



Czech Republic

POLICY SCORECARD

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



MenEngage Alliance

working with men and boys for gender equality

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Feminist Solutions towards Global Justice

A review of Czech Republic's **National Policy**:

Government Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic for 2014 – 2020

At a glance

Most of the government's strategy focuses on ensuring equitable relations between men and women, challenging harmful norms and stereotypes and changing the behavior and attitudes of men and boys that drive and sustain inequalities. However, there is somewhat uneven treatment of strategies that focus on the participation of men and boys. The implementation of the strategy has been hampered by a lack of political will and tools to hold government officials accountable for fulfilling their implementation responsibilities. These issues are reflected in the policy's overall score of 49%.

**Policy's
Score**



49%

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 Czech Republic and other countries assessed at menengage.org/advocacy.

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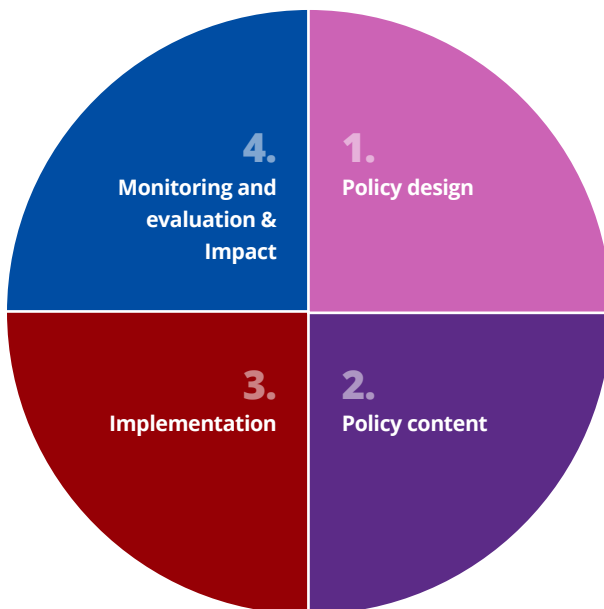
THIS IS A REVIEW OF THE POLICY:	Government Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic for 2014 – 2020
DATES OF THE POLICY:	2014 – 2020
SCOPE:	National policy of Czech Republic
POLICY DEVELOPED BY:	The Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

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?

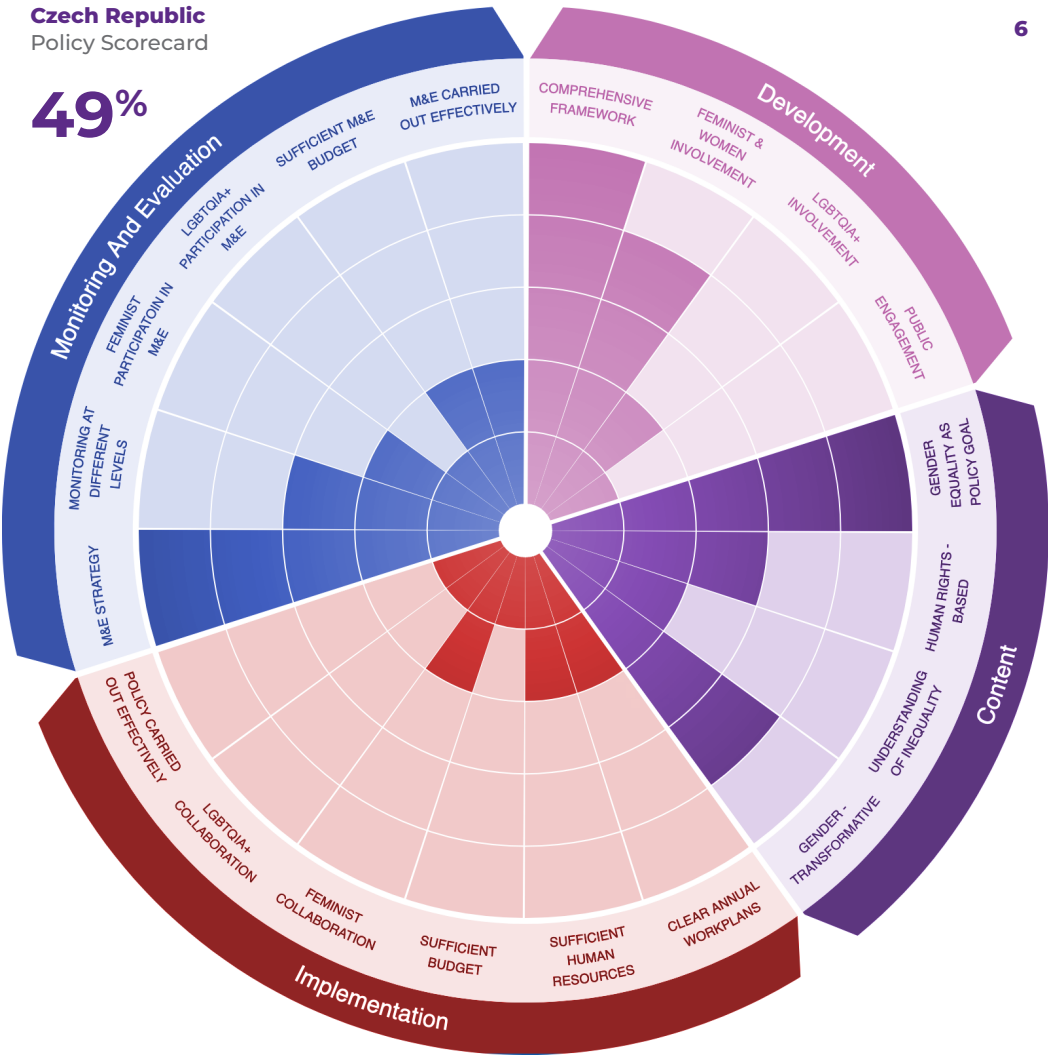
A gender-transformative policy aims to: dismantle harmful and oppressive social and gender norms, create new norms that affirm people of all gender identities and expressions, and redistribute gendered and other intersecting forms of power and privilege. It also puts into practice the human rights principles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

