

# Reforming family law



READ AND REFLECT

## IDEAS FOR ACTION PLANNING

Here are some ideas for activities and ways of working towards reform of religious family/personal status laws.

- Before embarking on work with family law reform ensure that you have a strong understanding of current and historical religious and political power dynamics in the context to help you develop strategies that are conflict-sensitive and less likely to backfire.
- Acknowledge how addressing discriminatory religious family/personal status laws is an important part of reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recognise and examine the links between discriminatory family laws and freedom of religion or belief, as well as violence against women (VAW), and expand these two issues to also include reform of family/personal status laws.
- Work with local women's groups and activists in both majority and minority communities in order to identify the key issues in family/personal status law which impact and discriminate on the grounds of both gender and religious identity.
- Build bridges with, and make strategic alliances between, religious actors and actors promoting gender equality and freedom of religion or belief as part of a wider human rights framework.
- Engage with religious leaders and offer support to religious voices advocating for an internal dialogue to reach a more gender sensitive interpretation of religious scriptures, especially female religious scholars.
- Raise awareness among women in religious communities about their rights and alternative readings of religious scriptures.
- Urge governments to repeal reservations to article 2, 9 and 16 of CEDAW, to adopt and enforce equality provisions in the Constitution without exception for religious or customary law, to review and reform all discriminatory family laws and to introduce and implement gender-sensitive legislation in compliance with international law, human rights standards and constitutional equality provisions. You can use both the UN SDG framework, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and different UN Conventions to which states are state parties.
- Use the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the review mechanisms of the Human Rights Committee and the CEDAW committee to hold your own and other states accountable for commitments to freedom of religion or belief, non-discrimination and gender equality. This can be

done through shadow reports, following up on concluding observations/recommendations made by the treaty bodies and following up on commitments made by the states in the relevant hearings. Be aware to include family laws concerning minority religious communities as well as majority communities.

- Join global efforts and campaigns that raise awareness and support the need of reforming religious family law/personal status law, like the joint [Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law](#) , and [Musawah's Global Campaign for Justice in Muslim Family Laws](#) , and make use of their resources.