

# 16+ milestones for gender equality

An interactive timeline mapping the pioneers, the campaigns and the activists who have shaped the global struggle for gender justice. What contribution will you make on the 16 Days of Activism?



**1851**

Sorjourner Truth, an African-American abolitionist and women's rights campaigner gives a famous speech, "Ain't I a woman?" which explained in plain language that women are equal to men.



**1893**

Kate Sheppard, along with fellow campaigners presented a "monster" petition with nearly 32,000 signatures to the New Zealand parliament demanding women's suffrage. New Zealand becomes the first country to grant women national voting rights.



**1911**

Raicho Hirasuka, a pioneering Japanese editor, writer and political activists co-founds Japan's first all-women Literary journal Seito to challenge women's traditional roles at home. The inaugural issue emboldens women to "reveal the genius within us".

One million people across Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland march at International Women's Day rallies for women's suffrage and labour rights.

In Russia, women led demonstrations break out demanding "bread and peace".



**1920**

Breaking with tradition, the Egyptian Society of Physicians issues a proclamation outlining the negative health effects of female genital mutilation, receiving support from the ministry of health, press and religious scholars.



**1929**

Frustrated with colonialism and patriarchal rule, Igbo women send palm leaves to fellow sisters across Southeastern Nigeria calling for a protest. Together they descend in thousands to "sit on" and "war on" undemocratically appointed chiefs by publicly shaming them, using creative methods (such as singing and dancing), and civil disobedience (including banging on walls and tearing down roofs).



**1946**

At the Inaugural session of the United Nations General Assembly, Eleanor Roosevelt an American political activist and human rights pioneer, reads an "open letter to the women of the world", urging the increased involvement of women in national and international affairs.



**1947**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) hosts its first meeting in New York. The CSW is established at the United Nations as a global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The CSW monitors the status of women and shapes global standards on gender equality.



**1951 -**

Doria Shafik catalyzes women's rights in Egypt when she, alongside 1,500 women storms the Egyptian parliament demanding full political rights, equal pay and reforms to personal status laws. These and other efforts paved the way for a women's right to vote in Egypt in 1956.

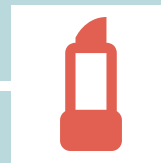
Through the advocacy of Margaret Sanger, the research of Gregory Pincus, and the financial support of Katherine McCormick, a birth control pill for women is developed and tested in the 50's in the United States.



**1960**

Rigoberta Menchu was the first indigenous person to win a Nobel peace prize. Rigoberta has campaigned for social justice, ethno-cultural reconciliation and indigenous rights during the Guatemala Civil War. She later cofounded the Nobel Women's Initiative to magnify the voices of women on peace, justice and equality.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka becomes the first elected female head of state.



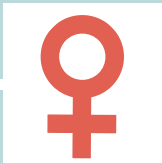
**1970**

Feminist protesters interrupt the Miss World competition with flour and smoke bombs claiming the context is a cattle market.



**1973**

Billie Jean King, pioneering tennis champion threatened to boycott the US Open in 1973 unless women were given equal prize money. A demand that was met. The US Open was the first major tournament with pay equality for athletes.



**1975**

During the United Nations, International Women's Year, the UN starts to commemorate International Women's Day. The First UN World Conference on Women takes place in Mexico.



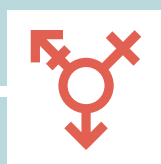
**1976**

The first "Reclaim the Night" marches are held in Brussels and Rome to protest violence and sexual-assault against women. Many of the protests are held in red light districts and are led by sex-workers.



**1979**

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also referred to as the Women's Bill of Rights is adopted by the UN General Assembly. CEDAW is the first comprehensive international instrument to protect the human rights of women, and includes legal obligations for countries to end discrimination.



**1990**

On the 13th of October 1990, the first lesbian and gay Pride march is held on the African continent in Johannesburg, South Africa. 800 people attended the march. The purpose of the event was not only to demonstrate pride in gay or lesbian identity but also to provide a wider platform for voicing political concerns.



**1992**

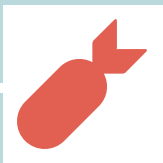
Unity Dow of Botswana, wins a historic case in 1992 enabling women married to non-citizens to confer nationality to their children. Later, Unity became Botswana's first woman high court judge, gaining critical acclaim by allowing Botswana's indigenous San people to return to their ancestral homeland.



**1994 - 1995**

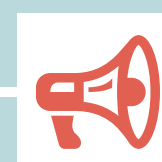
Radhika Coomaraswamy is appointed the first UN special rapporteur on violence against women.

Over 30,000 activists arrive in Beijing to engage the fourth UN Conference on Women. The conference leads to the Beijing declaration and platform for action, a progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights.



**2000**

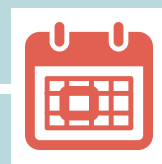
The UN Security Council passes a historic resolution (1325) recognizing the different impacts of war on women, and calling for women to take a key role in preventing, managing and resolving conflict.



**2003 - 2004**

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol, is adopted by the Assembly of the African Union. The Maputo Protocol guarantees comprehensive rights to women, including the right to partake in political process, to social and political equality, improves autonomy in reproductive health decisions, and an end to female genital mutilation. In 2006, and 2016, plans of action were developed to achieve the goals of the protocol.

At the third AU Assembly held in 2004, African heads of state adopted a Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. The declaration is an important African instrument for promoting gender equality and Women's empowerment as it strengthens the African ownership of the gender equality agenda.



**2010**

The AU launched the African Women's Decade on the International Day of the Rural Women. The decade adopted the theme, "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" with the aim to advance gender equality through the acceleration of the implementation of global and regional decisions and commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN Women is born! The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is created to accelerate the empowerment of women and girls globally.



**2011**

Expressing grave concerns about the human rights violations suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, the UN Human Rights Council adopts the first UN resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity. #FreeAndEqual



**2012 - 2013**

In 2012, the UN General Assembly passes a landmark resolution to ban female genital mutilation affecting over 130 million women and girls worldwide.

In 2013, Malala Yousafzai speaks at the UN on her 16th birthday. She delivers a powerful speech on the right to education, and the rights of girls.



**2014**

#HeForShe campaign is launched by UN Women Goodwill ambassador Emma Watson, calling on men and boys to become allies for gender equality.

As part of the #OrangeIsNotHood campaign, landmarks like the Empire State Building, and Egyptian Pyramids and Sphinx, are lit up in orange to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism. The UNITE campaign galvanizes people online and offline to use the colour orange as a symbol of hope for a future free of violence against women.

The African Commission for Human and People's Rights adopted resolution 275 which calls for the protection from violence and other human rights violations against person based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.



**2016 - 2017 - 2018**

In 2016, former child brides, Lovness Mudzuru and Ruvimbo Tsopodzi took the Zimbabwean government to court in a groundbreaking case to outlaw child-marriage. They made history when the Zimbabwean Constitutional Court ruled in their favour stating nobody may enter a marriage, including customary unions, before 18.

In 2017, one million people marched in the Women's March in Washington, with scores more in 20 countries across the globe in support of women's rights, health issues, equality, diversity and inclusion

In 2018, Saudi Arabia issued its first licence to women drivers, ending a decade long ban on women driving. In 2018, Pakistan passes a landmark law recognizing third gender and transgender people. The law promises to protect the right of individuals to express their gender as they wish and to respect their gender identity. In 2018, the AU develops an updated gender policy to strengthen access to rights, justice and peace of women and girls on the African continent.