



Costa Rica

POLICY SCORECARD

To what extent are Costa Rica's national policies that focus on engaging men and boys gender-transformative?



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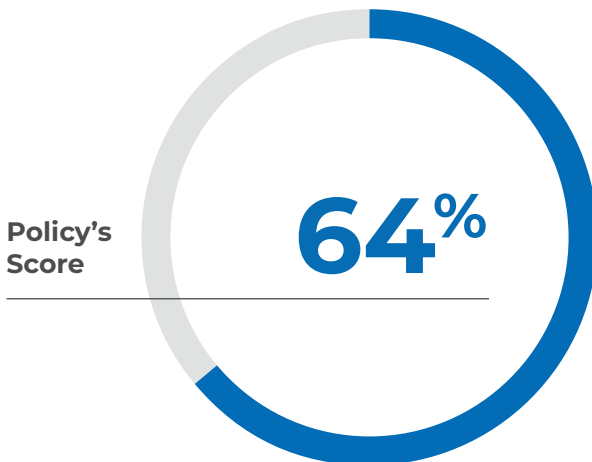
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A review of Costa Rica **National Policy:**

National Policy for the Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women of All Ages, Costa Rica 2017- 2032 / *Política Nacional para la Atención y la Prevención de la Violencia contra las Mujeres de Todas las Edades, Costa Rica 2017-2032*

At a glance

Costa Rica's policy strives to advance gender equality, with a strong focus on making visible and confronting the symbolic violence of machista culture and building new, positive masculinities. Progress, however, has not been entirely linear. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant delays in its implementation and there has been poor engagement with feminist and LGBTQI activists and organizations, as well as women, girls and LGBTQI people. These issues are reflected in the policy's overall score of 64%.



This is part of a series of policy reviews developed in partnership between MenEngage Global Alliance and FemJust.

Find out more about the methodology used to review this policy – and how you can use it to hold law-makers and policy implementing institutions accountable from national to global levels – at menengage.org/advocacy.

The policy was reviewed independently against a methodological framework that assesses the policy against a range of criteria. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from interviews, document reviews, and survey responses.

Interviews and respondents included feminist, LGBTIQ and youth activists, and people from government and UN officials, and academia. Find out more about the methodology and detailed results for Costa Rica and other countries assessed at menengage.org/advocacy.

www.menengage.org

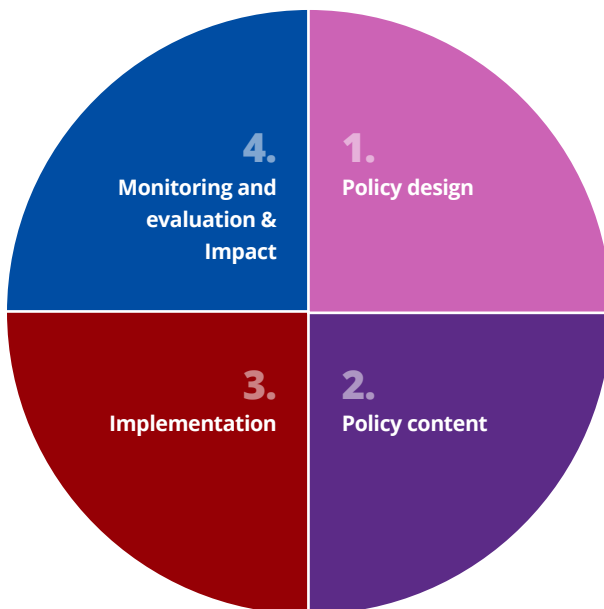
THIS IS A REVIEW OF THE POLICY:	National Policy for the Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women of All Ages, Costa Rica 2017-2032 / <i>Política Nacional para la Atención y la Prevención de la Violencia contra las Mujeres de Todas las Edades, Costa Rica 2017-2032</i>
DATES OF THE POLICY:	2017-2032
SCOPE:	National policy of Costa Rica
POLICY DEVELOPED BY:	National Institute of Women (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres) INAMU / Secretaría Técnica del Sistema Nacional para la Atención y Prevención de la Violencia contra las Mujeres y la Violencia Intrafamilia

How has this policy been analysed?

