



# Equality Starts in the Family

*A Global Campaign for Change*



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# Equality Starts in the Family

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## **Equality Starts in the Family**

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### **About the Global Campaign for Equality in the Family**

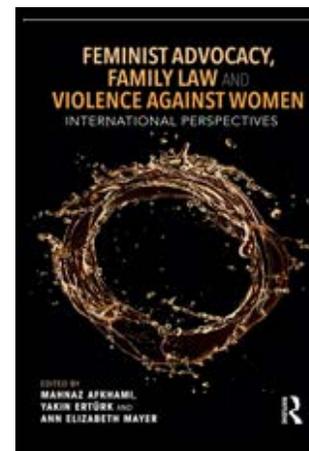
Throughout history, the unequal status of women in the family has been remarkably the same all over the world. The structure of the relationships between men and women and between boys and girls is hierarchical, top down, and segmented by gender roles. This unequal status within the home upholds the inequalities outside of it and impacts women through gendered legislation that determines their right to choose their partner, divorce, travel, hold a job, choose their place of residence, access their inheritance, and make decisions about their bodies and/or their children.

The global campaign, **Equality Starts in the Family**, focuses on changing the culturally determined roles and beliefs that perpetuate gender discrimination in the family, community, and society. As part of this campaign, WLP is conducting research, providing resources, facilitating trainings, and holding international dialogues to reform discriminatory family laws and ensure women's rights and freedoms.



## About WLP

Founded in 2000, the Women's Learning Partnership (WLP) is a global partnership of 20 organizations located around the world. The Partnership trains women leaders, advocates for women's human rights, and strategizes to overcome barriers to women's equality. Together, the partners have created culturally and linguistically adapted learning tools and curricula, built the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) around the world, developed innovative templates for collective action, and led advocacy campaigns that have helped change discriminatory laws. WLP works from the local to the global and back again, bringing lessons learned at the grassroots to regional and international dialogues, and lessons from these dialogues back to the grassroots, to facilitate learning and exchange.



## Research-Based Advocacy

As part of the Global Campaign for Equality in the Family, WLP partners worked with local scholars and experts to research the history of family law reform, the challenges and obstacles encountered, and opportunities for change. This research culminated in *Feminist Advocacy, Family Law, and Violence against Women: International Perspectives*.<sup>1</sup> The book contains eight country case studies describing the history of legislation related to the status of women in the family, three interviews with high-level policymakers and activists, and three essays by scholars from the Middle East and North America reflecting on advocacy efforts and strategies to restructure discriminatory laws for a more egalitarian society. The case studies from Brazil, India, Iran, Lebanon, Nigeria, Palestine, Senegal, and Turkey present the varied history of family law and reform efforts in each country and provide an in-depth analysis of issues impacting women's equality. From the transition to democracy in Brazil to the multi-cultural, multi-religious contexts of India and Lebanon, the studies show the nuances of family law legislation and the ways in which discrimination and violence against women are manifested in each country.

By giving a historical perspective as well as documenting women's successful advocacy campaigns to change these laws, the research provides lessons that can be applied to the challenges facing the international women's movement today. Significantly, several case studies describe the gaps in implementing current laws that are meant to uphold women's rights, which have been stymied due to the influence of local interpretations of family law or lack of awareness. The research also examines the role of international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and others in providing a reference point for challenging discrimination against

<sup>1</sup> Mahnaz Afkhami, Yakın Ertürk, Ann Elizabeth Mayer, eds., 2018, *Feminist Advocacy, Family Law and Violence against Women: International Perspectives* (Routledge Studies in Development and Society), Routledge: London and New York; published with the support of the International Development Research Centre of Canada.

women. Essays by leading women’s rights experts and practitioners - Mahnaz Afkhami, Yakın Ertürk, and Ann Mayer - provide comparative perspectives on the findings of the research and detail current global trends and their impact on women and the women’s movement. The anthology concludes with interviews from prominent women’s rights activists - Hoda Elsadda (Egypt), Asma Khader (Jordan), and Rabéa Naciri (Morocco) - describing their successes and failures in advancing reform agendas in their countries. These personal accounts provide unique insight into the experiences of the leaders of the women’s rights movements in the Global South. The anthology is currently being translated into Arabic, French, Persian, Portuguese, and Russian.

