

# ACTIVISTS

A handy guide  
to making your  
voice heard



#FeministGenerations

**Who is going to make a more feminist world?**

**We are!**

**Let's express our concerns to our governments and societies, tell them what we care about, what we want and the solutions we propose.**

**Let's show the power of feminism together!**

**This guide provides guidance on how to advocate for women's rights and gender equality so that commitments made locally, nationally, and internationally will be funded and implemented by governments, and overseen by citizens.** This guide was written for young people who support gender equality, whether as an individual or as a member of a movement. Young people – and young activists – should be treated like the experts they are and have a seat at the table where decisions are made.

We have important things to say!

You can use this guide on your own, or share it with others in your activist group, your student organization, or even with your grandmother – it's for everyone!

**This guide to activism was created by Equipop in partnership with the West African Young Feminists Network (Réseau des Jeunes Féministes d'Afrique de l'Ouest).**



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# SOME KEY INFO

## Why this guide?

You are part of the Feminist Generation, aren't you? We created this handy guide to give you some tools to participate in a key year for gender equality: 2021. The Generation Equality Forum, a global gathering, will take place in Mexico City, Mexico and in Paris, France in 2021 to celebrate 25 years of international women's rights.

**To begin, we would like to tell you that:**

1. We need your help to change the world! We need your voice, your commitment, and the expertise you have gained from living in a patriarchal society. Your personal experience and actions are essential for promoting gender equality!
2. The global forum that we are going to tell you about is different from those we are used to seeing. With your help, it really will lead to concrete actions!
3. In this guide, you will find all the information and actionable ideas you need to fully participate in a global forum – things you can do to advance women's rights in 2021 – starting right now.

*"This guide to activism is a fun, easy-to-use educational tool that will help you turn your ideas into action. Whether you work alone or as part of a group, it will be your best friend as you promote the Generation Equality Forum."*

Alexia du Benin,  
a member of the West  
African Young Feminists  
Network

*"This guide will allow all young people, whether they live in rural or urban areas, to participate in the Generation Equality Forum. Through the innovative action strategies described in the guide, young people can show their commitment to gender equality in person or online."*

Denise from Guinea,  
a member of the West  
African Young Feminists  
Network

**ARE YOU READY?  
LET'S LOOK INTO THE HISTORY OF  
THE GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM.**



# Happy Birthday! 25 years of women's rights.

Do you know how long women's rights have been recognized? Obviously, it depends on where you were born or grew up. Internationally, women's rights have been recognized for (only) 25 years. The Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing, China, in 1995. At this conference, governments from around the world agreed, after intense debate, that women's rights are human rights. The international community concurred, for instance, that "women have the right to control their own sexuality." That may seem obvious to you, but it's not yet a reality in this world. But we will get there!

More than 8,000 civil society representatives and 189 governments participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women. The governments jointly issued the Beijing Declaration, which obliged them to advance gender equality. They even drew up a Platform for Action, with strategic goals and concrete steps to achieve gender equality. Today, 25 years later, the Beijing Platform for Action still serves as an international benchmark for gender equality. Although it is not legally binding, it has great normative power, sets out the right direction, and remains a strong source of inspiration.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were supposed to be implemented as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, NO country has enacted all the actions and changes needed for gender equality. However, important progress has been made.

For example:

→ **Senegal** recently made a significant advance in countering violence against women and girls. **In 2020, the legislature passed a law to criminalize rape and pedophilia-related activities.** In addition, a toll-free hotline (800-805-805) has been set up so that people can report violence against women and girls.

→ **Guinea** voted in 2014 for a decree that led to creating Gender and Equity departments in all of the country's ministries. In addition, the Guinean government established a strategy to empower women by **enacting a law that allows a married woman to work outside the home without requiring her husband's permission to do so.** Centers for women's empowerment and vocational or professional training have also been set up.

These two examples illustrate notable advancements. Nonetheless, across the world, women's and girl's rights face many challenges that pose obstacles to achieving gender equality.

