



# MUSAWAH

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Setting The Foundations For A Dynamic Movement



musawah



Fest of Equals

Musawah, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, is now at an important juncture. It has been three years since its official launch at the first Musawah Global Meeting in 2009 and five years since planning for our movement began. It is time to revisit and reaffirm Musawah's vision and objectives, review progress in its key work areas, and set its strategic direction for the next few years.

This strategic direction document was developed through a consultative drafting process involving dozens of Musawah Advocates across the world. It builds upon collective analyses in key Musawah publications, including the *Musawah Framework for Action and Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family*. It also draws on insights and agreements that emerged from the October 2009 Communications Advisory Group meeting, the August 2010 Outreach Strategy Meeting, the International Advisory Group (IAG) meetings in 2010 and 2011, and the February 2011 Strategic Direction Meeting.

This document is intended to guide all those involved in the work of Musawah. This includes Musawah Advocates, Affinity Groups, Working Groups, the IAG and the Secretariat. As a movement of groups and individuals from diverse and changing contexts, our collective understanding of Musawah is an organic process. This articulation of Musawah's current strategic direction is one step in this process.

# The Musawah Voice

“A movement like Musawah will raise the knowledge, give us solidarity ...  
I can't be wrong if all these women are with me!” Zaynab Mohamed Hamed Elswawi (Sudan)

Musawah shares with all who advocate for human rights, and with women's rights activists in particular, the vision of a world where equality, non-discrimination, justice, and dignity are the basis of all human relations.

Our understanding of equality recognises the different circumstances and experiences of women and men. We seek to achieve the full development of every individual's potential, rather than simply seeking sameness or equity. We see equality as a core message of Islam and a core universal value.

We have come together across regions and across our diversities to realise this dream for women and men in diverse Muslim contexts, including majority and minority. Our sense of unity and common purpose are helping us turn our efforts into a dynamic, unstoppable movement for equality and justice in Muslim families – in all of their multiple forms.

Musawah provides support for national, regional, and international women's rights initiatives by raising their visibility and strengthening women's voices demanding equality and justice in the family. Across Muslim societies, women's voices, women's experiences, and women's realities have historically been silenced or ignored by those with authority and power. It is time to strengthen the voices of all those who have been marginalised.

Ideas, knowledge, and voice are the main currency of Musawah. Our holistic Framework for Action brings together scholarship and experience regarding Muslim jurisprudence and theology, universal human rights principles, national laws and constitutional guarantees of equality, and the lived realities of women and men in Muslim contexts.

We seek to reclaim the spirit of equality and justice within Islam, which we see as compatible with international human rights standards. We highlight women's realities, amplify women's voices (both historical and contemporary), and strive to legitimise their perspectives. We show the injustices arising from patriarchal customs and laws that take their legitimacy from particular readings of Islam's sacred texts. We offer alternatives by developing new understandings of Muslim jurisprudence, laws, and practices in ways that are responsive to women's needs and in harmony with Islamic teachings and human rights principles.

Musawah opens up spaces where activists can interact, exchange information, and mutually strengthen a common pursuit of equality and justice in the Muslim family.

Our movement is led by Muslim women, but is open to women and men from all religions and beliefs. We are building a supportive constituency of Muslim women and citizens with the knowledge and confidence to participate in and shape the discourse on Islam and women's rights in private and public spaces.

We will use our collective strength to challenge governments, patriarchal authorities, and ideological non-state actors who try to utilise religion and the word of God to silence our voice and our demands for equality.

With an unshakeable insistence on equality for women, we will create and engage in constructive dialogues that enable religion to be a source of liberation, and no longer an obstacle to equality. We do so with full conviction that this is both our right and our duty as women and men committed to equality and justice.

# Musawah's Hope for Equality

## Our Vision

A world where equality, non-discrimination, justice, and dignity are the basis of all human relations.

## Our Goal

A global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, which advances human rights for women in Muslim contexts, in both their public and private lives.

## Our Objectives

1. To build and share knowledge that supports equality and justice in the Muslim family using a holistic approach that combines Islamic principles, international human rights standards, national laws and constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination, and the lived realities of women and men.
2. To build a critical mass of organisations, groups, and individuals that support, use, and promote the Musawah Framework for Action and are empowered to engage in the public discourse on Islam and women's rights.
3. To support the work of human rights mechanisms, as well as groups and individuals working with these processes at the international, regional, and national levels, to advance equality and justice in the Muslim family.

To me, change towards equality means:

**“To have a family law in the first place.”**

Hatoon el-Fassi, Saudi Arabia

**“Get the minimum age of marriage introduced immediately.”**

Asma'u Joda, Nigeria

**“Equal parental responsibility.”**

Halima Jouini, Tunisia

**“For women to be able to call their own divorces without obstruction and without the social baggage and hang ups that come with it.”**

Tasneem Chopra, Australia



# Why Musawah? Why now?

Musawah, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, was launched in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in February 2009. Musawah is new as a social movement, yet it builds upon centuries of effort to promote and protect equality and justice in the family and in society. The time was ripe for the emergence of Musawah.