### Documentary film

WLP’s documentary film on family law, *Equality: It’s All in the Family*, illustrates the spectrum of family laws around the world and their impact on women’s freedom, safety, and well-being. Drawing on expertise from prominent human



rights activists and leaders, it examines the root causes of discriminatory laws and highlights pathways toward legal reform. “The family is the primary unit of society, and it is the first place where women’s roles are constrained and defined from their very birth,” says Kavita Ramdas in the documentary. The film was released in English and has been translated into Arabic, French, Kyrgyz, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish.

### Online Learning Center

WLP’s digital Learning Center ([learningpartnership.org/Learning-Center](http://learningpartnership.org/Learning-Center)) houses resources for advocates and researchers who are working towards equality in family law. This database includes a “Corpus of Laws” that provides constitutions, penal codes, civil laws, family laws, and legislation related to citizenship and violence against women, as well as case studies for scholars and activists focused on family law reform.

### Capacity Building

As part of this campaign, WLP partners conducted workshops in Brazil, Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Senegal, Turkey, and the United States with the Iranian diaspora to review the case studies and discuss current challenges and opportunities for reform in these countries. The workshops featured academics, activists, journalists, and government representatives who have been involved in family law reform at the local or national level.

WLP partners held Regional Training of Trainers Institutes in Beirut, Lebanon, Lagos, Nigeria, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to build the capacity of activists and CSO leaders on advocacy strategies and legal reform. These Middle East/North Africa (MENA), Africa, and Asia regional trainings equipped participants with the knowledge and skills to implement, monitor, and evaluate local advocacy campaigns for the reform of discriminatory family laws. Participants included human rights activists, policymakers, lawyers, journalists, and gender specialists working with regional partners.



## International Advocacy Initiatives

WLP partners organize advocacy initiatives to bring attention to the detrimental effects of inequality in the family. On March 8, 2018 - International Women's Day - WLP partners used the *Equality: It's All in the Family* documentary film as a public education and awareness-raising tool, screening the film in eight countries and leading dialogues with community members. During the 16 Days of Activism in November and December 2018, WLP led an online campaign - "16 Facts About Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and the Family" - to illuminate the close connection between family inequality and violence. On May 15, 2019, WLP celebrated the United Nations' International Day of Families by hosting a webinar on family law reform and sharing facts and infographics as part of a social media campaign.

## Annual Expert Meetings

Since 2017 the Partnership has held annual expert group discussions at the UN Commission on the Status for Women for NGO leaders, academics, UN representatives, and funding organizations with experience working on family law and gender inequality. These expert meetings provide space for planning the next phase of the campaign, useful entry points for reform, and how to plan for and minimize backlash.



## The Global Partnership for Equality in the Family

Over the last 20 years, the WLP Partnership has achieved significant successes in reforming discriminatory family laws in many partner countries. Building on the knowledge, research, and experience of the partners and other organizations involved in reform efforts, partners continue to advocate for women's equality in their countries. In 2017, the Partnership launched a knowledge-based global advocacy campaign on family law reform using research conducted at the national level. As a prototype of a successful local to global reform effort, these experiences reveal the power of a shared vision and collaborative action.

## Jordan

Local successes such as the repeal of Article 308 in Jordan, which allowed rapists to escape criminal punishment if they married their victims, show the impact of women's rights advocacy. As a result of years of women's research, organizing, and coalition building, in August 2017, the Jordanian parliament repealed the loophole that permitted this injustice.





To overturn this law, Solidarity is Global Institute/Jordan (SIGI/J) conducted leadership and advocacy trainings on this issue and connected CSOs across Jordan and in the MENA region. They also documented cases and used qualitative and quantitative data collected to analyze the impact of the law and shared the personal stories and analysis throughout Jordan to raise awareness. SIGI/J produced numerous press releases to ensure that the topic was consistently covered by the media, and they approached religious leaders who eventually agreed that Article 308 has no basis in Islamic law. They also leveraged key international days of advocacy to bring attention to the cause and presented petitions to overturn the law to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. On August 1, 2017, Parliament voted for a full repeal of Article 308.

