Your Voice Matters

A Handbook for Women's Rights Activists and Advocates

Published
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Rights of Equality

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A Handbook For Women's Rights and Gender Equality Advocates and Activists

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Purpose and Context

Background:

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Yet, women worldwide face oppression and discrimination because of deeply embedded patriarchal norms and culture. Over the past few decades, feminist movements have acquired momentum and visibility worldwide because of young people's collective activism. The international community finally became aware of the importance of achieving gender equality. Despite the overall progress of gender parity, many governments still openly support policies, laws, and customs that discriminate and oppress women, which indicates that the pace of reform is too slow for achieving true gender parity in the near future.

As a gender equality advocacy platform, Rights of Equality's mission is to educate, engage, and empower people about harmful socio-cultural and systemic issues that discriminate and oppress women and girls for generations. We strongly believe that society must wake up to realize that women's rights are at their core human rights and moral, legal, economic, and social obligation. And, we need to have honest conversations about how gender identity shapes one's life and circumstances. We believe in applying simple techniques like storytelling, discussions, and sharing information to mobilize young and aspiring change makers to navigate the uncomfortable but essential conversations.

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Dismantling social and cultural gender-based norms and discrimination needs a lot of effort, awareness, education, and active participation at every level of society. Strategic activism could be a potent tool for bringing fundamental changes if used and planned in an informed and organized fashion. The goal of activism is to get people to think and make changes. While we acknowledge the power of activism and advocacy, the young people at different corners of the world, especially those from marginalized and underserved backgrounds, lack access and direction about effective activism mechanisms. This realization motivated us to develop a handbook with guidance and resources for women's rights activists and advocates.

About This Handbook

This handbook intends to support the new and aspiring women's rights advocates and activists in planning their journey, equipping them to break the initial barriers to come forward as feminists or gender equality activists and amplify their voice in their communities. This is designed as a starting place for finding guidance, information, and resources for gender equality activism with the core belief that we all have something to offer in the fight against injustice and inequality. We want you to believe that change can start with you. If you are ready to become a women's rights advocate or activist, you do not necessarily have to spend a tremendous amount of money or a big group who are ready to put endless hours fighting for justice. You can take small steps that will go a long way.

Advocacy is about influencing the thinking and behavior of other people and to persuade them to act differently than they would have otherwise. Your advocacy work can be targeted to policy changes, or advocating for community members to change mindset and behaviors.

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Regardless of the type of change you are planning to bring, an essential thing in the fight for women's rights is to know that there is no quick fix for this fight; this is not a sprint but a marathon. The more you learn, ask questions, join conversations and connect with people who inspire you, the more you get the power and courage to bring changes.

With this handbook, we also aim to help our readers identify that change-making doesn't necessarily involve big, expensive, and complex processes. Anyone and everybody can be the potential change agent by using the resources they have right in front of them. We want to equip everyone with the wisdom to challenge the status quo that oppresses women and has been ongoing for generations without being questioned. It is also important to know that we all can achieve our goal in many different ways, and no particular channel of activism is better than another. We hope the guidance and resources you will find in this book will help you find your own activism path.

Swagata Sen
Founder, Rights of equality
May 25, 2021

> **You just have to find your activism, and don't let anyone tell you what that should look like. If you're doing the work, and you're getting someone to think, you're on the right path**
>
> *— Angie Thomas*

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Acknowledgement

Right from the inception of **Rights of Equality**, I wanted to publish a handbook of advocacy for women's rights and feminists activists. But, it would not have been possible without one of our core team members, **Ekaterina Zemskova** coming forward enthusiastically to put together her ideas and research skills in outlining the framework of creating this handbook. I am eternally grateful to Ekaterina, for her initiative, commitment, leadership, in co-creating this handbook with me. Thanks to people like Ekaterina the world is a better place. Despite living in an unimaginably difficult personal, political, and professional environment, she never ceases to stop thinking about others and making a difference in society. Right from the first stage of planning this handbook, her positive energy, enthusiasm, and commitment kept this book project on track. Ekaterina did not only put our ideas together but has also provided unconditional support and showed a lot of patience throughout this process.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to all the volunteers and contributors of Rights of Equality. You didn't only allow me to lead an outstanding team of inspiring individuals but also have given me the hope and reasons to believe in human goodness. Your passion, hard work, and sincerity made it possible for us to reach out to the global community and create an impact. Finally, I am incredibly thankful to all our supporters who believed in our work, trusted on our mission and vision.

Swagata Sen

Founder, Rights of equality

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Before You Begin

Learn, Observe and Reflect

Before you start your advocacy journey, it is worthwhile to turn to what is happening specifically in your community and at the national and global level in the context of gender equality. Most often, women's rights exist in the legislation, but are they used in practice? What influences their implementation? It is essential to apply a gender lens to understand how gender inequality influences the economic, healthcare, education, legal, political and domestic aspects of your community, country, and the world.

It will be very useful if you read and learn about intersectional issues - what does being a woman mean for people of different races, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Start from your personal experience and your surroundings and gradually broaden your perspective about how your personal experience connects with women's discrimination and oppression in different parts of the world.

The existence of correct legal mechanisms is not the only factor that affects gender equality in any society. Rigid patriarchal rules and norms govern all the societies. Societal gender norms and gender roles are often huge predictors of women's place in society. Discriminatory and oppressive outlook and treatment of women are in the DNA of our social fabric. It's essential to have a clear perspective to analyze the impact of gender norms and power imbalance between men and women in society, government, and families.

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It is wise to try to gain some perspective about the possible barriers women or women's rights advocates and activism in your community might face if they try to promote the concept of gender equality or eradicate harmful gender norms. This will give you an idea about what you are getting into, what kind of resistance and obstacles you might face and how to prepare yourself for that.

"No one should be forced to remain silent for fear of religious or political persecution, arrest, abuse, or torture. Tragically, women are most often the ones whose human rights are violated. Even today, in the late 20th century, the rape of women continues to be used as an instrument of armed conflict. Women and children make up a large majority of the world's refugees. And when women are excluded from the political process, they become even more vulnerable to abuse."

— - Hillary Clinton at the 1995 Bejing Conference

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Questions For Self Reflections

- What are the social roles and expectations from women and men?
- Who possesses authority and power?
- Who is expected to be in control?
- How are women traditionally viewed in your community?
- What are the restrictions imposed on women's personal and professional life?
- Do women have equal access to opportunities?
- Are they allowed to take important decisions?
- Are their harmful traditions applicable only for women?

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Get Familiar With The Major Issues

Structural Barriers related to gender and gender-based discrimination exist in every country. Gender roles and expectations are influenced by the socio-cultural institutions of a community and a nation. Gender inequalities compounded by many intersecting inequalities expose women to vulnerabilities, exclusion, and disadvantages on different levels and various spheres of public and private life. We have included some of the primary areas where systemic gender discrimination is prevalent in all the countries. The list is not all-inclusive but consists few significant issues which impact women's lives and well being. However, several other micro and macro-level discriminations and biases that women face every day, everywhere in the world, are not included here. But, you can always learn and research a topic that intrigues you, bothers you or you feel compelled to do something to change it. It is wise to try to gain some perspective about the possible barriers women or women's rights advocates and activism in your community might face if they try to promote the concept of gender equality or eradicate harmful gender norms. This will give you an idea about what you are getting into, what kind of resistance and obstacles you might face and how to prepare yourself for that.

> **"Women comprise more than half the world's population, 70 percent of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write. We are the primary caretakers for most of the world's children and elderly. Yet much of the work we do is not valued—not by economists, not by historians, not by popular culture, not by government leaders."**
>
> *— Hillary Clinton at the 1995 Bejing Conference*

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Violence and harassment against women

Gender-based violence is one of the most common forms of violence in many countries. Global estimates published by WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

Women face violence in many forms, including but not limited to sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, sexual violence in conflict zones, genital mutilation, domestic violence, emotional and psychological abuses, economic abuses, and violence.

The causes of violence against women are deeply rooted in patriarchal institutions that treat women as inferiors and powerless. Because of gender inequality in all areas of life, including economic, political, religious, and family, a false perception is that men should have more social power than women, and men have a right to control women, often forcefully and violently. Gender-based violence is a grave human rights violation that causes long-term harm to the victims, their families, and society.