We must vanquish these obstacles and finish the uncompleted Beijing Platform for Action, and we must do it quickly! That is why we are telling you about the Generation Equality Forum.

# Generation Equality Forum

## 2021, A KEY YEAR FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Generation Equality Forum will celebrate **the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration** (the Forum was postponed from 2020 to 2021 because of the pandemic). As a global gathering to promote gender equality, one that features civil society participation and brings together many stakeholders, the Forum presents a crucial opportunity to mobilize for women's rights. The Generation Equality Forum follows the same rationale as the Beijing Conference on Women, which enabled a decisive advance by adopting the Beijing Platform for Action.

**Twenty-five years ago, the power of activism and feminist solidarity combined with youth leadership achieved transformational change. The same opportunity exists today!** The Generation Equality Forum represents a key moment for all activists – representatives from governments, civil society, the private sector, and trade unions, along with artists, academics, students, and influencers – to encourage a global public conversation about governments' urgent need to take actions and be accountable for gender equality.

The Forum will be an international discussion that includes the public. This new format makes the Forum both interesting and worthwhile. **To make it work, it is vital that we all participate, that we make some noise, have our voices heard, and make the discussion turn into action.**



## HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

A United Nations agency that works on gender-equality issues, UN Women is using the Beijing Declaration anniversary to catalyze actions that promote gender equality. UN Women asked Mexico and France to co-host the Generation Equality Forum.

The Generation Equality Forum will be the culmination of an international campaign begun in 2019 with the hashtag #GenerationEquality. The first international meeting kicks off in Mexico City at the end of March 2021 and continues in Paris in June 2021.

Youth activists and representatives from civil society, the private sector, philanthropic entities, and universities – among others – will participate in the Forum to advance women's and girl's rights globally. **Will you be there?**

## ACTION COALITIONS = PRIORITY THEMES

At the Generation Equality Forum, work will take place in spaces called “Action Coalitions.” Coalition participants will include representatives from civil society, governments, international organizations, and the private sector. The Action Coalitions will deliver concrete and transformative change for women and girls around the world in the coming five to ten years. Each Action Coalition must develop solutions for one of six themes that are critical for achieving gender equality:

1. Gender-based violence
2. Economic justice and rights
3. Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
4. Feminist action for climate justice
5. Technology and innovation for gender equality
6. Feminist movements and leadership

Theoretically, adolescent girls and young women will be at the heart of each Action Coalition. To make it a reality, you need to be proactive about this and sign up!

**If you belong to an organization or movement, you can express your interest in participating in the Action Coalitions. You will find information on this web site:**

<https://forum.generationequality.org/action-coalitions>

# Intersectionality and sisterhood

Some people suffer simultaneously from two or more forms of social domination or discrimination. This is known as “intersectionality” because such discriminations overlap and intersect with each other. For example, a woman may suffer from sexism, and also from, for example, racism and/or classism, ageism, ableism, or discrimination related to poverty, disability, literacy, schooling levels, rural or urban residence, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. Therefore, it is essential that all matters affecting women’s rights are addressed with an intersectional perspective because such a perspective leads to a better understanding of each person’s situation and better ways of fighting discrimination. This leads, in turn, to more solidarity and a sisterhood between women and girls despite their differences.





AND... ACTION!  
AND... ACTION!  
AND... ACTION!  
AND... ACTION!  
AND... ACTION!

A better world  
= An equal world

Close your eyes for a couple minutes  
and imagine a world where everyone enjoys  
the same rights – a world of equality  
where you would dream of living.

Let's use the Generation Equality Forum  
to demand change and make a better world!





# Take action like young West African feminists!

In this section, we propose actions based on the experiences and ideas of members of the Young West African Feminist Network to show you what you, too, can do.

## WHO ARE THEY?

This group of young feminists from French-speaking West African countries met for the first time in November 2018, in the city of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Since that time, these men and women have been working together in order to make their concerns and demands heard in local, national, regional, and international decision-making fora. Their network is spread across eight countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.

