For the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the world went orange, the signature colour of the UN Secretary-General’s campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women by 2030. Clockwise from top left: The orange-illuminated presidential palace in Quito, Ecuador; a flashmob in Ukraine; a public rally to take action in the United Republic of Tanzania; an all-women football match in Turkey; slogans against violence in Morocco; luminaries from the arts and media at United Nations headquarters to launch the Days; violence survivors showing off new fashion design skills in South Africa; orange handprints signalling commitment to the cause in Bangladesh; and a painting contest for children and youth in Viet Nam.

Around the world, a growing chorus of voices calls for gender equality. Advocacy campaigns align their ideas and channel their passion so their messages of hope and progress are widely heard.

UNITING TO END VIOLENCE

In France, the President wore an orange scarf in solidarity. Ecuador lit its National Presidency building in orange, while on a safe bus journey in Indonesia, top transport officials urged riders to be aware and take action. Samoans tuned in to a special tournament of rugby, a widely loved sport. Moroccans filled the sky with orange, eco-friendly balloons. In Rwanda, 2,500 people walked across the city of Kigali. Residents of 16 cities across Ukraine sponsored flashmobs with orange umbrellas.

These were just a few of the hundreds of events where women’s activists, government officials, business leaders, police officers, local authorities and many others marked the 2017 16 Days to End Violence against Women, an annual hallmark of the UN Secretary-General’s campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women by 2030. Managed by
UN Women, the campaign has unleashed a surge in global advocacy around stopping violence, rallying people around the colour orange as a vibrant symbol of hope and a violence-free world.

Coinciding with an unprecedented outcry against sexual harassment, the 16 Days ignited media coverage in 97 countries, while tweets and Instagram posts reached 610 million users. Creative online content tapped trending conversations through the stories and voices of people—lawyers, doctors, police officers, social workers, traditional leaders, students and transportation workers—who have broken their silence, pursued justice, supported survivors and challenged harmful practices.

Outside the 16 Days, the UNiTE campaign is a force for mobilization throughout the year, within and across countries. Monthly Orange Days keep the issue visible. Actions in individual countries in 2017 included backing a three-year advocacy surge in Kyrgyzstan that resulted in a new and highly forward-looking law on domestic violence. In South Africa, through UNiTE, the Government, UN Women and the Edcon Group, the country’s largest non-food retailer, are partnering to help survivors of violence gain skills for employment and begin the journey of healing.

CHAMPIONING HEFORSHE

Heads of State, CEOs and university presidents have all signed on. As champions of HeForShe, a global campaign, they are among 12 million men and boys who have made a firm commitment to actions to achieve gender equality. An associated initiative, IMPACT 10x10x10, mobilizes leaders and influencers for HeForShe, such as the Prime Minister of Canada, who in 2017 became the first HeForShe Thematic Champion for youth.

Georgia’s HeForShe campaign, with its playful but serious take on the lack of grammatical gender in the Georgian language, won the Tokyo International Photo Awards. Designed in collaboration with the advertising agency McCann Tbilisi, it was entitled “Georgian language has no gender prejudice - why is it in your head?” Catchy and widely circulated videos and posters featured male and female athletes from different sports, united in sending a message that gender does not matter in language or in striving for victory.

The Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) kicked off its HeForShe Campaign with a call for a culture of respect and recognition that men and boys benefit from gender equality. At the HeForShe Arts Week in Bangkok, thought-provoking videos, exhibits and social media postings celebrated the remarkable achievements made in Asia and the Pacific, while stressing remaining gaps, such as in ending violence and balancing the burden of unpaid care work.

SCORING GOALS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

A woman in sports can be a powerful symbol of what women can achieve. In Fiji, a record number of women players took part at the Oceania Rugby Sevens Championship, supported by a partnership with UN Women. As a sports organization, Oceania Rugby has become a catalyst for change in the Pacific region, including through high level appointments of women board members who have championed an equal opportunity approach to recruitment. A new family-friendly emphasis includes lower ticket prices.

More goals were scored for gender equality at the Global Goals World Cup, an all-women football tournament orchestrated to raise awareness on the Sustainable Development Goals. Held in New York during the UN General Assembly, it drew women from around the world who played with heart, skill and stamina. The SDGs Dream Team comprised strong gender equality activists, like Dina Smailova from Kazakhstan, who played to raise awareness on sexual violence. A survivor of gang rape, she has guided and supported 200 women survivors in Kazakhstan and was instrumental in winning seven sexual violence cases.

SHIFTING SOCIAL NORMS

Changing people’s minds goes a long way towards achieving gender equality by encouraging the abandonment of discriminatory ideas and behaviours. In 2017, UN Women reached millions of people across Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and the State of Palestine with its “Because I am a man” campaign. It has engaged people online and off—including widely followed celebrities such as football superstar Mohammed Salah—in asking provocative questions such as: Does being a man mean being violent? Or does it mean standing up to violence? The question has unleashed ongoing public debate on social media, in community outreach events and even in exhibits on fatherhood.

The campaign builds on the region’s first-ever multi-country study on men and masculinity. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in short. Supported by UN Women, the study tapped the perspectives of 10,000 men on gender equality and perceptions of masculinity, providing some of the first data on men’s attitudes.

A significant share supported equality, suggesting that while unequal attitudes still dominate, that may not be the case for long.

Clockwise from top: The HeForShe campaign in Georgia enlisted celebrity athletes like fencing champions Nina Thibilashvili and Luka Choghamidze to question gender prejudice, using a clever play on the Georgian language. The photo of Chasen Namroush playing guitar with his daughter is part of the photo exhibition “Palestinian Dads”, produced in Palestine as part of the “Because I am a man” campaign. Women athletes from around the world scored for gender equality at the Global Goals World Cup in New York.