

Each of Us, All of Us

Taking Action to Strengthen Rights Globally

Expressed in our living rooms and around our kitchen tables, these are rules that most of us teach our children: that everyone should be treated fairly, and that we all have a responsibility to one another. The inherent dignity and worth of every human being represent widely shared values. In 57 of the 60 countries covered by the World Values Survey, a majority of respondents said that it is especially important that children learn tolerance and respect for other people. Likewise, in 58 of the countries, large and often overwhelming majorities of respondents indicated it was important to them to do something for the good of society.¹

These values did not originate in a single region but span countries and continents, and give shape to the agreements that have been reached globally by the United Nations. Consistently and comprehensively, these treaties speak to the fundamental value of every person. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified by 189 countries, asks every government to recognize that “discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.”²

Similarly, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, with 179 states parties, proclaims that “the existence of

racial barriers is repugnant to the ideals of any human society,”³ while the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with 177 states parties, notes that “discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person.”⁴ As these commitments stress, equality and dignity are intimately linked; achieving one requires achieving the other.

EACH OF US, ALL OF US

What each country’s constitution does to ensure everyone can reach their full potential matters to each of us. Our children, and our siblings’ children, can be any gender. We cannot know whom they will fall in love with, marry, and form families with. What will their race/ethnicity be? Their place of residence?

Globally, one in 30 (that is, 258 million) people are migrants.⁵ While some planned their moves in advance, or immigrated seeking better opportunities, others had little warning: wars, natural disasters, or economic and political collapse in their countries forced their departure. Wherever we each live, the histories of our countries and families provide strong reminders that many of us may need to cross borders; we should care about having equal rights in all countries for ourselves and for our friends, families, and all people.

We also all face uncertainties in core aspects of life. It is impossible to predict our future health. While our family members may not personally face disability discrimination today, equal rights on the basis of disability could become critical to their daily lives tomorrow, or in a decade. The same is true for equal rights and opportunities regardless of social class. Present education and employment circumstances may have enabled our family to succeed in the current economy, but that does not guarantee future financial security.

Beyond the human implications, discrimination impedes our collective capacity to thrive as societies. According to a 2015 McKinsey Global Institute report, fully closing the gender gap in the labor market by 2025 could increase global GDP by \$28 trillion, equivalent to the U.S.’s and China’s economies combined.⁶ Similar studies have documented the widespread economic benefits of ensuring the full inclusion of racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, people with disabilities, LGBT+ workers, and others.⁷

Guaranteeing equality for all changes the world we live in. Ensuring that everyone has the chance to reach their full potential changes the art we see, the music we hear, the food we eat, how economically successful our countries are, what scientific discoveries are made, and how well major social problems are solved. Conversely, every instance of discrimination both causes individual harms and diminishes our collective success. If we do not ensure that every person gets a good education, decent healthcare, and the opportunity to work to their full capacity, we are trying to build countries with half a team or less.

Constitutions provide vehicles for translating fundamental beliefs about the value of every human being, and evidence on the impact of achieving equal opportunity for all, into meaningful improvements in people's lives and powerful statements of countries' values. In this concluding chapter, we evaluate how constitutions can advance equality not just on paper but in practice, highlighting demonstrated strategies for realizing this vision.

HOW CAN WE TAKE ACTION?

You Shape the Future

You have a part to play in shaping the future of your country. Citizens and residents of every country, community organizations and companies, lawyers and advocates, policymakers and business leaders all have roles and responsibilities to ensure that equal opportunity exists in practice.

Getting the ground rules right makes a difference. Just since we entered the twenty-first century, over 130 countries have enacted constitutional amendments. Now implementing the constitutional rules that promote equal opportunity and equal rights is essential.

Good building codes can ensure safe places to live and work, free from cancer-causing asbestos or lead paint that degrades health and cognition. These ground rules can also help ensure buildings do not collapse. However, they work only when implemented. Inspectors must check whether building codes are followed. When neighbors, engineers, and visitors are aware of dangerous code violations, their active participation makes it far likelier that everyone's life will be healthier. Blueprints can make buildings easier to construct, not harder.

Similarly, once a good constitution is in place, we all need to participate to ensure it succeeds. We each have a role to play in transforming norms, addressing discrimination, and ensuring our governments provide access to education, health, and the ability to work and live to our fullest potential.