While it is the responsibility of all governments to protect women and girls from all forms of violence and harassment by implementing correct policies, laws and bringing social changes, the reality is very different. Many countries don't have the proper legal mechanisms to address violence, harassment, and oppression against women.

Legal systems in many countries don't criminalize or penalize domestic violence or sexual harassment perpetrators. A vast majority of the cases are not reported worldwide for reasons ranging from social stigma, shame, victim blaming to fear of retaliation.

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Overall, it has been challenging to tackle this issue; women and girls worldwide are paying a hefty price for that. There is a vast scope of policy advocacy, grassroots campaigns, education, and building awareness for change of behavior, mindset, and culture. While many organizations support and rehabilitate the survivors or advocate for better policies, others focus on working with the community, especially with young boys and men. There is a lot of work left to be done in ending violence against women by changing the culture and social norms that contribute to it.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Women's sexual and reproductive health is related to multiple human rights, including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination. Every woman should be free to decide whether or when to have children and whether to get married. Every woman should have access and choice to quality reproductive health care and make these decisions free from fear and oppression.

Early marriage and pregnancy, sexual violence, femicides, denial of safe abortion, performing procedures like forced sterilization, forced virginity examinations, and forced abortion without consent violate women's rights to sexual and reproductive health. Violations of women's sexual and reproductive health rights are linked to the patriarchal concepts of women's roles as child-bearer. Globally, 40% of childbearing age women live in countries where abortion remains highly restricted or inaccessible in practice even when allowed by law. Some 225 million do not have access to modern contraception.

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Right to a Better World, a documentary video series exploring how human rights-based tactics to achieve sexual and reproductive health rights. This video series is produced in partnership by the Oxford Human Rights Hub (OxHRH), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Health Organization (WHO), and HRP (the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction). *for more information. It's*

Economic participation and Gender Pay Gap

Economic empowerment is the key factor to realizing the rights and equality of a community or group. Unfortunately, women in most societies face barriers to achieving economic empowerment and freedom because of discrimination within the social institution and legal frameworks. Lack of access and opportunities to receive higher education and skills, discriminatory laws preventing women from working in many sectors, combined with the patriarchal societal burden of domestic and care work contribute to their low participation in the workforce.

Globally, over 2.7 billion women are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men. As of 2018, 104 economies had laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, 59 economies have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace, and in 18 economies, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working.

Women's economic empowerment is directly related to women's ability to have more control over their lives and choices, to accumulate wealth and land, invest in education and growth of the children, better social protection and decision making power, better representation in politics and public service.

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The main systemic constraints identified by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment in 2016 are **adverse social norms; discriminatory laws and gaps in legal protection; the failure to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid household work and care; and gender gaps in access to financial, digital and property assets**. These constraints interact with persistent gender biases in policy, investment and business practices to impact women's economic empowerment.

There are plenty of scopes for organizations, groups, and individuals working with marginalized communities, including rural women, domestic workers, migrants, and low-skilled women, to provide education and skill-building opportunities and advocate for gender-focused laws and policies which would bridge the gender gap in the economy.

For more information, read Women, Business and Law by the World Bank Group.

Burden of Unpaid Care

Unpaid care is a universal issue. Regardless of the education and income levels, women around the world typically spend disproportionately more time on domestic and care work than men. In countries where social institutions discriminate highly against women, women's role in society is restricted to reproductive and domestic functions, limiting women's opportunity and access to flourish and live an empowered life. Women spend a significant amount of their lives working for the family's wellbeing and health, which is not formally recognized as 'work'.

While the value of unpaid work is indispensable for societies' wellbeing and health, women are often penalized for doing this type of work.

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To compensate for the burden of domestic work, women either opt-out of participating in the workforce, or work in part-time, temporary, informal sectors, and less demanding jobs. Unequal distribution of care and domestic work within families translate into disproportionate opportunities and access to paid jobs, gender employment and wage gaps, women's economic empowerment, and women's participation in leadership roles in economic, political, and social sectors.

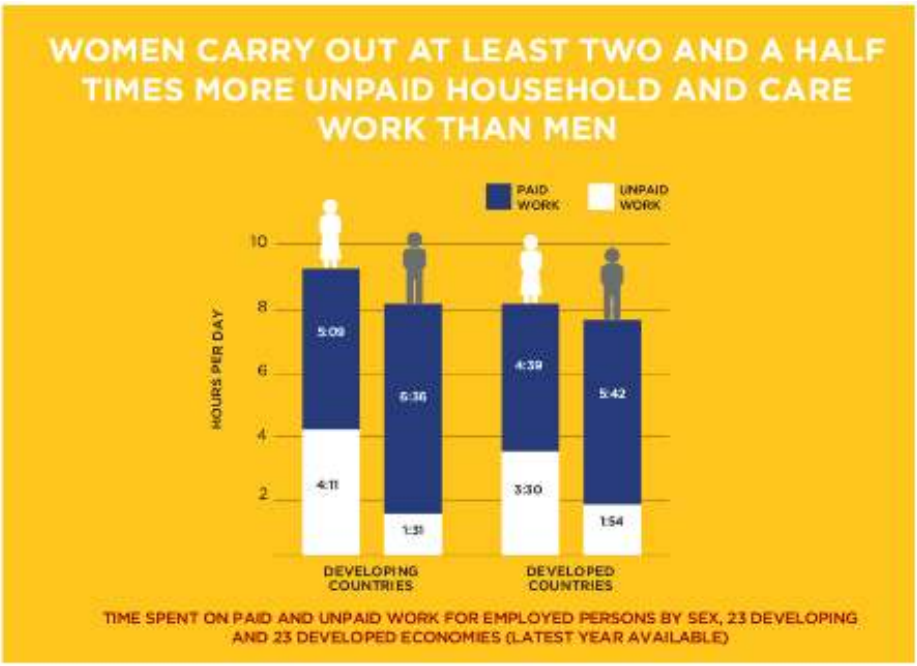

Image courtesy: UN Women

To address this systemic injustice, Instead of putting the burden of most of the unpaid work on women, governments and families should re-define the care responsibilities so that men, women, and States play equal roles in it.

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This can be achieved by recognizing unpaid care work at the national policy level, improving public care services for children and elderly, implementing family-friendly working policies and conditions, promoting change in attitudes towards unpaid care work, educating the communities de-feminizing domestic and care work. A lot of policy and grass-root level advocacy work is required to bring those changes.

For more information, read **Unpaid care work : The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labor outcomes** by OECD Development Center and **watch this video** by UN Women.

Representation in Politics and Leadership

Women continue to be underrepresented in political leadership positions all over the world. In 2020, only 20 out of 193 nations were led by women. Globally only 7.2 percent of Heads of State and 5.7 percent of Heads of Government are women, and only 18.3 percent of government ministers are women.

Structural barriers like discriminatory laws, patriarchal societal norms, traditional beliefs, cultural attitudes, and lack of access to education and economic development are responsible for women's under-representation in public offices. Traditionally in all societies, control and decision-making power are in the hands of males.

Women must participate in decision-making, legal reforms, framing policies to create sustainable, democratic, developed, gender-equal societies. Gender imbalance in public offices translates to gender imbalanced policies and laws, impacting the human development index where women's safety and human rights are not protected.

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Women's participation and representation in government is a very crucial factor, Women's participation and representation in leadership and decision making in private and public sectors will help to achieve equitable society and democratic governance.

