

Towards gender equal nationality laws

Law reform and momentum
since 2023 – Progress,
regress and ones to watch

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Since our [July 2023 Update](#) to *The state we're in: Ending sexism in nationality laws, 2022 edition – Update for a disrupted world*, which details gender-discriminatory nationality laws around the world and their significant negative impact on women, their families, and society, there have been both positive and negative developments that are highlighted below. We have also included a **Call to Action urging all States to meet their obligations under international law by amending or repealing any remaining discrimination in their nationality laws, and calling on other stakeholders to continue supporting these efforts**. This update also provides tools and resources, including proposed draft “model” legislation, to help accelerate progress towards achieving gender-equal nationality laws by 2030.

Legal reforms

Progress

- ▶ **Malaysia:** In March 2025, the Malaysian Government officially published [Act A1752 - Constitution \(Amendment\) Act 2025](#), which gives women gender-equal rights to confer citizenship on a child born abroad. This law will give Malaysia's 16.9 million women and girls greater citizenship rights, in line with those of the male population. However, despite [promises](#) to begin implementing this historic amendment by mid-2026, this has yet to take place, and the Government's website still indicates that it is “NOT YET IN FORCE”. Separately, in a court settlement, the [Government agreed to grant citizenship](#) to all pending applications/those born before the amendment (going forward) who are under 18.
- ▶ **discriminatory provisions denying equal access to citizenship for children born to Bahamian fathers *outside* of The Bahamas and out of wedlock, children born abroad to Bahamian women, and noncitizen spouses of Bahamian women.**
- ▶ **Barbados:** [Constitutional reform](#) is targeted for November 2026, the 60th anniversary of Barbados' independence or 2027, if further consultations are needed. The [Constitutional Commission](#) has called for nondiscrimination and recommends gender neutral language and gender-equal nationality rights in the new Constitution, including the right of citizens to confer nationality on a child or noncitizen spouse on an equal basis.

Momentum and reaffirmation

- ▶ **Bahamas:** Equality Now's update in July 2023 noted that the Attorney General committed to reviewing remaining discrimination in the law following the confirmation by the Privy Council, the final appellate court for The Bahamas, that a child born *in* The Bahamas out of wedlock to a Bahamian father may acquire citizenship at birth under Article 6 of the Constitution. However, no further action to update the Constitution nor the Nationality Act has been taken by the Government. [Equality Bahamas](#) and others continue to call for reform, including regarding gender-
- ▶ **Pakistan:** The Pakistan Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2026, [again affirms](#) the right of Pakistani citizens to confer nationality on their children without discrimination on the basis of sex. Gazetted in March 2026, this amendment clarifies the retroactive effect of a previous amendment of the Pakistani Citizenship Act of 1951, passed in 2000, which enshrined for the first time Pakistani women's right to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men.

Regress

- ▶ **Iran:** As noted on our website, in November 2023 Iran repealed its 2019 amendment to the Law on Determining the Nationality of Children Born from a Marriage of Iranian Women and Foreign Men, upon approval of the National Residency Organization Plan. Although the amendment did not create full equality between men and women (children born to non-Iranian fathers were still required to apply for nationality and pass a security check, whereas children born to Iranian men obtain citizenship automatically at birth), it was a significant step in the right direction. Without the amendment, children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers **within** Iran are now only granted citizenship once they reach the age of 18 and have lived in the country for more than a year; and children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers **outside** of Iran *may* be granted citizenship once they reach the age of 18 and have lived in the country for more than five years.

Clarifications

- ▶ **Tonga:** not included in our *The state we're in* report as it is a gender equal nationality law with respect to conferral of citizenship on children and spouses, with minor discrimination against formerly Tongan men who renounced their citizenship to acquire their wives' foreign citizenship and who could have a higher barrier to re-acquire Tongan citizenship on the death of or divorce from a foreign wife. (See Art. 8(4) of the Nationality Act (2016)). Fortunately, this would impact very few people but nonetheless should be reformed.