SIGI/J and its supporters and coalition members are now focusing on other discriminatory laws, such as laws that allow light punishment for “honor” crimes, deny access to abortion, and unequal inheritance. In the spring of 2019, SIGI/J and Jordanian activists successfully pressured the legislature to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls from 15 to 16. Although activists would like to see the minimum age raised higher, the increasing public support for this incremental step provides momentum for further reform.

## Morocco

The Moroccan reform of the personal status code in 2004 was a turning point in the MENA region and was possible because of the decades of advocacy by women’s rights CSOs. Subsequently, WLP’s partner in Morocco, Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), has worked on other advocacy areas, focusing on sexual harassment in the workplace, domestic violence, discriminatory nationality laws, and lifting CEDAW reservations - which Morocco did in 2009 and ratified OP-CEDAW in 2015.

The collaboration between ADFM and rural Soulaliyate women in Morocco mobilized hundreds of women to claim their inheritance and land rights. In 2017, ADFM organized a three-week advocacy campaign in which more than 600 Soulaliyate women and allies traveled via caravan to bring the issue of women’s land rights to the attention of policymakers in Morocco. In July of 2018, the Soulaliyate women achieved a major legal and social victory when the women of Kenitra province were given equal land rights to the men in their communities. The movement is now one of the strongest grassroots advocacy movements in Morocco, and Soulaliyate activists are sharing their experiences with the international community, including at the 2018 Human Rights Defenders World Summit in Paris.



Khadija Oueldammou of ADFM explains, “These women now have the skills and the tools to organize themselves to demand their rights.”



## Lebanon

WLP's partner in Lebanon, Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD.A), has a long history of advocating for women's equal citizenship rights in Lebanon which has resulted in significant policy changes. Its "My Nationality, My Rights" campaign, launched in 2000, advocates ending discriminatory laws that restrict women's ability to pass on their citizenship to their children and spouses. The campaign has achieved significant successes across several national ministries: the Ministry of Education has eased some restrictions on registrations for non-citizen families of Lebanese women to benefit from governmental health coverage; the Ministry of Education has given priority for public school registrations to non-national children of Lebanese mothers; and the Ministry of Labor has recognized the right of non-national families of Lebanese women to work and has excluded them from a recent decree restricting foreigners from several white-collar occupations. CRTD.A and the national coalition continue to advocate for women's full citizenship and annually hold dozens of public demonstrations and press conferences.



## Nigeria

WLP's partner in Nigeria, the Center for Advancement of Development Rights (CEADER), collaborates with local CSOs to provide technical support and mentoring on advocacy and education for ending early marriage and GBV in their communities. CEADER conducts workshops and interviews in camps for internally displaced peoples on violence and early marriage. In order to raise awareness about these issues, CEADER holds gender-sensitivity trainings for media organizations and advocacy workshops for women leaders in Nigeria. CEADER's February 2019 advocacy and training institute led to the commitment of over 20 women leaders to conduct their own workshops and events on ending early marriage, ending GBV, and amplifying women's voices in their homes and communities.

## Pakistan

Access to education is vital for ensuring equality for women and girls. In Pakistan girls are particularly impacted by a lack of access to education. To increase girls' attendance in schools, WLP Pakistan/Aurat Foundation conducts awareness sessions with girls' parents to enroll their daughters in school and with schoolgirls regarding violence. Aurat also leads an advocacy campaign in the community focused on girls' enrollment, under Article 25A of the Pakistani Constitution, which guarantees the right to an education for all children in Pakistan. Aurat produces and distributes posters and information encouraging school enrollment and holds mobilization meetings with community women leaders. As a result of these efforts, there has been a substantial increase in girls' enrollment in schools with more than 50,000 girls enrolled in primary school to date with increased monitoring of attendance by district authorities.