We understand that it may be difficult initially to imagine how you can contribute. But around the world, individuals and small groups have played pivotal roles in both strengthening their constitutions' protections and ensuring they have impact. In this section, we share information about a wide range of these initiatives to demonstrate the many different ways it is possible.

Movements to Pass Constitutional Amendments

Over the past several decades, everyday citizens in countries around the world have come together to demand that their constitutions better ensure the rights of all. These movements have relied on various strategies for their success, including direct actions and demonstrations, large-scale organizing to shift public attitudes and get out the vote, and strategic litigation aimed at precipitating constitutional reform. A few examples follow.

India: Leveraging Case Law and Building a Broad Civil Society Movement

In India, the movement to enact a constitutional right to education was a long-term effort requiring the dedication, energy, and persistence of countless parents, educators, activists, and lawyers committed to change. In 1990, a government committee headed by social activist Acharya Ramamurti reviewed the national education policy of the past five years, issuing a report urging recognition of education as a fundamental right and increased government expenditure on education.⁸ That same year, India joined the UNESCO-initiated Education for All movement, and, in 1992, ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Two Supreme Court decisions further catalyzed activism to advance universal education through a constitutional amendment. In a 1992 case brought by a medical school applicant who could not afford the out-of-state fees, the Court determined for the first time that the constitution guaranteed a right to free education.⁹ The justices pointed to the “directive principle” on education, which described education for all children until age 14 as a goal of the state, as well as the “right to life,” which the Court stated “cannot be assured unless it is accompanied by the right to education.”¹⁰ The following year, in *Unni Krishnan*, the Court affirmed the existence of a constitutional right to free education, but limited its scope to ages 6–14 rather than education at all levels.

While these court victories were major steps, advocates were nevertheless keenly aware that an explicit protection in the constitutional text was still needed. First, enshrining the right in the constitution would increase awareness that education was a fundamental right, and that schooling was both free and compulsory. Although enacted by some states and local governments throughout the twentieth century, compulsory education laws were often perceived as a duty on parents (sometimes enforced through criminal penalties) rather than a right of the child or a governmental commitment to ensure that all children could attend school.¹¹ Moreover, many school administrators were unaware of the laws.¹² Second, case law could be more easily overturned; even the two cases that established a “right to education” illustrated how the Court could articulate an expansive right in one decision and limit it in the next. Finally, some observers criticized the Court’s decision as overstepping its authority and changing policy in a way that should be reserved for Parliament.¹³ Consequently, even though the cases importantly advanced the right to education, further work was needed to ensure a strong, enduring constitutional right that all people would be aware of simply by reading the constitutional text.

In the years following *Unni Krishnan*, the right to education movement leveraged its findings and built strong partnerships with wide-ranging stakeholders, including families, teachers, trade unions, local government councils (*panchayats*), and numerous national and international civil society organizations (CSOs). Among the primary partners were groups working on child labor, including *Bachpan Bachao Andolan* and the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude. In 1997,

the movement successfully conveyed to Parliament a proposed amendment that was soon abandoned due to budgetary concerns and an impasse over its details. The CSOs' advocacy intensified, with networks including the National Alliance on the Fundamental Right to Education and the Forum for Crèches and Child Care Services (FORCES) leading actions and continuing the campaign nationwide.¹⁴

The movement culminated in the 115-day march for education, which traversed thousands of kilometers and 20 Indian states. The march brought even wider attention to the issues at stake and helped secure the Eighty-sixth Amendment's passage in 2002, thus creating an explicit, justiciable right to free and compulsory education for all children aged 6–14. In 2009, the legislature passed the Right to Education Act, which built on the amendment by establishing detailed standards, including the rights of students with disabilities, the prohibition of corporal punishment, and private schools' obligations to provide tuition-free education to at least 25% of their pupils.

As this brief history suggests, advancing education as a constitutional right in India required working in broad coalitions and building on both incremental victories and international commitments. According to one observer, the movement represented “the largest ever social mobilisation in Indian history post-independence for one single cause.”¹⁵ The movement also required dismantling fears and misinformation about what the right to education would mean. Parents feared that making school compulsory would open the door to criminal penalties, given the prosecutions under state compulsory education acts in the preceding decades. Advocates had to clarify that the amendment was about assigning responsibility to the state to guarantee free education to all.¹⁶ Today, the movement continues: FORCES and other organizations are building on the education amendment to call for an expansion of early childhood education.¹⁷