The policy was analysed based on its alignment to the following frameworks through all phases of the policy process:

- 1. Intersectional Feminist analysis**
- 2. Human rights-based approach**
- 3. The socio-ecological model**

The policy's approach towards engaging men and boys through a feminist policy process is assessed across four areas:



What makes a policy gender-transformative?

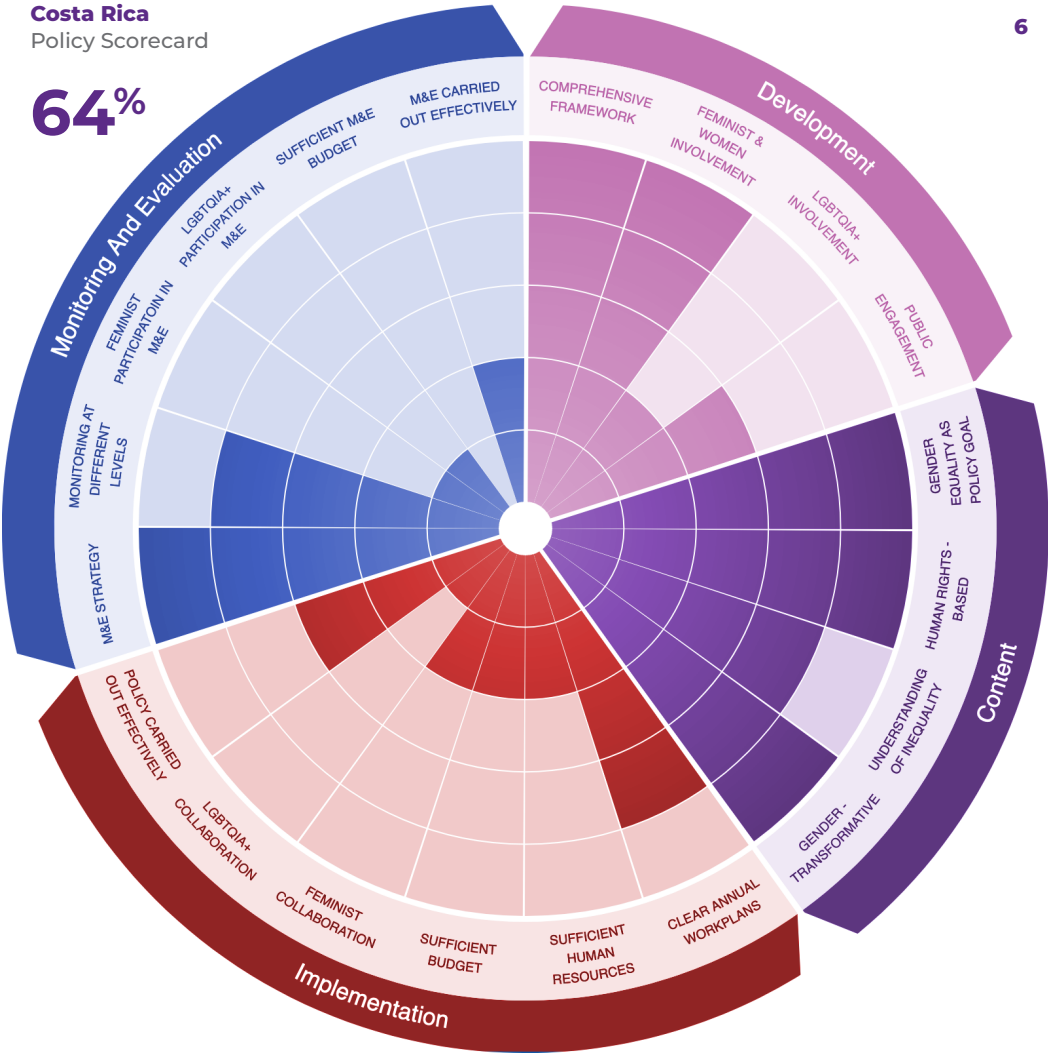
A gender-transformative policy aims to: dismantle harmful and oppressive social and gender norms, create new norms that affirm people of all gender identities and expressions, and redistribute gendered and other intersecting forms of power and privilege. It also puts into practice the human rights principles of participation, empowerment, accountability, transparency, and centering the most affected and the most marginalized, among others.