## Brazil

WLP's partner in Brazil, Cidadania, Estudo, Pesquisa, Informação e Ação (CEPIA), has been at the forefront of ending domestic violence and femicide in Brazil since the organization's inception in 1990. Along with a coalition of activists, scholars, and policy-makers, CEPIA advocated for change in Brazil's Penal Code to establish femicide as a form of aggravated murder. In 2015 CEPIA and its network succeeded in passing legislation that imposed harsher penalties for perpetrators of GBV and expanded the definition of femicide to include any crime involving domestic violence. CEPIA leads advocacy efforts to end domestic violence in Brazil with innovative digital campaigns that encourage the public to speak out against GBV. Their current campaign uses multimedia components such a video that sets the sounds of emergency calls made by victims of domestic violence against images of peaceful homes.

## Senegal

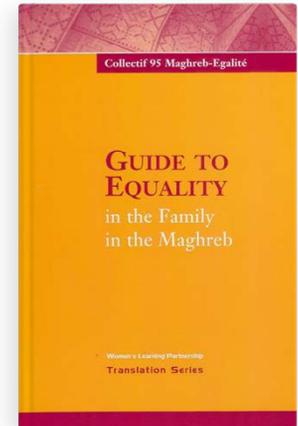
December 2018 marked the second anniversary of the Kilimanjaro Initiative, a women-led campaign to claim land rights and access to resources for women in Africa on an equal basis with men. WLP's partner in Senegal, Groupe d'Initiatives pour le Progrès Social/West Africa Region (GIPS/WAR), leads these efforts in Senegal, which focus on women's unequal access to land rights and food security in rural areas. Through the Kilimanjaro Initiative, GIPS/WAR participates in the Pan-Africa Rural Women's Council, which coordinates the advocacy efforts of women in their countries. Most recently, with GIPS/WAR's support, the Council compiled a charter of demands on land rights that they presented to the African Union Commission.



## An Early Example of a Successful Global Campaign: *The Viral Nature of International Advocacy*

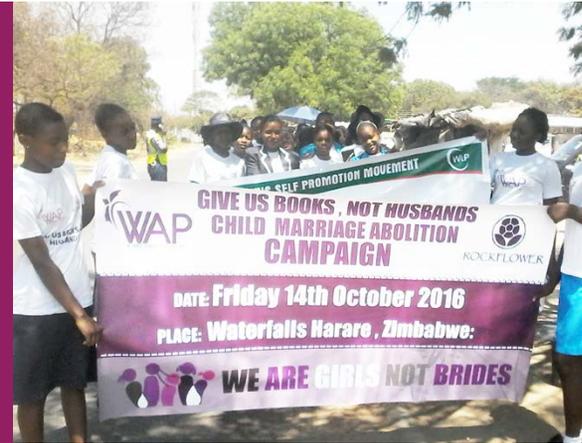
### *From the Maghreb to Iran to Malaysia to Central Asia*

In preparation for the UN's 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, ADFM collaborated with partners from Algeria and Tunisia to publish detailed sociological, legal, and theological research on family law reform that supported equality between men and women in the private and public sectors. Using the research as well as WLP's leadership training manual *Leading to Choices*, ADFM trained women throughout Morocco to become local advocates for family law reform. ADFM's combination of research-based advocacy and community mobilization has led to critical victories for women's rights in Morocco.



In 2005, WLP translated and published English and Persian versions of the *Guide to Equality in the Family in the Maghreb* and launched the book at the AWID Forum in Thailand and in Washington, DC. The *Guide's* exposure to international audiences of activists, academics, and policymakers had a viral effect. Iranian activists used the Persian version to shape their own campaign, One Million Signatures for Reform of Discriminatory Family Laws, and added new ideas such as an emphasis on including men as advocates and encouraging participation of groups with diverse goals and perspectives who agreed to work together, focusing strategically on family law reform. The book launch in Washington encouraged WLP's Malaysian partner Sisters in Islam to initiate the Musawah network, which focused on empowering Muslim women to reinterpret major texts of Islam from an egalitarian perspective. The Iranian activists published their own advocacy experience, which WLP translated and published in English, Arabic, and Russian to add to the conceptual and strategic curricula in the MENA region and provide new material for WLP's Central Asian partners in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. In less than four years, the information, research, and life-changing advocacy spread from North Africa to the Middle East to East and Central Asia and provided a model for expansion in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia.