49%



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 creation of a permanent advisory body composed of civil society organizations created space for the participation of feminist and women's rights organizations in the policy design process. However, meaningful participation may have been inhibited by challenges such as little advance notice and insufficient time for feedback.
- ▲ Strategies to achieve gender equality include challenging harmful norms and stereotypes (e.g. increasing the role of men in caretaking) and changing the behavior and attitudes of men and boys which propel and sustain inequalities.



Lowlights

- ▼ A lack of technical expertise led to development of a largely unmeasurable monitoring and evaluation framework.
- ▼ There are no government tools for ensuring that ministries are held accountable for fulfilling their implementation responsibilities.

In the last three years, discourse about gender equality and engaging men and boys has become closely connected to public debate about the Istanbul Convention, which the country signed in 2016 but has not yet ratified.

Gender and 'gender ideology' are highly controversial in the country and considered a way station to subverting traditional values and advancing feminist and LGBTQI rights agendas. Whereas interventions to increase men's involvement in child rearing (as both a means to disrupt traditional gender roles but also to free women to participate in the labor market) dominate public discourse and government action, tackling gender stereotypes receives far less attention (both in policy and society).



“Social awareness in the Czech Republic of the government’s gender equality strategy is near zero. Equal opportunities for women and men are consistently trivialized”

FEMINIST ACTIVIST

In what landscape did the policy emerge?

In the Czech Republic, efforts by activists and advocates to create a culture of robust and nuanced discussion on gender equality is often met with disinterest, and increasingly, including in parliamentary debate, with clearly articulated homophobia and instances of violent misogyny. In principle, discourse in the country focuses on cooperation between women and men as necessary to achieving gender equality. In reality, however, gender inequality is not understood or seen to be a serious problem, nor is it a policy priority. The strong bent towards an archaic traditionalism and Christian morality that has swept through the Czech Republic in the last five years has shaped the national conversation about gender equality in largely neoliberal terms - i.e. any individual, regardless of gender, who tries should succeed - and if they do not, it is seen as a personal failure instead of recognizing the contribution of sustained systemic discrimination.

In the last three years, discourse about gender equality and engaging men and boys has become closely connected to public debate about the Istanbul Convention, which the country signed in 2016 but has not yet ratified (as of August 2020). Articles which encourage formal education on gender equality, non-stereotyped gender roles, and GBV, among others, have been of particular concern to politicians and other opponents of the Convention¹. The potential 'feminization of men' has underscored such concerns and lifted into public discourse fears that education directed towards boys will change 'their nature'. While such essentialist and misogynist concerns by politicians are growing in popularity, this is not necessarily the case within wider Czech society, where young men are seen to be far more open to learning about gender equality and GBV. Other concerns abound, however, and in political spaces, dangerous invective is growing in popularity.