We live in an era in which women's rights have been asserted and recognised as part of international human rights standards. Constitutions and national laws in many Muslim majority and minority countries guarantee equality and non-discrimination to all citizens regardless of gender. Vast socio-economic changes have transformed the daily lives of Muslim women. Muslim women's tangible contributions to their families as providers and protectors are growing and are increasingly being recognised.

At the same time, the rise of political Islam in Muslim majority and minority countries has led to absolutist understandings of Islam being used to pressure communities and individuals to adhere to particular ways of life – in ways that often discriminate against women. In the process, women's rights, status, dress, freedom of movement, conduct, and roles in public and private life, especially within the family, have often become a major battleground of Muslim authenticity and piety. In many countries, gains made through law reform are threatened by claims that these rights are against the teachings of Islam.

Increasingly, women are claiming for themselves the right to shape the interpretations, norms and laws that affect their lives. Over the past few decades, women activists, scholars, and rights groups in Muslim contexts have built on the efforts of earlier generations to push for recognition of equality between men and women and to protect positive legal provisions where they exist.

Musawah emerged to highlight these efforts. It seeks to further explore, develop, and share a broader, holistic framework for promoting concepts of justice and equality in Islam, and the Muslim family in particular. The Musawah Framework for Action argues for reform from multiple approaches:

- Islamic principles and sources, including Muslim jurisprudence;
- International human rights standards;
- National laws and constitutional guarantees of equality; and
- Lived realities of women and men.

Musawah views each of these approaches as having equal value. The Framework offers the possibility that these approaches can be used in harmony with each other. As such, women can locate their activism, their feminism, and their demands for justice and equality in both Islamic and human rights frameworks. They can choose how to emphasise the different approaches in their advocacy strategies according to their specific needs and contexts.

# Why Musawah? Why now?

All of this is epitomised in Musawah's three key principles:

- Equality, non-discrimination, justice, and dignity as the basis of all human relations;
- Full and equal citizenship for every individual; and
- Marriage and family relations based on equality and justice, with men and women sharing equal rights and responsibilities.

Musawah's efforts are based on simple but strong assertions: Islam, indeed all religions, can be a source of empowerment, not a source of oppression and discrimination. Given their impact on our rights and our daily realities, all laws and public policies, whether based on religion, custom, or other norms, must be open to public debate and advance equality and justice for all.

## The time for equality and justice is now!

We believe that equality and justice in the Muslim family are necessary and possible. All citizens – women and men, Muslims and people of all religions and beliefs, no matter what their expertise – should be able to claim their rights and speak out on issues that affect their lives. The rationale for this movement is simple. In the 21st century, there cannot be justice without equality. The time for equality and justice is now!

Zainah Anwar, Director of Musawah, Malaysia



# The Musawah Community

Musawah is a movement for all who share Musawah's principles and vision for change. While women and men of all religions and beliefs make up the Musawah community, Musawah is led by Muslim women. This reflects women's particular need for equality and justice in the family and highlights Musawah's efforts to show that this is possible within Islam.

Musawah seeks to provide knowledge resources, information, and links that can support those working to ensure equality in family laws and practices in diverse contexts. This includes contexts in which laws and practices are codified or uncoded, secular or based on religion, whether they apply only to Muslims or affect people of different religions and beliefs.

The Musawah community includes Musawah Advocates, Allies, Affinity Groups, Working Groups, the International Advisory Group and its Steering Committee, the Musawah Secretariat, and everyone who has a stake and is actively involved in Musawah's work. We aim to have a flexible structure to support our global reach and activities and to ensure effective and accountable governance and resource management.



# The Musawah Community

**Advocates:** Advocates share Musawah's goal of equality in the family and have a stake in and commitment to the growth of the movement. All Advocates agree with the Musawah Framework, use it in their activities, and contribute to the achievement of Musawah's strategic goals and objectives.

**Allies:** Allies are individuals and organisations who broadly support Musawah's work, vision, and principles, though they may not specifically work on issues related to Muslim family laws and practices.

