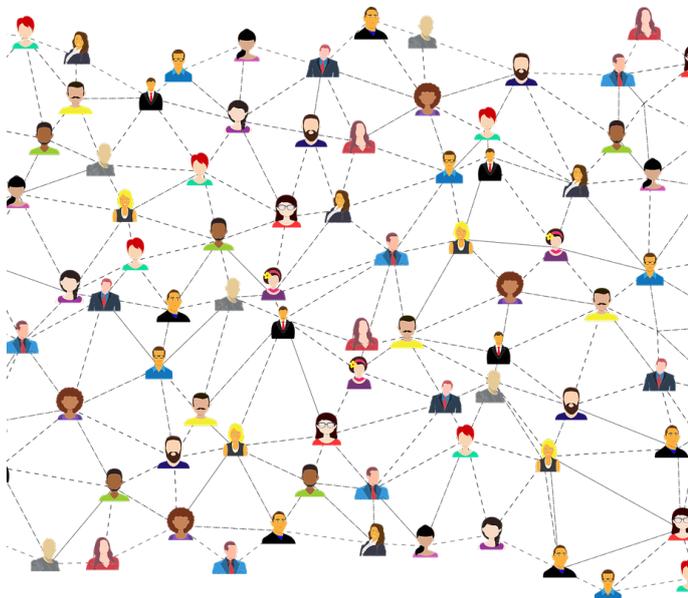
Level 3: Advanced activist skills

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## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Why is it important to partner with people outside of our movement?
3. The fundamentals of a strong partnership
4. Amnesty International's partnership approach
5. How to identify potential allies
6. How to create a community map
7. How to build partnerships in the community
8. What's next?

Get ready to grow your networks!

## BEFORE WE BEGIN

If you haven't completed our modules on [fundamental activist skills](#), we recommend reading these first. In particular our module on Public narratives & Relational meetings.

If you have any questions please get in touch with us at [communityorganising@amnesty.org.au](mailto:communityorganising@amnesty.org.au).



Activists showing support for community sponsorship. © Amnesty International

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our module on Partnerships & Community Mapping. In this module we're going to look at how to build and maintain relationships in your community. Also how you can make sure that your partnerships are strategic collaborations. How you can work with people outside our movement to amplify the impact of our campaigns. We recommend you check out our guide to [Public Narratives & Relational Meetings](#) before you begin.

## Why is it important to partner with people outside of our movement?

Forming collaborative relationships with other people is central to our community organising theory. To bring about human rights change we need to unite a community behind a solution to an issue. This is how we put pressure on decision makers and anyone else who opposes the solution we're calling for. These decision makers need to hear from a wide range of people in the community. If they're only hearing from Amnesty people then it may not be enough to achieve that change we need.

So we need to encourage other community leaders and organisations to get involved. Actually, we need to get them more than involved. We need to have active strategic partnerships with them. We need our visions for change in the community to align. We want them to take initiative and start an active campaign of pressure too. In time a strong network of people and groups committed to the solution will emerge.

But, having a diverse partnership network is important for other reasons. Certain groups and individuals have more influence over decision makers. This will be different in every community. It's based on the decision maker's background, personality and values. It could be the local church, school, sports club, particular businesses and more. So working out who those influences are has some immediate benefits. If we can encourage them to use that influence with the decision maker we could see some progress on the issue.

But, it's not always about getting people to work on our campaigns. We also have the opportunity to use our power and privilege to amplify the voices of others. This means building relationships with activists and advocates from marginalised communities. We should work out how we can support their work and follow their lead when needed. It's important that we are present when there are calls for allyship and solidarity. Also if there is crossover in our work we need to make sure we consult before we proceed. See our guide on [How to be a genuine ally](#) for more.

The more people working with us, the more capacity and resources we have to campaign. It takes some of the pressure off of us to be running a continuous stream of activism. We can share the load with others, coordinating events and tactics at different times. Then we can unite at peak moments when the pressure is most needed. We can learn a lot from each other and provide different strengths and skills. Working with others exposes our work to new audiences. So it's also a great way to build our movement at the same time. It increases our visibility in the community which in the end means more human rights impact.