It appropriately conceptualizes and analyzes the problem in focus - for example, gender inequality or gender-based violence or adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes. **This includes identifying the power imbalances created by gender norms and stereotypes, and how these intersect with other forms of oppression.** It does not perpetuate existing gender norms and stereotypes in its framing, assumptions or strategies.

It recognizes the leadership of feminist and queer movements and meaningfully engages them at all stages of the policy process, from design to implementation to evaluation. At its heart, a gender-transformative policy is **accountable to all those who have been historically oppressed by patriarchal norms**, discrimination and violence, including girls, women, trans, non-binary and queer people.

When a gender-transformative policy engages men and boys, it does so in service of the mission of achieving a gender just society, social and political institutions, and policy framework. **Specific strategies call on and enable them to recognize and dismantle patriarchal power and privilege utilizing an intersectional feminist approach.** Strategies to engage men and boys do not operate in a silo, rather form part of a comprehensive strategic framework to achieve gender transformation and equality.

64%



This chart shows how strong the policy is in terms of intersectional feminist thinking and practice, across 20 scoring criteria. The criteria are grouped into four areas, offering a quick visual guide to how well the policy was developed, implemented and monitored, as well as the strength of its content. The scores reflect a thorough assessment of evidence and interviews, against a standardised scoring framework.

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Highlights

- ▲ The policy's primary goal is to advance gender equality, with a strong focus on transforming machista¹ culture and building new, positive masculinities. The policy is grounded in human rights principles of equality, participation, transparency and accountability. The policy recognizes multiple sexualities and diversities, which is often missing in strategies to engage men and boys.
- ▲ The policy design and development process engaged feminist and women's rights activists and organizations and diverse stakeholders including rural women, afro-descendent women, transgender women, lesbians, indigenous women, teenagers and young women, women with disabilities, women living with HIV, women sex workers, as well as men from various sectors, leading to robust policy proposals that are intersectional.
- ▲ This is the only policy reviewed which, in addition to indicators and targets, includes baseline data against which to measure progress.



Lowlights

- ▼ While some lesbians and trans women were included in the policy design and development process, LGBTQI activists and organizations were not extensively engaged.
- ▼ In policy implementation and monitoring efforts, there has been poor engagement with feminist and LGBTQI activists and organizations, as well as women, girls and LGBTQI people.
- ▼ While there have been significant efforts to train government officials and equip staff to effectively implement the policy, available human resources are insufficient to effectively implement the policy.

1. *Machista* refers to people who propagate traditional, harmful masculinities, male supremacy and patriarchal norms.

Costa Rica's national policy has been twenty-five years in the making. Political discourse on engaging men and boys for gender equality and conceptions of masculinities have changed in the last twenty years - from near silence on the issues to robust dialogue as well as collaboration between those who work on masculinities and government agencies.

Costa Rica's GBV policy focuses not only on dismantling machista culture, patriarchal norms and stereotypes but also on reimagining and building new, positive masculinities. It focuses not only on men not being violent, but also on equality, care, co-responsibility and sexual pleasure. The policy recognizes multiple sexualities and diversities, which is often missing in strategies to engage men and boys.



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“Public institutions have an annual training budget on gender, and they have integrated the issue of masculinities; some have both gender and masculinities training budget”

ACTIVIST

In what landscape did the policy emerge?

The Política Nacional para la Atención y la Prevención de la Violencia contra las Mujeres de Todas las Edades 2017-2032 (PLANOVI III) has been twenty-five years in the making. Following years of activism by feminist and women's rights activists, the cultural understanding of violence against women has steadily evolved. From the 1990s, wherein the first PLANOVI established the country's framework for its national policy of equality between women and men, to the criminalization of violence against women (Law N° 8589) - the result of advocacy by feminist organizations - to the current and third PLANOVI, which for the first time is inclusive of a primary prevention lens, great strides have been made. Where once there was disbelief that sexual violence could exist within the home, most recently, a law has been passed against street harassment, signaling acceptance of broad definitions of violence.

