

# WOMEN WHO DARE IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



2023 CALENDAR 3



## WOMEN WHO DARE IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA!

These women have played crucial roles in the Civil Rights Movement, from leading local human rights organizations to campaigning pushing for the passing of the gender equality and women's empowerment legislation.

Their efforts to lead the movement were often overshadowed by patriarchal and discriminatory practices and power dynamics. Moreover, many women experienced gender discrimination and sexual harassment within the civic space and later turned towards the feminist movements. This calendar project tells and honors the struggle of these 12 outstanding women human rights defenders as an expression of pride in their achievements and also candid assessments about the difficulties they faced within the movement.

You will discover women who have been a leading and steadfast voice in promoting democracy, fair elections, institutional reforms, and women's political empowerment as you move through the months of this calendar. Champions who often faced intimidation, threats of death, and arrests because of their roles and delicate subjects they discussed. Others have gone above and beyond to defend the rights of women and girls, including those in vulnerable and displaced settings, or those living in exile. They have improved access to modern contraception and family planning products to end unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions. Others have aimed to protect and safeguard their endangered cultural heritage and the rights of indigenous people.

Some of these women have been working in this field for more than two decades, and over the years they have established their own organizations, won international awards for good governance, democracy, and elections, and many of them have advanced to executive director positions in the workplace, proving that their efforts were not in vain.

Every month serves as a reminder of the truth revealed in the amazing work carried out by these courageous women by telling their untold stories. It has been themselves who have shared them with us from their own perspectives, and they have delightfully been transformed into artistic works created so that other communities can celebrate with them. You will be brought back also to the terrible realities that the women encounter when working in hostile environments, which highlight their bravery and resolve to defend the rights of under-represented groups and combat injustice even in the face of grave danger.

From our profound respect and admiration, we hope this calendar contributes to the recognition of their work and the fulfillment of their protection.

### Front Line Defenders team

*Disclaimer: This calendar contains a non exhaustive selection of women human rights defenders from West and Central Africa highlighted during each month of 2023.*



# JANUARY

## Miguele Houeto-Benin

*The amazon of human rights*

"I mostly work on human rights, women's and children's rights.

I do a lot of interviews and I am a whistle-blower.

I had many trials and losses, but many young people have educated themselves and are now using the Justice system to win that fight.

I want them all to be aware of human rights, and understand what it means."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1 New Year's Day
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 International Day of Education	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					



# FEBRUARY

## Viviane Tathi-Cameroon

*The hope and smile giver*

"I am founding member of the Cameroonian Feminist Coordination (CFC) which is a working group composed of Cameroonian feminists from the diaspora and feminists residing in Cameroon aiming to revitalize feminist action in Cameroon."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6 International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation	7	8	9	10	11 International Day of Women and Girls in Science	12
13 Valentines Day	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 World Day of Social Justice	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					





# MARCH

## Celine Narmadji-Chad

*The strong arm of human rights*

"My organization mainly works on women and girls, but now focuses on civil and political rights.

I am targeted as a woman and as a human right defender; I am a Chadian. I won't wait for men to stand for my rights."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1 Zero Discrimination Day	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 International Women's Day	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



# APRIL

## Marcella Samba-Sesay-Sierra Leone

*The BossLady with a sugar God*

"Speaking out for others is divine. The inner peace and free spirit it brings is indescribable. I believe that peace does not only mean ending wars; in a democracy, citizens must benefit from the social contract and be directly involved in making decisions that affect their lives."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			World Health Day		Easter Sunday	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
				Earth Day		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
International Day for Multilateralism and Peace						



# MAY

## Samira Sabou-Niger

*The guardian of Freedom of Expression*

"I fight to denounce injustice and defend freedom of expression and the fight to end early marriage. I was fired from my job as a journalist for publicly parodying the President of the Republic in the newspaper. I filed a lawsuit which I won against the Niger state.