Ireland: Citizen Engagement and Building Wide Support for Same-Sex Marriage

In Ireland, the movement to enact a constitutional amendment protecting the right to same-sex marriage emerged not from case law, but from a constitutional convention. In 2011, as Ireland was recovering from the global recession, the new coalition government published a policy document broadly calling for a constitutional convention.¹⁸ The same year, a CSO, We the Citizens, held the Citizens' Assembly, which convened a randomly selected, representative group of Irish citizens to discuss their ability to influence politics.¹⁹ The assembly drew inspiration from similar gatherings in British Columbia, Iceland, and the United States, and shared its findings with politicians and government leaders.²⁰ In 2012, the government organized a constitutional convention,²¹ drawing on the “Citizens' Assembly” model.²²

In forming the Irish Constitutional Convention (ICC), the government had a polling company select participants to ensure representation across gender, race, SES, religion, and other characteristics. Ultimately, the 100-person ICC comprised

66 members of the public, 29 parliament members, four representatives from Northern Ireland, and a government-appointed chairperson.²³ The ICC's Terms of Reference, established by a parliamentary resolution, listed eight discussion topics, including marriage equality.²⁴ In response to public input at regional meetings in the fall of 2013, the ICC added economic, social, and cultural rights.²⁵ Throughout the convention, which met for livestreamed discussions over ten weekends from January 2012 to February 2014, participants heard presentations on each topic, including marriage equality, and were invited to deliberate at length.²⁶ After testimony and presentations from wide-ranging experts and stakeholders, including constitutional lawyers, clergy members, adult children of same-sex couples, and marriage-equality opponents, 79% of ICC members voted to put marriage equality on the ballot.²⁷

With this hurdle cleared, advocacy groups began focusing on strategy. Unlike in India, where constitutional amendments are adopted by parliamentary vote, in Ireland, proposed amendments are subject to a popular referendum. Like India's efforts on education, the movement to pass same-sex marriage in Ireland involved marches and public demonstrations, but ultimately focused on canvassing neighborhoods, launching social media campaigns, sharing personal stories, and other organizing tactics designed to encourage citizens to vote for the amendment.²⁸ The YES campaign emphasized a simple message: according to campaign co-director Grainne Healy, "[o]ur communications started with values. Our research told us that the electorate believed in love, equality, fairness, generosity, and being inclusive. These were what it meant to be Irish."²⁹ In May 2015, nearly 80% of the electorate turned out to vote. By a margin of 62% to 38%, voters affirmed these shared values, making Ireland the world's first country to explicitly protect same-sex marriage in its constitution.³⁰

In the years since the ICC, much coverage has been positive, although some criticisms have also emerged regarding representative participation and transparency of topic selection.³¹ The broader challenges with designing participatory constitutional design processes include ensuring that they provide a range of opportunities for participation that are accessible to people nationwide, and meaningfully incorporate public input as drafting moves forward. Nevertheless, Ireland's experience underscores ordinary citizens' enthusiasm and capability to engage in debates about their constitutions and identify priorities for ensuring these documents align with their values. Moreover, the clear support for marriage equality reflected in the 2015 vote illustrates how public education and civic engagement can serve as core components of movements for equal rights.

Malawi: Training Youth to Advocate for Themselves

Finally, in Malawi, a campaign to amend the constitution to eliminate a loophole perpetuating child marriage started with the people with the most at stake: girls and young women. Under the 1994 constitution, children as young as 15

could be married with parental approval.³² According to UNICEF, between 2002 and 2012, 11.7% of girls in Malawi were married by age 15, while 49.6% were married by 18.³³

In partnership with international CSOs including Girls Not Brides and Plan International, a youth-led movement began campaigning in 2011 to prohibit child marriage at every level of law. Two national networks, the Adolescent Girls Advocacy Network and the Girls' Empowerment Network (GENET), supported these efforts across the country. GENET's work in particular focused on empowering girls to raise their own voices and tell their stories. After GENET led an advocacy training with 200 girls in southern Malawi, the girls lobbied 60 village chiefs to strengthen community bylaws against child marriage and other harmful practices. In another initiative, GENET led a story-writing workshop with girls, who put their child marriage experiences onto paper. These powerful firsthand accounts were then published and distributed to policymakers.³⁴

