



Eight ways you can be a women's rights advocate today, and every day

Date: Wednesday, 30 May 2018



Women in Brazil march for women's rights. Photo: UN Women/Bruno Spada

Right now women and men around the world are part of an unprecedented movement for women's rights, equality and justice. From global marches to social media campaigns like #MeToo, women are raising their voices in unison, calling out sexual harassment, organizing for unequal pay and women's political representation.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day, 8 March, is "Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives". Join us to celebrate women's rights activists everywhere, embrace your inner activist and empower the women in your life.

The #TimeisNow.

1) Raise your voice



Jaha Dukureh. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Whether you're talking to your friends and family, or engaging with an advocacy organization, the most important way to be an advocate is speaking up. By raising your voice for women's rights and gender equality, you can spread awareness and break down barriers.

Jaha Dukureh, an activist and UN Women's newest Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Africa, is leading the movement to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. Jaha first started speaking out against child marriage when she was barely 10, when she snuck out to the local television station to talk about how girls in her community should not be forced to marry.

FGM is a cultural practice that involves cutting off parts of female genitalia, condemning girls and women to a lifetime of health consequences. In many parts of the world, it's also a prelude to child marriage.

"It wasn't until I was pregnant with my daughter, that I started to speak out against FGM. I didn't want my daughter to ever have to go through what I had. I also knew there were millions of girls out there, just like me and my daughter, and no one was speaking for them. If it wasn't going to me, who else would do that?" Jaha says. "I started to speak out, I started to shout."

[Read the full story ►](#)

2) Support one another



Faten Ashour (left) ended her 13-year abusive marriage with legal help from Ayah al-Wakil. Photo: UN Women/Eunjin Jeong

Every day since 2015, Ayah al-Wakil, a lawyer working at the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) in Gaza Strip, has gone to court to file cases on behalf of survivors of violence.

Ayah participated in a training with the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, supported by a UN Women/UNDP joint programme, to defend women's rights at the Shari'a court, which deals with family matters codified in the Personal Status Law relating to marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. After her training, Ayah chose to remain at the Centre to continue working with survivors of violence.

"If you find yourself in a place that allows you to make a real difference in other women's lives, obstacles will not stop you anymore," says Ayah. "I became determined to improve women's lives in my hometown and started to look for opportunities."

Supporting women and those that empower women, is essential to achieving gender equality. Whether you're like Ayah al-Wakil and working with women to navigate the legal system, or supporting women entrepreneurs in your community, you can make a difference.

Speaking Up | Faten and A...



[Read the full story ▶](#)

3) Share the workload

What is the real value of unpaid work?



Empowering women can start in your own home.

From cooking and cleaning, to fetching water and firewood or taking care of children and the elderly, women carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work than men. As a result, they have less time to engage in paid labour, or work longer hours, combining paid and unpaid labour. Women’s unpaid work subsidizes the cost of care that sustains families, supports economies and often fills in for the lack of social services.

It’s time we recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work performed by women that is foundational to all societies. Men, let’s step it up and redistribute this equally! 🧑🏾 <https://t.co/QbuiuFIQrt> #PromisesToAction #GlobalGoals pic.twitter.com/43kn1iivQv

– UN Women (@UN_Women) [February 19, 2018](#)

Encourage everyone in your life to split all unpaid work 50/50 between men and women so that they can both thrive, rest, work and feel empowered.

4) Get involved



Coumba Diaw. Photo: UN Women/Assane Gueye

Running in a local election, like Coumba Diaw in Senegal, or supporting candidates who understand women's unique needs in your community is a critical way to ensure women's rights.

Despite growing up listening to a rhetoric that restricted women from participating in politics and public life, Coumba knew the importance of women's leadership, and became the only woman Mayor in the Louga region of Senegal.

"They said that a woman couldn't run for elections. They said that a widowed woman couldn't be a Mayor...that a woman did not have the skills to manage a community. I have proved them all wrong," Coumba says.

As mayor, Coumba works to inspire other women, and brings attention to women's issues in the community. She worked to free up women's time through the installation of drinking taps, and set up a weekly market for women vendors.

