



# FACILITATOR NOTES

# For the facilitator

## Why have Facilitator Notes?

These Notes accompany the *Toolkit for Advocates: Sharing the Musawah Framework and our Key Messages*.

At the end of each section in the Toolkit, there are some suggested questions to discuss – either as a group or for individual Advocates to think about on their own. As a way of helping anyone facilitating these discussions, these Notes provide a brief guide to what issues the questions aim to explore. Some of them point to flashpoints that may be difficult for people to discuss, either because they are sensitive or they challenge dominant ways of thinking.

However, these may not be the only issues that surface during the discussions, and as a facilitator you should feel free to take the discussion in whatever direction and to whatever depth is most useful in your context and for your participants.

Make sure you also read the introduction to the Toolkit itself, as this may give you more ideas about how to use it.



## How are the Notes organised?

Each section in these Notes follows the same order as the sections in the main Toolkit. The various sections of the Toolkit (and therefore these Notes) can be used in any order that works best for you – there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ sequence.

For convenience, these Notes reproduce the To Talk About parts for each section of the Toolkit and adds the guiding points highlighted at the top of the page in a box. Please note that each guiding point does not necessarily correspond to a question in the To Talk About part; the guiding points are more about the overall aims of the questions. Each section is separate so you can print it out or photocopy it to have with you during a session.

As a facilitator, you may be using the Toolkit with Advocates and participants who have varied levels of experience and interest in the issues. So, in some sections we suggest additional questions for those who are more experienced as rights activists. But you may decide that your participants, even if they are less experienced, may be interested in these questions; it’s up to you, the facilitator, to decide which questions to discuss.

We hope these Notes help you and your group to explore the Musawah Framework in ways that inspire you to become an active part of our global movement to ensure equality and justice in the family!

# Why ‘Musawah’?

## This discussion explores:

- The challenges of a multi-lingual, transnational movement which brings together people from many cultures;
- How our traditional sayings and cultures can sometimes support equality.

### To talk about

What would have been the advantages and disadvantages if we had decided to use a different language for the name of our movement?

Does it matter how you pronounce ‘*musawah*’? What if your first language is not Arabic?

Some cultures have words and traditional phrases that seem to support gender equality. In parts of South Asia they say, “Women and men are like the two wheels of a bicycle.” Can you think of words and sayings in your language?

## This discussion explores

- Our individual and organisational diversities as well as the diversity of Muslim contexts (which can be manifested in different laws and practices, different legal systems, different attitudes towards law); and nevertheless the similarities we share;
- What it means to be an organic movement, rather than an organisation.

### To talk about

Does being 'global' mean that all the groups and individuals who are Musawah Advocates are (or have to be) the same? What do we share and what might be different?

How do our similarities and differences affect this movement?

Does your country have a Muslim majority or a Muslim minority? Does it have codified or uncodified laws? Laws based on religion and custom or laws that are called 'secular'? Do people follow the law or do they follow customs and practices?

If there is a country with no Musawah Advocates, should we search for them, create them, wait for them to contact other Advocates or find us through the website, ignore this gap...?

# Movement

## This discussion explores

- What movement means to you, the advantages of collective action and the idea that being part of a movement also carries responsibilities;
- What Musawah needs to do to become an effective movement;
- For more experienced activists: how the different forms of collective action work in theory and in practice.

### To talk about

If you are already a Musawah Advocate or if you or your group are thinking of becoming one, what do you think might be the benefits of being part of a movement like Musawah for your work towards equality and justice in the family? How could you strengthen the work of others in the movement?

What are the differences in the ways that people and groups in a movement, a network and an organisation relate to each other?

If you are already part of Musawah, how has your relationship with the movement been so far? Is there anything you would like to change and if so, how?

Is Musawah already a movement?

# Equality in the family

## This discussion explores

- Local priorities for achieving equality in the family;
- What achieving equality in the family means to each of us personally;
- Our knowledge about what family law texts actually say;
- For activists familiar with legal matters: concrete proposals for change towards equality, including where laws have already moved towards equality.

### To talk about

If you had magical powers, what is the one family law or practice that you would change immediately?

Acknowledging that ‘family’ means different things to different people and is varied across cultures, what do you think substantive equality in the family would look like in families you know?