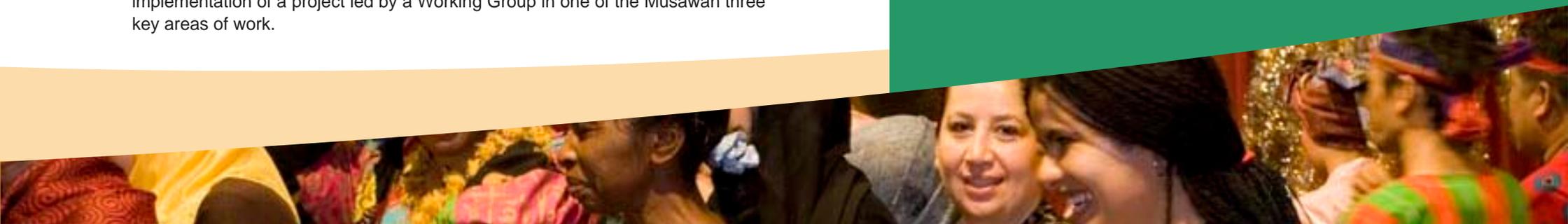
**Affinity Groups:** Affinity Groups are self-organised groups of individual Advocates or organisations who share a national, regional, thematic, or contextual focus. Affinity Groups seek to advance their advocacy by tapping into the solidarity and strength of collective thought and action. (See box for examples of Affinity Groups.) Affinity Groups make autonomous decisions on their scope and focus. They are considered part of Musawah as long as they agree with Musawah's vision and principles and actively contribute to the achievement of Musawah's strategic goals and objectives.

Advocates who decide to form an Affinity Group simply need to come together, declare themselves an Affinity Group, develop a plan, and communicate this back to the Musawah Secretariat. The Musawah Secretariat will sign a Memorandum of Agreement with the Affinity Group regarding responsibility and autonomy in their mutual relationship. In turn, the Secretariat will help the Group become connected with others in the Musawah community. Activities carried out by Affinity Groups are, for the most part, sponsored through their own fundraising efforts. The Secretariat can provide letters of recommendation to support such activities. Certain Affinity Groups may receive Musawah funding support if their work is directly linked to the implementation of a project led by a Working Group in one of the Musawah three key areas of work.

## Examples of Affinity Groups

**Alimat** ('knowledgeable women') was launched in Indonesia as a national Musawah Affinity Group in October 2009. It is comprised of 9 member organisations and 21 individual members (including academics from both Islamic and secular universities). Alimat and its members have been particularly active in research and advocacy on amendments to the family law and led the pilot study on documenting life stories for the Musawah Knowledge Building Initiative on Qiwamah and Wilayah. In August 2010, Alimat organised and hosted the first Musawah Outreach Meeting and an Asia Regional Strategy Meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

**The Young Women's Caucus (YWC)** was formed at the first Musawah Global Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It consists of approximately 30 Muslim women under the age of 35 who are interested in working on the issues of young Muslim women within the Musawah context. The YWC plans to create a space where young Muslim women's voices, experiences and perspectives are amplified and to enable young Muslim women to have access to gender-just resources on Islam and women's human rights.



# The Musawah Community

**International Advisory Group (IAG):** The International Advisory Group is Musawah's highest policy- and decision-making body. The 15 Advocates on the IAG provide strategic direction, leadership, and input into strengthening Musawah at the regional and international levels. They provide feedback on Musawah's programmes and activities; serve on Working Groups; represent Musawah in various fora; and help guide the direction of the Global Meetings. A smaller **Steering Committee** works with the Secretariat to make programmatic decisions and monitor implementation for the movement. The Steering Committee is comprised of a chair elected by the IAG, the convenors of the 5 Working Groups, and the Director of the Secretariat.

The IAG was formed in February 2010 when the original Planning Committee for Musawah's first Global Meeting was dissolved. A transition was made into this more diverse body of 15 members. Membership is on a rotational basis. New members are nominated from amongst qualified Advocates, in accordance with the guidelines in the IAG Terms of Reference.

**Working Groups:** There are currently 5 Working Groups on knowledge building, outreach, international advocacy, communications, and resource mobilisation. These Working Groups provide support, advice, and assistance to the movement in developing work plans, building resources, and implementing activities for each of these areas of work. The Working Groups are made up of Musawah Advocates, IAG members, and allies. The convenors of the 5 Working Groups are also members of the Musawah Steering Committee.