Finally, it's all about showing that we actually want to work with others because together we are stronger. Otherwise it will be a very lonely fight for us to achieve our wins and we may not have the power to do it alone. We have to build trust, we have to show willingness to collaborate. At times we have to step back and follow the lead of others. While it is important for us to live up to our movement's values, that should not be a reason to isolate ourselves from the rest of the community. It is on us all to balance our credibility, our strength and value with being relevant, visible and a good ally.



*No movement is an island.*

## The fundamentals of a strong partnership

Like any relationship we have to invest time and hard work to make sure it's strong. It's not something where we can put minimal effort into and hope it works out. It will be obvious to either side when the relationship isn't genuine and mutual. So we've put together some recommendations that we should consider for every partnership.

### Strong partnerships are...

<b>WELL DEFINED</b>	It should be clear early on to both sides why you are building this partnership. What is the purpose of it? What do you both want from it? Where do your missions align? What can you offer each other? What can't you do together? Make sure both sides know the answers to these to avoid any confusion later. There should be no mistaken expectations from each other.
<b>SENSITIVE TO EACH OTHER'S NEEDS</b>	If there are things one side isn't comfortable in doing then we need to respect that. Vice versa we should try to push ourselves to meet their needs if we can. But if it is beyond our own means or level of comfort then we should make that clear.
<b>BASED ON TRUST AND RESPECT</b>	We have to prepare for the fact that it may take time for the relationship to be productive. It may only happen when both sides have established trust and respect with each other. This means taking the time to learn what that entails. Then putting in the effort to make it happen. We can't rush it and if it means that the partnership won't be there in time for the campaign, that is okay. If it is worth investing in then make the time for it.
<b>EQUAL IN STANDING</b>	If one side feels subordinate to the other they may not see a reason to keep the relationship going. Make sure to make decisions together through consultation. It may mean finding compromises, but if you can proceed with both the work and the relationship then it is worth it. Also, if the group we're working with faces regular disempowerment then we shouldn't contribute to that.
<b>BENEFICIAL TO BOTH GROUPS</b>	Both sides need to be getting something out of it. If one side has constant requests of the other without asking how they can help in return, that's not mutual. What resources and capacity can you provide each other? How can you make sure you are there for each other when needed? What can you learn from each other? We shouldn't take, take, take their time, resources and energy all the time. We should at least provide an equal amount in return.
<b>ONGOING</b>	Partnerships do not end when a campaign is over. If you've taken the time to build a relationship then that is something that you need to maintain. It might mean less communication than during the campaign period, but you should check in from time to time. Continue to show interest and support their work. Think of other ways to collaborate. But, if you abandon the relationship and need it again later you may have to start from scratch. Or worse, they may not want to work with you again.

All relationships are two sided, so it's also important the other side does these things too. It's not only on you to make the relationship work. So it is worth working these criteria into the conversation at different times. If it's a more casual or ad-hoc relationship then you might bring up bits and pieces of it over time. A formal partnership should have a detailed conversation covering this from the start. Leave no room for confusion or misunderstanding. Strong communication is key for lasting relationships.



**Activity:** Think about some of your current or past activist relationships, do / did they fit all of these criteria? Can / could you have improved them? We're not suggesting you use this as an opportunity to try and fix them all as that could be stressful. It's a thought exercise so you can start getting into the habit of developing strong relationships.

## Amnesty International's partnership approach

In the first section of this guide we referred to Amnesty needing to always live up to its values. This is where we'll expand on that statement. There are particular instances where certain relationships can be tricky for us. Amnesty has many views on human rights issues and we are active in campaigning for those. But, at our core we have an impartiality and independence that we need to maintain.

The worldwide movement of Amnesty International is a non-denominational and non-partisan movement. We are independent of all governments, political parties and religious institutions. Maintaining this independence and impartiality is essential for our continued authority. Which is why we can't be perceived to support any single power structure over another.

In essence we only want to focus on the issues at hand and how to solve them. Everyone has human rights and we want every person on the planet to feel like they can be part of our movement. If it seems like we preference one structure over another then that impartiality begins to slip. It can result in certain decision makers not engaging with us or writing off our campaigns. They may see us as aligned with their competition and not take us seriously. More important than that we lose trust with parts of the public. Some people will feel an opposition to us if they perceive that we are aligned to one particular structure or another.