In concrete terms, what laws and practices need to change so you can achieve equality in the family in your context?

Regarding the question immediately above, look at the text of the current local family law (if there is one in your country) and think about whether the main problem is with the law, with practices, or both.

If there is already a codified (written) family law in your country, or a draft law, can you suggest new wording that would strengthen its provisions in line with substantive equality?

# Equality and justice in the Muslim family *are necessary*

## This discussion explores

- The lived realities that make equality in the family necessary;
- The gap between the theory and practice of family laws; the roles and responsibilities of the spouses in theory (in laws and customs), and how these responsibilities work in practice;
- The role of laws, and the limitations of laws, in changing social attitudes.

### To talk about

What makes equality and justice in the family necessary in your country or community? How far do family laws and practices meet women's needs and their lived realities?

How do existing injustices impact on women and families?

In your experience, how are family law issues connected with other areas of life?

Is changing the law sufficient to achieve equality and justice in the family?

# The *time* for equality and justice is *now!*

## This discussion explores

- The changes in women's economic activity in Muslim societies, and the factors involved (which might include some or all of: access to education, access to contraception, conflict and displacement, poverty, migration, globalisation, women's rights movements, drug addiction and other factors);
- The gap between the theoretical rights and duties laid out in Muslim family laws (both codified and uncoded) and how these rights and duties work out in practice, for example whether men are really sole providers and women are always dependent;
- The impacts of this gap between laws and reality on rights and on individual lives;
- For activists familiar with advocacy: the challenges in building advocacy for a change in laws and attitudes.

### To talk about

How has the economic activity of women changed in your country or community in the past few decades? Do you feel there are more or fewer women-headed households?

What has caused these changes?

How have these changes affected family relationships?

Are the laws and practices in tune with these changes and impacts? How has this affected women in particular?

Do you know of any Muslim scholars who are talking about these issues, in your country or elsewhere? If there are some that are taking a rights-based position, how can you support their work, and if they are not visible how could you find out about them or create the opportunities for them to emerge?

As women's rights activists, how can you create the evidence and demand for change in laws and customs relating to the rights and responsibilities of the spouses?

# Equality and justice in the Muslim family are *possible*

## This discussion explores

- The diversity of Muslim family laws and practices over time and place, leading to the idea that humans shape laws and practices;
- The concrete and specifically local factors that make equality and justice in the family possible;
- Strategies for achieving the goal of equality and justice in the family, at both personal and community/national levels.

### To talk about

Think about the way your grandparents experienced family laws and practices. Are there any similarities and differences with your experience? Do you know of any community or country that has different practices and Muslim family laws from the ones you experience?

Some people say Muslim laws and practices are divine and so cannot change. What does diversity in laws and practices tell us about the space for change?

What makes equality and justice in the family possible in your country? How could you, as an individual or as part of a group, expand these possibilities or take advantage of them to improve your own situation and the situation for others?

# Holistic framework

## This discussion explores

- Why Musawah has chosen a holistic framework;
- The possible inter-actions between the four approaches that comprise the holistic framework;
- How the holistic framework relates to a real context;
- The participants' capacities, and also possible suggestions for future Musawah capacity-building.

### To talk about

What do you think are the advantages of using a holistic framework to analyse and advocate for equality and justice in the Muslim family? Are there any disadvantages you can think of?

Can you think of advocacy work in other areas of rights activism that has successfully used or is using a combination of approaches? What does this tell you about using a holistic approach in arguing for equality in the family?

In your context, is any one of the four approaches more or less effective in advocating for equality in the family? What combination, if any, might work best for your context?

What gaps in knowledge do you have about each of the four approaches? How could they be used in your context to support equality in the family?

# Why equality *and* justice?

## This discussion explores

- How our interpretations of important ideas reflect changes in society;
- Major social changes that have taken place compared to earlier Muslim histories;
- For activists with some experience in debating abstract ideas: The differences and relationship between equality and justice.



### To talk about

What changes do you think happened in the 20th century that made equality, and especially gender equality, an essential part of understanding the concept of justice?

Can you make a drawing showing the relationship between equality and justice? How does trying to draw this relationship help your understanding of the two ideas?