"8 Naturalization of non-Tongans

(4) In the case of a woman who was a Tongan subject previous to her marriage with a non-Tongan and whose husband has died or whose marriage has been dissolved, the requirements of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of this section as to residence shall not apply."

- ▶ **Cote d'Ivoire:** In most respects, the Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) has a gender-equal nationality law regarding the conferral of citizenship on children and spouses. However, Art. 28(3) allows the wife and adult children of a man who acquires Ivorian nationality to be naturalised without any condition as to length of residence. This discriminates against foreign women who become naturalised, as their spouses and children cannot get naturalised immediately, and in fact naturalised women cannot confer Ivorian nationality upon their children unless their spouse has died. (See ISI UPR, para. 23)

Major events

- ▶ Global Multistakeholder Summit on Advancing Gender Equality in Nationality Laws
The Global Multistakeholder Summit on Advancing Gender Equality in Nationality Laws took place on 10-11 December, 2024. The Summit brought together parliamentarians, government officials, and representatives from civil society organisations from among the twenty-four countries where women lack the right to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men, as well as representatives from countries that have enacted reforms to share learnings from reform processes. Videos of presentations, including on achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the SDGs), are available.
- ▶ Africa Multistakeholder Convening on Achieving Gender Equality in Nationality Laws
Held in Nairobi in February 2026, the convening brought together government representatives, parliamentarians, civil society leaders, including impacted activists, and regional and international experts to move toward coordinated action. With each day centred on the lived realities of impacted activists, participants shared national experiences, identified legal and

political barriers, and worked collectively to advance solutions. The convening resulted in the development of clear road maps for multistakeholder action to achieve reforms and reinforced a growing commitment across Africa to uphold women's equal right to confer nationality on their children.

► IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians 2026

The conference included a breakout session on “Advancing equality in the law to address stereotypes and negative social norms,” facilitated by UN Women, Equality Now and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights. Inspiring women impacted by discriminatory laws and who have contributed to reform efforts shared their strategies with parliamentarians, including in relation to gender-based violence, nationality rights and economic empowerment. Participants were invited to share reform efforts in their countries, indicate where they might need support to advance these efforts, and discuss innovative ways to secure legal equality, including through multi-pronged, evidence-based approaches to achieving legislative wins.

law; b) information on laws and policies that impact children's access to rights and services.

► A state of belonging - The right to equal citizenship: A decade of global action for gender-equal nationality laws (2014 - 2025), 2026

This impact report reflects on Equality Now's and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights' (GCENR) work between 2014 and 2025 to eliminate gender discrimination in nationality laws. During this period, the campaign contributed to 18 full and partial nationality law reforms, while influencing reform efforts in more than 20 countries. Drawing on coalition documentation, reform tracking, and lived experiences, the report examines how feminist legal advocacy, coalition-building, and engagement with UN mechanisms have helped translate gender-equal nationality rights into enforceable international law and standards and tangible legal change.

► Proposed select draft articles on nationality rights to ensure gender equality, 2025

This is a legal blueprint to help governments reform unjust laws and deliver on gender equality, Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) and other SDGs, and human rights for all. Despite decades of progress, more than 45 countries still have laws that deny women the same rights as men to pass on their nationality to their children and/or spouses. These laws often lead to family separation, statelessness or the threat of statelessness, and lack of access to education, healthcare, and employment. We hope States will use this tool to improve everyone's lives.

New resources: Toolkits and evidence of impact

► Legal Atlas on Gender Discrimination in Nationality Laws, 2026

The Legal Atlas provides a visual overview highlighting countries with nationality laws that discriminate on the basis of gender. Country-specific data for the 24 countries with nationality laws that deny women the right to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men, detailing: a) the status of gender discrimination in the nationality law with related constitutional text and obligations under international

Call to action

- ◆ **States, lawmakers and policymakers** should reform any discriminatory nationality laws or regulations to meet their international legal commitments under treaties, the SDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Pact for the Future.
- ◆ **UN treaty bodies and legal advocates** should continue to push for State compliance with international human rights standards to ensure gender equality in nationality laws, regulations or implementation.
- ◆ **Funders** should support civil society groups and legal practitioners campaigning for nationality law reform.