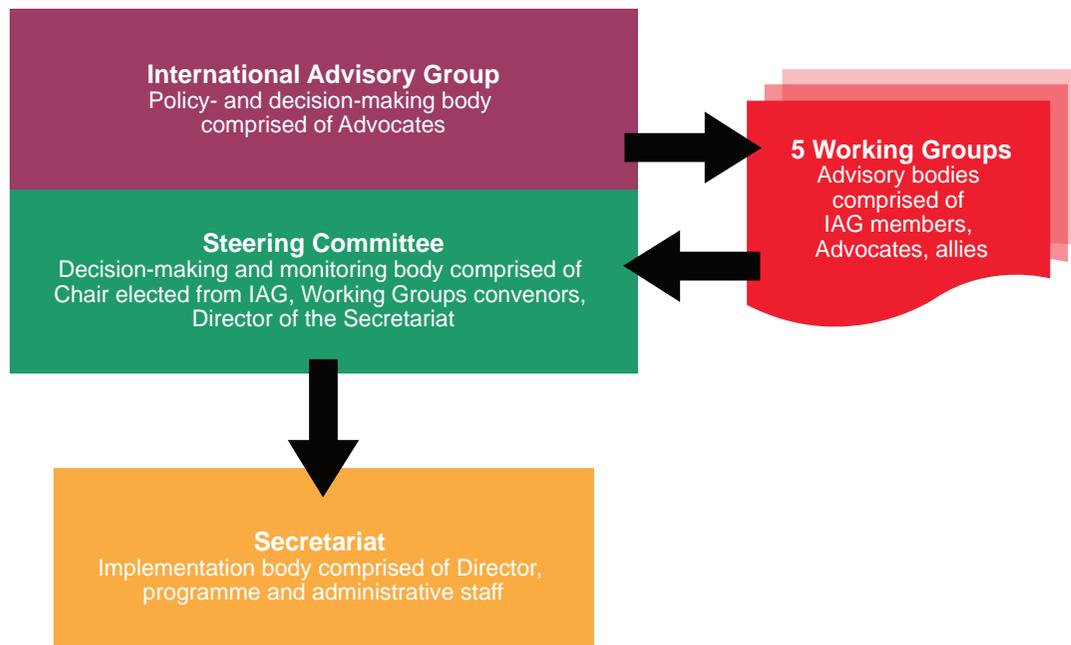
**Secretariat:** The Secretariat facilitates the implementation and coordination of overall Musawah work plans and key components of the global activities. These work plans are developed in part by the 5 Working Groups. The Secretariat is currently made up of a Director, a Global Coordinator, programme and administrative staff members. Currently, some staff members work full-time, others part-time; some are physically based in the Secretariat, while others work from their home countries. The Secretariat also organises annual IAG meetings and other key events, responds to queries, provides technical support to the different components of Musawah, and liaises with the media. The Secretariat is also responsible for fundraising, reporting, and resource management towards implementing Musawah's work plans. The Secretariat reports to the IAG twice a year and is in regular contact with the Steering Committee.



Shahnaz Habib, The Star, Malaysia

*One of 28 global media organisations that covered 2009 Global Meeting*

# The Musawah Community



## Rotation of the Musawah Secretariat

Musawah has a rotating Secretariat. This is to ensure that as a global movement, it can grow in diverse cultural and political contexts. This also offers different Advocates the opportunity to take up leadership.

The Secretariat is currently housed within Sisters in Islam (SIS), a feminist non-governmental organisation based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. SIS provides the Secretariat support in ensuring Musawah meets its financial and legal obligations.

Egyptian Advocates have offered to host the Secretariat beginning in 2013. The Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA), a non-governmental organisation in Cairo, will support Musawah in this transition, including advising on the best legal and organisational structure for Musawah in the Egyptian context. A transition team will develop a blueprint of Secretariat functions, roles, and responsibilities that the new Secretariat can use to maintain consistency in Musawah's work.

The next Global Meeting will be held in Egypt in early 2013. Given the scale and size of this meeting, the Cairo-based organising team will focus solely on the preparation for this event. The transition of the Secretariat will be completed after the Global Meeting.



# The Musawah Community

## Principles of Interaction

Musawah's work is grounded in the core principles of transparency, honesty and accountability. In addition, the following principles, which are inspired by values within the Musawah Framework for Action, guide interactions between members of the Musawah community:

- **Equality** means ensuring (a) all in the Musawah community are equally valued for what they bring to the community; (b) Musawah materials use language that promotes equality; and (c) Musawah knowledge and expertise are available to all in the Musawah community.
- **Non-discrimination** means consciously working towards inclusivity in the form, structure and content of all Musawah activities and communications. Specifically, we seek to ensure space for people of all ages, capacities, religions and beliefs, socio-economic standings, and professions, and those active in the women's movement, whether they refer to themselves as feminists or not.
- **Dignity** means affirming, respecting, and celebrating each individual's uniqueness, which entails (a) respecting differences of opinions; (b) valuing diversity in contributions to the movement; (c) depicting people in a positive light; and (d) respecting confidentiality.
- **Justice** means that all within the Musawah community have an opportunity to share their opinions and perspectives and be respectfully heard.
- **Full and equal citizenship** means recognising (a) the agency of Musawah Advocates as local experts in the generation and sharing of knowledge; (b) Advocates' right to retain control over knowledge they produce and build; and (c) Advocates' right to self-representation.