[Read the full story ►](#)

5) Educate the next generation



Aiturgan Djoldoshbekova and her mother Aigul Alybaeva. Photo: UN Women/Theresia Thylin

Youth activists around the world are stepping it up for gender equality. By empowering young advocates, and educating them about women's rights, we can ensure a better future for all.

In Kyrgyzstan, Aigul Alybaeva is doing her part to advance women's rights and gender equality by supporting her daughter's participation in a school-based programme that works to empower girls, generate inter-generational dialogues and change attitudes about child marriage.

"We try to support her, create an enabling environment at home, so that she gets the time she needs to study, prepare for her assignments," Aigul says of her relationship with her daughter. "Feminism is in her character. She knows her rights and she shares with me what she learns in school."

Aigul's daughter, Aiturgan Djoldoshbekova, has learned about women's legal rights in her country and wants to pursue a career in law. She also knows the importance of sharing her knowledge with others.

"It is important that girls know their rights. I want us all to be feminists and work together to stop violence against women and girls," Aiturgan says. "What I learn in school, about rights, I share with my younger brother. He too should know his rights. I tell him that we have to take an absolute stand against violence."

[Read the full story ►](#)

6) Know your rights



Charo Minas-Rojas. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Charo Mina-Rojas is a Colombian activist who works tirelessly to educate grassroots Afro-descendant communities of Colombia on Law 70 of 1993, which recognizes their cultural, territorial and political rights.

Following the historic peace agreement in 2016, which ended the more than 50-year conflict between the Government of Colombia and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Charo advocates for justice and equality for Colombia's afro-descendent women.

"Afro-descendent women were not at the negotiation table from the beginning, but in the end, we managed to include a specific chapter on the ethnic perspective," Charo says.

"Do I think that the peace agreement will be implemented? Yes, I trust that it will. But it needs to be implemented in a way that acknowledges the diversity of the Colombian people, and of women, and respect their rights. This means, providing access to land and property that they can use in accordance to their own cultural practices and traditions, and consulting the local communities before infrastructure projects are developed."

[Read the full story ►](#)

7) Join the conversation



Ana Vasileva. Photo: UN Women/Mirjana Nedava

In 2017, we saw the power of social media campaigns in changing attitudes and raising awareness. By sharing your stories and amplifying the voices of others who do, you can make a difference.

While the #MeToo movement and #TimesUp made waves in the United States, activists in other countries found the conversation met with some resistance. To keep the conversation going, six women's rights activists in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia came up with their own hashtag and started a national campaign.

Ana Vasileva, a women's rights activist and a member of the feminist collective, Fight Like a Woman, and other activists kicked off a social movement in FYR Macedonia against sexual harassment, under the hashtag #CeraKaжувам (#ISpeakUpNow).

"The campaign showed the magnitude and prevalence of sexual harassment, and also exposed the subtle ways in which this behaviour is normalized and internalized," Ana says. "Our movement too faced criticism. Most notably, some people criticized us for not revealing the names of the offenders. But our goal is not about punishing a few individuals, but to bring real change in people's attitudes and the system so that there is no more social tolerance towards this violence."

[Read the full story ►](#)

You can join the conversation about International Women's Day using the hashtags #TimesNow and #IWD2018.

8) Give to the cause

Every woman and girl deserves the opportunity to live a life free from violence and discrimination. Your donation can help UN Women break the cycle of violence, assist survivors, and drive economic inclusion and equal rights for women and girls everywhere.

Donate now at donate.unwomen.org/en

For more stories, interactive experience and infographics, visit [UN Women's In Focus page](#).

Related News

27/05/2021

Press Release: Celebrities and world leaders from government, business and academia convene at UN Women's global HeForShe Summit to release pioneering solutions for gender equality

01/03/2021

Claiming women's space in leadership

15/07/2020

Inspirational Black women you should know

23/06/2020

Take five: "This year's Pride is marked by a critical need to not just stand but act in solidarity in seeking racial justice and equality"

06/04/2020

Step it up G7: An extraordinary time requires extraordinary solidarity

[More news ►](#)