Objectification and representation by the mainstream media

Media plays a very powerful role in constructing or deconstructing social norms and stereotypes. Media is also a powerful medium of education and shaping people's thoughts and mindset. The lack of representation of powerful women role models in the media combined with gender stereotyping and women's objectification by the mass media is counterproductive to gender equality and empowering women and girls. The portrayal of women and girls as submissive, weak, and hypersexualized reinforces sexual violence and domestic violence. Mass media also promotes unrealistic and perfect beauty standards which leads to the sexual objectification of women. Sexual objectification is defined as the practice of viewing, using, and/or valuing a person as an object (i.e., a thing) whose worth is based primarily on his or her physical and sexual attractiveness (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). According to UNICEF, "The objectification and sexualization of girls in the media is linked to violence against women and girls worldwide." Researches showed the negative effects the media has on girls and young women's mental health, putting tremendous pressure on them to conform to conventional beauty standards. Here are some tips of what you can do to dismantle objectification and mis-representation of women by the media -

- Become aware
- Educate others and build awareness
- Speak up against mis-representation
- Engage in conversation

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Harmful social practices

Communities worldwide have historically been engaged in activities and cultural practices that are harmful to women and girls and often violate their fundamental human rights. Female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, forced marriage, dowry and dowry-related crimes, various taboos or practices to prevent women from controlling their own fertility, taboos around menstruation, nutritional taboos, breast ironing, son preference, and its implications for the status of the girl child, female infanticide and early pregnancy are just to name a few such harmful social practices. These practices are reflections of the status of the human rights of women and female children as a result of the inferior value placed on women and girls by society and endorse economic, political, and social subordination of women.

Despite their harmful nature and their violation of international human rights laws, such practices persist as traditional practices are not questioned in society.

For a long time, Governments and the international community have failed to acknowledge the impacts of the trauma, pain, suffering, and death of millions of girls and women, the counter effect on the overall development of society, and the need to protect the human rights of women and girls by eradicating these practices.

Though many countries have implemented laws and policies to prevent and stop many harmful practices in recent years, the progress has rather been slow. Implementing new laws without enforcing them or educating the communities about the need for new regulations is not adequate. There is still a lot to be done in terms of policy and mindset reforms and creating a framework supporting the changes.

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Discriminatory mindsets and cultures are very difficult to change. There is a huge scope of advocacy in awareness building, educating the elderly population, and taking evidence-based interventions in **Shifting mindsets and behavior,** particularly in communities where girls are most devalued, could be effective in ending the harmful social practices.

> **Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture.**
>
> — *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*

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Evaluate Your State's Women's Rights

Right to bodily integrity and autonomy

This right is linked to countering such things as torture, rape, child marriage, and human trafficking, and emphasizes the importance of personal autonomy, self-ownership, and self-determination of human beings over their own bodies. This may also include female genital mutilation, forced sterilization, and forced abortions. Are there such practices in your society? Are they common? Do the authorities try to fight them? What about society's attitude towards this problem?

Right to be free from all form of violence

Try to evaluate the rates connected to sexual offenses, rapes, and domestic violence in your country. Does the community take any steps to eradicate sexual violence? Is there legislation to prevent and tackle domestic violence and sexual violence? Does the legal justice system criminalize rape, sexual and domestic violence? Are rape victims allowed to make any choices about their rights and their choices about their health and recovery? Does your government have adequate policies and programs to prevent violence against women? Do victims of sexual and domestic violence receive proper protection and legal and medical support from the states? Are marital rapes considered crimes? Try to develop a good understanding of various difficulties and barriers faced by victims in accessing justice.

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Right to vote and right to hold public office

Do women have voting rights, and can women vote freely in your country? Is it publicly encouraged? What would you say about women's access and representation to politics and public offices? What percentage of women hold public offices? These questions will help you assess the extent to which women can exercise their right to vote and hold public office. The equal presence of women and their representation in parliaments is essential to ensure a democratic, gender-balanced state where women's rights are valued.

Right to have equal rights in family law

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution". How is the marriage procedure carried out in your country? Are there arranged marriages? At what age does a girl usually get married? Does she enter it of her own free will? Does she have the opportunity to divorce? Who do children stay with after divorce? By reflecting and researching on these topics you will gain clarity about how women are viewed in the family, whether their rights are protected by the family laws.

Right to work and right to equal pay

Do women in your society have free access to work? Are they allowed to work in any sector or occupation? Are there any lists of prohibited professions for women? How can they combine household chores with their work? Will there be any difficulties in hiring a woman? What is the status of the gender pay gap? Is there any act or law to ensure transparency and fairness of wages and remuneration?

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Right to have reproductive rights

Women's reproductive rights may include the right to legal and safe abortion, right to birth control, freedom from coerced sterilization and contraception, right to access good-quality reproductive healthcare, and the right to education and access to make free and informed reproductive choices.

Can a woman in your country choose whether she wants to have children or not? How safe is it for her to have an abortion? Is access to contraceptives free in your country? Are there any laws that limit the right to abortion? Does the school have sex education classes?

Right to own property

How freely can women acquire property? Does this require permission from any family member? How is the inheritance law? Can women inherit their parent's property? How a man and a woman share property if they get divorced? Does a woman get anything after the divorce proceedings?

Right to education

Find out whether women have access to primary, secondary, and higher education in your country - whether women's higher education is economically accessible, and culturally acceptable, whether they have the opportunity to pursue any profession and whether the decision to get higher education is influenced by family members. Early marriage is a primary deterrent to girls' education in many communities. You may want to find out the rates of early and child marriage in your country.

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These topics we've discussed so far are not an exhaustive list but can lead you to the status of women's fundamental rights in your country. There are many micro and macro-level issues specific to a region, community, or culture where women's and girls' rights are violated or women face institutionalized discrimination, have not been discussed here. But, we hope that with the help of the information we provided so far, and the resources listed in APPENDIX 1, you will be able to connect any specific areas of concern with the broader problems and would know how to address them.

> **Feminism has never been about getting a job for one woman. It's about making life more fair for women everywhere. It's not about a piece of that existing pie; there are too many of us for that. It's about baking a new pie.**
>
> *— Gloria Steinem*

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Time To Take Actions

Starting Your Grassroot Advocacy/Activism

You have conducted a sufficient amount of research, studied basic information about women's rights, correlated this information with the reality in your society and your own life. Now it's time for you to plan, organize and build support for your advocacy.

Mobilizing the community at the grassroots level involves people, time, and commitment. We have seen how some of the recent grassroots activism like #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #IAmMyOwnGuardian transformed into social movements and created huge impacts and even policy changes. Most grassroots movements start with an intense desire to make a difference and defy the status quo. Grassroots campaigns usually start from one person or a group of like-minded people and gradually spread to the local, national, and sometimes international levels. The main idea of the campaign is that all your actions are aimed at one common goal. And the realization that we cannot achieve the goals ourselves, it will often require us to influence the thinking and the behavior of other people. That's what advocacy is all about.There is no single way to create an impact; as an activist and advocate of gender equality, you can choose a combination of different methods and mechanisms to bring the change.

Define Your Goals and Plans

Fighting for social justice starts with you stepping forward with a goal which you believe. As a gender equality advocate or activist, your goal would ideally be an issue or cause related to the status of women which you deeply believe in.

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Highlight the issues or topics that you want to address through your grassroot advocacy. Identify the main reasons why this problem appeared, why it still exists. Brainstorm with people with shared identity, mutual understanding and trust about finding possible solutions of the problems that you want to address.

It is important to contextualize the problem and your approaches to solve them. It requires analysing the root causes of the problem and its impact on the people who face the problem directly. There is no doubt that understanding the political environment of the country where a particular issue exists is also important for the success of an advocacy or a campaign. That is because a certain approach can be appropriate for a certain context but not for another. It is only the people that are part of a specific community can decide which advocacy approach is applicable.

Choose the issues that you are familiar with, can relate to, have lived experience with, or are highly prevalent in your community. Gender Inequalities and injustices are deeply rooted in the patriarchal social structure. You might have to deal with many obstacles and adversity to dismantle that structure. Thus, it’s very important to study your surroundings, your professional and personal network-who they are, how motivated they might be to support you, what kind of resistance you might face from your community members.

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Try to reflect on the following questions -

1. **What are you trying to change? Is it policy, culture, mindset or systems, or a combination of all?**

2. **Who are you trying to influence? Your local community, religious Leaders, political leaders, elected officials or the global community? What needs to be done to influence the key stakeholders?**

3. **How will you solve the problem that you have identified? What are some specific solutions that you are looking For? What Process would you like to follow?**

4. **Who are the people who share your ideologies, purpose and values. How would you build a community of people who might be your allies ? Do you need for support, partnership and collaboration with other organization and individuals?**

Build support for your plan of action.

Social transformation through grassroot advocacy is an ongoing process that requires building capacity over the long haul. It may start with you, but over a period of time you need to create a network of individuals and organizations who would directly or indirectly support you in accomplishing your goals.