The campaign's first major victory was a new law raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 in 2015. Yet the constitutional loophole for parental consent remained, and became the youth-led campaign's primary focus over the following year. The campaign was boosted by the support of Malawi's president and first lady, and built further momentum by engaging with key government bodies including the Ministries of Gender, Justice, and Education. Additionally, international and regional pressure, including multiple country visits by the U.N. Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, helped advance government leaders' commitments to moving the constitutional reforms forward.³⁵ In 2017, the parliament voted 131–2 to amend the constitution and eliminate the parental consent exception.³⁶

While much work remains to ensure implementation, girls and young women raising their voices effected remarkable changes in Malawi's laws and constitution over six years, striking a crucial blow against the persistence of child marriage and laying a foundation for equality for generations to come. Memory Banda, a young woman who participated in the campaign, stated: "Marriage is often the end for girls like me. But if our leaders will invest in us and give us the chance to be educated, we will become women who create a better society for everyone."³⁷ Notably, the campaign worked to advance change at every level, from community bylaws to national legislation and finally the constitution.³⁸ Further, by training girls and young women to be their own advocates, the campaign laid bare the consequences for individual lives of failing to act, while helping to cultivate Malawi's next generation of leaders.

As the experiences from India, Ireland, and Malawi illustrate, the most effective strategies in each country vary depending on the processes for constitutional change, the stakeholders involved, and the issues at stake. Nevertheless, the critical role of individual people throughout the process is consistent, and foundational for securing change.

Forming Coalitions

As the examples throughout this section have shown, ensuring the rights of all often requires building partnerships and recruiting allies to support broader movements. While a single person can make a difference, the more people who are engaged and the more voices that are raised, the greater the odds of creating lasting change.

Working in coalitions is especially important for strengthening rights for minority groups. In South Africa and Ecuador, for example, coalition-building was essential to successful efforts to include sexual orientation in the constitutional equality provision. In South Africa, integrating the fight for LGBT+ rights within the broader post-apartheid struggle for equality was pivotal for securing support for the world's first specific constitutional protection against sexual orientation discrimination.³⁹ In Ecuador, LGBT+ activists partnered with feminist groups and labor organizations to enact a SOGI-specific equal rights provision and strengthen fundamental social and economic rights. It is unlikely these new protections would have been achieved if the LGBT+ advocacy groups had not collaborated with others.

Partnering with other groups is also important for larger populations that have been politically marginalized historically. In Tunisia, women's groups played a powerful role in drafting the 2014 constitution, which explicitly protected women's equal rights for the first time. Women's groups nationwide partnered with other CSOs and labor groups to advance both strong protections for women's equal rights and provisions supporting economic opportunity.

Likewise, within Parliament, women worked across parties and religious lines to advance the new gender equality provisions. A key issue in the drafting process was how to reconcile Islam and strong protections for equality, but both religious and secular women parliamentarians exhibited a commitment to ensuring a women's rights provision made it into the final text.⁴⁰ In the words of Hela Hammi, a member of the religious party Ennahda, during the drafting process "there [were] a lot of political tensions among members of Parliament, but the women worked more or less in tandem."⁴¹

Sharing the Constitution

Everyone needs to know their constitutional rights for them to be realized. It is important for individuals to know both their own rights and the expectations for respecting the rights of others.

To increase awareness of constitutional rights, CSOs, governments, and concerned individuals have undertaken efforts to share their country's constitution—including both physical copies and education on its key principles. For example, the CSO Uraia Trust works to distribute copies of Kenya's constitution throughout the country, including copies in Braille, while providing civic education to empower citizens to claim their rights. The Indian organization Nazdeek trains

communities about their constitutional rights to health, and has instituted a community monitoring program in the rural area of Assam to track implementation of the right to health for expectant mothers.⁴² In South Africa, as part of a “Know Your Constitution Campaign,” the Constitutional Literacy and Service Initiative hosts workshops and constitutional debates at high schools and universities in disadvantaged areas throughout the country.⁴³ And in Germany, the government translated the first 20 articles of its constitution into Arabic in 2015, and distributed 10,000 copies of the document at refugee registration centers.⁴⁴ These initiatives underscore how sharing constitutions can both increase public awareness of rights and improve the prospects for their effective implementation.

