

DESCRIPTION OF THE  
NOMINEE AND THE JURY'S  
REASON FOR SELECTING THE  
2019 WINNER



Finland has a long history of advocating and promoting gender equality both at home and around the world. In 1906, Finnish women became the first in the world to receive full political rights. Equal succession rights were introduced even earlier in 1878, and women have been entitled to complete university degrees since 1882. Throughout Finland's independence, women have served as leaders in all key positions, including President of the Republic and Prime Minister.

Discussions about equality are always topical, especially in today's world, and even in Europe and other western countries. Equality brings opportunities to all societies around the world. This is why, to commemorate its 100 years of independence, Finland established the International Gender Equality Prize in 2017 to keep discussions about equality alive and to improve the position of women and girls globally. The decision to establish the prize was taken by the Finnish Government, which is the benefactor of the prize.

The prize is awarded based on the recommendation of an independent jury\* to a person or an organisation who has promoted gender equality in an internationally recognised way. The prize is awarded every other year. The recipient of the first prize in 2017 was Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

The prize is a monetary award but it is not granted for the personal benefit of the recipient. Instead, the recipient identifies a cause or project that is aimed at strengthening the position of women and that will be the beneficiary of the prize. In 2019, the amount of the prize is EUR 300,000.

The prestigious independent jury for the 2019 International Gender Equality Prize in 2019 has selected Equality Now as the recipient of the award. Through this prize, the jury wants to highlight the impact of the work of Equality Now on gender equality.

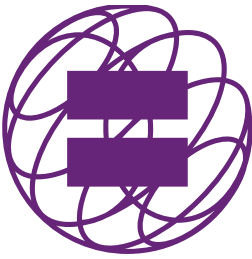
\*The members of the jury for the 2019 prize are **Pekka Haavisto** (chair), Minister for Foreign Affairs; **Eva Biaudet**, President of the National Council of Women of Finland; **Katja Iversen**, President and CEO of Women Deliver; **Anneli Jätteenmäki**, first female Prime Minister of Finland; and **Dean Peacock**, Senior Advisor for Global Advocacy, Promundo.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINEE

### THE JURY FOUND THAT EQUALITY NOW

- does very significant and high-impact work on gender equality;
- advocates changes in laws and policies, helps to shift gender norms, has an impact locally, nationally, regionally and internationally, attempts to engage both women and men in its work, and makes concerted efforts to mobilise young people to support a new generation of young leaders;
- is pushing the gender equality agenda forwards in a visible, systematic and ambitious way;

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- has been resolute in raising difficult issues – such as violence against women, the right to self-determination and sexual and reproductive health and rights – that today are being strongly challenged even in Europe and at high political levels, in countries we thought would be already beyond this stage;
- will inspire others to emulate its work;
- is best suited to leverage the visibility and recognition that comes with the prize into high-impact work.

## IMPACT OF EQUALITY NOW'S ACTIVITIES

Equality Now works globally to promote equality. The organisation uses a combination of legal advocacy, regional partnership-building and community mobilisation to encourage governments to adopt, improve and enforce laws that protect and promote the rights of women and girls around the world.

Equality Now raised the question of female genital mutilation (FGM) already before the issue reached the global agenda. Today, FGM is considered a human rights violation and an extreme form of violence against women, instead of just another 'cultural rite of passage'.

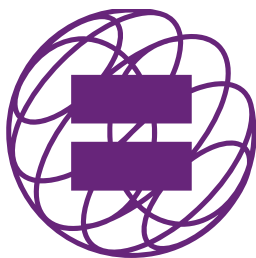
Equality Now has been working for over 25 years and focuses its efforts across four programme areas: Legal Equality and Access to Justice, End Sexual Violence, End Sex Trafficking and End Harmful Practices.

Equality Now has contributed towards changing over 50 sex discriminatory laws – such as those that prohibit women from owning property, employment, inheritance, travel, passing their nationality or their name to their children; those that require wife obedience and those that allow rape and "honour" killings.

For example, Equality Now, in collaboration with partners in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, was involved in a movement calling for the repeal of laws that allow rapists to go free if they married their victims. Each of these countries has now repealed its discriminatory laws that protected criminals and that turned marriage into a prison for rape victims.

The organisation's work is done by staff with expertise in law and campaigning. They collaborate with individuals, institutions, and coalitions encompassing grassroots activists, survivors, legal reformers, lawyers, service providers, corporations and national and regional women's organisations. An important part of the work is to offer a platform to survivors to tell their story (559 stories in 2018).

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Equality Now relies on the knowledge, understanding and connections of local communities to spark systemic change. The actions are customised to the needs of local communities. Actions can include:

- Awareness raising, advocacy and amplifying the voices of girls
- Legal advocacy by using strategic litigation and international frameworks
- Collaboration with grassroots organisations
- Campaigns against specific issues in certain countries

In 2018, Equality Now worked in 49 countries across five continents. Every new action is preceded by thorough baseline studies where girls and representatives of government, NGOs, community-based organisations, academic institutions and faith-based institutions are interviewed.

Through training sessions, Equality Now enhances the capacity and knowledge of lawyers and judges on strategies to hold their governments accountable to national and international commitments. Training sessions are also available for media professionals to bring sensitivity and a girl-centred approach to their reporting.

In 2018, Equality Now worked with its partners on 53 campaigns. During the year, the organisation

- generated 5,000 stories in the media,
- made 40 submissions to the UN and regional bodies,
- contributed to 12 strategic litigation cases,
- directly helped 700 women and girls, and
- reached 4.3 billion people in the target groups through social media and media coverage.

**For more information about the International Gender Equality Prize:**

<https://genderequalityprize.fi/en/frontpage>

**For more information about Equality Now:** <https://www.equalitynow.org/>

**Inquiries about the International Gender Equality Prize:** [igep@vnk.fi](mailto:igep@vnk.fi)

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