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For building support and shifting mindset, it is important to understand Which group of people care enough about the issue and will be motivated to take action? Who might be your potential opponents? How will you influence those who have different ideologies?

Identify a core group of people who would like to work together over time and share the same vision and values. The core group should ideally be involved in all the activities like planning, strategizing and implementation. You would expect commitment and dedication from your core group members. Thus it's very crucial to select your core group members carefully and based on mutual trust and purpose. Don't be disappointed if you find it rather difficult to find such a trusted and committed group of people. Many activists start the journey by themselves and continue to do so until their work gains some popularity and momentum. Thus it's completely alright if you find forming a core group challenging in the beginning.

Asides from forming your core group, you need to also be mindful about finding other individuals or groups that can influence your grassroots advocacy or campaigns. Make contact with such individuals, explain what you are trying to accomplish and why it is important for them to support your campaigns.

This is how you will find other organizations and individuals to partner and collaborate. Always include accurate information, logical consistency, and an emotional appeal in your talking point while approaching influential leaders,and community members. It may start with you, but over a period of time you need to create a network of individuals and organizations who would directly or indirectly support you in accomplishing your goals.

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Which is completely fine. Please remember, building a team, collaboration and partnerships are slow and continuous processes, and should not impact your activities. You should focus on starting your activism or campaigns when you have the basic resources without waiting to onboard best allies and partners.

Identify Tactics and Strategies for your advocacy

Community change has several action strategies such as by organizing an action group, planning a community event, or educating the community about a new way to do things. Developing a plan of action for your campaign or movement will help identify realistic goals and achievable outcomes.

What are your strengths and weaknesses? What resources do we already have and what you can achieve in the near future? Decide about your possible strategies based on all these facts. A simple example is, suppose there is a problem of domestic violence in your community. You can brainstorm different strategies for policy advocacy for the creation of a law to tackle domestic violence. You can also choose to empower women in this community to tackle domestic violence. Or you can organize sessions and workshops to educate and sensitize men and boys in your community to change their behaviour and attitude towards women. You will plan your tactics and organize your resources depending on your strategies. Your tactics may include educational activities like discussion clubs, book sessions, speakers sessions, watching movies and reading books together, disseminating information via social media, starting a volunteer initiative, starting a petition, or writing letters.

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Here are the various activities that you can essentially take up to create an impact by mobilizing your community or influencing the decision-makers.

Organize community events or clubs

First step of any social change is about building and organizing a community. Community building starts with bringing people together to discuss what needs changing, why it needs to change and what it would take to make it happen. These events are a way for people to share information and ideas to learn from one another and view themselves as a group who care about women's rights and gender equality. It starts with reaching out, connecting with people who might have shared ideologies and purpose, and listening to their views and ideas about the issues.

Starting Human rights clubs or organizing community events can be a great idea to develop and disseminate information about women's rights protection and promoting women's rights in your community. You can organize these events in your school, college, local library, or anywhere in your community.

You may need space, but in general, if we are talking about a small group of people, most likely, you will not need ample space, which is not easy to manage. You may want to have speakers or panelists who are experts in specific topics. You can spread the word by preparing flyers, using word of mouth or social networks.

Human Rights book clubs are active around the world, and serve as an important site for grassroots education, discussion and organizing. You can also watch a movie or documentary together which might invoke some critical discussion about a speicific topic related to women's rights.

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List of Films and Documentaries to Inspire Discussions About Women's Rights:

- *SASA! A Film about Violence, Women, and HIV (2007) The Help (2011)*
- *Suffragette (2015)*
- *Audrie & Daisy (2016)*
- *Hidden figures (2016)*
- *Feminists: What Were They Thinking?(2018)*
- *On the basis of sex (2019)*
- *Knock down the House (2019)*
- *Period. End of Sentence (2019)*
- *Misbehavior (2020)*

List of Ted Talks to Inspire Discussions About Women's Rights and Feminism:

- *A survivor's plea to end child marriage by Payzee Mahmod*
- *Born a girl in the wrong place by Khadija Gbla*
- *Everyday sexism by Laura Bates*
- *How I Escaped Child Marriage To Become A Women's Rights Activist by Mercy Akuot*
- *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*
- *We should all be feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*
- *Why we have too few women leaders by Sheryl Sandberg*
- *Women's safety in a violent world by Lina Abirafeh*
- *Why Gender Equality Is Good for Everyone — Men Included by Michael Kimmel*
- *Why I believe the mistreatment of women is the number one human rights abuse by Jimmy Carter*

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List of Books to Inspire Discussions About Women's Rights and Feminism:

- *The Feminine Mystique (1963)*
- *The Handmaid's Tale (1985)*
- *The Vagina Monologues (1996)*
- *Gender at Work: Organizational Change for Equality (1999)*
- *Feminism is for Everybody(2000)*
- *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*
- *Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism (2005)*
- *I am Malala (2013)*
- *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead (2013)*
- *We Should All be Feminists(2014)*
- *Gender Equality and Sustainable Development(2016)*
- *This Is How We Rise (2017)*
- *What Works: Gender Equality by Design(2016)*
- *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions (2017)*
- *The Feminists Handbook(2019)*
- *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men(2019)*

Arrange an online event

The main advantage of an online event is that people from your local community and outside can join to exchange ideas. Here are some important tips to help you prepare your first online event -

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- Define the theme of the event and the format in which it will take place. Will it be a lecture or an interactive conversation? Will, there be invited speakers and, if so, how will you contact them? Will video and audio materials be used?

- Prepare information and outreach materials for the event. Tell people interesting facts, provide statistics in infographics, determine the main color tone for your presentation, and make it easier for people to perceive information.

- You can choose Zoom, Skype or any other virtual meeting platform for an event. All these platforms have free versions as well as paid subscriptions. Do your research to compare various features offered by them. You also want to explore options of live streaming to social media pages.

- Promote the event on social media and through emails. Ask your friends and supporter to share it to maximize the outreach. All outreach and promotional materials should be designed carefully to include the background story about this event - why you are organizing this event, why the particular topic is important. They should also contain all information about the event, for example, the topic, link to the registration, main speakers, etc.

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- If you want to prepare registration forms for your event, it is better to use Google Forms. In the description of the form, don't forget to mention all the details about the event: The event title, main topics that you are going to cover, information about the main speakers, event time with time zone and language of the event. Also, make sure to collect names and emails through the registration form and send a couple of reminders before the event later and understand how many people you should count on.

- If you are planning a big event, with high profile speakers and delegates, it's worthwhile to create a website for your event. If you have monetary restrictions, you can use free website builders like Tilda or Wix, which have many templates and free functionality.

- Check everything in advance, how your computer works, if the speakers need any technical support. It is better to check all technical issues before the event and not during it. Sometimes it's wise and less stressful to live stream a pre-recorded event rather than having a live event. In the case of live online events, you want several people to monitor the chatbox, QnA, and social media pages to identify trolls or hackers trying to disrupt the event.

- Invite participants to fill out a feedback form after an online event to improve your future online events' engagement and quality and make people feel valued and appreciated as the hosts of the event.

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Visit your Elected Officials

While more complicated than sending them a letter, if your country's protocol allows face-to-face meetings with the elected officials to discuss any issues or concerns, it's worth exploring that as an advocacy option. Having a face-to-face conversation with Members of Congress, or their staff, is undoubtedly a very effective and satisfying experience.

Please plan your visit and Make an Appointment well ahead of time. You can choose to visit alone or in a small group. Be clear about what you would like to achieve out of your meeting. Ideally, if you are visiting in a group, you should choose one or two team members who will be speaking primarily. Make sure you do your homework on the issue you are planning to discuss with the legislative representative. Collect important information and data. Prepare a brief speech mentioning your visit's purpose, the major highlights of the issue, and your request or proposal to the legislator. It's a good idea to make a package with printouts, newspaper cutting, graphs and charts, and anything important that you would like to include. Don't include a lot of lengthy texts or papers, which would very likely be ignored.