Invoking the Constitution to Change Norms

With knowledge of what their constitution protects, individuals and communities can do more to change norms and attitudes, and begin productive conversations about critical issues. In South Africa, politicians and advocates have spoken out against xenophobia by referencing the constitution’s protections of refugees’ rights, which have been clarified through case law.⁴⁵ In Colombia, advocates citing their government’s constitutional obligation to uphold its commitments under CEDAW spurred a dialogue across Latin America about reproductive rights, which culminated in a Constitutional Court decision ending Colombia’s complete ban on abortion.⁴⁶

Individuals and groups can also invoke constitutional provisions and values to contest discriminatory policies or legislation before they are passed. In India, activists cited the constitution’s equality guarantee in protesting an amendment to the Citizenship Act introduced in 2016 that would create different standards for refugees’ ability to naturalize based on their religion.⁴⁷ In Malaysia, 51 national and regional civil society organizations collectively condemned the Malaysian government’s proposed “Foreign Workers First Out” policy, which urged employers to fire migrant workers before laying off citizens, notwithstanding their employment contracts. Citing the constitution’s guarantee that “all persons are equal before the law,” the groups rallied against the “unjust, discriminatory and unconstitutional policy.”⁴⁸

Finally, invoking the constitution can be a powerful tactic for pushing back against discriminatory statements or unconstitutional actions undertaken by people in positions of power or influence. For example, in 2006, then-former South African deputy president Jacob Zuma came under fire after making disparaging public remarks about homosexuality and same-sex marriage, which he described as “a disgrace to the nation and to God.”⁴⁹ Activists and other government leaders quickly condemned Zuma’s comments, partly by referencing the constitution’s explicit protection of equal rights regardless of sexual orientation. Within days, Zuma apologized, acknowledging that “[o]ur Constitution clearly states that nobody should be discriminated against on many grounds including sexual

orientation, and I uphold and abide by the constitution of our land.”⁵⁰ While norm change is a complex process shaped by many factors, individuals raising their voices play an important role in shifting societal expectations.

Claiming Rights and Challenging Discriminatory Laws in Court

Importantly, as emphasized throughout this book, claiming rights through the courts can be among the most powerful ways to realize constitutions’ promise and translate their commitments into impact in people’s day-to-day lives. Affected individuals, government actors, and community organizations all have roles to play in ensuring that constitutional rights are fulfilled.

Addressing Inconsistencies between Constitutions and Laws

One powerful way that individuals and CSOs can use constitutions is to demand reforms to laws and policies that are inconsistent with constitutional values. In various countries, especially those whose laws are far older than their constitutions, aspects of the national legal system may not fully align with constitutional commitments to equality. For example, around the world, many countries’ laws treat women and men unequally, even when their constitutions guarantee equal rights. Almost one-third of countries allow girls to be married younger than boys. Nearly half of countries provide paid maternal leave but not paid paternal leave, and those with paid paternity leave often provide men with a small fraction of what they provide women. These inequalities make women more vulnerable to employment discrimination, while reducing equality at home. Scores of countries have laws barring women from certain types of work. Women often have far fewer legal rights in families than men, from financial rights, to the right to pass citizenship to children, to safety from violence. The list goes on.

Individuals and civil society groups have shown that constitutional protections can provide tools for addressing these disparities. In Zimbabwe and Tanzania, constitutional guarantees of gender equality empowered young women to demand an increase in the minimum age of marriage for girls.⁵¹ In the United Kingdom, the Equality Act enabled a new father to access sufficient paid leave to take the primary caregiving role in his household while his wife returned to work.⁵² And in Sudan, the 2005 constitution’s new “bill of rights for women” provided a foundation for activists to demand reform of the country’s rape laws, which provided that survivors of rape could be prosecuted for having sex outside of marriage. Although significant challenges remain to ensure its implementation, the law was amended in 2015 to redefine rape and eliminate this possibility.⁵³

While inconsistencies between constitutional law and ordinary legislation are common, people have the power to close these gaps. Moreover, efforts that simultaneously change norms and challenge laws can be particularly effective. In South Korea, a network of 113 women’s organizations invoked the constitution’s protection of gender equality in its nationwide campaign to educate the public about the

“head-of-family” system, which automatically designated the eldest male family member as the legal head of household.⁵⁴ Alongside its efforts to increase public awareness of the issue, the group initiated a lawsuit, which resulted in a 2005 Constitutional Court ruling declaring the policy unconstitutional.⁵⁵