We can demand governments change laws, but not their method of governance. Which means we can't say one form of government is better than another. We can tell political parties to alter their policies, but can't promote parties who align with us. Which means not preferencing one party even if they have a strong human rights platform. We can fight for an end to systemic injustice, but not the overarching structure. Which means we fight to change the culture that causes oppression, but we do it within the existing system. Our central mission is to defend human rights. We change laws, we stand with the oppressed, we challenge injustice. But, Amnesty leaves political matters to the will of the people.

Since human rights and politics are so intertwined some can find it confusing for us to try and separate them. There are definitely pros and cons to this approach. Different people will see this as either a strength or a flaw, both have valid arguments. Political allegiance is an integral part of our identities as individuals. We each may feel more comfortable aligning with organisations that fit with that identity.

Amnesty's identity is based on human rights and that is something a lot more people are comfortable to unite behind. We bring together people who may not agree in a political way, but do agree that we need to protect our rights. That is a powerful thing to bring so many people together behind a single cause.



*NSW activists preparing for Mardi Gras 2018.*

The other fact of the matter is that this is the approach our global movement has chosen to do for decades. There have been repeated decisions that this is the best chance we have to affect the kind of change we want. People in power can claim we have bias, but many in the public know our reputation proves otherwise. We need everyone in our movement to live up to these ideals while representing Amnesty in the public eye. So, let's have a look at how you might approach some common relationships activists tend to develop.

**Working with people more affected by structural oppression and human rights abuses**  
(e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQI+ peoples, refugees etc.)

We do not campaign on behalf of anyone, we campaign in solidarity with them. People do not need saviours, they need allies who will stand and fight with them. This is of particular importance when campaigning on domestic issues in Australia. In these instances we do not have any excuses not to work with people affected by these issues. Never proceed without at least consulting with these communities. Your activism may have unintentional consequences for them. Even if unintentional, you might further their oppression and damage future relationships. We want to avoid this at all cost. So, make sure to build your relationships and consult before you do anything else. Find out what they want to do and what they are comfortable with us doing.

If they are working on a similar campaign, then offer to support them. Support may include helping out at events and providing logistical or financial support. It might also include not turning up with Amnesty branding, petitions or other things. If they're not currently doing this work then talk to them about our campaign. Find out whether they'd like to work with you on it. They may choose not to, but also give you their blessing to proceed. Listen to any advice they have and honour their requests. Make sure that any actions you do are amplifying their voices over your own. Prioritise these relationships over all others. We cannot have negative relationships with these communities. We could hardly say we are standing in solidarity with them at that point. Our campaigning would be hollow and not genuine. Read our guide on [how to be a genuine ally](#) for more information.



QLD activists at Harmony Day 2018

**Working with similar organisations or movements whose primary focus is on social justice**  
(e.g. *Get Up, ASRC, Oxfam, Extinction Rebellion etc.*)

In general this should be fine. Most organisations such as these line up well with both our work and values. We all tend to have similar goals. We also know that we're going to encounter each other at various times. It's a reality of our work that we will work with each other every once in a while. For this reason we don't have to maintain relationships the same way we would with other groups. So it is worth finding out how many of these organisations have a local presence in your area. Get in touch and let them know who you are. Also find out whether Amnesty has any pre-existing relationships here. They'll be the people most likely to work with you without much effort. Keep in mind they have their own campaigns they're working on and look for moments where our work aligns. They are also working to build their movements, so in some ways there can be a little bit of competitiveness. The only time when we need to be cautious is if they are using tactics that we may not be able to be part of. For example non-violent direct action or anything that could involve breaking the law. Check with staff first and we'll work out how we could get involved.

**Working with community groups, religious groups, businesses or other local organisations**  
(e.g. *Churches, sporting organisations, corporations etc.*)