> **Things will only improve when the people – all of us – say to authorities, 'I will hold you responsible.' We should all be showing up at city council meetings, lighting up every community with activism and mobilization**
>
> *— Erin Brockovich*

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Write articles, stories, letters

Writing is still considered one of the most powerful methods of reaching out to people and voicing your concerns. You can publish your articles, stories, letters or narratives on gender-focused blogs, newspapers, social media or magazines. You can also publish your articles on open platforms like Medium or LinkedIn. If you are writing for advocacy, always remember to highlight different issues, topics around women's rights and gender-based discrimination through your writing. Writing is also an effective tool to educate people and build awareness.

It may sound old school to some, but writing a letter about any social problem can make a huge difference. You can write a letter to a local newspaper (consider its target audience, the letter will be read by the older generation rather than the younger), or to your state or national elected representatives supporting or opposing a bill or for drawing their attention to the problem. State your subject clearly in the email subject line or the first sentence of the letter. It is recommended to stick to only one issue in a letter. Mention **why a particular issue or legislation matters in the community or state. Include a personal story associated with the specific problem, if you have one. Choose a few vital points that will most effectively persuade legislators to support your position and build on that.**

> **"I write for those women who do not speak, for those who do not have a voice because they were so terrified, because we are taught to respect fear more than ourselves. We've been taught that silence would save us, but it won't."**
>
> *— Audre Lorde*

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Start a petition

Petitions are a great way to draw the attention of parliamentarian, political, community, religious and organizational leaders and other decision-makers to an issue while increasing your support base and network at the same time.

You can start a traditional paper-based petition for collecting in-person signatures. This approach has many upsides - to allow the petitioner to interact with people from their community, explain the issue and answer if they have any questions, grow their network and potentially attract more volunteers to the campaigns. The flipside of an in-person signature collection is that you would need to invest plenty of time, people and other resources for a signature campaign to gain momentum. Additionally, there might be many people who do not support your cause and will not respectfully disagree. Thus you might need to appoint volunteers who know the issue you are collecting signatures for and prepared to deal with any potential conflicts or aggressive people on the ground.

On the contrary, online petitions through specialized platforms like change.org, your petition can reach out to a global audience. You can potentially collect more signatures, with lesser resources.

Governments of many countries allow citizens to start e-petitions through their official websites. This is a direct means by which an individual or group can ask the Parliament to take action without involving communicating through a parliamentary representative or a parliamentary committee. Petitioning the Parliament is a long-established fundamental right of the citizen.

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These tips will help to plan and make your petition effective:

- People and organizations around the world start petitions on different issues. Before starting a new petition, you may want to research the petitions that are already active on the same topic, in the same region. In case you find another individual or organization that has started a petition in your jurisdiction on the same issue, you may consider collaborating with their ongoing petition campaigns.

- Please write a clear title, a purpose statement, and a description of why you are making the request. The description should provide clear arguments, background stories and statistics to help people to understand what you are petitioning for and why. Add a concise and specific call to action. Please avoid using offensive language or an aggressive tone while writing a petition.

- Sometimes, a petition is symbolic that aim to promote awareness about certain issues. It doesn't matter the number of signatures it was able to collect. But if a petition aims to change a policy, decision, rule or legislation, the number of signatures collected counts. The more names you have on a petition, the more difficult it is for the authorities to ignore your request. Sharing the petition with friends, families, and other supporters will help build momentum. But, you need to spend ample time, networking and different promotional approaches for a petition to be successful. While social media and different online tools are very effective tools to promote a petition, media coverage and offline events may bring petitions to a new audience.

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Create your own podcast, blogs, or YouTube Channel

Blogs, YouTube, or podcasts are popular advocacy tools through which you can reach out many people globally. Moreover, your contents are going to be available on the internet for a long time after you create them. A blog, podcast or Youtube channel about women's rights, feminism, and gender equality may become widespread and create a lot of impacts. However, before you begin, you may want to consider that creating your own blog, or Youtube channel are serious, long-term commitments that involve perseverance, money, and hard work. Each of these mediums need you to master specific technological and creative skills that are not impossible but need time and patience.

On the upside, there are plenty of free tutorials and resources available on the internet for beginners. It would be best if you focus on one specific platform, invest in learning about it in details, develop various skills needed for it and gradually build on that. It will be excellent if you have a small team of three-four people with different areas of expertise. Some of the essential skills for blogging, creating a YouTube Channel, or podcasts include but not limited to writing, presentation, public speaking, audio-visual recording and editing, multimedia designing, website development, digital and social media marketing. You may also want to do prior research on the financial commitment involved in subscribing different softwares, domains, and equipments.

It's not very realistic to expect your podcast or blog to have hundreds of followers overnight. Even with high quality content, it might take months for a new website or YouTube channel to be indexed by the search engines. During this phase, you might have a strong and persistent presence on different social media platforms and groups for promoting your blog, podcast or YouTube channel.

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Use the power of data and visualization.

Data visualization can be used as a potent advocacy tool. Human brains are known for recognizing and processing information faster and easier when it is presented in the form of patterns and images: a picture is worth a thousand words. You can use data visualization and infographics to communicate your message and story in a more compelling and impactful way to influence decision-makers and community members. Thus complex issues can be depicted in a more simplified and relatable form through infographics and visualization. Graphics and visual presentation are also social media friendly and attract an audience more quickly.

The source of the data used to create the visualization should be carefully verified. Suppose you are advocating for a global issue for publicly available data and information already available. In that case, you can use the data to create your own visualization using any data analytics or visualization software. If the data you are looking for is not easily available, you need to find a reliable source (websites of various government or international organizations) of data.

You can also use the visualizations and infographics published by different nonprofit, international, and government organizations by correctly citing the documents' source.

Here are few additional resources for using data visualization for human rights advocacy:

Data 4 Change - Equips people and organizations with the skills, processes, and creative talent they need to harness the power of their data for positive social change.

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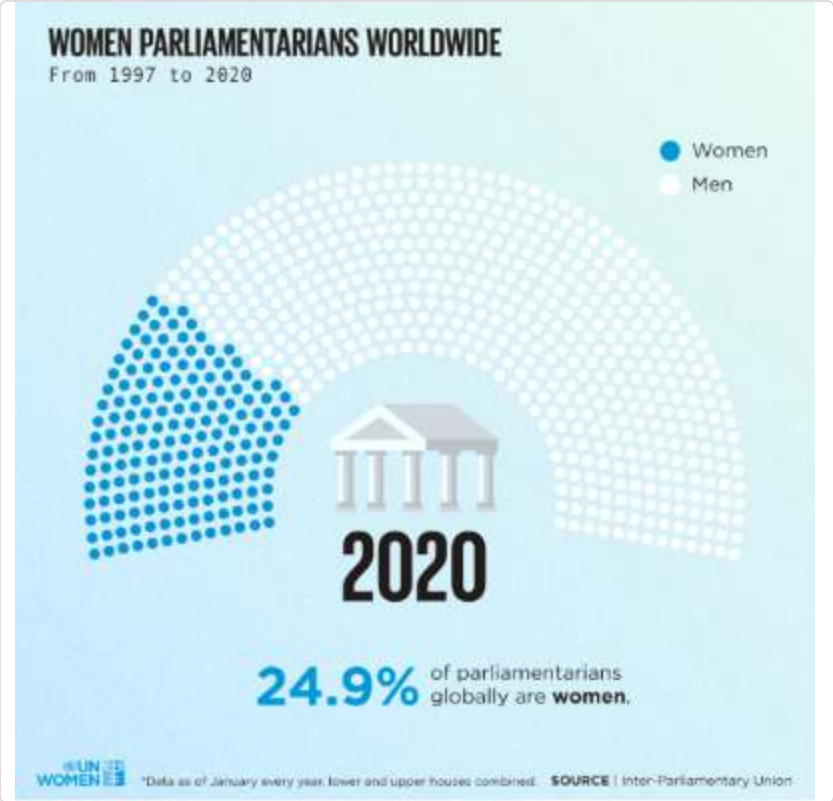

This image from the UN Women website represents the status of women's political participation in 2020 with the help of a simple but easily recognizable data visualization.

The Human Rights-Based Approach to Data - A guidance note issued by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) identifying six principles for a human rights-based approach to data collection to support monitoring of progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Visualizing Data for Human Rights Advocacy: A guidebook and workshop activity- the result of a research collaboration between the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice and Tandon School of Engineering at New York University.