In 2020, I was arrested and spent over one month in prison. I receive repetitive harassment from the authorities but will stay the course of the fight."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1 Labour Day	2	3 International Freedom of Press Day	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 Ascencion	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 International Day of UN Peacekeepers	30	31				



**JUSTICE  
MUST  
PREVAIL**

# JUNE

## Isatou (Ayesha Harun) Jammeh-Gambia

*The hope for victims*

"I advocate for victims of the 22-year dictatorship rule in the Gambia. As a survivor myself, I defend other victims and their families to ensure that justice is served and ensure their voices are heard."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Day of the African Child International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict	20 World Refugee Day	21	22	23	24	25
26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture	27	28	29	30		





# JULY

## Florence Ouattara-Burkina Faso

*The shelter for human rights defenders*

"I am the head of the CBDDH and is well known for the adoption of the HRD protection law in the country that gives voice to women. From my perspective, women's rights, women's opportunity, international community gives voice to women. I always remind myself: "Alone we go fast, together we go far"

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 World Population Day	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30 World Day Against Trafficking of Persons
31 International day of African woman						



# AUGUST

## Fatouma Harber-Mali

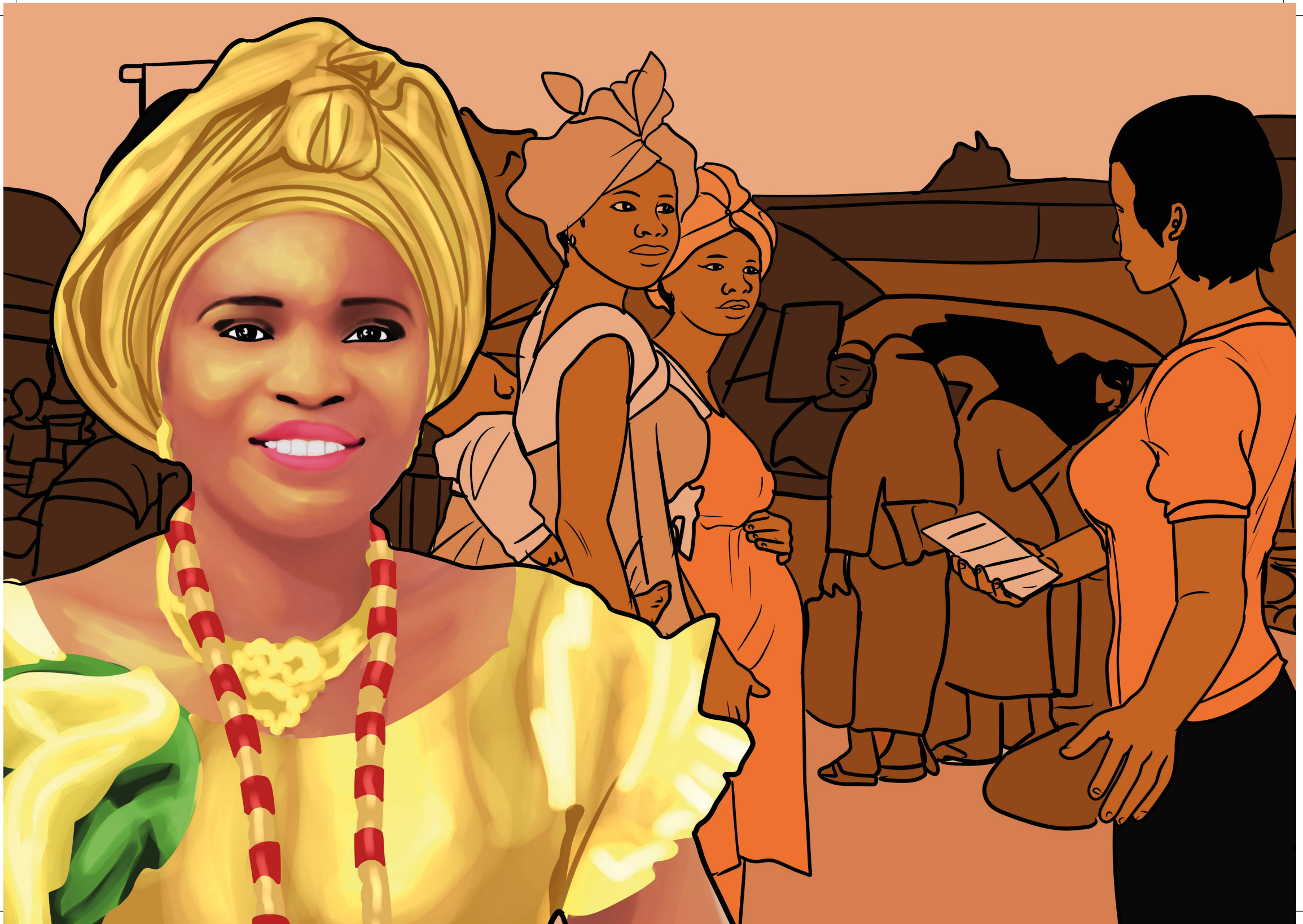
*The drive for girls in technology*

"I am a web activist and blogger. In 2013 in Dakar, together with other Malian bloggers, I created Doniblog the community of bloggers of Mali.

I am also a creative member of #Mali100Mega, a collective that has been fighting since 2014 to improve Internet speed in Mali and lower its price to access it.

I have been working with Reflet Timbuktu, an association that aims to protect and safeguard the endangered cultural heritage of Timbuktu."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
				International Blog Day		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	International Day of the World's Indigenous People			International Youth Day		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
				World Humanitarian Day		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



# SEPTEMBER

## Blessing Michael-Nigeria

*Carry Belle by Choice Not by Chance*

"I work to empower young women and fight against early marriage and early pregnancy. We launched our "Carry Belle by Choice not chance campaign" in September 2021 and our STEM Girls initiative campaign in September 2019."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
					World Suicide Prevention Day	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
				International Day of Democracy		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
			International Day of Peace			
25	26	27	28	29	30	



STADE DU 28 SEPTEMBRE

