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Global Multistakeholder Summit on Advancing Gender Equality in Nationality Laws 10-11 December 2024

Concept Note

The Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights¹, Equality Now, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the UN Refugee Agency, and UN Women will convene a Global Multistakeholder Summit on Advancing Gender Equality in Nationality Laws in December 2024. The Multistakeholder Summit is intended to heighten attention to the costs of gender discrimination in nationality laws and increase support for and expedited action to achieve gender-equal rights across the globe, thereby advancing state commitments and global goals pertaining to gender equality, children's rights and wellbeing, sustainable development, and ending statelessness. The Multistakeholder Summit is envisioned to serve as a rallying event to encourage more of the remaining countries with gender-discriminatory nationality laws to join the ranks of those that have enacted nationality law reforms to enshrine gender equality. More immediately, the Summit is anticipated to result in the building of partnerships and proposed road maps for national-level action to advance gender-equal nationality rights.

Background

Currently, [twenty-four countries](#)² have nationality laws that deny women the right to confer their nationality on their children on an equal basis with men. Over [40 countries](#)³ deny women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality, or to confer nationality on their non-national spouses. Gender discrimination in nationality laws (GDNLs) causes wide-ranging human rights violations and hardships experienced by affected families. When women are unable to pass their nationality to their children, and children are unable to acquire their father's nationality, they are often rendered stateless. Without

¹ The [Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights \(GCENR\)](#) is a coalition of national, regional, and international organizations, independent activists, and UN partner agencies working to end gender discrimination in nationality laws. GCENR steering committee members include Equality Now, Family Frontiers, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, Nationality For All, UNHCR, Women's Learning Partnership, and Women's Refugee Commission, which houses the Campaign.

² Countries that deny women the right to confer nationality on their children at birth on an equal basis with men: The Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Brunei, Burundi, Eswatini, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Togo, United Arab Emirates

³ Countries with gender-discriminatory provisions in their nationality law: Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brunei, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo (Republic of), Egypt, Eswatini, Guatemala, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.



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citizenship, children and noncitizen spouses are often inhibited from accessing education, healthcare, formal employment, financial services, property rights and inheritance, their freedom of movement, and

their full participation in society generally. GDNLs can result in family separation and contribute to gender-based violence (GBV), including child marriage and human trafficking.

Discriminatory nationality laws put a huge strain on family unity, leaving spouses and children feeling particularly vulnerable and in some cases increasing the fear of family violence. Women's inability to pass on their citizenship to their children and spouses puts significant financial, psychological and physical strains on families, resulting in an intergenerational spiral of poverty, destitution and depression.

The negative impact and reach of GDNL increases in contexts of conflict and displacement, due to the combination of lost or destroyed civil documents, family separation and the inability to prove a legal link to missing or deceased men. GDNL also creates obstacles to refugee women in binational families returning to their homelands, with their children and noncitizen spouses lacking access to citizenship. Of note, just under half of the countries that deny women's right to confer nationality on their children are fragile states, conflict contexts, and/or countries of origin or hosts of large, displaced populations.

Though such laws were traditionally the norm across the globe, significant progress has been achieved in securing gender-equal nationality rights. In the past fifteen years, over twenty States have reformed their nationality laws to advance gender equality. Momentum for reform is also increasing at the regional level, indicated by the establishment of regional declarations calling for the eradication of gender discrimination in nationality laws as essential to ending statelessness, including the [Arab Declaration on Belonging and Legal Identity](#) (2023), [Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on the Eradication of Statelessness in West Africa](#) (2015), and the new Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Right to Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa, adopted by the African Union in February 2024. At the international level, heightened attention to advancing gender-equal nationality rights has also been driven by the June 2023 Global Summit on Gender Equality in Nationality Laws and a new Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution on nondiscrimination in nationality laws (July 2023), which echoed HRC Resolutions in 2012 and 2016 calling for an end to gender discrimination in nationality laws.

While nationality laws around the world have been changing, concerted and ongoing engagement is needed to highlight the negative impacts of GDNLs, the positive impact of reforms to uphold gender-equal nationality rights, and what is required to achieve them. Eliminating gender discrimination in nationality laws could have profound impacts on hundreds of thousands of lives through, for example, improved access to education, health care, identity documents, employment, and inheritance.

Global Multistakeholder Summit on Advancing Gender Equality in Nationality Laws

The multistakeholder convening will include parliamentarians, representatives from concerned ministries, and civil society from affected countries, along with representatives⁴ from countries that have recently

⁴ Ideally delegations from participating countries where reform is needed will include 1-2 parliamentarians, 1 representative of a relevant ministry (such as ministries with a focus on gender/women, justice, interior, social affairs), and 1 civil society expert.



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enacted reforms, for a two-day Summit. Representatives from among the twenty-four countries that deny women's equal right to confer nationality on their children are proposed to be invited.

Sessions include a focus on exchanges of lessons learned, strategic messaging, and building connections between allies and key stakeholders to advance gender-equal nationality rights and increasing awareness of the benefits of and paths to achieving gender equality in nationality laws. This convening will build on momentum stemming from the 2023 [Global Summit on Gender Equality in Nationality Laws](#), making an important link between key actors in target countries who can learn from and be energized by each other's experiences.

The Multistakeholder Summit is anticipated to result in a proposed road map for national-level action to advance gender-equal nationality rights. Leveraging an impactful international, multistakeholder model that has demonstrated notable impact in past convenings, the Summit will facilitate collaboration and build a network of support among States to help facilitate and accelerate the reform process.

Date and Venue: The Summit will take place during 10-11 December 2024 in Geneva at the European Broadcasting Union Headquarters (L'Ancienne-Route 17A, 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex)

Participants: Participants include representatives from among the twenty-four countries where women lack the right to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men, including representatives from parliament, relevant ministries, and civil society, as well as experts from relevant UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations.

Co-sponsors:

- Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights
- Equality Now
- Inter-Parliamentary Union
- UN Refugee Agency
- UN Women