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Use social media for Activism and Campaigns

Social networks are now one of the most powerful aids for disseminating information. You can create an Instagram page to talk about the basic rights of women in publications and options for how to protect them; you can create a page for your club on Facebook to post information about upcoming events, or even shoot videos on YouTube to raise awareness about women's rights among people in your country, in your society, in your city or in your school.

You can also follow and engage with the social media accounts of organizations dedicated to gender equality advocacy and awareness.

'Rights of Equality' has content focused on social media action campaigns on different issues like gender-based violence, child marriage, FGM, body positivity, etc. Our mission is to educate, engage, and empower people about harmful socio-cultural and systemic issues that discriminate and oppress women and girls for generations through social media campaigns.

With that aim, our team develops research-based campaign content and hashtags to reach as many people as possible quickly. If you would like to participate in our social media campaigns or initiate a new campaign using our resources and guidelines, please reach out to us at equalityrightsof@gmail.com to receive access to our exclusive content and materials for social media content. Here is an examples of our social media content used to create different socio-cultural issues which are oppressive to women.

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In many cultures, girls are viewed as inferior to boys and as a burden to the family. Parents do not want to spend money on education or health of girl children and often try to pass the burden to another family by marrying her off – the earlier the better! You can find more information and resources about childmarriage at: https://www.rightsofequality.com/child-marriage-getting-rid-of-the-burden/ . Please stand up against Child marriage. Join us in ending oppression and discrimination against girls and women by participate in #EqualityCampaigns by @RightsofEquality, and be an #EqualityAdvocate.

Design and Distribute flyers

Distributing flyers may seem a little outdated in today's digital age, but it is still valid, especially in communities where many people don't have access to the internet or computers. Sharing information and telling your story with simple details, charts, or images is a short but effective medium of drawing people's attention and influencing their minds. Try to use bright colors (in case you can make them on a computer and print, you can use a program like Canva, they have free access and colorful designs) and abstract information to grab the public's attention.

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You can also draw these flyers (by the way, these flyers can also contain invitations to your human rights club). Try to analyze the text and decide what you would read yourself, which color scheme would attract you the most.

If we are talking about interesting and funny options, you can develop your own memes related to women's rights. For this, you can use the website https://imgflip.com/memetemplates. This will draw attention to the problem, albeit in such a non-standard way. Even though violations of women's rights involve dire and severe questions, it is worth remembering that at this stage, you should involve your community as much as possible in finding or solving a problem.

As we've already covered in our previous section, it's worthwhile to use informatics, graphs, and other forms of visualization to make your message more compelling. Don't hesitate to use pictures, images, tables or graphs in your flyers as it helps convey the message faster and deeper than only text based contents.

Become an Expert in Feminism and Women's studies

Fighting for women's rights, promoting gender education, defending women's human rights can also be part of your career. Ideally, you should have degrees, specialization, certification, or training in any one of these areas - gender education, women's rights, feminism, human rights, International Relations, human rights laws, human rights education, international politics or International Laws, social science, politics, law etc.

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There are hundreds of career options to choose from depending on your interest and background. As a gender or women's rights expert, you would have opportunities to work in various sectors, including government, developmental, education, health, law, social services, arts, journalism, communications and media, marketing, and nonprofit and social justice organizations.

Get a degree or take special courses

Not everyone has access to higher education, but this is not a reason to be disappointed. At the moment, there are a large number of online courses, including free ones, that will help you understand what exactly is required from a human rights defender. But if you still have the opportunity to get a higher education, this will be a great option to immerse yourself in this field. Keep in mind that many universities offer a large number of loans, scholarships, and bursaries; you can also pay attention to master's degrees since there are many more master's degrees that specialize specifically in women's rights. study.com, a career as a human rights advocate requires a master's degree in political science, law, international relations, or social science. Some employers may consider candidates with a bachelor's degree and several years of relevant work experience. But, again, all this is at your discretion, and you should understand what exactly you want to do. Human Rights Careers is a helpful website where you could find various tips, courses, internships, and dive into the topic more.

Get an internship or fellowship

A logical continuation of your education would be to gain professional experience, an internship, or a fellowship.

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A fellowship is a monetary prize awarded to a student based on their academic records and potential to succeed and make an impact in their chosen field. Whereas internships provide an opportunity to explore potential career paths through hands-on experience, fellowships offset tuition costs without any work requirement and augment the fellow's academic studies in their chosen field.

Please note that finding an internship or fellowship can take a long time since many people are interested in this area. Have patience, find priority organizations for yourself, monitor their websites, pay attention to application forms, develop cover letters and resumes tailored to the requirements of each fellowship you apply to.

The disadvantage of internships is that they are mostly unpaid, despite a campaign like Pay the Interns. Doing an unpaid internship for a long time is not financially sustainable unless you have other income sources. You can look for part-time jobs, home-based internships, or part-time internships to combine with the main job. These are just different options to make your internship sustainable while gaining meaningful work experience. In any case, this will be a stepping stone to find a full-time job in the future to devote your life to human rights. Here is a great list of organizations who provide Paid Human Rights Internships published by Human Rights Career.

Become a volunteer

Volunteering is an essential starting point of every future human rights defender's life. Volunteering is an excellent way to connect with several organizations working to advance women's rights and feminism and gain experience, skills, and connections. The knowledge and contacts gained through volunteering could be crucial stepping stones for your career.

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Useful websites and articles for human rights and women's rights career:

- *Careers Human Rights Watch*
- *Careers at Amnesty International*
- *Human Rights Careers i*
- *Idealist*
- *LLM Guide*
- *Reliefweb*
- *UN careers*
- *New item*
- *A career as a Human Rights Lawyer*
- *How do I become an international human rights lawyer?*
- *New item*

Volunteering is also an incredible way to give back to society. Before you decide to volunteer for a cause or a specific organization, make sure you are driven by passion and desire to help others. You can find tons of online volunteering opportunities (use these websites: **idealist.org**, **reliefweb.int**, **volunteermatch.org**) or join an organization in your area that deals with women's rights. For example, you are worried about domestic violence, and you can find a shelter for women who fled violence in their families and try to help such an organization.

Sometimes, you may not find the necessary volunteer opportunities on the website of the organizations you are interested in. If the organization's mission and work resonate with you, it's worth to reach out to them requesting possible opportunities for getting involved.

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Please tailor your letter to your educational background and interests, but the most important thing is to show that you are passionate about the work, that you care for the issue they are trying to address, and that a sense of the importance of what you do is essential than just making money.

Do not forget that you can create your own volunteer initiative around an issue you deeply care about. You can also mobilize other people in your community who are passionate to get involved. For instance, suppose poor menstrual hygiene in your community really bothers you, and you want to promote awareness about it. You can consider starting a door-to-door campaign with your friends to speak to women and girls in your neighborhood and introduce affordable menstrual hygiene products. This is a great way to build your leadership and organization skills as well.

> **"Activism is a very admirable way to create change, but it has to go hand in hand with personal contact with the people with whom we have opposing points of view; without that, there will never be any movement."**
>
> *— DeRay Mckesson*

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Dealing with Roadblocks and Resistance

Women's rights and feminist activists face backlash and resistance, both institutional and personal, from all corners of society as their work is seen as a threat to traditional notions of family and community. Gender equality and women's rights activists fight against issues which are perpetuating for centuries and part of the patriarchal social structures. Their opponents are often very powerful and resourceful. As a result, women's rights defenders face several obstacles and often subjected to stigmatization and ostracism by the government, community leaders, religious leaders, families, and communities who consider them to be threatening religion, honor, or culture through their work. As women, they are also targeted for or exposed to gender-specific threats and gender-specific violence. This is also true for women in politics, academia, policy, journalism, or any traditionally "male-dominated" space when they express or promote unpopular opinions, challenge unequal power structures or dismantle the patriarchal stereotypes.