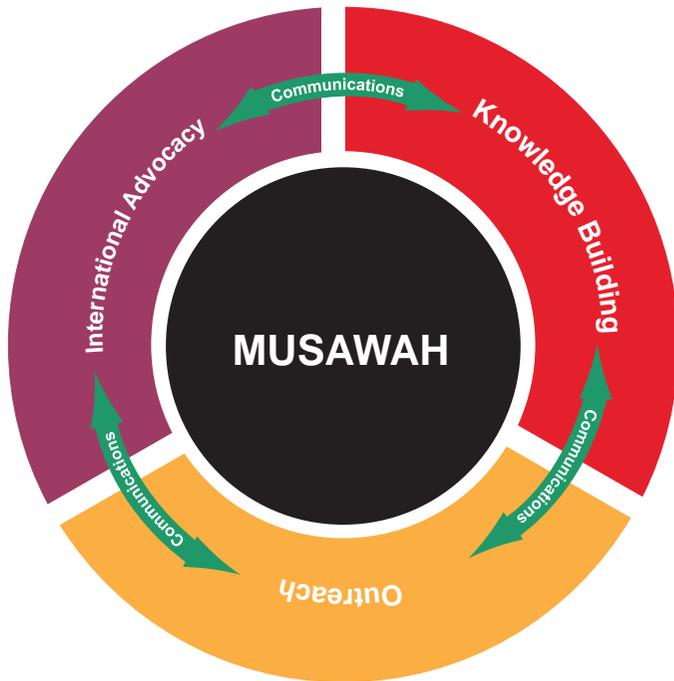
- **Reciprocity** within the context of our community means encouraging Musawah Advocates, allies, and others both to give and to take in a spirit of mutual respect and solidarity in their interactions with each other and the various entities within the Musawah structure.
- **Diversity** means openness to acknowledging our differences of context, opinion, and approach, wherever these arise.



Fatimata M'Baye, Musawah Advocate, Mauritania

# Musawah Ways of Working

Musawah has developed three inter-related areas of work to realise its goal. These three areas of work are: (1) knowledge building; (2) outreach; and (3) international advocacy. These areas of work are supported by communications activities. In each area of work, a Working Group supports, advises, and assists the movement in developing work plans, building resources, and implementing activities.



Marwa Sharafeldin, IAG Member, Egypt



# Musawah Ways of Working

## Knowledge Building

Musawah is a knowledge building movement, facilitating access to existing knowledge and creating new knowledge about women's rights in Islam. We seek to apply feminist and rights-based lenses in understanding and searching for equality and justice within Muslim legal traditions. Such lenses help reveal the tension between the egalitarian and hierarchical voices in the tradition. This allows the emergence of women's voices, which were for so long silenced in the production of religious knowledge, so that women's concerns and interests can be reflected.

We believe that the production and sharing of knowledge should be participatory, recognise non-traditional forms of expertise, and begin from contexts rather than texts. In this way, the knowledge produced will be grounded in the lived realities of women and men, with such realities informing the approach to the issues and the questions being asked.

Musawah's current knowledge building work has two components: (1) long-term, multi-faceted knowledge building initiatives on specific concepts and themes; and (2) capacity building of Musawah Advocates to make knowledge and advocacy strategies relating to family laws and practices and women's rights in Islam more accessible.

### Knowledge Building

#### Focus Areas through 2014

- Conduct a multi-faceted knowledge building initiative on the Qur'anic concepts of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*, which are commonly understood as sanctioning men's authority over women. The initiative will have three elements:
  - Commissioning background research on the role of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* within historical and present-day Muslim legal traditions and research on socio-economic realities;
  - Conducting participatory research to collect women's and men's life stories in relation to *qiwamah* and *wilayah*; and
  - Opening spaces for scholars and activists to discuss and forge new understandings of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.
- Develop a capacity building programme on 'Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective', including curriculum development, training sessions, and a training of trainers to help build a pool of resource persons.

#### Outcomes

- New feminist knowledge and a rethinking about the idea and realities of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* that can empower Musawah Advocates to ensure that laws and practices promote equality and justice in the family.
- A core of Advocates able to share knowledge about the dynamic interactions between the Qur'an, *fiqh*, and the rights framework and to advance rights-based arguments that are grounded in lived realities and an understanding of Islam that upholds equality and justice.

#### How You Can Get Involved

- Share examples of best practices in laws, successful campaigns to promote and protect equality in the family, texts of relevant laws and constitutions, research on family laws and practices, life stories, and so forth. For example, collect life stories of women in your country as part of the *qiwamah* project or share legal frameworks or socio-economic data on how *qiwamah* works in practice in your country.
- Attend a Musawah training on 'Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective'.
- Organise a national or regional training or workshop in collaboration with Musawah to promote analyses and advocacy strategies that advance equality and justice in Muslim families.

## Outreach

Musawah works to strengthen our sense of community and common purpose, with a goal of building a critical mass of supporters that work with and advocate for the Musawah Framework. Musawah is a diverse, multi-dimensional, and organic movement that has different significance for different people. Even so, we seek to always work collectively in response to real needs. We do this by creating and sharing platforms, tools, and information that all in the Musawah community can use based on their needs and their own directions.