1. Common name for the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Interventions to address gender equality in the Czech Republic have historically been driven by feminist groups but as the country prepares its next gender equality strategy, those who fear a feminist agenda have seeded doubt and raised questions about widely agreed upon principles related to gender equality and GBV (e.g. that violence against women is gender-based). Moreover, gender and 'gender ideology' are highly controversial in the country and considered a way station to subverting traditional values and advancing feminist and LGBTQI rights agendas. Indeed this is part of a broader discourse sweeping many countries across the world and in the Czech Republic, it is being used as a means of rejecting progressive measures for gender equality (e.g. cutting funding for civil society organizations (CSOs) doing much of the vital work in the country). Political debate about the Istanbul Convention has become an indictment of feminism and LGBTQI rights, and contributes to the narrow boundaries within which the current understanding of engaging men and boys exists.

Efforts to advance gender equality in the Czech Republic are grounded within the country's economic development and labor market aspirations. As such, dialogue about gender equality is dominated by a focus on work-life balance, the gender pay gap, and the participation of women in the labor market. Engaging men and boys is largely absent in national discussions but when it does surface, it is primarily to serve these goals. Specifically, the involvement of men primarily focuses on fatherhood and parental leave for men and is typically framed as a measure that would support women in their role as mothers, thereby allowing women to participate in the labor market. Within civil society, there have been efforts to broaden how the engagement of men and boys is conceptualized and while even CSOs tend to mostly focus on fatherhood, this has also been a means to build interest and support for gender equality.



How was the policy design process carried out?

In 2001, the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (hereinafter “the Council”) was established as a permanent advisory body to the government. The Council is composed of committees and working groups which address different aspects of the government’s agenda for gender equality; its mandate is supported by the Department of Gender Equality which acts as the secretariat. Established in 2006, the department is largely populated with former CSO workers and funding received from the European Social Fund (ESF) was instrumental in growing the secretariat’s capacity and enabled it to play a leading role in drafting the Government Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic for 2014-2020, the country’s first strategy related to gender equality.

Within the Council sits the Working Group on Men and Gender Equality (hereinafter “the Working Group”) which acts as a sounding board on issues related to engaging men and boys. The Working Group is composed of and led by government and civil society actors (i.e. mostly academics and CSOs) and serves to facilitate public feedback in the development of government policy and strategy. It is the only official mechanism by which CSOs can influence government policy related to engaging men and boys.

Key informants highlighted that the Working Group provided diverse stakeholders with an accessible avenue by which they could influence the development of the Strategy. In addition to Liga Otevřených Mužů or League of Open Men (LOM), who sit on the Working Group as one of the country’s few CSOs working in the area of men and boys’ involvement, feminist groups and academics were also represented as were advocates working for the rights of LGBTIQ people (though likely as individuals rather than representing organizations). Working Group participants were able to provide feedback on multiple drafts of the Strategy.

This vital mechanism is not without some challenges. While the main goal of the Working Group is to advise the government, it is largely up to the government the extent to which it will heed their advice. Although this is not uncommon, the influence of the Working Group itself has waned as the power of conservative forces within the country has grown. Moreover, there is room for improvement with respect to how the Working Group is engaged. For example, the Working Group was provided multiple opportunities to provide written feedback on the draft Strategy but were not given advance notice of when to expect the draft and were provided with a very narrow window in which to provide feedback, rendering the consultation less meaningful.



How are masculinities addressed in the content of the policy?

The Czech Republic's commitment to gender equality is grounded in international and regional agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the European Social Charter, though as previously discussed, the Istanbul Convention is not included. Several regional strategies (i.e. Europe 2020 Strategy, European Union Strategy for Gender Equality for 2010-2015, Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010, and Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality 2001-2005) also root the Czech gender equality Strategy.

The Strategy provides situational, institutional, and legal context and outlines nine key strategic areas intended to be achieved by 2020. The majority of the Strategy focuses on ensuring equitable relations between men and women but the ninth strategic area ["horizontal strategic priorities"] elaborates a further five priorities, including "Men and Gender Equality" and "Gender Stereotypes and Relations", which apply horizontally to all the strategic areas.

