

Background

We are equal. Yet today, many young girls and boys still grow up seeing otherwise, hearing otherwise, and learning to believe otherwise. It is easy to forget that we are equal when our rights – to health care, education, economic opportunities, and freedom from violence – are not always treated the same. This is both unjust and unwise. Achieving gender equality is critical to driving social and economic progress for all and building the world that we want. As a society, we cannot collectively move forward to achieve these goals if we are only lifting one foot off the ground.

The good news: We already have proven solutions to build an equal society. What we need now is collective action to complete the task.

The Campaign

That is why, on 17 June 2023, the Organisation of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD) and partners launched **#WeAreEqual**, a year-long campaign that calls for urgent action to advance gender equity and close the gender gap in Africa. At its core, this campaign aims to drive home an essential truth: We are equal – and always have been. If we can agree on this fact, then it becomes impossible to tolerate or justify persistent gender disparities in our fundamental rights and opportunities, especially when evidence tells us that gender equality is possible and benefits everyone. As a society, we can do better.

#WeAreEqual focuses on key action areas, including health care, gender-based violence, education, and economic empowerment. The campaign seeks to raise awareness about the power of gender equity and call on our leaders to take action today. By addressing the root causes of gender inequality and fostering collaboration among diverse partners, OAFLAD is committed to driving sustainable change and building a prosperous, equitable Africa that leaves no one behind.

Why Now

Although gender parity in Sub-Saharan Africa is at its highest in a decade, significant challenges remain. This year, we find ourselves at the halfway mark for the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – a milestone that serves as a reminder of the urgent action needed to accelerate progress. Gender equality cannot wait.

We are equal. Working together, our society can be too. Join us.

Using this Toolkit

During the year-long campaign, African First Ladies and partners will unite under the banner of **#WeAreEqual** and call for gender equity to be a priority for governments, policymakers and other stakeholders across Africa.

As an activist, partner, ally, or passionate individual, you can join us in advocacy – your voice can make a difference! Use the actions and ideas in this toolkit to help raise awareness, call on leaders to advance gender equity in Africa, and guide your digital and in-person activities to support the campaign.

You can find materials and resources to guide your activities on the [campaign website, including key messages and a social media toolkit](#).

Together, we can raise awareness and support around the need for urgent action to advance gender equity across the continent for the benefit of all Africans. Garnering support from leaders, policymakers and influencers is critical to the success of the **#WeAreEqual** campaign, and the more people hear about the campaign and its goals, the better!

Why Advocacy Matters

Change is possible – and it is an ongoing process.

History has shown us that progress can be made and that transformative shifts are achievable. Over the past several years, we have witnessed significant strides in women's rights, empowerment, and gender equity in Africa and worldwide. By fostering dialogue, raising awareness, and mobilizing collective efforts, we can drive meaningful change.

Concrete action and policy change to advance gender equity works.

Gender-sensitive and gender-focused policies – when implemented with adequate funding and full commitment – can contribute to creating more inclusive and equitable societies.

From gender-responsive budgeting to laws that protect and enshrine women's rights, policies and laws that prioritize gender equity are crucial for driving meaningful change.

Everyone has a role in bringing attention and urgency to this issue.

Participation and commitment from governments, civil society organizations, international bodies, and individuals are critical to advancing gender equity. Driving meaningful change requires continuous advocacy, policy reforms, and allocation of resources to address the root causes of gender inequality and create enabling environments for women and girls to thrive. Advocacy works best when we're all striving towards the same goal, led by the same vision and championing the same message.

When we empower women and close the gender gap, we unlock the full potential of our societies.

Evidence from around the world has proven that gender equality drives social and economic progress for all. Through concerted efforts, we can create a future where gender equity is not only a goal but a lived reality for everyone, transforming societies and building a more just and inclusive world.

Campaign Timeline & Pillar Spotlights

Throughout the coming year, **#WeAreEqual** will focus on each of the four campaign pillars – health, gender-based violence, education and economic empowerment – to rally stakeholders and call for action around each of these key issues. **#WeAreEqual will spotlight the four pillars as follows:**

Health

Jul-Sep 2023

We are equal.
Our health care should be too.

Gender-Based Violence

Oct-Dec 2023

We are equal. Our
freedom from violence
should be too.

Education

Jan-Mar 2024

We are equal.
Our education
should be too.

Economic Empowerment

Apr-Jun 2024

We are equal. Our
economic opportunities
should be too.

During each pillar spotlight, campaign participants will be encouraged to join us by:

- Amplifying the focus pillar's key messages, through social media and in your communities, using tailored content from the campaign toolkits;
- Unpacking that specific issue in greater depth, including through opinion pieces, traditional media coverage, or multimedia content to highlight specific challenges and opportunities for that pillar in your local context; and
- Emphasizing the campaign's key asks and policy priorities for that pillar to decision-makers.

Crucially, even as the campaign will emphasize each of the four pillars in turn, it is important to remember that all four pillars of the **#WeAreEqual** campaign are deeply important and interconnected on the road to gender equality. Therefore, no matter which pillar you are emphasizing at a given time during the year, we recommend acknowledging that these issues must be advanced in parallel and always bringing the conversation back to the overarching campaign message:

We are equal. Working together, our society can be too.