Musawah's current outreach work seeks to connect activists, organisations, and individuals through three key components: mobilisation, capacity building, and knowledge building. The Musawah Secretariat shares responsibility for facilitating transnational outreach and connections, while Advocates and Affinity Groups take responsibility for building local and regional connections, with support from the Secretariat as required. Opportunities and responsibilities for focus areas and outcomes are shared accordingly.

| Outreach                        |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Focus Areas through 2014</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build connections locally, regionally, and transnationally that link Advocates as well as allies.</li><li>• Develop and operate diverse online communications platforms and means that enable Advocates to engage in shared Musawah activities and programmes.</li><li>• Support the establishment of Affinity Groups that share a national, regional, thematic, or contextual focus.</li><li>• Share the Musawah Framework for Action with activists and the wider public locally, regionally, and internationally.</li><li>• Work with Advocates to promote the Musawah Framework for Action in their communities.</li><li>• Facilitate regional or affinity-based meetings in preparation for the 2013 Global Meeting.</li></ul> |
| <b>Outcomes</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A stable core of engaged Advocates and Affinity Groups that can help shape the movement, its knowledge building and advocacy.</li><li>• A core of Advocates able to promote the Musawah Framework for Action in different contexts.</li></ul>   |
| <b>How You Can Get Involved</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share your experiences and resources about family law issues, strategies, and advocacy campaigns around family laws and practices, or initiate and engage in discussions about family laws and practices with other Advocates and allies on various Musawah platforms.</li><li>• Form an Affinity Group based on national, regional, thematic, or contextual affinities with other individuals or groups in order to strengthen your collective action.</li><li>• Join an existing Affinity Group that meets your needs for solidarity and support.</li><li>• Organise a national or regional meeting in preparation for the next Musawah Global Meeting in 2013.</li></ul>   |

# Musawah Ways of Working

“Would be truly appreciative of any information that would enable us to convince our own ulama that they need to support and protect the girl child from the harmful effects of child marriage. Can you link us up with anyone working on the legislation?”

Maryam Uwais, a child rights activist from Abuja, Nigeria, connecting with other Musawah Advocates to strengthen her local work

“Thanks to Musawah, I feel honoured to be part of a global network of Muslim women who are working tirelessly throughout the world for the rights of women despite many challenges.”

Jennifer Janif, a New Zealand activist who connected with Musawah Advocates in the United Kingdom

Members of Musawah YWC, International Women's Day 2011, Malaysia



# Musawah Ways of Working

## International Advocacy

Musawah seeks to strengthen women's voices at the regional and international levels and raise the visibility of initiatives for equality and justice in the Muslim family. A key strategy of Musawah's international advocacy work is engaging with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its treaty body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), and with NGOs involved in the CEDAW reporting process.

### International Advocacy

#### Focus Areas through 2014

- Introduce the Musawah Framework to women's human rights NGOs and activists involved in preparing CEDAW shadow reports and engaging with CEDAW Committee members on key issues related to Islam and women's rights in their countries.
- Maintain engagement with CEDAW Committee members on the Musawah Framework. This could include the submission of thematic reports on marriage and family issues for reporting States parties when no shadow report has been submitted or when the shadow report is silent on Muslim family laws and practices.
- Promote Musawah's perspectives and analyses to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations treaty bodies, and special mechanisms. Simultaneously engage international, regional, and national NGOs involved in advocacy in these spaces.
- Assess possibly entry points for advocacy in regional and international bodies and mechanisms such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Arab League, African Union, and different United Nations special mechanisms.

#### Outcomes

- NGOs engaged with the CEDAW process use the arguments and analyses put forward by Musawah to support their demands for equality and justice in family and marriage.
- Experts, officials, and activists engaged with human rights and women's rights treaty obligations and mechanisms are increasingly familiar with the Musawah Framework and the possibilities for reform towards equality and justice in Muslim families.

#### How You Can Get Involved

- Join the CEDAW shadow reporting process in your country and/or ensure that your shadow report emphasises that equality and justice in Muslim families are necessary and possible.
- Attend the CEDAW Session when your government reports to the CEDAW Committee and actively engage with CEDAW Committee members on Musawah's key principles.
- Request the support of the Musawah Secretariat to submit a thematic report on marriage and family issues to the CEDAW Committee in response to your government's report. This is in the event that NGOs from your country are unable to submit a shadow report or attend the CEDAW session, or if the shadow reports from your country fail to address Muslim family laws and practices.