Women activists with firm political standpoints receive backlashes in the form of online and in-person harassment, hate messages, rape and death threats, and the fear of conviction. Dealing with backlash can have a serious impact on health and wellbeing. Tackling backlashes or harassment could be emotionally and psychologically exhausting for women's rights defenders. Before you start your journey as a gender equality activist, please make sure you have access to -

1. **Personal and institutional support and means to seek legal protection if required.**
2. **Alliances with other feminist and human rights organizations and networks**
3. **Friends, family, and a support system**
4. **Safety, well being, and self-care plans**

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Here is a list of organizations specifically supporting women human rights defenders:

AWID- Raise awareness about human rights abuses and violations against women human rights defenders and the systemic violence and discrimination they experience and work to promote a holistic approach to protect them from violence and threat.

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition is a global network made up of 35 organizations working tirelessly to defend those defending human rights. You will find the list of all 35 organizations supporting women's human rights defenders on their website.

JASS-supports women and their organizations as they defend their human rights by responding to urgent situations that place the safety and livelihood of activists and women human rights defenders at risk and Promote dialogue on self-care as a condition for sustainability of women's struggles for justice and equality; and

Staying Motivated

Many people will try to undermine your work throughout your journey, dismiss your purpose, belittle your contribution. Apart from constant struggle with funding, lack of moral support, fear of retaliation, and backlashes, activism, in general, could be very exhausting and burn you out at times. You might also not see your work's impact, especially in the beginning, and can be disappointed imagining your efforts are not taking you anywhere.

Please stay strong in front of criticism, resistance, or opposition. Try your best not to take these personally and look at the bigger picture, as most of these are part of any social reform experience.

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On the other hand, Your small acts of support and courage could have a ripple effect in the world. Because of you, more people in your community will learn about women's rights, gender discrimination, social injustice, and gender equality. Your work will essentially give voice to millions of women who don't have any. Your courage will help many others to speak up, maybe for the first time in their lifetime.

You might have to deal with a lack of motivation and exhaustion from time to time. Do not push yourself to engage in activities without taking care of yourself when you feel exhausted or demotivated; wait until you accumulate your emotional resource again. The main task is to shine but not to burn. Taking care of your feelings, emotions, and health because of the constant and invisible fight you are fighting to restore social justice is a critical component of your work. Please don't ignore it.

Try to Influence the people around you by sharing your story and every small milestone you reach in your activism or advocacy journey. Introduce yourself in your family, school, workplace, or community as an advocate of gender equality. You may not be able to change everything, but you can certainly influence many people to think outside the box.

> **There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.**
>
> *— Elie Wiesel*

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Resources

Free courses on women's rights:

UN Women Training Center

The UN Women Training Center is designed to educate, empower and equip people with the transformative knowledge, skills, and techniques to advance gender equality, women empowerment, and women's rights. They have a list of courses to choose from, ranging from introductory courses on gender to advanced courses on gender evaluation, monitoring, and gender-focused project management.

International Women's Health and Human Rights

We highly recommend this course because it covers a wide range of issues related to women's rights. For instance, female genital mutilation, HIV/AIDS, sex workers' rights, women's rights in armed conflicts, domestic violence. You can attend this course free of charge for 10 weeks without obtaining a certificate. In case a certificate is important for you, you can request financial assistance to complete the course.

Seeking Women's Rights: Colonial Period to the Civil War

If you want to learn more about the history of women's rights movements, then you should take this course! To get knowledge from this course for free, you have only about 12 weeks, but you will have time to go through this course if you get serious about the issue. You can apply for financial aid provided by edX.

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Gender and Intersectionality

Understanding gender is important in order to fight for women's rights, as this concept is interspersed with all areas of life. This course examines gender in terms of religion, race, sexuality, nationalism, and the idea of equality—a great option for expanding your background and raising your awareness of such a sensitive topic.

Amnesty Human Rights Academy

This link contains all of the courses on Amnesty International's human rights, and they are available in different languages. Excellent techniques for understanding what HRDs do and how they do it, filled with personal stories of people fighting for human rights (for instance, the course about Human Rights Defenders). If you are seriously considering becoming a human rights defender and developing in this area, then this course will give you more understanding.

Gender Analytics: Gender Equity through Inclusive Design (University of Toronto)

This is a 5-course program to help analyze products, services, processes, and policies with a gender lens to uncover hidden opportunities for innovation and improved effectiveness. The course will also teach how gender identity, Indigeneity, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and other intersections shape risks, opportunities, and impacts of an organization's activities, operations, and outcomes.

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'Understanding Gender Equity

The course is offered by Catalyst; a nonprofit organization focused on workplace inclusion and diversity. This course provides a starting point for learning about and supporting gender equity in the workplace, the difference between gender equality and gender equity, why gender equity it matters, and how to recognize and address gender inequities in the workplace.

Raising Voice

Raising Voices, a nonprofit organization in Uganda working towards preventing violence against women and children, has developed many training guides and other tools kits. The materials can be adapted for other countries and cultures, and many GBV programs in humanitarian settings are using Raising Voices' materials with success.

Free courses on advocacy and activism:

Advocacy Course by The Philanthropic University

This is a free online advocacy course to teach advocacy tactics and strategies from two of the leading experts on the subject. Ruth Levine of the Hewlett Foundation and Rakesh Rajani of the Ford Foundation share real-world examples, interviews with extraordinary advocates, and lessons learned from decades of advocacy experience.

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Social Work Practice: Advocating Social Justice and Change

This course teaches the learners to reflect on current challenges facing the lives of individuals, families, and communities and examine ways to advocate for needed changes by using a social justice lens. Learners will also have an opportunity to explore the different roles of social workers in a range of settings. These cross-cutting themes guide social work practice, the history of social work, and current challenges.

Promoting and Protecting Human Rights: a Global Overview (GCHumanRights)

The Global Campus of Human Rights online course focuses on the international framework of human rights promotion and protection and is recommended for all participants. It provides the learners a solid basis to understand, know and stand up for human rights. It has a module dedicated to regional perspectives on the standards, mechanisms, benefits, and challenges in five regions of the world: Africa, the Americas, the Arab World, Asia Pacific, and Europe.

Community Organizing for Social Justice

The course by University of Michigan examines specific strategies for community organizing for social justice in a diverse, democratic society. It examines core concepts of social justice and practical steps for bringing people together to set goals and priorities, assess community assets and needs, develop action plans, and build support for implementation. It includes information on how to form core groups, build organizational capacity, and formulate strategy for reaching out to constituents and allies.

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Human Rights Activism, Advocacy, and Change

This course by **Curtin University** covers a range of social movement theories and concepts and explores specific movements and campaigns to illustrate the diversity of movement philosophies, methods, and outcomes. It teaches about the role of social movements, advocacy groups, and activism in bringing about social change.

Foundations In Human Rights And Advocacy

This online course is offered in partnership with the University of Richmond and UNC Charlotte. This is the perfect course for those looking to improve the quality of life for people across the world and taking up human rights or advocacy as a career. Learners get familiar with the essential terminology, tools, and concepts to better understand how the justice system works. You will learn the key human rights policies, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as you gain insight into some of the most important milestones and historical events of human rights.

Social Norms, Social Change

The course is a joint Penn-UNICEF project, and it includes many examples of norms that sustain behaviors like child marriage, gender violence and sanitation practices. The course teaches how to measure social norms and the expectations that support them, and how to decide whether they cause specific behaviors.

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Take Action: From Protest to Policy

In this course you will learn four strategies for transforming your activist work into policy change. It will teach to use the courts to mobilize constituents, raise awareness, gain information, and change the law. This course also explores how to connect to power through stakeholder analysis and issue framing and the benefits of working locally to generate wins, gain knowledge, and create meaningful change.

Free courses on Fundraising and Grant Writing:

Multiple Fundraising Courses on Philanthropy University

This set of three free online courses on fundraising, Introduction to Fundraising, Fundraising Strategies, Fundraising: Connecting with Donors, are designed to teach different strategies for fundraising, including writing a grant proposal and planning a small-scale fundraising event and creating powerful crowdfunding campaigns. The courses are beneficial for organizations and individuals new to the complex world of fundraising. Learners are eligible to receive a Certificate of Achievement for this course through the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley Haas).

Fundraising and Development Specialization (University of California, Santa Cruz)

This fundraising specialization consists of four courses -Fundraising and Development Foundations, Annual Campaigns, Planned Giving, and Major Gifts. These courses are focused on teaching how to develop a support case, identify and assess prospective donors, crafting an impactful email appeal, and effective proposal writing.

