



## 2025 Year-End Update: Expanding Rights, Protections & Opportunities

2025 has been a landmark year for Equality Now — a year of progress powered by the shared belief that laws can, and must, change to secure equality for women and girls everywhere. With the steadfast partnership of supporters like you, we have continued to drive legal and systemic change, challenge discriminatory practices, and strengthen movements across every region where we work to achieve lasting equality for all women and girls.

**As of November**, our advocacy contributed to **14 legal changes that will improve the lives of more than 51 million women and girls worldwide**. From President Biden’s recognition of the Equal Rights Amendment as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, to the lifting of job restrictions for women in Kyrgyzstan, and the expansion of child-marriage and anti-FGM protections across multiple regions, these victories demonstrate the tangible power of collective action.

The importance of this progress cannot be overstated, especially amid shifting geopolitics, the rise of anti-rights movements and authoritarian leaders, shrinking civic space, and devastating funding cuts that continue to erode women’s movements globally. In this climate, our collaborative approach and the collective power of our vast global networks have been essential in holding the line and continuing to make progress. While these are just examples of the durable, systemic change we’ve helped to create this year, each of these victories demonstrates how sustained, strategic advocacy and local-to-global collaboration translates into lasting, measurable change:

- **Ending Child Marriage:** Legislative reforms in **Washington D.C., Maine, Oregon, and Missouri** brought the U.S. closer to ending child marriage entirely, reducing the number of states with legal exemptions to 34. Meanwhile, in **Bolivia**, the government eliminated all exceptions to the minimum marriage age of 18 — a historic win expected to protect **2.2 million girls** nationwide.
- **Expanding opportunities and protections in Kyrgyzstan:** We helped usher in a suite of reforms to advance women’s rights: a new Labor Code lifted bans on over 400 “arduous/dangerous” jobs (with exceptions only during pregnancy and breastfeeding), opening economic pathways for **1.9 million working-age women**; criminal law amendments increased penalties for sexual violence against persons with disabilities, strengthening protection for about **108,000 women and girls with disabilities**; and a National Action Plan began introducing a consent-based (as opposed to force-based) definition of rape, law-enforcement training, child-marriage reforms, and better data — improving safeguards for estimated **183,000 girls and adolescents nationwide**.
- **Advancing Gender Equality in Africa:** In **Kenya**, Kisii County enacted a Gender Mainstreaming Policy that embeds gender equality across all county departments, protecting **678,000 women and girls** from sexual violence and harmful practices. Regionally, the **Central African Republic’s ratification of the Maputo Protocol** extended one of the world’s most progressive frameworks for women’s rights to **2.8 million women and girls**.

- **Eliminating Impunity for Sexual Violence:** In **Kuwait**, the repeal of Penal Code Article 182 closed a long-standing loophole allowing perpetrators of sexual violence to escape prosecution by marrying their victims — a critical step toward justice for **1.9 million women and girls**.
- **Strengthening Access to Justice for Survivors:** **Oaxaca, Mexico** reformed its Criminal Code to introduce a consent-based definition of sexual offences and to strengthen provisions involving crimes against adolescents. Survivors no longer need to show physical signs of violence, intimidation or resistance—the absence of freely given consent is sufficient for prosecution. The law will benefit the estimated **1.1 million** women and girls at risk of sexual violence.
- **Ending Female Genital Mutilation:** The **Washington, D.C. the Female Genital Mutilation Prohibition Act** came into effect, offering comprehensive protection for **51,000 women and girls** at risk of this harmful practice.
- **Protecting Against Online Exploitation:** The U.S. **Take It Down Act** — a new federal law requiring tech companies to swiftly remove intimate content, including AI-generated deepfakes — established a global precedent for protecting against technology-facilitated sexual exploitation, with potential impact for **42 million women and girls** who have experienced such abuse.

These achievements are yours as much as ours. Together, we translated our legal expertise into action that yielded transformational change—opening opportunities, strengthening protections, and advancing equality for millions of women and girls. In a world where backlash is real and resources are shrinking, your partnership and our brave and determined staff of human rights defenders in 25 countries have enabled Equality Now to not only hold the line, but continue moving the dial forward.

As we look ahead, we're ready to scale what works through our bold and ambitious **2026-2030 Strategic Plan: Securing Rights. Transforming Futures**. It responds to emerging challenges while building on three decades of thought leadership, strategic collaboration and movement building. To confront the existential threats facing our sector, we must intensify our efforts to defend the rule of international human rights law and strengthen women's leadership and movements worldwide. We will also deepen our work to center economic justice, advance digital rights and safety, and end sexual and gender-based violence—including FGM and child marriage—with the goal of **transforming the lives and futures for 350 million women and girls globally**.

This is how we will make equality a reality for generations to come, and we hope you will continue to be a lynchpin partner in fueling our efforts and strengthening our global community. We would be happy to set up a call to share more about our vision for the next five years and explore areas where you may wish to invest and deepen your involvement. And if you know others who are passionate about these issues, we would be happy to host a group conversation to share more about how women around the world—including our staff and partners—are rising to meet the moment. Now more than ever, we are eager to create more opportunities for people to learn, connect, engage and support the local-to-global movements for gender equality and human rights, and we are grateful for all of the ways you serve as an ally and ambassador for our mission.

Thank you for standing with us. With your continued partnership, we can ensure the laws and systems designed to protect truly do deliver justice and equality for women and girls everywhere.