Additional Milestones and Advocacy Days

In addition to the overarching campaign timeline and pillar spotlights shown above, the campaign will leverage international and regional days and milestones for targeted advocacy throughout the year. Participants are likewise encouraged to elevate the campaign at additional milestones and awareness days throughout the year according to your interests and priorities. Select examples may include:

- June 17: #WeAreEqual Campaign Launch
- July 31: Pan-African Women's Day
- September 18: International Equal Pay Day
- October 11: International Day of the Girl Child
- November 18: World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Violence
- November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women; 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence
- December 1: World AIDS Day
- December 10: International Human Rights Day
- December 12: International Universal Health Coverage Day
- January 24: International Day of Education
- February 4: World Cancer Day
- February 6: International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation
- February 11: International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- March 8: International Women's Day
- March 24: World TB Day
- April 7: World Health Day
- April 11: International Day for Maternal Health and Rights
- April 24-30: African Vaccination Week
- May 25: Africa Day
- May 28: International Day of Actions for Women's Health
- June 16: Day of the African Child

Take Action: How You Can Participate

1 Use your voice

Use your voice and platform to raise awareness about gender equity and the **#WeAreEqual** campaign. Share content from the **#WeAreEqual** campaign toolkit on social media and help us draw attention to the issue. Use the messages and suggested posts in the toolkit – or craft your own – to amplify our advocacy and educate your network on why we need urgent action to advance gender equity in Africa. Use the hashtag **#WeAreEqual**, tag other influencers and advocates, urge decision-makers to take action, and get everyone talking about gender equity!

2 Invite your networks to join #WeAreEqual

In the fight for gender equity, every voice counts. The bigger our network of advocates and allies, the better. We need your help to engage as many people and organizations as possible so that our calls to action can't be ignored. Encourage your partners, networks and friends to visit [[campaign website](#)], share their support on social media, and add their voices to the movement.

3 Show how gender equity is connected to the issues you care about, or how it affects you or your community

Progress on gender equity is inextricably linked to progress on other development challenges. Share your expertise and help us explain how gender equity is linked to progress in health care, education, economic opportunity, reducing gender-based violence, climate change, food security, poverty reduction, peace and justice, and more. Use facts, anecdotes and examples to show how advancing gender equity helps drive progress on other development challenges for the benefit of all.

You can also share a personal story about what **#WeAreEqual** means to you! How has gender inequality impacted you or your loved ones? What changes do you most want to see in your community? What do you believe is most important to help us move toward a more equal world? Share a post, photo or video to tell your story.

4 **Amplify the work of other organizations and activists**

Do you know inspiring activists, women's organizations, or champions for gender equity in your community? Amplify their voices by sharing their stories and work and connecting them to the **#WeAreEqual** campaign and network.

5 **Talk to media**

Media can expand the reach of advocacy efforts beyond our personal networks by engaging new audiences and elevating the discourse on gender equity. Write an op-ed about gender equity – or how it relates to the issues you care about – to educate the public and build momentum for the campaign. Or, set up interviews for your organization's leadership to highlight your support for the campaign and how the issues you work on relate to gender equity. (Tip: use the **#WeAreEqual** key messages and campaign materials to help craft talking points and support your spokespeople with evidence and calls to action for media interactions!)

6 **Talk to policymakers – and demand action**

Policy change is crucial to driving progress on gender equity. Engage your country's political leadership to take action:

- Write letters to your local and national leaders, urging them to prioritize gender equity in policy and funding decisions.
- Collaborate with like-minded organizations and advocacy groups to increase your visibility and strengthen your influence on policymakers.
- Amplify your messages through coordinated actions, such as petitions or peaceful and respectful public demonstrations.

7 **Organize an event**

Organize awareness-raising activities, such as seminars, workshops, or panel discussions, to engage stakeholders and foster dialogue on gender equity. In-person events are a great way to generate awareness and connect with local stakeholders around gender equity issues in your country or community. Invite a diverse audience – including key partners and stakeholders, government officials and community members – to build relationships and expand your network of supporters. Inviting local media can also help spread the word and amplify messages from your event.

8 **Donate money, time or resources**

Donate to organizations working to advance gender equity in Africa. Research and invest in grass-roots women's rights organizations, organize fundraisers on behalf of local organizations that are working to support women and girls in your community or volunteer your time and expertise to support programs and initiatives that empower women and girls.

9 **Maintain momentum**

#WeAreEqual is a year-long initiative. Stay engaged by linking your advocacy efforts to key milestones and calendar days throughout the year. Use our campaign calendar for inspiration, but don't stop there! Every day is an opportunity to tell the world why gender equity matters and to call on our leaders to take action.

Additional Resources

Partner resources

- [African Union Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028](#)
- [2021 African Union Gender Scorecard](#)
- [UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#)
- [Building a Gender-Equal Africa - UN Women East and Southern Africa Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#)

Partner campaigns

- [What African Women Want](#) (African Union)
- [Education Plus](#) (A joint initiative of UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women)
- [Act For Equal](#) (Generation Equality / UN Women)