The situational analysis provided under these priorities emphasizes that women and men are both affected by gender inequalities (men can also face discrimination, e.g. fathers after divorce, and loss of reputation for taking parental leave), that gender stereotypes are instilled during childhood, and that entrenched gender roles are limiting to both. It also describes surveys carried out by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. Survey results reveal that Czech men are "rather happy" with traditional and stereotyped gender roles (i.e., men as providers and babysitters), and that women outstrip men as recipients of childcare benefits, underscoring the challenge of very limited programs for men aimed at supporting active fatherhood.



Specific goals relating to “Men and Gender Equality” include:

- Increasing identification of men with gender equality agenda by education focused on specific themes such as fatherhood, men's health, men's violence in household and public space and etc.
- Creation of conditions for increasing the number of men taking care of children and close persons, in particular by educating, motivation, stating positive examples and financial support.”



The main goal relating to ‘Gender Stereotypes and Relations’ is:

- Systematic finding of ways [for the] efficient elimination of gender stereotypes and unconscious prejudices in all spheres and at all levels of society [and] systematic and continuous fulfillment of the principle of the so-called gender mainstreaming.”

The horizontal inclusion of these goals reinforces their applicability and relevance to all the stated priorities of the Strategy. There is, however, a somewhat uneven treatment of the strategies that focus on engaging men and boys. Whereas interventions to increase men's involvement in child rearing (as both a means to disrupt traditional gender roles but also to free women to participate in the labor market) dominate public discourse and government action, tackling gender stereotypes receives far less attention (both in policy and society), despite the survey data on gender stereotypes that the Strategy itself acknowledges, and in some instances, the regression taking place in the country's current conservative climate (e.g. in a very recent parliamentary debate, questions were raised of whether violence against women is gender-based).

Furthermore, a critical failing of the Strategy is the lack of actionable activities for these priorities. Whereas the Action Plan for Equality (2019-2020) which accompanies the Strategy articulates specific activities for vertical goals, it does not provide specific activities (or even address) the horizontal goals, which is where the goals on engaging men and boys sit. This absence conveys a lack of commitment to actually achieving these goals, and ultimately render the goals as not much more than window dressing.



How well has the policy been implemented?

The implementation of the Strategy is guided by the 'Action Plan for Equality' (recently changed from 'Priorities and Policies of the Government in Promoting Gender Equality'). The Plan in fact pre-dates the Strategy but as part of the government's effort to more strategically address gender equality, came to serve as the implementation arm of the Strategy. The Plan is updated annually by the Department of Gender Equality based on yearly progress reports submitted by the different ministries which have been reviewed by the Council's committees and working groups, including the Working Group on Men and Gender Equality.

In its submission to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (for report A/HRC/38/24), the government highlighted the Ministry of Industry and Trade's issuance of "Methodical information on the recognition of sexism in advertisement". This guidance includes a brief consideration of gender stereotypes and offers insight on how to identify such stereotypes in advertising. Beyond this activity, however, there have been significant challenges with the implementation of the Strategy, not least of which is the lack of priority accorded to it by various ministries. Moreover, failure to implement the Strategy carries no consequences and no tools exist to hold ministries accountable. The lack of political will is not new. Only one of the previous five governments have referenced gender equality in their policy declaration which outlines that government's most important priorities. There is some indication that this could be changing, however. Prime Minister Andrej Babiš is the current chair of the Council, unlike in previous governments where the position was filled by the minister of human rights or labor. The presence of the Prime Minister could have a strong symbolic value and might place some pressure on ministries to work towards implementing the Strategy; so far, however, key informants have not seen much to indicate a genuine personal interest in gender equality by the Prime Minister.

The Strategy outlines that the government would collaborate internally with ministries, but also with gender focal points, researchers, academics, media, and CSOs, among others, with the Council serving as the main platform for cooperation. Although the framework for cooperation is good, that many former CSO workers with expertise on gender issues join governmental offices appear to have more of an impact than does collaboration between CSOs and governments, which one key informant suggested was less intentional and could be dependent upon the approach of the government official. There is also minimal engagement of youth or queer organizations in supporting Strategy implementation efforts.