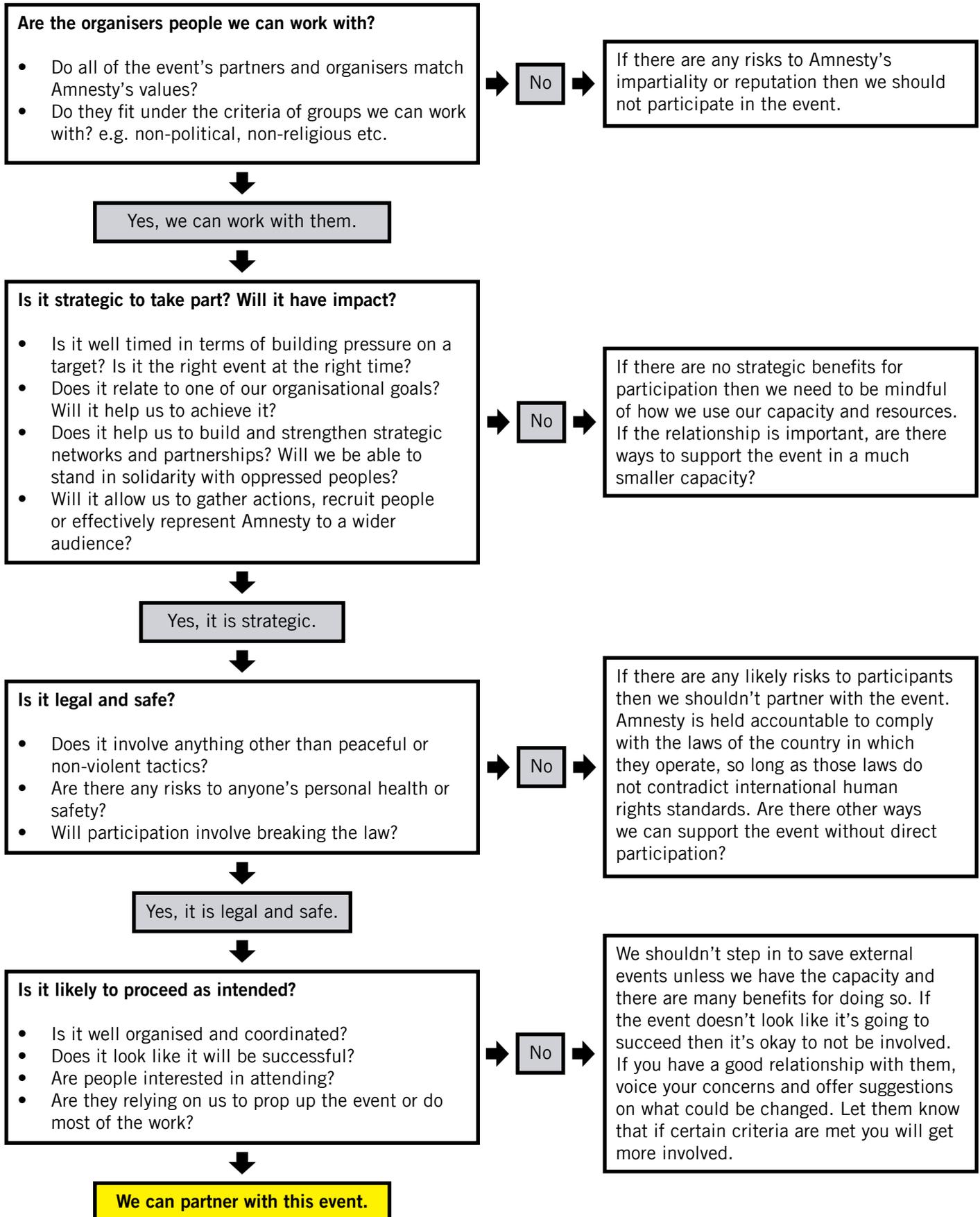
These tend to be groups whose main focus isn't around social justice or human rights. But on occasion they support some of the same issues as us. We need to be cautious about engaging or partnering with these groups. They don't have to align 100% to our values for us to partner with them. But, there are particular values they may have that are irreconcilable for us. They may support one issue we work on, but also be an opponent on another issue. We would risk alienating a community affected by that active opposition. It could damage our relationship with that community. So make sure to do some research on these organisations before doing any work with them. If you find that they align well with our values and will not damage our reputation, then proceed. But, if there are some major risks involved then be cautious. You could use it as an opportunity to try to get them to change their views on these opposing views. You also have the option to support their work, while not representing Amnesty. That way you can make sure the work is successful, but Amnesty's reputation is intact.