# Musawah Ways of Working

## Supporting Musawah areas of work through communications

Building a global movement requires raising the visibility of Musawah issues and the work of Advocates in their diverse contexts. In addition, popularising the Musawah Framework and sharing our linkages and knowledge are essential. All this needs effective, accessible communications. This includes a commitment to: translations; an emphasis on clear language; sensitivity to information and communications technology access in resource-poor contexts; inclusivity of form, structure, and content; respect for confidentiality concerns; and positive messaging on the possibility of change and people as agents of change.



Mona El Tahawy, Member of Communications Advisory Group, Egypt

### Communications

#### Focus Areas through 2014

- Provide portals and platforms that enable the Musawah community to engage in dialogue with each other. This includes a redesign of the website using Web 2.0 and integrating other new media into our work.
- Develop and circulate a multi-media Toolkit that provides Advocates with key messages and language to support their national level advocacy.
- Work to actively engage Musawah Advocates in generating and disseminating Musawah knowledge.
- Produce Musawah Vision, a quarterly e-newsletter for the Musawah community.

#### Outcomes

- Processes to ensure effective multi-directional communication and sharing of knowledge and linkages between all in the Musawah community are established.
- Musawah's three key areas of work are supported, with a special focus on raising Musawah's visibility as a movement and making Musawah analyses accessible.

#### How You Can Get Involved

- Get engaged in online discussions on the Musawah networking platform.
- Share your updates on family law issues and practices with the Musawah community through Musawah Vision.
- Contact us at [musawah@musawah.org](mailto:musawah@musawah.org), visit the Musawah website (<http://www.musawah.org>), interact with us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter (@musawah).
- Subscribe to Musawah Vision, our quarterly e-newsletter.
- Become a Musawah Visionary: make a fixed-term agreement with Musawah to contribute information, news, or analysis in the form of interviews, photographs, films, articles, or documents through the website and Musawah Vision.
- Contribute to the development and sharing of Musawah communications products.

# Resources for Equality

**Advocates:** Musawah's most valuable resources are its Advocates and their breadth of knowledge, experience, and networks. Their work as individual Advocates, as members of Affinity Groups, and/or in national level movements provide the rich foundation upon which the movement grounds itself.

**Website:** Musawah's website makes accessible a range of resources and tools that Advocates and Affinity Groups can use in their work at the local and national levels. It offers a shared platform for Advocates to connect and share.

**Newsletter:** Musawah *Vision*, a quarterly e-newsletter, builds a sense of community and common purpose through regular reports on trends and developments in family laws, new resources, and activity updates. Contributions to this e-newsletter come from Musawah Advocates, Affinity Groups, Working Groups, and the Secretariat.

**Publications:** Publications include the Musawah *Framework for Action*; *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Family*; *Home Truths: A Global Report on Equality in the Family*; *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground*. These publications reflect the key principles, analyses, and ground realities guiding Musawah's work.



Karima Abdeen, Musawah Advocate, Sudan



# musawah

Global Movement  
for Equality and Justice  
in the Muslim Family

مساواة: حركة عالمية من  
إجل تحقيق العدالة والمساواة  
داخل الأسرة المسلمة.

Mouvement mondial pour  
l'égalité et la justice dans  
les familles musulmanes



Organised by  
Sisters in Islam

Kuala Lumpur

15-17th



# Musawah Pathways to Change

Musawah as a movement is still in its early stages. We face a long, challenging, but exciting journey towards equality in the family. In the next four years, we will know we are on the right track if<sup>1</sup>:

1. **Musawah language and concepts are used more frequently in mainstream discourses:** Concepts, ways of thinking, and language in the Musawah Framework for Action and other Musawah collective analyses are a recognisable part of discussions on Muslim family laws and practices in particular, and women's rights in Islam in general, especially among NGOs, activists, government officials, Muslim jurists, CEDAW Committee members, UN staff, scholars, the media, and others.
2. **Musawah Advocates are empowered to speak out and can publicly uphold strong positions in the face of resistance:** Advocates effectively use Musawah language, advocacy strategies, and support to speak out publicly on issues of equality and justice in Muslim family laws and practices. Advocates who are already speaking out are able to maintain their positions in spite of resistance and opposition to their demands for equality.
3. **The Musawah community is strong, active and recognised:** Advocates feel a sense of belonging to the Musawah community. Members of the community actively support and foster solidarity with one another in times of crisis or need. Those outside the community, in particular the larger women's rights and human rights movement, recognise the community and its contributions to discussions and debates on family laws and practices, and women's rights in Islam.

4. **Family laws, policies and practices in Muslim contexts increasingly embrace equality:** Although such change can take years, there are shifts in laws, policies, programmes, and practices at local and national levels towards equality and justice in the family.
5. **Equality and justice in existing family laws, policies, and practices are maintained:** Where existing laws and policies related to family issues favour equality and justice, they remain in place with strong support.