## THEIR MISSION

Promote their feminist values and make the voices of women and girls - especially West African voices - heard in national, regional, and international decision-making fora.

## THEIR MANIFESTO

**1. We young feminists want the power to freely control our own bodies to be elevated.**

**2. We young feminists want the power of women's knowledge to be elevated.**

**3. We young feminists want women's economic power to be elevated** (their work valorized and equally paid).

**4. We young feminists want the economic power of women's organizations to be facilitated** (through sufficient budget allocations to promote equal societies).

**5. We young feminists want women's political power to be elevated.**

In 2021, a key year, these young feminists are mobilizing within the framework of the Generation Equality Forum to ensure that multiple feminist voices will be heard in all their diversity. They want to make the Forum a genuinely political meeting that will lead to transformative actions.



For more information, follow the West African Young Feminists Network on Twitter (in French): Réseau des Jeunes Féministes d'Afrique de l'Ouest. [@FeministesAO](https://twitter.com/FeministesAO)

# What can you ask of your government?



As defenders of women's rights, we can hold our governments accountable for the promises and commitments they made 25 years ago at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. We have an opportunity to mobilize to protect rights that have been under attack ever since. Furthermore, we can advocate for issues that have emerged since 1995, so they can be addressed now and at future international decision-making events.

Governments must pair commitments made during the Generation Equality Forum with funding and actions that will truly advance gender equality. You can press your government in the following ways:

→ Ask your government representatives to participate in the [Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions](#). It's vital that your elected and appointed officials commit to pursuing actions that will be agreed upon during the Forum.

→ Write to your government representatives and make actionable recommendations that emphasize areas that need additional funding and attention.

→ Ask for records of funding allocations to gender-equality projects and demand increases to such budgets.

→ Ask your government representatives to abolish discriminatory laws, policies and practices that directly or indirectly inhibit progress toward gender equality.

→ Demand that your government collects, analyzes, and uses data that segments populations by, for example, gender, age, income, disability, immigration status, etc. With more detailed data, the realities of different groups can be better understood in order to design more appropriate policies or actions for them.

→ Ask your government representatives to ensure that women and youth participate in the development of all policies and legislation that will affect their lives and the communities where they live and work. Also ask that women and young people be included in negotiations that take place during the Generation Equality Forum!





# Raise awareness and inform people around you!

The more of us that mobilize, the better: more voices lend more weight to our groups' and communities' demands and show the importance of these topics. By disseminating information about the stakes involved with gender equality in the year 2021, you will be doing an essential awareness-raising job. You can talk to local women's groups and other organizations in the places where you live, to student groups in your junior high, high school, college, or university, and to special interest groups, such as sports clubs, chess clubs, book clubs, etc.

You can also reach out to youth organizations that are not apparently affiliated with feminist issues. All these are the best places to find allies and create powerful collaborations. You can also raise awareness about feminism among influential people and officials in your neighborhood, city, community, or country: elected officials, political appointees, religious leaders, customary chiefs, business leaders, etc.

## ☑ TO DO LIST

**1. Identify potential allies.** Ask yourself: Who needs to know about this information? For example, small local organizations, schools, and/or youth groups committed to other topics, such as climate change.

**2. Identify themes** that affect young people in their daily lives.

**3. Speak simply and use words that are easy to understand** when talking about the Generation Equality Forum and gender equality. Use short messages and don't hesitate to explain or define theoretical concepts, such as feminism and gender equality, by giving real-life examples.

**4. Contact people** to ask if they would be interested in hearing about or hosting a presentation about the Forum or gender equality issues.

**5. Use forms of communication that inspire people to act.** For example, storytelling can raise awareness and often be quite effective; a story can be told in many ways, such as through a video or an online or print article, in person, etc.

**6. Look for information you can re-use.** You can find all kinds of information on the Generation Equality Forum website [www.forum.generationequality.org](http://www.forum.generationequality.org). You can also use information from this guide and share it with other young people.

**7. Encourage more young people to get involved.** Explain opportunities for action to them and let them think about things to do — everyone always suggests great ideas!