# Equality and Substantive Equality

## This discussion explores

- The differences between formal and substantive equality;
- Recognising the practical impact of the gap between formal equality and substantive equality in our daily lives;
- For activists familiar with legal matters: the challenges in drafting laws that promote substantive equality.

### To talk about

Women and men are biologically different: does this automatically mean they should have different social roles?

Can you share examples of laws and practices that support discrimination, formal equality and substantive equality?

What would substantive equality mean in your life? And what needs to change in yourself and others to move towards equality and justice in the family?

Take one concrete family law issue, and discuss what could be the text for a new family law that would support substantive equality for that issue.

# Equality in the family is the foundation for equality in society

## This discussion explores

- The links between family laws and practices and the overall development of a society;
- The power structures, and political and social groups that benefit from continuing inequality in the family.

### To talk about

Can you think of examples of how inequality in the family affects people's lives outside their home? How would their lives be different if there was equality in the home?

What benefits would equality in the family bring to society as a whole? In your country or community, who supports equality in the family and who resists it, and why?

# Families are central to our lives

## This discussion explores

- The role of family in our lives, including the positive and the negative;
- Strategies for a positive vision of the family.

### To talk about

Discuss any examples you can think about of people who do not have a family. Are they still affected by family laws? If not, why not; and if so, why?

At a conference in 2007 held by AWID ([www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org)), some women's rights activists called for greater attention by feminists to the family. Some also suggested that feminists need to reclaim the idea of family from patriarchal forces. Do you agree?

What can be done to make families work more as a support mechanism and less as a source of exploitation and discrimination?

# Safe and happy space, equally empowering for all

## This discussion explores

- The idea that positive and egalitarian behaviour and attitudes in the family are possible and are beneficial for all family members;
- The limits of law as a tool for social change;
- Our own behaviour which may be discriminatory towards people we employ in the family setting.

### To talk about

Can you think of examples of families that are safe, happy and empowering spaces or examples of marriages that are a partnership of equals? What is it that they do differently from families that are unhappy?

Are laws enough to ensure the family is a safe and happy space, equally empowering for all? How can attitudes be changed?

Some people argue that non-blood relations such as domestic labourers should also be included in the family and also need to be safe, happy and empowered. What do you think?

# The Muslim family and families in all their multiple forms

## This discussion explores

- Ways of broadening our understanding of what ‘the family’ means, and what ‘the Muslim family’ includes;
- How some interpretations of ‘the family’ or ‘the Muslim family’ can be discriminatory and exclude some people and families;
- The concept of identity and how we all have multiple identities;
- For activists familiar with the idea of identities: the role of the state and laws in categorising people.

### To talk about

Can you think of different types of Muslim families in your context?

What are the similarities and differences with other families?

Here are two short stories based on real people’s lives (the names have been changed to protect their privacy). Discuss what they mean for our understanding of the term ‘the Muslim family’.

Zakia’s family migrated from South Asia to Britain when she was a little girl. She lived most of her life in Britain, and was brought up as a practising Muslim. When she grew up, she became a well-paid professional woman. She didn’t find the men of her community able to accept her as an equal. Instead, she fell in love with and married an Englishman. He did not convert to Islam when they got married but they were able to marry under British civil law. They were blessed with two children, a daughter and a son, both of whom were brought up as Muslims. Zakia is now getting older and has started worrying about what will happen at the end of her life. She wants to be buried as a Muslim but she has been told by some people that because she married a non-Muslim, she was not part of a Muslim family and she cannot be buried as a Muslim. Luckily, she has found some sympathetic scholars who support her desire to be buried as a Muslim.

Shoeib and Fatmeh from Cairo in Egypt were brought up in families that were not very religious. But because their family background is Muslim, under the law they count as Muslim and have to get married by signing a Muslim marriage contract before a Mazoun, a licenced marriage official who has a religious education. They don’t consider themselves a ‘Muslim family’ but an ‘Egyptian family’.

‘Muslim’ is just one identity, label or way of categorising people. Another is ‘woman’, ‘man’. What are some other identities? Are the identities and labels we give ourselves always the same as the labels other people or the state give us? Can you think of anyone who does not fit a neat identity category, and how this might affect their rights in family law and practice?

What does the law recognise as a ‘Muslim family’ in your context? Are there some families which are excluded and which you think should be included?