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Writing Effective Grant Proposals

In this course, learners will learn to assemble, write, and submit complete grant proposals to foundations, corporations, and individuals for any projects and effective ways to describe their cause that will stand out to grantors.

List of Women's rights organization and groups:

About Face

'About-Face' arms girls with the knowledge and tools they need to fight back against a culture that diminishes and disempowers them. Their programs for teen girls range from our Education Into Action in-school programs to weekend boot camp, and online resources for teens here on the site. They also support their adult advocates — parents, teachers, mentors, relatives, and group leaders — through adult-centered workshops as well as curriculum development and support.

Amnesty International

Through their detailed research and determined campaigning, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL helps fight abuses of human rights worldwide. They bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and free people jailed just for voicing their opinion.

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CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice and to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms.

Center for Reproductive Rights

The Center for Reproductive Rights uses the power of law to advance reproductive rights as fundamental human rights around the world. They are a global legal advocacy organization dedicated to reproductive rights and access to reproductive healthcare, including birth control, safe abortion, prenatal and obstetric care, and unbiased information with expertise in both U.S. constitutional and international human rights law.

CHANGE

CHANGE works to secure and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all by elevating women's voices, driving the public conversation, and shaping U.S. global health and foreign policy. Through their signature advocacy tool, Reverse Co-dels, advocates, experts, and service providers from the Global South come to D.C. to educate Congress with evidence about the importance of SRHR to achieve gender equality and other development goals.

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Equality Now

EQUALITY NOW works to achieve legal and systemic change that addresses violence and discrimination against women and girls around the world. They believe in creating a just world where women and girls have the same rights as men and boys. They believe in tackling the most difficult issues, challenging ingrained cultural assumptions, and calling out inequality wherever we see it. And they believe in the power of the law to create enduring equality for women and girls everywhere.

FGM Education and Networking Project

The purpose of the FGM Education and Networking Project is the distribution of online and offline material related to female genital mutilation, otherwise known as female circumcision. The Project seeks to form an online clearinghouse and a community for researchers, activists, attorneys, and health care practitioners to obtain information and network with others involved in similar projects.

Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) -

The Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF), which was founded in 1987, is a cutting-edge organization dedicated to women's equality, reproductive health, and non-violence. In all spheres, FMF utilizes **research and action** to empower women economically, socially, and politically.

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Gender at Work

GENDER AT WORK uses capacity development strategies like gender action learning, strategic planning and program development, training, and reflective learning to engage with teams, organizations, and networks. They offer a range of consulting services to organizations to strengthen their contributions to gender equality and advance feminist leadership and offer courses on feminist leadership and transformational change.

Global Funds For Women

GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN is one of the world's leading foundations for gender equality and is known for standing up for women and girls' human rights. They campaign for zero violence, economic and political empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch investigates and reports on abuses happening in all corners of the world. They are roughly 450 people of 70-plus nationalities who are country experts, lawyers, journalists, and others who work to protect the most at risk, from vulnerable minorities and civilians in wartime to refugees and children in need. They direct their advocacy towards governments, armed groups, and businesses, pushing them to change or enforce their laws, policies, and practices. They partner with organizations large and small across the globe to protect embattled activists and to help hold abusers to account and bring justice to victims.

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Institute for Women's Policy Research

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that engages in research and dissemination to shape public policy and improve women's lives and opportunities from diverse backgrounds. IWPR ensures that they remain nonpartisan through rigorous internal and peer review processes. As an organization, IWPR does not engage in activities that constitute lobbying, but it does encourage its experts to share the findings and recommendations that emerge from their research through expert testimony, conversations with the media, public events, and other forums. IWPR employs research methods that are scientifically sound and engages in research and related activities that advance its mission and values.

JASS

JASS is dedicated to strengthening the voice, visibility, and collective organizing power of women to create a just, sustainable world forall. JASS believes that women who are most affected by the political, economic, environmental, and health crises reverberating across the world are on the frontlines of change. As a global women-led human rights network of activists, popular educators, and scholars in 31 countries, they work to ensure women leaders are more confident, better organized, louder and safer as they take on some of the most critical human rights issues of our time.

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Minority Rights Group International

MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL campaigns worldwide with around 150 partners in over 50 countries to ensure that disadvantaged minorities and indigenous peoples can make their voices heard. Through their programs, publications, advocacy, legal cases, training, and education they support minority and indigenous people as they strive to maintain their rights – to the land they live on, the languages they speak, to equal opportunities in education and employment, and full participation in public life. They have over 50 years' experience of working with non-dominant ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities and bring a long-term view of these issues to bear in all the work we do.

NOMORE: Together We Can End Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

The NO MORE Foundation is dedicated to ending domestic violence and sexual assault by increasing awareness, inspiring action and fueling culture change. NO MORE is a groundbreaking, global initiative comprised of the largest coalition of nonprofits, corporations, government agencies, media, schools, and individuals addressing domestic violence and sexual assault. They are committed to engaging, reaching, and working with people from diverse communities. They work to amplify and grow the movement to stop and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault, in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities around the world by creating and supporting innovative campaigns, partnerships, and tools that leverage the power of the media, entertainment, sports, technology, and collective action. NO MORE has grown to become the largest and most successful domestic violence and sexual assault awareness/engagement initiative in history and is now its own 501(c)(3) public charity.

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Plan International:

PLAN INTERNATIONAL strives for a just world that advances children's rights and equality for girls. They engage people and partners to empower children, young people, and communities to make vital changes that tackle the root causes of discrimination against girls, exclusion, and vulnerability. They also drive change in practice and policy at local, national, and global levels through our reach, experience, and knowledge of the realities children face and work with children and communities to prepare for and respond to crises and to overcome adversity.

UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The creation of UN Women in 2010, came as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for gender equality and women empowerment for greater impact.

The main roles of UN Women are:

To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards, and norms and

To help the Member States implement these standards, stand ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it and forge effective partnerships with civil society.

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The Women's Refugee Commission

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) is creating a better world for refugees. WRC catalyzes transformative change to protect and empower women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. They research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice. WRC's vision is a world in which internally displaced and refugee women, children, and youth: are safe, healthy, and self-reliant; have their human rights respected and protected, and inform and drive their solutions and development.

Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace

WOMEN'S LEARNING PARTNERSHIP is a partnership of 20 autonomous women's rights organizations located throughout the Global South that promote women's leadership, civic engagement, and human rights. They are an international, nonprofit, non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

Women Deliver

WOMEN DELIVER a leading global advocate that champions gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women. Their advocacy drives investment—political and financial — in the lives of girls and women. They harness evidence and unite diverse voices to spark a commitment to gender equality.

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Women Without Borders

Women without Borders (WwB), an international nonprofit organization headquartered in Vienna and founded by Dr. Edit Schlaffer in 2001,[1] works to empower women as agents of change. WwB has since its inception been putting research into practice through community-based strategies that combine theory and grassroots-level fieldwork.

Women for Women International

Women for Women International created 'sister-to-sister' connections between isolated women in Bosnia and individual 'sponsor sisters' around the world. A letter exchange provides these Bosnian women with solidarity and emotional support, along with small amounts of financial aid to help them meet their basic needs as they begin to rebuild their lives. To this day, their approach remains inspired by this spirit of sisterhood, and the combination of social and economic investment. They have gone on to support over half a million women across 8 conflict-affected countries to overcome the horrors of war and work towards a better future for themselves and their families.

Young Feminist Wire

This online platform was created in March 2010 by the Young Feminist Activism (YFA) program at the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). The Young Feminist Wire is an online community for and by young feminists working on women's human rights, gender equality, and social justice around the world.

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Writing this handbook has been incredibly fulfilling and a rich learning experience for both of us. We hope that you find this book useful and relevant. We are very pleased to have completed this version and look forward to keep improving and updating the content in the upcoming versions. We would appreciate feedback, suggestions and comments from our readers and supports. If you have ideas and thoughts about improving this handbook, you are welcome to share that with us. Your feedback would help us serve our readers better. If you are a women focused organization and would like to include your website or resources in our list, please let us know it as well.

Swagata and Ekaterina
Co-Authors
Your Voice Matters

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