**Working with political groups or groups trying to change political systems**  
(e.g. *ALP, LNP, Greens, Socialist Alliance etc.*)

In general avoid these partnerships, particularly where political affiliation is very obvious. We cannot partner with political parties whatsoever. But, most people have political affiliations, so it can be hard to avoid. If they are well known for that affiliation it becomes tricky. If you're going to work with them, have people of other political persuasions involved too. It is useful to have a variety of views in the room as it increases your potential audience. Be cautious with groups with official affiliations to political parties. These may not be obvious right away. They may be an issue focused group formed by that party. We should say the same for groups advocating for change to governmental structure. We won't say not to work with these groups, but be very careful. Make sure they don't use the partnership to promote their political beliefs and keep it to the issue. We campaign against policies, not politicians. So as long as joint actions fit this structure it should be okay. If it's starting to look like our non-partisanship is at risk then back away.

## Can Amnesty partner on this event?

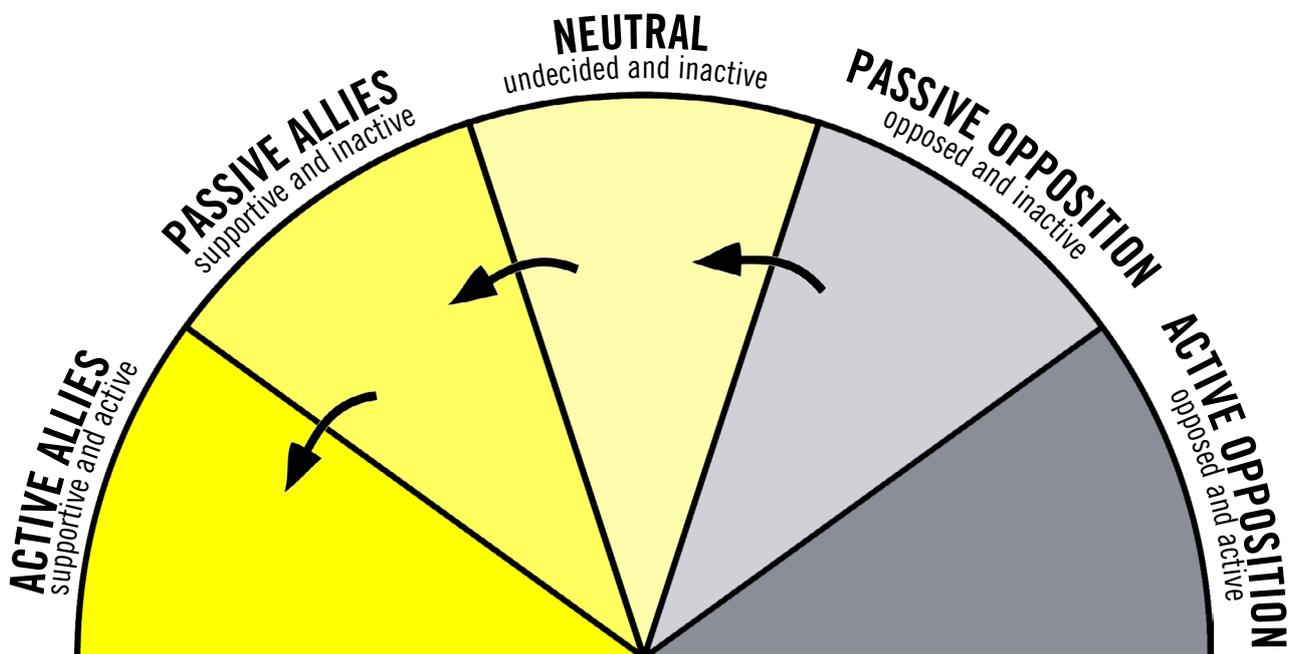
Have you been approached for Amnesty to partner on an event or provide support? Use this flowchart to determine whether it's possible or wise to do so. If you're still not sure, get in touch with us at [communityorganising@amnesty.org.au](mailto:communityorganising@amnesty.org.au).



## How to identify potential allies

Now we know a bit more about who we shouldn't work with, let's focus on who we can. On any campaign issue, there are people who will support our position and those that do not. Also all the people in the middle who vary from time to time. The "spectrum of allies" is a framework to help us to understand this. Through it we can find the relative position of other people's attitudes to our campaigns.

At one end of the spectrum are people who show strong support for our campaign position. They should be easiest to convince to take action if we can inspire them to do so. At the other end are the people that show strong opposition. They are very unlikely to support the solutions we are calling for. Arguing the issue may cause them to become more entrenched in their views. If pushed they may campaign against us. Then we have everyone in the middle of this spectrum both passive and undecided. If they are passive and leaning to one side that's likely where they'll end up on the issue. But, it does mean they are more open to discussion than people who have strong opinions.