Political discourse on engaging men and boys for gender equality and conceptions of masculinities have changed in the last twenty years - from near silence on the issues to robust dialogue as well as collaboration between those who work on masculinities and government agencies. The Instituto WEM is a pioneering organization founded in 1999 that focused specifically on the construction of masculinities and of sexualities, and collaborated with INAMU (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres/ National Institute of Women). This collaboration led to the development of a draft policy on masculinity, which ultimately was combined with the national policy on care and prevention of violence against women and became one of the pillars of PLANOVI III.

Progress, however, has not been entirely linear; there have been push-back and disagreements. As the country's understanding of violence against women grew, some men within government institutions pushed narratives of 'the victimized man' and would not implement the PLANOVIs in some

municipalities. Feminist activists have also expressed a loss of interest by donors to invest in activities to address violence against women and pressure to include work on engaging men and boys. Moreover, there is also pressure placed on feminist and women's organizations by donors to involve male perpetrators of violence in their work. Key informants explained that this is due to the influence and dominance of American models of interventions, i.e., therapeutic approaches to curtail male violence against women, while not understanding the depth of the process and with a superficial conception of violence. This also appears to be a case of donors dictating what to prioritize with low regard for local movements determining their own priorities, demonstrating an unfortunate but fairly common neo-colonial dynamic between Global South movements and Global North donors.



How was the policy design process carried out?

PLANONI III builds upon Costa Rica's international and regional obligations related to women's human rights, including CEDAW and the Inter-American Convention on Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women ("Belém do Pará Convention"), and commitments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among others.

PLANONI III was developed through a participatory process in which public institutions and organizations that are a part of the government agency, Sistema Nacional de Atención y Prevención de la Violencia contra las Mujeres (National System of Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women) (hereinafter "Sistema"), specific population groups, and subject matter experts provided feedback for the context analysis that would go on to inform the policy's strategic priorities. The government undertook various activities during the policy design process, including an audit of services for women affected by violence against women (by INAMU in 2015), workshops with institutional representatives from the Sistema Follow Up Commission (the evaluative and compliance mechanism for Sistema policies), with members of local networks focused on intrafamily violence and the prevention of violence against women, and other professionals working in the field of violence against women.

As part of the policy development process, a series of consultations at the national and territorial levels was also held with diverse populations across the country including rural women, afro-descendent women, transgender women, lesbians, indigenous women, teenagers and young women, women with disabilities, women living with HIV, women sex workers, as well as men from various sectors (e.g. education, public institutions, and community based organizations). Such diverse participation, some key informants note, contributed to the development of robust policy proposals that are intersectional. The policy was further informed by the final report from the National Women's Gathering (to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Belém do Pará convention), as well as PLANONI I and II evaluative reports, reports from CEDAW and from the Controller General on Compliance with Gender Equality and Equity Policy.



How are masculinities addressed in the content of the policy?

PLANOVI III aspires to interrupt cycles of social and intergenerational violence, end impunity for violence, and dismantle machista¹ culture. In particular, the policy strives to make visible and confront the symbolic violence of machista culture. Through this conceptualization, the policy strongly positions itself to achieve gender-transformative change in the long term. PLANOVI III defines symbolic violence as “a group of meanings imposed as valid and legitimate by patriarchal culture, based on the supremacy and domination of the male/masculine and which as a result is closely related to power and authority. It is a type of violence sustained by the cultural practices of men and women that are present in all the spaces for life, including the state apparatus and its institutions. It is a resource that socially legitimizes the continuity of hierarchical power relations, which give power to what is considered male/masculine and as such contributed to reproducing the causes of machista violence against women.” (Translated from Spanish)

PLANOVI III outlines two aims directly relevant to engaging men and boys for gender equality:

4.5.1.3



STRATEGIC AIM: Provide the population of Costa Rica with non-stereotyped perceptions of women and men based on the principles of non-violence, equality, equal relations, respect for women’s bodies, and dignity and recognition for, and the valuing of differences.”

1. Machista refers to people who propagate traditional, harmful masculinities, male supremacy and patriarchal norms.



STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

"1. Execution of studies about the perceptions of VAW, including national surveys of the population.