Remember: You have to adjust what you say and how you say it for each person or group you meet in order to have the greatest effect. For instance, you should adapt your examples of inequality or feminism for rural or urban dwellers and/or for different religious or cultural beliefs. Also, adjust your speech and stories to your audience's education level and familiarity with feminism. Tailoring your explanations and examples for each audience will help more people grasp what you are talking about and understand its importance for themselves and for those they care about. For instance, it would be great if you could talk to people in their local dialect, or use their slang or formal speech, as they prefer. That way everyone will receive the information they need to take action.

#### IDEA BOX

- Conduct workshops with other young people so you can jointly identify gender-equality issues and the stakes involved.
- Train young people to become gender-equality ambassadors for their family and friends, and/or in their junior high, high school, college, or university.
- Organize role-playing games that let participants feel what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes so they experience some of the effects of inequalities.
- Talk about all this information during events, at private gatherings, or in public places, such as at schools, youth centers, etc.
- Use comic strips that illustrate gender-equality issues: using comics can attract people's attention and spark discussion.



## Elevate young people's needs!

It is always important to know which topics are most urgent and the concerns of youth and society in general. You can gather opinions online or in person through surveys, individual interviews, consultations, and/or roundtables, and get recommendations from two, ten, one hundred, or more people! That kind of input will help you speak for other young people and give your demands more legitimacy. The more people you can consult, the more weight your and their opinions and recommendations will carry when you share them on social media, in Action Coalitions, and with government representatives.

## ✓ TO DO LIST

**1. Define a framework for your survey or interviews.** Ask yourself: Who do I want to survey or interview? How many people do I want to reach and when? What themes do I want to explore? What is the best way to reach these people?

**2. Organize your survey or interview** online, by telephone, or in person, using whatever means you choose. You can even combine several methods!

**3. Analyze the data and opinions you collect** and think about the best way to summarize and present the findings.

**4. Present your summary to the person or people you target with your advocacy** such as the government representatives you want to convince. Present clear demands that reflect the findings of your research.

**5. Make some noise and amplify your findings** by contacting the media, bloggers, influencers, and others who will spread the word. Think about all kinds of fun ways to draw people's attention to your findings and recommendations and make others talk about them as much as possible.



Remember: Preserve the anonymity of survey respondents and interviewees. Always ask for their consent beforehand if you want to use their name or share personally identifiable information from their own or others' life stories. When you use or publish the survey or consultation findings, be sure to describe the methodology you used, i.e., how many interviews or surveys, by what means, when, where, and the respondent profile (age, gender, location, and socioeconomic category if applicable).



### IDEA BOX

→ If you cannot easily access the Internet or a computer, you can do interviews by telephone or in person.

→ You can also set up in-person meetings, such as a discussion group, focus group, roundtable, and other types of meetings to share or trade information. (During the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure you and all participants respect and apply health and safety guidelines for such meetings.)

→ Other innovative and attractive methods to elevate and amplify young voices include online and/or interactive television or radio shows, thematic webinars, and roundtables on social media.



# Demand action and not just words!

For your advocacy to succeed, you have to deliver a strong argument in order for governments to move from talking to doing. Advocacy work means meeting public officials, legislators and their staff, and making recommendations, writing articles, and publishing open letters and letters to editors. In short, it means putting pressure on decision-makers about a particular topic.

In 2019, in the run up to the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration of women's rights, all countries were supposed to write a national report about the progress they have made and the challenges they face in implementing gender equality policies. You can use your government's report to observe and evaluate the performance of your elected representatives and other authorities.

[These national reports](#) also present the commitments governments have made for the future. This information allows you to advocate for your government representatives to honor their promises: that's called "holding them accountable." You can study a nation's statistics, action plans, and budget plans to assess progress on a given topic and to ascertain whether or not speeches and commitments have become concrete actions. It is also a way for all of us to exercise a form of citizen control over our political leaders.