The good news is that we don't need to win over our strongest opponents to our point of view to win a campaign. In fact, we don't have to engage with them at all if we prefer. But, we do need to know what their arguments are so we can make sure ours are more convincing.

What we need to do first is identify who our allies are. When we have our allies together we then try to move people along the spectrum towards our position. We want to increase how many active allies we have while shifting the rest towards us.

We can use this framework in many ways. We can use it for the general public, all politicians and other influential people. We can also use it as part of the mapping process in our community. To work out which people we should be approaching to form partnerships. This is where community mapping comes in, so let's go onto that.



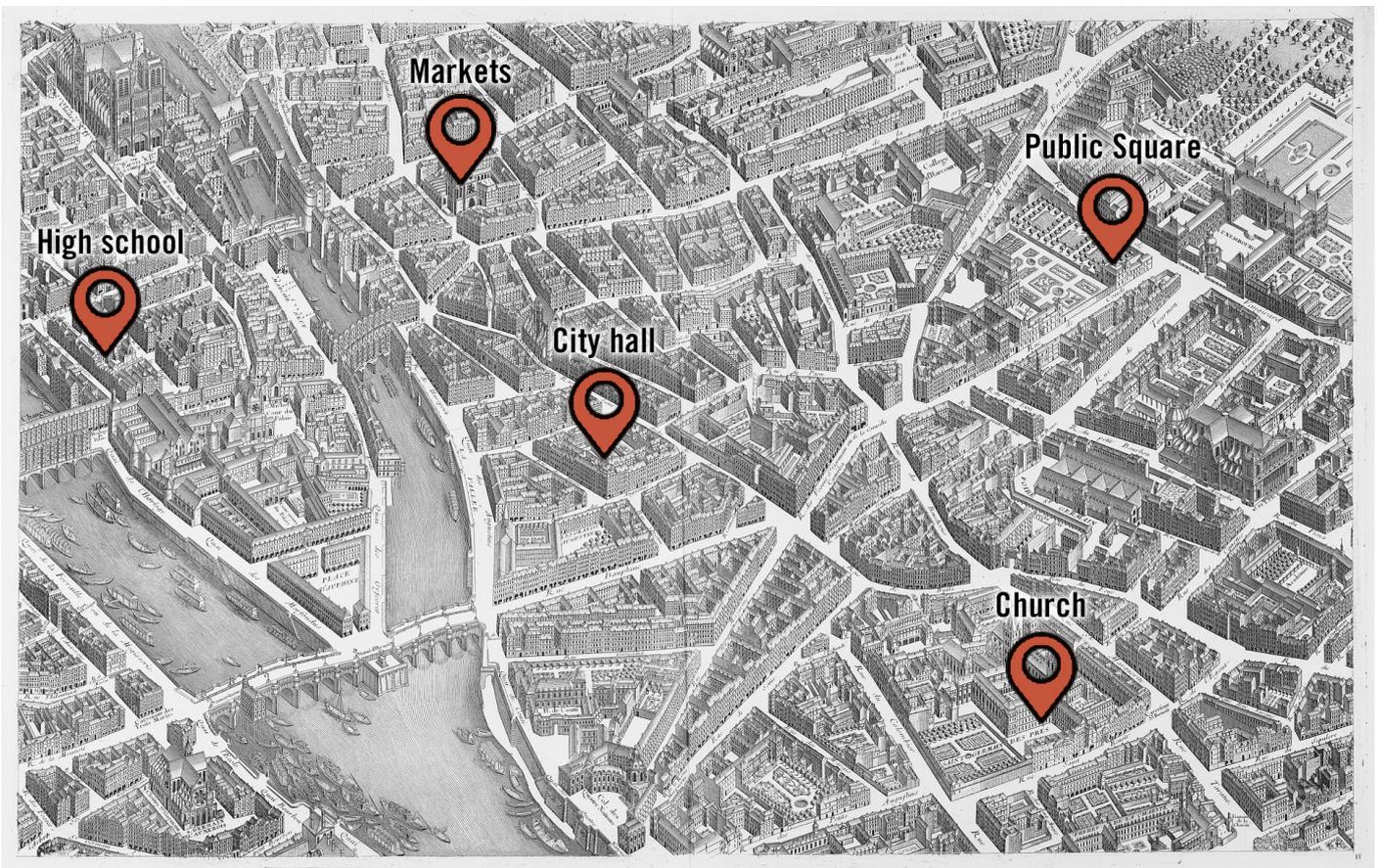
**Activity:** Try using this spectrum with people you know. It could be friends, family, coworkers etc. Where do you think they would sit on here in relation to our work? Or if you'd prefer to use strangers, why not a bunch of well known people? Where would they sit in their support of human rights?