The national CSOs grant scheme is another avenue for collaboration but its incredibly limited budget raises questions about the political will to meaningfully implement the Strategy. The Department for Gender Equality (which is populated by former CSO workers) is also considered to be welcoming and desirous of collaboration, but as part of the State apparatus, can move slowly and in contrast with how CSOs work. There is minimal engagement with youth and queer groups.

How are the policy targets and activities being funded?

Funding received through the ESF provides the main budget for the implementation of the Strategy. The ESF's operational stream on Strengthening Employment and Mobility is a major tool for supporting the country's labor market activities and forms the main budget for the implementation of the Strategy; the Fund has provided 1.2 billion Czech koruna (approximately 48,792,300 US dollars) for activities focusing on gender equality within the labor market. On the other hand, no specific budget has been earmarked by the government for the implementation of the Strategy but there are some limited budgetary allocations towards a grants scheme for CSOs - the only national grant program specifically for the Strategy. Between 2015 and 2020, a total of 16 million Czech koruna (approximately 650,500 US dollars) has been allocated for CSOs but the latest government funding (in 2017) was less than previous contributions, and overall is very modest, particularly when compared to government funding for other issues. Key informants highlight that the ESF has a much more practical impact on the ability of CSOs and employers to implement work in support of government policy, and without this funding, their efforts would be hamstrung.

At the time of its creation in 2006, the Department of Gender Equality had five full time staff to support the mandate of the Council. This has since decreased to only two full time staff that are funded through the existing budget for the department, and an additional eight full time staff through the ESF. Beyond this, the Department's recommendation of at least one full time gender focal point in each ministry to support the Strategy's implementation and mainstreaming has gone somewhat unheeded. For example, government policy over the last two to three years has been to reduce the number of staff across many ministries. This has led to pressure to eliminate staff positions, and as is the case in many instances, gender focal points in the different ministries have only been able to allocate between a quarter to half of their time to supporting the implementation of the Strategy. Other times, ministries have no gender focal point whatsoever because this is not seen as a priority or having an important role in the ministry's work, for example, the Ministries of Environment or Transportation, where a link to the Strategy is not seen as important.





Has the policy been monitored & evaluated?

The Strategy employs a broad range of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess change, including reports by ministries that feed into updating the annual action plan, definition of priorities, and evaluation of departmental measures and data collection practices, among others. Unfortunately, by all accounts, the monitoring and evaluation framework falls short. As a key informant within the government acknowledged, the framework is not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Oriented) and thus renders efforts to measure progress very difficult.

This challenge is further compounded given that the strategic priorities on “Men and Gender Equality” and “Gender Stereotypes and Relations” are not included in the action plan nor are any indicators set forth for the latter priority. As a result, there is no way to know whether any change has taken place, and as a crosscutting issue without any grounding in the action plan, engaging men and boys is at once the responsibility of all ministries and no ministry.

Despite this, there are ongoing efforts to monitor and evaluate change: at an institutional level, ministries that received funding through the ESF achieved better results and were able to identify good practices, in large part because the funding enabled them to improve their capacities and recruit human resources. The annual action plan is the singular tool to evaluate interventions taken by ministries, however, again, because goals and targets were not specific enough, actual evaluation is poor, and instead aids the review of strategy measures rather than a critical evaluation.

At a societal level, factors that are measured are connected to the labor market (e.g. women's participation in the labor force, and gender pay gap) and there has been some progress here. For example, the gender pay gap has decreased in the last three to four years (but is still very high relative to

other European Union countries) and labor force participation by women has increased. However, goals that address gender stereotypes and norms have had less success. More than 10 years of advocacy and public discussion led to paid father's leave (taking effect in February 2019) but only 1.5-2% of men took parental leave in the last year. Studies and public surveys to collect data about men's attitudes on feminism and violence against women have been conducted but the lack of a baseline prevents any assessments of change and there has been no follow up to these studies and surveys. Key informants highlighted that the current period of resistance to progressive policies and an evolving understanding of gender norms continue to be important barriers.

There is reason to be somewhat optimistic: the next strategy on gender equality will, according to a key informant, include indicators relating to gender stereotypes. If backed by political will, accountability mechanisms, and robust collaboration with diverse stakeholders, there is the possibility of 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.

