



Sri Lanka

POLICY SCORECARD

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



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A review of Sri Lanka's **National Policy:**

Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2016-2020

At a glance

The draft policy was the subject of a public national consultation, involving civil society, State officials, UN agencies, and the media and private sectors. However, it does not include national level data due to the lack of a proper system to manage information and data on SGBV. For most part, Sri Lanka's policy and strategies as a whole lean towards gender-responsive/ gender-mainstreaming rather than gender-transformative. These issues are reflected in the policy's overall score of 55%.

**Policy's
Score**



55%

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 Sri Lanka and other countries assessed at menengage.org/advocacy.

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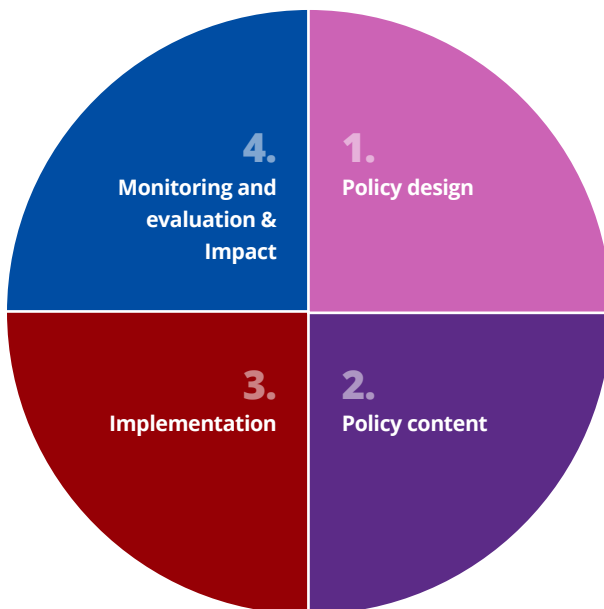
THIS IS A REVIEW OF THE POLICY:	Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2016-2020
DATES OF THE POLICY:	2016-2020
SCOPE:	National policy of Sri Lanka
POLICY DEVELOPED BY:	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Strengthening Enforcement of Law, Access to Justice and Social Integration Programme (SELAJSI))

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?

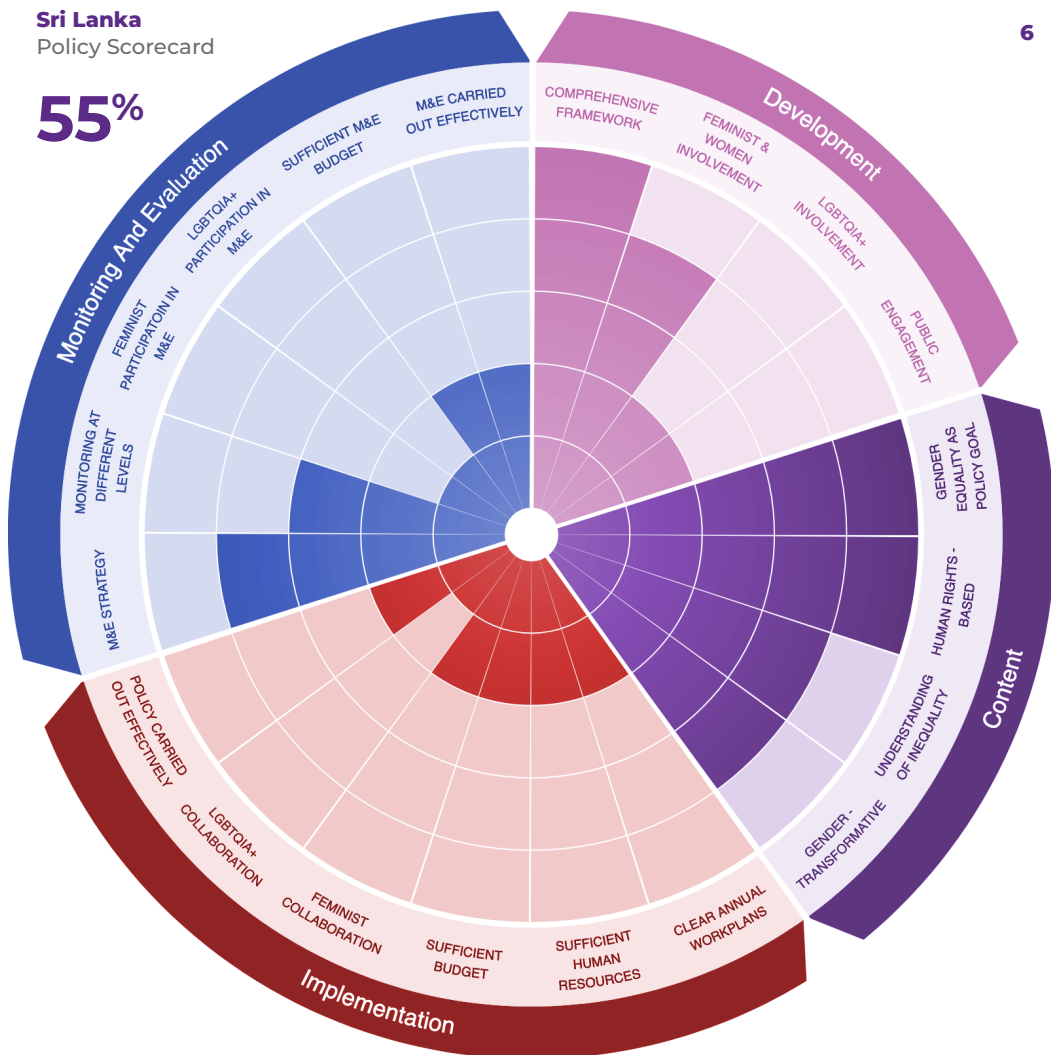
A gender-transformative policy aims to: dismantle harmful and oppressive social and gender norms, create new norms that affirm people of all gender identities and expressions, and redistribute gendered and other intersecting forms of power and privilege. It also puts into practice the human rights principles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

