Public Statement: 16 Days of Activism 2026
Ensure Justice. Protect Survivors. End Impunity.
YNCSD joins the global UNiTE campaign to end violence against women and girls, and calls for cross-movement solidarity against the rollback of rights.

Women and girls around the world continue to face widespread and intersecting human rights violations, while feminist movements and civil society are increasingly forced to defend hard-won gains against organised efforts to roll them back. Anti-rights movements are not operating in isolation. They are building alliances, mobilising resources and exploiting political, economic, social and cultural crises to undermine gender equality and human rights. What we are witnessing is not simply a convergence of crises, but an **organised and politically driven polycrisis**, in which multiple forms of oppression reinforce one another and the rights, safety and freedoms of women and girls become sites of sustained contestation.

In Nigeria, the scale of violence and the barriers to justice expose the distance between human rights commitments and the realities people live with. The 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey found that 21 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical or sexual violence. Among them, 58 per cent had neither sought help nor told anyone about their experience. Between January and April 2026, 2,755 gender-based violence cases were formally documented, yet only four per cent were reported to have been successfully prosecuted. The Initiative for Equal Rights' 2024 Human Rights Violations Report documented 556 violations affecting 850 people across 29 states, with 46 cases attributed to state actors. Meanwhile, a 2022 Africa Polling Institute study found that 28 per cent of women with disabilities surveyed had experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime, compared with 11 per cent of men with disabilities. These figures reflect different forms of violence and different experiences of exclusion, but together they expose persistent failures of protection, accountability and access to justice.

As the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence begins, the Youth Network for Community and Sustainable Development (YNCSD) joins the global UNiTE call to prevent violence, protect survivors, strengthen access to justice and end impunity. As a youth-led organisation working through an intersectional feminist lens, we recognise that ending gender-based violence requires more than condemning individual acts. It demands collective organising, institutional accountability and sustained action against the power structures that enable violence and deny survivors justice.

Audre Lorde reminds us that “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” This remains an urgent political lesson. Anti-rights movements build alliances, coordinate narratives and exploit divisions across movements. They target women and girls, queer and intersex people, persons with disabilities and young people, while counting on us to organise and respond in isolation.

Gender-based violence does not affect only women and girls. It also harms queer and intersex persons, persons with disabilities and other communities pushed to the margins. We

will prevent it and respond to it collectively, and we will stand against every form of oppression. To do this, we must examine the structures that deliberately exclude rights holders. We must understand the systems that oppress women and marginalised genders, and also how power operates within our own movements, organisations and funding structures. We must move from fear of legal penalty to active learning and genuine inclusion, and refuse tokenism. Rights holders carry expertise from their own experience, and young people are also at the forefront of this work.

Cross-movement solidarity is how we refuse that isolation. It means sharing evidence, building collective pressure, protecting those at risk and making our platforms available to struggles that are too often pushed to the margins. It means recognising that no movement can secure lasting liberation while others are being silenced, criminalised or abandoned.

We call on civil society organisations to work together to prevent and respond to GBV, across every movement and every identity, experiences and realities.

We call on government and policy makers to domesticate, fund and enforce the laws that protect survivors in every state, including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and the disability rights law. Equip police, prosecutors and judges to move cases from report to conviction without bias. Enforce criminal law against assault, extortion and blackmail whatever the survivor's sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. Fund accessible health, legal aid and shelter services, including sign language and accessible formats. Collect data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, so that no survivor is left uncounted. Involve young people and rights holders in designing the policies that govern their lives.

We call on legislators, religious and traditional leaders, the media and development partners to stop narratives that legitimise violence, and to fund movements with flexible, accountable and equitable resources.

We call on the public to refuse silence and stand with survivors.

We must recommit to this work of defending human rights. We must reimagine what sexual and reproductive health and rights look like for every community in the nearest future. We must move from anticipatory criminalisation to an organised and strengthened cross-movement solidarity.

Youth Network for Community and Sustainable Development (YNCSD)