

Reforming family law 3 h 10 min



ACTION PLANNING FOR FORB

GROUPWORK
GROUP EXERCISE

About the exercise

TARGET AUDIENCE

Best suited to civil society organisations, human rights defenders, religious communities and legislators with an interest in legal reform. The exercise assumes both participants and the facilitator have a strong prior understanding of freedom of religion or belief (FORB), of gender equality, and of religious family/personal status laws. It also assumes that participants already recognise needs for legal reform in their context and have identified areas of reform they would wish to see.

Not suitable for introducing the topic of family law and gender to audiences who have not yet recognised such needs or oppose the idea of reform.

PURPOSE

- To enable participants to explore different approaches to the reform of religious family/personal status laws.
- To enable participants to develop ideas for action and plan effective, contextualised strategies for work to reform religious family/personal status laws.

DESCRIPTION

A four-part exercise including a knowledge input and plenary discussion; exploration of case studies in buzz groups; groupwork in which participants develop an action plan for the reform of a religious family/personal status law in their context; the presentation and discussion of action plans in plenary.

This exercise works well as a follow-up to '[The problem tree](#)' exercise on page 158, '[What's the problem?](#)' on page 175 and '[FORB and family law](#)' on page 110.



Instructions

RESOURCES

- Suggested contents for a [knowledge input](#).
- One copy of the '[Action plan template](#)' per participant.
- One copy of the handout '[Reforming family law: Ideas for action planning](#)' per participant.
- Flipchart sheets and marker pens
- PowerPoint or other form of knowledge input on reform of religious family/personal status laws.
- Case study materials

Find the template, handout and case studies at www.forb-learning.org/exercises/reforming-laws.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Prepare a knowledge input on approaches to reform of religious family/personal status laws (suggested contents can be found [here](#)).
- Choose case study materials relevant for your context from the following:
 - Short film on Muslim Sharia law by Musawah, challenging the idea that religious family/personal status laws are divine and therefore not possible to change.
 - PowerPoint slides on reform of Tunisian family/personal status law.
 - PowerPoint slides on reform of Christian family/personal status law in India.
 - PowerPoint slide and short film on implementing reformed family/personal status law in the Lutheran church, Palestine.
- Write up the guiding questions for the groupwork on a flipchart sheet (see below).

**OPTIONAL EXTRA: BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE!**

Strengthen your knowledge on the issues by taking the FORB Learning Platform's free, on-demand mini-course: 'FORB and gender equality – Enemies or allies?', which includes a module on religious family law. www.forb-learning.org/courses/forb-and-gender

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 10-15 MIN

Start the exercise with a knowledge input on religious family/personal status law, including contextually relevant needs for reform (as well as any positive aspects of current legislation) and approaches to reform (religious approaches, secular approaches and legal approaches). Find some suggested contents for a presentation script for you to adapt and use at www.forb-learning.org/exercises/reforming-laws-infosheet

HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 2 H 50 MIN (PLUS A BREAK)

- **PLENARY DISCUSSION** (15 MIN)
Invite comments and questions on the presentation, then lead a plenary discussion with the help of the following questions:
 - What are the main challenges or obstacles to reform?
 - What are some of the common arguments against reform in our context? How might we respond?
 - Which of the approaches to reform presented (religious/secular/legal) are already being used by actors in our context?
 - What advantages and disadvantages do you see with each approach?
 - Have any reforms that contribute to gender equality been made already? How did that happen – which approaches were used?
- **CASE STUDIES AND BUZZ GROUPS** (15 MIN)
Briefly present/screen your chosen case study or studies. Ask participants to get into threes with people sitting next to them and discuss:
 - Is there anything we can learn from the case studies that is relevant for our context?
 - Do they spark any ideas for action we could take towards reform?
- **GROUPWORK** (1 H 30 MIN)
Divide participants into small groups, giving each group flipchart sheets and marker pens to record their ideas. Give each participant a copy of the 'Action plan template' and the 'Ideas for action planning' handout.

**SHORT TALK**

TIP! A ready-made PowerPoint presentation and script introducing the action planning model is available in multiple languages in Session 8 of the Local Changemakers Course. www.forb-learning.org/changemakers.

Explain that the task of the groups is to develop an action plan for reform of a family/personal status law that they consider to be problematic. Go through each section of the action plan template to explain it, pointing to the guiding questions displayed on the flipchart sheet as you do so. Tell participants that they have 1 hour 30 minutes to develop their action plan.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- **PROBLEM:** What specific family/personal status law do you wish to reform?
- **GOAL:** What reform do we wish to see put in place?
- **TACTICS:** Which approach to reform do you think would work best
 - religious/secular/legal/multi-faceted approach?
- **STEPS:** What would be a positive step towards reform of the laws? What would that change/step look like? Can you draw on any of the suggested activities or approaches from the handout?
- **ALLIES:** Are there women's groups you want to work with? Progressive scholars who support gender-sensitive religious interpretations? Legislators or judges who wish to see reform?
- How will we know if this action plan is having the desired effect? Is there some way in which this will be visible? What can we do to check?

• **GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND PLENARY DISCUSSION** (50 MIN)

Invite each group in turn to present and receive feedback from the plenary (maximum 10 min/group).

Use the following questions to lead the feedback discussion:

- What do you like about this action plan?
- Do you have any suggestions for how to make it even better?

After all the presentations have been made and discussed, highlight any common themes or ideas coming from the presentations.

HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE 5 MIN

Congratulate participants on their excellent work and engagement in the discussions. Outline next steps in accordance with the plan for your training and the process to follow it.

Source

Adapted from the FORB Learning Platform's online course, 'FORB and gender equality – enemies or allies?' www.forb-learning.org/courses/forb-and-gender

TIP! Why not take a break or introduce an energiser at this point? Check out the '[Icebreakers and energisers](#)' section on page 10 for inspiration.