# OCTOBER

## Asmaou Diallo-Guinea

*The advocate for Justice*

"I started working as a human rights defender on 28 September 2009, when the military junta killed my oldest son and about 800 people in the stadium. I founded my organization AVIPA to seek justice and fight against impunity. We take action and lobby to uncover the truth about the event."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2 International Day of Non-Violence	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 International Girls Day	12	13	14	15 International Day of Rural Women
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 United Nations Day	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					





# NOVEMBER

## Yvonne Toba-Côte d'Ivoire

*The Voice of the Voiceless*

"My commitment led me to be elected national coordinator of the citizen movement No-Vox Côte d'Ivoire in 2014 with the mission of fighting for social justice by emphasizing the land rights of vulnerable communities."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2 International Day to end Impunity and Crimes against Journalists.	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women	26
27	28	29	30			



# DECEMBER

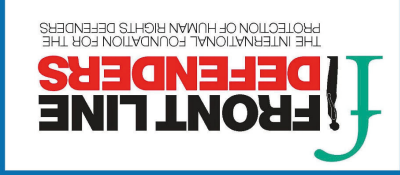
## Melanie Sonhaye Kombate-Togo


*The colibri of law*

"I am the Head of the regional network of Human Rights Defenders.  
 I was trained as a lawyer and am a bailiff with experience as a human rights defender.  
 I work on gender-based violence and have done advocacy for women in public  
 and political life. I specialize in children and minors.  
 I am in charge of monitoring rights issues, press, and demonstrations.  
 Being a human right defender is dangerous and not well perceived by the authorities."

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1 World AIDS Day	2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	3 International Day of Persons with Disabilities
4	5	6	7	8	9 International Human Rights Defenders Day	10 Human Rights Day
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 Christmas Day	26	27	28	29	30 New Years Eve	31

Front Line Defenders is an international human rights organization based in Ireland, dedicated to the safety and protection of human rights defenders and organizations at risk around the world. The calendar "Women who Dare in West and Central Africa", features 12 amazing women from different countries in the region. We honour and celebrate each one of them in their struggle including both expressions of pride in women's achievements and also candid assessments about the difficulties they faced within the movement. Some of the women human rights defenders in the calendar have been working for more than 2 decades, and over the years they have established their own organizations, won international awards for good governance, democracy, and elections, and many of them have been recognized at national, regional and global levels for their dedication in promoting rights of women in their diversity proving that their efforts were not in vain.



*Illustrations and design by Richard Fakala.*  
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