Half of the world's population has not had its share of inclusion in shaping the world in which we live. Together, we have to create a vision for the future that we want, to make a society that works for everybody.



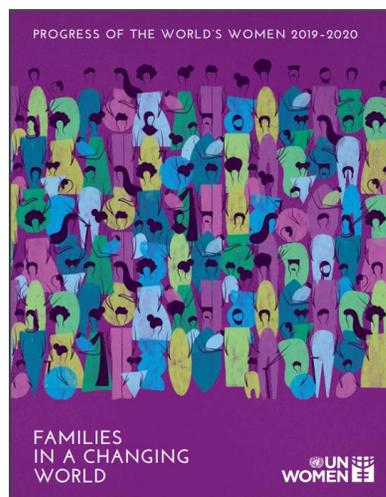
## Resources from Campaign Allies

### UN Women

#### *Families in the Changing World: Progress of the World's Women Report 2019 -2020*

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/progress-of-the-worlds-women>

This comprehensive report assesses the state of families worldwide, evaluates the changes in family life vis-à-vis today's realities, and measures the impact these changes have on gender equity and women's voice and agency. The report demonstrates that promoting gender-based equality within the family unit is crucial to fulfilling the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. It provides an invaluable tool for learning and research-based advocacy across the world.



### Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security

#### *Women, Peace, and Security Index*

<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>

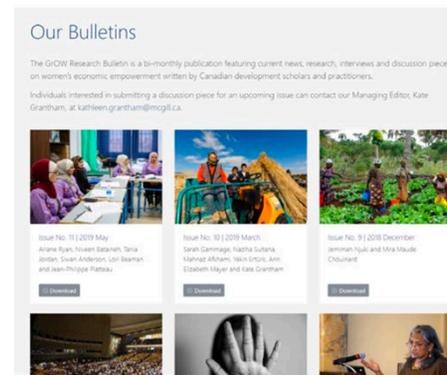
This Index ranks 153 countries on women's wellbeing and their empowerment in homes, communities, and societies more broadly. The Index demonstrates the close connection between women's experiences of peace and security and their access to justice and equality in society. Established in partnership with the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, the Index is complemented by tools and analyses that shed light on these countries' key achievements, as well as opportunities to improve. It identifies the family unit as one of the most crucial elements of women's wellbeing and security.

### International Development and Research Centre

#### *The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) Briefs*

<https://www.idrc.ca/en/research-in-action/grow-briefs-research-policy>

Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) tasked 14 research teams with identifying the key challenges that impede women's financial empowerment and outlining opportunities for change. The evidence-based research covers 50 countries worldwide and examines a wide variety of issues, including repressive social norms which start in the family, the (in)ability to access the job market, and acknowledgement of the prominence of women's dual roles as care-takers and jobholders, among other topics. GrOW's methodology turns research findings into actionable insights and advocacy for policy change.



### Amnesty International

#### *Human Rights Defenders Online Course*

<https://www.edx.org/course/human-rights-defenders1>

Educating and empowering women to speak up for their rights and the rights of other women and girls in their families and communities is critical to achieving equality in the family. Amnesty International offers an introductory online course in four languages that highlights stories of human rights defenders and describes creative strategies to stand up for equality. This resource also shares ways to mitigate the risks that can occur while working for equality in a variety of spaces, including the home.

## The Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights

<https://equalnationalityrights.org/the-issue/research>

The Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights mobilizes international action to achieve law reform in the 25 countries that prevent mothers from conferring their nationality on their children on an equal basis with fathers; and to achieve law reform in the 50+ countries which deny women equal nationality rights with men, including conferral of nationality to non-national spouses. The Global Campaign has published numerous resources and research articles on the impact of statelessness on women and families.

## Connect with the Global Partnership for Equality in the Family

[www.learningpartnership.org](http://www.learningpartnership.org)

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