## ☑ TO DO LIST

**1. Create an advocacy monitoring group!** Work with others to determine the topics you want to address, your advocacy objectives, and your priority issues. Think about whether you need to learn more in order to master a particular topic.

**2. Analyze the situation in your country!** Has your government committed to certain actions in its national report in order to implement the Beijing Declaration? Has it allocated funding for such actions? Compared to other countries, for example, are these budgets or commitments sufficient?

**3. Contact your government representative(s).** As soon as your advocacy group has properly analyzed its chosen topic(s) and you have evidence of unfulfilled commitments or ineffective funding for a promised government action, try to contact one or more relevant government representatives and request a meeting. If a representative does not follow up, try to find a way to publish your research results, such as by writing a news article, open letter, letter to the editor, or by sending tweets directly to the representative(s)!


4. **Meet your government representative(s)** or their staff. Ask those responsible to comment on your priority issues and demand that they do something; you can use facts from the 2019 national report to support your demand(s). Take precise notes on their responses to keep a record of the meeting and discussion.

**5. Monitor the results of your advocacy efforts.** Taking into account what officials said during your meeting and afterwards, check to see if the government actually allocated or increased funding for your topic and/or took other requested or relevant actions.

**6. Publicize key information.** Send out a press release to tell local and national media about your meeting with government officials. Describe your requests and share the official's commitments and actions with the public. To reinforce accountability, even let the

public know if nothing was promised or done. Write articles about the meeting and its results for online and offline publications; share highlights on social media.



 Remember: If you meet government officials as a group of people, try to designate one individual to speak for the group in order to make focused and clear arguments.

### IDEA BOX

→ Make a scorecard to keep track of the gender-equality performance of each city, county, state, or province in your country; it can help you increase pressure on those that lag.

- Create a team to monitor gender-related government budget line items and funding, and approach the relevant government official – even the minister in charge of gender-related issues – to ask precise questions about gender-equality funding.



# Become an online activist!

Social media and networks are powerful, and our generation uses them best! Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, etc., can be great tools for activism. Through social media, you can attract the attention of society at large and also decision-makers – legislators, ministers, those in charge of organizing the Generation Equality Forum, and even influencers.



## ☑ TO DO LIST

1. **Choose a topic** from an Action Coalition or that is close to your heart and write short, clear, and impactful messages.
2. **Think about online activities you can do** Design and create creative and interactive social media posts. Tailor your messages according to the people you want to reach.
3. **Build an action team with other online activists.** You can take action on your own, but the more people who do the same action, the more visibility the action will have.
4. **Get your team ready.** Set up a meeting so everyone is 100% prepared to act.
5. **Keep informing people about the action.** Send frequent reminders and try to broaden the network of people doing your action.
6. **Go viral! Post your action** on social media. Share your content with your group, affiliated groups, and traditional media. If possible, it's best to post in a synchronized way with other activists to increase your

⚠ Remember: Social media is a great tool, but sometimes it can affect your safety and well-being. To protect yourself, use secure passwords for your accounts, verify and source all information you share, and limit the visibility of yours and others' personal information as much as possible. Don't hesitate to ask relatives or other activists for help if you find yourself dealing with ill-intentioned people. When using social media for advocacy work, don't forget to tag influential people and the targets of your posts so that your messages get to the right place. On Twitter you can tag up to 10 people in an image! Just use @ in front of their handle in the middle of a tweet (don't begin your tweet with @). Remember that you need a good Internet connection when doing advocacy online. Finally, never post a photo or video of anyone on the Internet without their permission.

### IDEA BOX

→ Host a tweetchat: This involves asking a series of questions on Twitter in the form of a chat. Leave time for responses between each question. The idea is to foster collaboration and engagement and to increase your visibility on Twitter.

Beforehand, define the theme, participants, questions, and hashtags that will be communicated during the tweetchat. It is important to choose a chat time slot that is convenient for your audience, depending on their time-zone and availability.

→ Create a private, closed group on a social media site to share information and more fluid or filtered conversations in order to prepare an advocacy action online, in a public space, or elsewhere.