2. Execution of social communications and education strategies, especially with underage people in order to improve factors for protection against VAW, through the development of the following competencies: *Critical gaze on reality with respect to power relations between men and women and inequalities; Critical gaze on prejudices and stereotypes based on gender; False romantic love as a risk factor; Active commitment to personal and social change in order to prevent VAW; Recognitions, respect and valuing of differences; Mutual care; Empathy; Solidarity and sorority; Self-care; Inclusion; Capacity for dialogue and negotiation; Management and expression of emotions; Exercise of affective, pleasurable, and safe sexualities, in co-responsibility and respectful of diversities*

3. Regulation and control of the use of images and treatment of sexist and male supremacist (machista) communications content (in advertising, news, education, public performances, mass media, social networks and institutional communications) in order to promote an ethics of equality between women and men."

4.5.2.3



STRATEGIC AIM: Involve boy children, teenage boys and young men in capacity-building to exercise their masculinities for equality and non-violence towards women in prioritized areas (cantons)."



STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

"2.1 Capacity-building among men, with a priority on boys: children, teenagers and young people (external service users), and among the staff of public institutions (internal service users) for the eradication of dominant male supremacist power and control.

2.2 Capacity-building among men, with a priority on boys: children, teenagers and young people (external service users), and among the staff of public institutions (internal service users) for the exercise of affective paternities, involved in care and co-responsibility, offering models of a non machista masculinity, free of violence.





2.3 Capacity-building among men, with a priority on boys: children, teenagers and young people (external service users), and among the staff of public institutions (internal service users) for the exercise of an integral sexuality that is informed and pleasurable and with co-responsibility as a factor protecting against violence towards women.”

Importantly, these aims and strategies focus not only on dismantling patriarchal norms and stereotypes but also on reimagining and building new, positive masculinities; moreover, they focus not only on men not being violent, but also on equality, care, co-responsibility and sexual pleasure. The policy does reinforce gender binaries throughout, but its focus on knowledge and evidence generation, education and awareness-raising, and capacity building are promising while the recognition of multiple sexualities and diversities (which is often missing in strategies to engage men and boys) within PLANОВI III can be considered inclusive of LGBTQI persons and is a critical step towards achieving gender just societies. The policy also includes elements common to sexuality education (e.g. negotiation skills, and emotional intelligence), which are equally critical to dismantling harmful norms and preventing violence. These approaches, together with the policy's conceptual underpinnings, offer a strong framework for meaningfully and effectively engaging men and boys. There was great enthusiasm for the policy among all key informants interviewed, in particular emphasizing that unlike previous PLANОВIs, the types of interventions included in PLANОВI III - specific, rather than broad, and progressive - could meaningfully contribute to a cultural change. This policy, they believe, represents a critical step in a new and transformative direction.



How well has the policy been implemented?

Key informants note that it is somewhat challenging and early into the policy period to assess the success of implementation efforts. In addition to a change in government, they highlight that the early years of the policy period (2018-2019) were largely spent developing the first of three five year action plans throughout the policy period; efforts focused largely on building the foundation and tools (e.g., training manuals, monitoring and evaluation tools) necessary for effective implementation throughout the policy period. Such efforts were due to begin in earnest in 2021-2022 but the COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant delays in implementation.

There has been some forward momentum. The preparatory phase of PLANOV III has significantly focused on developing a cadre of government officials trained to better understand harmful and positive masculinities. This is intended to function as a training of trainers, and as a part of this, an online course and supporting materials were created. Capacity-building goals identified for 2018 have been met and there is now a committed technical team of officials, according to key informants, that can work to implement the policy. To ensure compliance with the policy's capacity-building goals, government supervisors were required to allocate sufficient daytime working hours to ensure that training could be completed. Key informants noted that the timeliness of execution of the strategic actions on capacity-building beyond the training of trainers might depend on the size of the ministry and that those with fewer officials may be trained within the first year and larger ones may take the length of the policy period to complete training.

How are the policy targets and activities being funded?