Bringing Individual Cases to Advance Broader Change

Cases brought by individuals are most transformative when their benefits extend to society as a whole. *Brown v. Board of Education*, the seminal U.S. case that ended formal school segregation, relied on the courage of 13 black families that purposefully tried to enroll their children at white schools. The case would go down in history in the name of Oliver Brown, father of nine-year-old Linda, who was the first plaintiff listed in the court filings. Linda’s case changed history.⁵⁶ In Canada, a case brought by a single couple, the Eldridges, both improved their access to services and changed the standard of care for people with hearing impairments in hospitals nationwide.⁵⁷ And in India, one woman’s fight against the discrimination she had personally faced in getting promoted at work led to a change in the law benefitting all women.⁵⁸

Holding Private Actors Accountable

Individuals have also brought cases, sometimes in partnership with and sometimes against government, to hold private actors accountable for rights violations. In Colombia, for example, Marco Gómez Otero brought a case against the private company charged with providing water to his neighborhood (which the public water service would not serve), arguing that it failed to supply sufficient water for personal use.⁵⁹ The company provided water only between 6 p.m. and midnight, and houses at higher elevations rarely received water at all, despite paying for it. Otero brought a lawsuit on behalf of his neighborhood. Citing the constitution’s protection of the rights to water and health, as well as international human rights standards, the Court ordered the company to make the necessary technical upgrades and investments to ensure an adequate daily water supply to all in Otero’s neighborhood within a month.⁶⁰

Advancing Equality across Communities through Civil Society Organizations

Lastly, CSOs can play major roles in identifying common rights violations in their communities, mobilizing potential parties and resources, and providing legal and technical assistance to prepare cases for court. In some countries, such as the United States, CSOs do not have jurisdiction to approach the courts on their own. In others, however, CSOs can bring cases to court directly. For example, the South African CSO Section 27 is dedicated to realizing the social and economic rights articulated in Section 27 of the constitution, and brings wide-ranging cases seeking to implement the rights to health and education for all. In 2015, Section

27 won a case on behalf of children in Limpopo, South Africa's northernmost, poorest province, establishing that students have a right to one textbook for each subject. As part of the broader campaign around the case, Section 27 engaged with parents, students, and community members to raise awareness about why #TextbooksMatter through marches, artistic demonstrations, and media outreach. More recently, the organization filed a case to secure Braille textbooks for students with visual impairments, which is still moving through the courts as of this writing.⁶¹

As these examples affirm, individuals can make a difference—whether by standing up on behalf of their communities, identifying and seeking to redress problems in their neighborhoods, joining broader equal rights campaigns, or simply speaking out against personal experiences of discrimination. Governments and private companies likewise have roles to play in understanding and fulfilling their constitutional and human rights commitments. While there are many effective approaches to achieving change, and going to court is rarely the first step, constitutional cases have been undeniably transformative in many of our countries. We can expect many more landmarks for equality in the decades to come.

CONCLUSION

Laws and constitutions alone, even well implemented, cannot ensure every person is treated equally. But they do provide important foundations. And just as constitutions have evolved over the past century, so too has our understanding of equality. Advancing equality requires creating conditions that provide all people with equal opportunities to thrive, eliminating present-day discrimination and dismantling the lingering impacts from past discrimination. It requires recognizing, respecting, appreciating, and accommodating our real differences, while ensuring our laws are not shaped by stereotypes. It means ensuring all people have a seat at the table and the opportunity to voice their needs and opinions. And it means guaranteeing that all people can meet their basic needs and have access to foundational education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.⁶²

Data on where countries, regions, and the global community are making progress and falling behind will have impact only if individuals use this information to make a difference. In the Philippines, two senators picked up our findings that the country provided less paid maternity leave than most of the world, and that it mattered for infant mortality. In 2017, they used these findings to pass a bill in the Senate to double maternity leave from 60 to 120 days.⁶³ In October 2018, the House of Representatives approved a similar bill guaranteeing 105 days of leave, which as of this writing awaits the president's signature.⁶⁴ In Ireland, together with the CSO Equality Now, we focused attention on the country's status as one of the few high-income countries not providing paid paternity leave. This inequality and the data showing that Ireland lagged behind other European countries became

an important topic of discussion in Parliament. In 2016, Parliament passed a law providing fathers with two weeks of paid paternity leave.⁶⁵

Will it make a difference that we now know which countries ensure equal rights regardless of gender, and which do not? And that we have similar information about the marked advances in countries guaranteeing equal rights across race/ethnicity and religion—but also about those countries that have yet to do so? Or the fact that people with disabilities, immigrants, and the LGBT+ community have the least protections? That's up to each of us, and all of us.