## How to create a community map

There are different ways to interpret the word 'community'. In community organising terms our main usage would be for people who live in the same area. But, communities also form around characteristics, interests, beliefs and attitudes. Community is what we share in common, what brings us together. Every community is different as well, so we have to shape our plans and strategies to fit. It's not as simple as turning up with a generic all-purpose campaign and then hoping people join in. We first need to develop a clearer picture of what will work best for our particular community.

That's where community mapping comes in, it's a vital part of our organising strategy. It's where we do some research to better understand the people around us. We need to know who our potential allies are and who might collaborate with us. But also the opposition we may face in our work. We gain valuable insight on the political landscape and where our influence needs to go. It also helps us to find out what our collective capacity and resources are when we all get together. But, what might be most important of all, what is going to inspire people. What will get them to turn up and be a part of change.

Showing that you've put the time and energy into learning this information goes a long way. What it shows the community is that you have respect for them and a genuine willingness to work together. So where do we begin? We've put together a template with questions you need to ask before building relationships. Don't worry if you don't know all the answers right away. Answer what you can and then get out there to find the rest in more detail.



*How well do you know your community?*

# COMMUNITY MAP TEMPLATE

Use this template to learn more about your community and the people you want to build relationships with. The more you know, the easier this work will be. We've included some questions here to get you started. But, there may be other information you'll need to find out depending on your specific community. We would recommend you start putting together a document to store all of this information. If you have any questions get in touch with us at [communityorganising@amnesty.org.au](mailto:communityorganising@amnesty.org.au).

- 1** What are the specifics of your community? It is important to define exactly what community you want to engage with. Where does the community start and end? Is it one suburb, an electorate, a whole town or city? Is it a particular group of people? What are the demographics? Who are your people? Determine this so you know exactly who to focus on.
- 2** How well does the community know Amnesty International? Are you starting from scratch? Have there been negative experiences you may have to overcome? Are there positive expectations you might have to live up to? How much knowledge does the community have of our movement already? This will determine how much time you need to spend educating the community about who we are.
- 3** What's out there in the community right now? What's the infrastructure like? What are the other organisations? What institutions are there? (e.g. schools, government, health, businesses etc.) Where and how do people gather? Are there key community events?
- 4** What issues do the community care about? What local campaigns are happening right now in the community? What will inspire the community to get involved?
- 5** Are there groups or individuals already campaigning on similar issues? What are they currently doing? What have they done in the past? What are the local tensions and attitudes in relation to these issues? What are the risks and rewards of entering this space?
- 6** Are there groups or individuals already campaigning on similar issues? What are they currently doing? What have they done in the past? What are the local tensions and attitudes in relation to these issues? What are the risks and rewards of entering this space?
- 7** Who are the decision makers in the community? That can include local, state and federal politicians. But, also other leaders of smaller sections of the community. e.g. heads of organisations and community groups, business and institution leaders. These are all people who can influence the groups they are part of to take a supportive stance on an issue.
- 8** Who influences these decision makers? What associations do they have with others? Where can extra pressure come from?