Costa Rica does not have a unified national budget from which funds are allocated for the implementation of policies and overall it is difficult to obtain information on how the State earmarks and allocates its resources. Key informants suggest that different government institutions may receive some funds for the implementation of PLANOV III through the indicators matrix, with the amount potentially dependent on the implementation burden of the institution. One key informant notes that the government routinely ensures funds for gender activities (wherein a focus on masculinities has been included) but different institutions are also expected to allocate funds and human resources for the implementation of PLANOV III from their own institutional budgets.



Has the policy been monitored & evaluated?

PLANOVI III includes indicators and targets (goals) for the policy period for both the strategic aims and actions, alongside a baseline for the former and a monitoring and evaluation framework is available online.

Various actions are prescribed for the monitoring and evaluation of the policy. The institutional framework for monitoring and evaluation was established within regulatory frameworks of the National Development Plan and the National System for Evaluation from the Ministry of Planning. The government has named a number of actions it intends to take during the policy period which allow for accountability and clear measurement towards progress. These include: the development of five year action plans that are reviewed annually and at their conclusion; intermediate evaluations that measure performance indicators; a final evaluation at the conclusion of the policy period; perception surveys for the general population and young people in school at five year increments; as well as accountability reports which detail progress and challenges during the policy's implementation are intended to be developed and shared publicly. While these exist, key informants emphasize that only some monitoring tools have been developed to date and moreover, indicators that have been developed are largely quantitative, thereby missing important considerations that are better captured with qualitative indicators. Overall, however, a robust and impressive architecture to measure change has been laid in Costa Rica and offers real possibilities to measure and contribute to transformative change.

A closer look at the other case studies

As part of this initiative, we carried out a review of other national policies, including:

Costa Rica	Política nacional para la atención y la prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres de todas las edades Costa Rica 2017-2032 (National Policy for the Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women)
Czech Republic	Government Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic for 2014 – 2020
Indonesia	Government Regulation Number 61 of 2014 on Reproductive Health
Mexico	Estrategia Nacional para la Prevención del Embarazo en Adolescentes (National Strategy for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy)
Rwanda	National Policy against Gender-Based Violence, 2011
Sri Lanka	Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2016-2020
Trinidad and Tobago	National Policy on Gender and Development: A Green Paper, 2018
Turkey	National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women (2016-2020)

Cross-Cutting Themes Across All Score Cards

Some key themes surface from the country scorecards:

Almost universally, **gender inequality** is not fully understood, particularly how patriarchal norms lead to social control of sexuality, sexual behavior, bodies and gender identities, and how this results in oppression and violence against not only women but also queer and trans men, intersex and nonbinary people.

Oftentimes there is a disconnect between a policy's stated intentions and the **implementation** on the ground, which may be poor, or even nonexistent. There is even an instance where a robust policy has been adopted but the government through its actions is actively undermining gender equality and the rights of women and LGBTQI people.

LGBTQI groups and organizations are largely absent from the processes of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies focused on gender equality, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health.

Across the board, **human and financial resources** are insufficient for the effective implementation of the policies assessed. Often national budgets lack the systems and/or the transparency required in order to track the funds allocated towards the implementation of specific policies.

Nearly all the policies include **gender-transformative strategies** to engage men and boys, with a focus on changing the knowledge, attitudes and behavior of men and boys; challenging oppressive social norms and stereotypes; adoption of gender-transformative programs and policies by social institutions; and strengthening the legal and policy framework in favor of gender equality.

A large majority of the policies have adequate accountability mechanisms in the form of **monitoring and evaluation** strategies; however, these are not followed through with sufficient funds or action. Moreover, indicators intended to monitor progress are often quantitative and focused on outputs or outcomes, rather than processes or impact.

Would you like to carry out this methodological analysis for a national - regional - global policy?

The Policy Analysis Toolkit serves as tools which aim to support the efforts of MenEngage Alliance's members and other advocates to advance gender-transformative policies and programs.

The Policy Analysis Toolkit, as an accompaniment resource to the policy case studies and score cards, can further be utilized and adapted to analyze other national, regional and global policies.

The process and resources to replicate these efforts can be accessed at menengage.org/advocacy.