55%



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 recognizes that discriminatory social and cultural norms and practices form the basis for unequal power relations between genders, which contribute to sexual and gender-based violence. The policy places priority on, among other things, attitudinal changes, promoting positive gender relations, challenging gender stereotyping, engaging men in denouncing sexual and gender-based violence, and holding the perpetrator to account.
- ▲ The policy recognizes sexual and gender-based violence as a violation of human rights, and engages concepts of equality (in its primary aims), participation (e.g. involvement of women's groups), transparency (e.g. public feedback), and accountability (e.g. strengthening data and information systems).
- ▲ Extensive community-level consultation was undertaken in drafting the policy, utilizing existing structures of various Ministries that reach the grassroots level. This is the only policy process reviewed in which consultations reached the grassroots community level. Feminist groups were involved in the policy development process as part of technical committees and consultations.



Lowlights

- ▼ LGBTQI organizations were not officially involved in the policy development process due to criminalization and discrimination.
- ▼ The policy's implementation is poor, including a lack of: annual work plans, sufficient and qualified human resources, a specific budget line, collaboration with feminist and LGBTQI groups, and political will.
- ▼ There is no government system or funding for effective monitoring and evaluation of the policy. United Nations institutions in the country started developing monitoring mechanisms during the last year of the policy period.

Sri Lanka's modern history of armed conflict, militarization and political violence has led to a culture of violence and impunity that has had a profound influence on GBV. In 2015, a report on violence against women and girls by a commission appointed by the Leader of the Opposition was publicized, and started changing the national dialogue on GBV.

The policy takes a three-pronged approach towards addressing SGBV: prevention, intervention, and policy advocacy. Specific strategies pertaining to engaging men and boys are integrated across eight of the nine sector plans.



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“Most efforts were focused on just engaging men and boys, not so much on changing structures and challenging patriarchy and homophobia”

FEMINIST ACTIVIST

In what landscape did the policy emerge?

Sri Lanka's modern history of armed conflict, militarization and political violence has led to a culture of violence and impunity that has had a profound influence on GBV. After the end of the civil war in 2009, there prevailed a nationalist sentiment that compounded patriarchal attitudes. Policymakers and government officials did not want to advance a progressive engagement of men and boys for gender equality because they thought it would decrease men's value and challenge their masculine power; they did not understand the strategy or its benefits, and were invested in maintaining the patriarchal order.