If you're unsure where to find all this information here are some places to start:

- Phone directories / google maps / search engine
- Local media / newsletters / notice boards
- Local council site / calendar / lists
- Census data
- Ask people you know

## DEMOGRAPHICS

*(e.g. what do you know about the community? Who are they?)*

## KEY DATES

*(e.g. Local holidays, festivals, human rights related dates etc.)*

## LOCAL ISSUES

*What are the most important local issues? What do locals care about?*

## ORGANISATIONS & GROUPS

*(e.g. Activist groups, rights holders, charities, social groups, youth groups, recreation groups, businesses etc.)*

## DECISION MAKERS & INFLUENCERS

*(e.g. Politicians, community leaders, local journalists, local celebrities, Elders etc.)*

## INSTITUTIONS

*(e.g. Schools, universities, colleges, hospitals, churches, government buildings, shopping centres etc.)*

## PHYSICAL SPACES

*(e.g. Gardens, parks, community halls, public spaces, markets etc.)*

Once you have all this information you can start working out how to use it. Keep in mind though that this map should be something you update from time to time. You can turn it into a bit of a directory with useful contacts and information on your relationships. For now think about what relationships you might already hold with some of these. Are you involved with any of these? Do you know people that are? Once you feel like you have enough info then it's time to take it to the next stage.

## How to build partnerships in the community

There might be temptation now to run to all these contacts and sign them up to a campaign. We'd suggest not doing this unless there is a particular urgency. If you have the time you should establish basic relationships first. Get to know one another more, see where you both stand and go from there. Reminder, for more specifics about relational meetings check out our guide on it.

What you want to find out in these initial meetings are some of the following:

- What do they do? What are they working on?
- Where do they sit on the spectrum of allies?
- What sort of resources and capacity do they have?
- What relationships do they have with others?
- Do they have any influence over decision makers?
- Do they seem interested in working with Amnesty?
- Are there any barriers towards this?
- How could you benefit each other's work?

Of course you're not going to be able to ask many of these questions straight up. You'll have to use other questions to get this information in a subtle way. They'll know that you're not only meeting to say "hey", that you do have a purpose for the meeting.

So you can let them know that you're part of Amnesty and campaigning in this community. You're reaching out because you want to know more about others in the community and what they care about. You're looking for ways to connect your work with that of the community. Let them know about some of the work you have been doing, try and get them interested and excited about it. Let them know you'd like to catch up every once in a while to update each other. That they should let you know when they have activities in case you're able to get involved.

This is a good way to ease into a relationship, low level support for each other's activities. You might share what each other are working on with your various mailing lists. You could offer to attend each other's events. Simple ways to show mutual respect and support. It needs to be simple support otherwise you'll find yourself doing it all the time. Then having no time to do your own work. So prioritise the relationship, build it over time, but only help when you have capacity.

Once you are getting on well you can start to add further asks. Think of it like building social capital with them, but you need to be wise in how you spend it. It's better to save this capital for when you need it the most. If you use too much of it then they may feel they've given too much and have to draw the line somewhere. At the same time if you drop a huge ask on them without warning they may not get involved either. Be prepared to do a favour of equal size in return. You can look for the right opportunity to offer this and be proactive about it. Always prioritise asks that have mutual benefit.

That's pretty much everything we have to say on partnerships. Don't spend all your time on it. Be strategic with who you build stronger relationships with. Make sure you're building something genuine and mutual with them. Follow the criteria from early in this guide on what a strong relationship looks like. You should see quick results in regards to what these relationships have to offer. You'll increase your audience, capacity and resources. You'll build a positive reputation where it counts. So there's nothing left to say except get out there and make some friends.



**Activity:** Role play a relational meeting with someone you know. Pretend that they are involved with another organisation or group. Give them some prompts beforehand about what kind of organisation they are part of. Or try and have a real relational meeting with someone you are confident will be friendly.

## What's next?

That brings us to an end of our module on partnerships & community mapping. We've covered the importance of working with others in the community. How these relationships help us to be more powerful and effective. Also what makes a strong relationship and how to achieve it. We've looked at a few tools and processes you can use to map your community too. We wish you the best as you get out into the community and start getting to know people.

If you have any questions you can get in touch with us at [communityorganising@amnesty.org.au](mailto:communityorganising@amnesty.org.au). Thank you for your time!

A large, weathered stone hand sculpture is shown from the wrist up, reaching out horizontally. The hand is positioned in the lower right foreground, with the fingers slightly curled. The background is a vast, misty valley with steep, rocky cliffs and patches of green vegetation. The overall atmosphere is dramatic and somewhat somber.

**YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT THE FABLED OUTSTRETCHED  
HAND OF RESPECT. DO YOU SHAKE IT? DO YOU  
ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY?**

Visit the Skill Up page for more activist development resources.

[www.amnesty.org.au/skill-up/](http://www.amnesty.org.au/skill-up/)

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