As we move along these pathways to change, we will continue to ask questions, reflect upon and share experiences and strategies, learn more from each other, strengthen our community, and know that we are not alone. We will work together in the coming years to help Musawah grow as a collective force for equality and justice in Muslim communities throughout the world.

<sup>1</sup>These indicators were inspired by the 'Making the Case' framework developed by the Women's Funding Network.



# The Musawah Journey

**2000-2006:** Through meetings, workshops and conversations, members of Sisters in Islam (SIS) perceive both interest in and an intense need for building an international network to share scholarship, strategies, and best practices on work related to family laws in Muslim contexts. This is seen as a strategic way to collectively counter the widespread use of Islam to resist women's demands for equality and justice and push for reform in national, regional, and international contexts.

**March 2007:** A 12-person Planning Committee comprised of activists and scholars from different regions meets in Istanbul, Turkey, at the invitation of SIS. This group decides that instead of simply holding one international meeting on family law reform, we should build on existing efforts and initiatives to create a movement that brings together Islamic and human rights frameworks and the lived realities of women and men to realise equality and justice in Muslim families.

**December 2007:** A meeting with 21 participants from 15 countries held in Cairo, Egypt deepens and clarifies the conceptual framework for equality in Muslim family laws and practices and lays the groundwork for the Musawah Framework for Action.

**Mid-2008:** A secretariat is established within Sisters in Islam to: (1) consult with groups and individuals in as many countries and contexts as possible to gauge interest in the idea of a global movement on equality in Muslim families; (2) support local groups to conduct national consultative processes on family law issues facing Muslim women; (3) work with the Planning Committee to organise the Musawah Global Meeting with feedback from the consultative processes; and (4) facilitate the compilation and production of resources on family law issues for launch at the Global Meeting.

**February 2009:** Musawah is formally launched at its first Global Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with 270 participants and resource persons from 47 countries and over 50 local and international volunteers.

**February 2009:** The Musawah Framework for Action (in English, Arabic, French, Persian, and Bahasa Malaysia), *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family*, *Home Truths: A Global Report on Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family* (in English and Arabic), and the Musawah website are launched at the Global Meeting.

**August 2009:** A two-week Short Course on 'Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective' is held in Cyberjaya, Malaysia, as a joint initiative of Sisters in Islam and Musawah. The meeting is attended by 24 women leaders and activists from 17 countries.

**August 2009:** Musawah *Vision*, our quarterly e-newsletter, is launched with an inaugural issue.



Mohamed Fahmy, Musawah Advocate, Egypt



**October 2009:** The Communications Advisory Group develops the Musawah Communications Strategy at a meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

**January 2010:** A Research Planning Meeting is held in Cairo, Egypt, to plan the scope of research and the process for a long-term, multi-faceted knowledge building initiative on the concepts of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.

**January 2010:** A three-day compressed version of the Short Course on 'Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective' is held in Cairo for activists involved in family law reform in Egypt.

**January 2010:** Musawah meets with members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) and senior staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, Switzerland.

**February 2010:** The Musawah Planning Committee is dissolved and transitioned into the International Advisory Group (IAG), a larger, more diverse policy and decision-making body.

**July 2010:** *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family* is published in French.

**August 2010:** An Outreach Strategy Meeting with 29 participants from 17 countries is held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to develop strategies and activities based on the needs, strengths, and challenges of various Advocates.

**August 2010:** An Asia Regional Strategy Meeting is held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with 22 participants from the sub-regions of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia.

**October 2010:** Resource persons conduct seminars on the Musawah Framework for Action and Islam and women's rights for the CEDAW Committee, OHCHR staff, and Geneva-based human rights NGOs in Geneva, Switzerland.

**January 2011:** A report entitled *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground* is launched.

**February 2011:** A Strategic Direction Meeting is held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with 22 participants from 12 countries.

**July 2011:** Musawah resource persons conduct a one-day seminar in Jakarta on Islam and women's rights for members of human rights and women's commissions and mechanisms in Asia and staff of United Nations regional offices.

**July 2011:** A Curriculum Development Meeting is held in Jakarta, Indonesia, with 12 participants from 8 countries.

**July 2011:** A Research Design Meeting for the Knowledge Building Initiative on *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* is held in Jakarta, Indonesia, with 13 participants from 7 countries.

**October 2011** - Musawah issues its first thematic report on the situation of Article 16 in Kuwait and Oman at the 50th session of the CEDAW Committee in Geneva, Switzerland.

**November 2011** - A conceptual workshop on *Developing an Egalitarian Understanding of Qiwamah and Wilayah* is held in Amman, Jordan with 35 participants from 19 countries.





# musawah

For Equality in the Muslim Family

To learn more about Musawah, visit

[www.musawah.org](http://www.musawah.org)  
[www.facebook.com/musawah](https://www.facebook.com/musawah)  
[www.twitter.com/musawah](https://www.twitter.com/musawah)

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