# Builds on centuries of effort

## This discussion explores

- How struggles for equality and rights have always existed and how they influence struggles today;
- How it is important to recognise the contributions of all struggles for rights.

### To talk about

In each country there have been struggles to advance and protect equality in national laws and constitutions, including in the sphere of the family; can you think of examples from your own country?

Who have been the rights activists, women and men, who have inspired your work? How far back in history does your list go, and how did they inspire you?

# To promote and protect equality

## This discussion explores

- The differences between “promoting”, “protecting” and “fulfilling” human rights;
- The roles of the state and of non-state actors;
- Identifying potential allies in action to ensure equality and justice in the family.

### To talk about

In your context, are women’s rights activists or your organisations mainly focusing on promoting rights, protecting rights, or both?

What aspects of which laws and practices do you think need to be reformed or protected?

In your context, how far is the state helpful in promoting and protecting rights in the family? Are there different parts of the state that are more or less helpful?

In your context, which non-state actors help promote and protect rights in the family and which obstruct advances towards rights?

# Led by Muslim women

## This discussion explores

- The challenges relating to women's leadership in Muslim societies;
- The possibility that 'Muslim-led' may make some people feel excluded, and what can be done to address this;
- Different ways of thinking about the idea of leadership - is it 'power over', 'power to', 'power with'?

### To talk about

What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of publicly claiming women's right to leadership in matters regarding equality and justice in the Muslim family?

How can a movement like Musawah be clear about its specific focus on Muslim societies and at the same time also be inclusive of people who may not be Muslim or may not identify themselves as Muslim?

What kinds of qualities, skills and backgrounds do you think the leadership of a movement for equality and justice should have?

# Women and men

## This discussion explores

- The role and contribution of men in a movement that focuses on the family and women's rights;
- How family law issues may affect men;
- Possible differences in the behaviour of fathers, husbands and sons towards female members of family in different contexts.



### To talk about

Do you think Musawah should include men? How are they affected, if at all?

These are comments from some Musawah Advocates interviewed in August 2010. Do these comments apply to your work or community too?

# Publicly reclaim Islam's spirit of justice

## This discussion explores

- Power dynamics relating to interpretations of religious sources;
- Thinking strategically about publicly debating a religion's perspectives on the family;
- Different possible meanings of “secularism” and the relationship between religion and public policy.

### To talk about

What obstacles do women and other disadvantaged groups face in publicly claiming their right to engage in understanding religious texts?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of publicly debating how Islam's message can apply to today's world and the need for equality and justice in the family?

Should religion influence public policy?

## This discussion explores

- How Musawah relates to people of other religions and beliefs;
- Various possible meanings of “citizenship” including ideas that it relates to the realisation of human rights;
- State discrimination against certain groups in society, and how this is manifested in family law matters.

### To talk about

How are non-Muslims or people who don't see themselves as Muslims affected by Muslim family laws and practices, if at all?

How can Musawah ensure that everyone affected by injustice and inequality in the family is included in the movement?

What do you think is meant by ‘full and equal citizenship’?

Do you think your country or your government ignores some citizens or excludes some people from full and equal citizenship? If so, how does this relate to equality in the family?

# Individuals and groups

## This discussion explores

- Alternatives to collective action as a form of rights activism;
- The different needs of individuals and groups in rights activism;
- A mapping of existing and potential allies and Advocates in your context.



### To talk about

How can individuals contribute to a movement such as Musawah and how can Musawah include them effectively?

What kinds of individuals and organisations are already part of local campaigns for equality and justice in the family? Can you think of others that you could include in your national or regional activities?

# Musawah's three areas of work:

## Knowledge Building, Outreach and International Advocacy

### This discussion explores

- The understandings of the term “knowledge building”;
- The importance of large-scale mobilisation for change;
- The impact of international human rights standards even in remote communities;
- The inter-action between Musawah's three work areas.

### To talk about

How might feminist or rights-based knowledge building be different to other types of knowledge building?

Are ideas enough to change the world? Why do we need to build movements? Musawah is a movement supporting rights activists who want to achieve equality and justice in the family in their communities and in their countries, so why does its work areas include international advocacy?

In your view, is one of Musawah's three work areas – knowledge building, outreach and international advocacy – more important for your work or are they all equally important?

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