# Occupy public spaces with actions!

A face-to-face action is a communication activity carried out in the street or other public places that are frequented by as many people as possible, such as parks or beaches. Such in-person actions aim to provoke a reaction in people, thereby raising their awareness and informing them about important topics. In-person actions are an inexpensive and effective way to attract public and media attention to gender equality issues that are important to you, and thus attract the attention of political, administrative, or economic leaders. To put pressure on government representatives before and during the Generation Equality Forum, face-to-face actions can be carried out in your country or, if possible, at the Generation Equality Forum venues.


## ☒ TO DO LIST

1. **Begin by asking yourself the right questions.** Who do you want to reach? What message do you want to send? What do you want to achieve?
2. **Create an action group.** Ask your friends, family, and work colleagues to join in your effort.
3. **Define what you will do.** You have to be creative and aim for strong impacts with the substance and form of your action. Exploit the power of images and sounds. Try to entertain, amaze, and impress your target audience.

**4. Determine how long the action will last.** It might be a flash mob that gathers a group of people in a public place to perform pre-agreed actions before quickly dispersing, or it might be a long-term action, such as occupying a space for as long as possible or repeatedly.

**5. Choose where and when to perform the action.** Should it be a place of power, such as a government building, to attract the attention of politicians? A high-traffic area in order to reach as many people as possible? A symbolic place to better convey your message? Also take into the account the accessibility of the place, for you and/or your action group, and the public.

**6. Communicate before, during, and after the action.** Tell the media beforehand, invite the media to cover the action, and use social media to make the physical event echo in the virtual world!

 **Remember:** When working as an activist, your safety and well-being should be a priority. Sometimes, when participating in actions in person, you may be confronted by violent or ill-intentioned people. Remember that you can always leave if something or someone makes you uncomfortable or scares you. If you feel you are in danger, ask those around you or other activists for help. Before participating in an action, learn about the location, the situation, and your exposure to risk. Also, during the pandemic, take precautions to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.



#### IDEA BOX

- Use art in your action. Perform dance, theatre, and poetry, show videos, exhibit artworks, and create street art with chalk on sidewalks and roads, or set up street installations, etc.
- Occupy spaces with symbolic objects, posters, slogans, stickers, etc.
- Your action can take one or many forms, such as organizing caravans, parades, rallies, and marches or staging topical speech contests, quizzes, debates, or street interviews and other activities.



# Let's make some noise before, during and after the Forum!

With all these tools for mobilization and action, you can make some noise before, during, and after the Generation Equality Forum.

**Before...** Speak up before the Forum so that your government will engage in the process and make commitments during the pivotal year 2021. International civil society should also mobilize to influence the Forum and promote actions that must be implemented in order to achieve gender equality.

**During...** Speak up during the Forum so that the voices of young people are heard and taken into account when planning gender equality actions and allocating dedicated budgets.

**After...** Speak up after the Forum to ensure that **words become deeds** and to make sure that youth and intersectional perspectives inform governments' gender-equality actions.

This pivotal year, 2021, is just the beginning of a #FeministGenerations movement. Draw attention to this key moment for gender equality and speak up – and write and tweet – to advocate for women's and girls rights!

It is often said that young people are the future, but they are also the present: you can help finish the Beijing Platform for Action. All girl's and women's rights must be upheld – right now and in their entirety!

## EQUIPOP

Equipop combines social and political mobilization, project conception and management, technical assistance and the construction of partnerships to empower women and girls, and promote their health and rights around the world.

### Our vision

A world where all human beings, regardless of their sex or gender, have their rights respected, including their sexual and reproductive rights, and everyone participates fully in a just, equal, and sustainable society.

### Our mission

→ Sparking social change by creating and implementing pilot projects in collaboration with local partners;

→ Mobilizing political leaders and citizens in France, West Africa and internationally, to create more favorable institutional and political environments for human rights, particularly women's rights;

→ Empowering development partners by strengthening their intervention capacity.

Equipop works to promote feminist values and places gender equality at the heart of its work.

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