Prior to the development of the Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2016-2020 (hereinafter "the Action Plan"), several organizations and networks, including the National Forum against GBV¹, CARE International, Promundo, UNFPA and UNDP, were doing research, training, campaigns and other activities related to the engagement of men and boys for gender equality and against GBV. In 2014, MenEngage Alliance was launched in the country and started working to sensitize government and civil society towards the strategy of engaging men and boys for gender equality. In 2015, a report on violence against women and girls by a commission appointed by the Leader of the Opposition was publicized, and started changing the national dialogue on GBV. Advocacy by feminist activists and groups and other civil society led to a change in the approach of the government towards its work on gender equality, GBV, and engaging men and boys. All of this created a conducive environment for the drafting of the Action Plan.

1. The National Forum against GBV is a collective of over 50 agencies comprising the Government, United Nations, national and international non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and individual experts in the field. With the leadership of UNFPA as the Chair of the Forum, the Forum is now the national level platform for coordinated advocacy and collective actions against GBV in Sri Lanka.

The process of developing the Action Plan helped deepen the understanding of key officials at the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MWCA) on the strategy of engaging men and boys for gender equality. Contributing to this were: the expertise of the consultants hired to draft the Action Plan, and the engagement of feminist activists and groups, other CSOs working on engaging men and boys, and UN agencies. However, there are still ways to go for State officials, CSOs and the public to deeply understand masculinities and the importance of engaging men and boys for gender equality.



How was the policy design process carried out?

The MWCA led the overall policy development process, with technical and financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A total of nine ministries² led the drafting of sector plans and budgets included in the policy; for this, they formed technical committees, inclusive of representation from other relevant ministries, State agencies, UN agencies, INGOs and domestic CSOs.

Key informants shared that extensive community-level consultation was undertaken in drafting the policy: the MWCA has a strong structure reaching grassroots communities, including Women Societies and Women Development Officers, who were consulted to assess needs. Other ministries also have officers in districts and divisions, with a link to communities, and were asked to consult at all levels. This is the only policy process reviewed in which consultations reached the grassroots community level. UNDP prioritized consultation and allocated funds for it. CSOs contributed to creating awareness about the policy development process. Feminist and youth groups participated in technical committees and consultations. The representation of queer communities was limited, due to a concern among those leading the process that that Action Plan would be rejected if it included them explicitly.

The draft policy was the subject of a public national consultation, which included civil society, State officials, UN agencies, and the media and private sectors. Recommendations were made during the consultation. UNDP reviewed the indicators included in the sector plans and provided feedback. The draft policy was revised, sector plans ratified by the lead ministries, and the cabinet approved the Action Plan.

2. Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Ministry of Disaster Management, Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training, Ministry of Foreign Employment, Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Mass Media



How are masculinities addressed in the content of the policy?

The Action Plan aims to “help reduce all forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women, men, girls and boys that take place in the public and private spheres, and help create a violence-free, safer place where human dignity and equal rights are ensured for all.” It recognizes that discriminatory social and cultural norms and practices form the basis for unequal power relations between genders, which contribute to SGBV. It also recognizes SGBV as a violation of human rights. Further, it recognizes that women are a non-homogenous group with diverse experiences and needs, and makes attempts to account for this diversity in the sector plans.

The Action Plan summarizes national laws and policies that prohibit and address “sex based discrimination” and SGBV, e.g. the national Constitution, the Women’s Charter of 1993, and the National Plan of Action on Women (2014). However, it does not analyze any laws or policies that may directly or indirectly perpetuate gender-based discrimination and gender inequality. The policy does not include national level data due to the lack of a proper system to manage information and data on SGBV. It includes a focus on strengthening data and information systems. Where available, it does rely on the latest available data, e.g. on SGBV in different industries and educational institutions, and SGBV against children.

The policy takes a three-pronged approach towards addressing SGBV: prevention, intervention, and policy advocacy. Prevention includes attitudinal changes, legal awareness, promoting positive gender relations, challenging gender stereotyping, and engaging men in denouncing SGBV. Intervention includes establishing service points and temporary shelters to provide services and protection for the survivors and their children, providing

psychosocial and other support, and holding the perpetrator to account. Policy advocacy includes enacting policies, laws and regulations, establishing practices and standards to address SGBV, reviewing current laws and policies, strengthening research and data systems.

The Action Plan views “engaging men and boys in challenging gender stereotyping and discrimination, and promoting equitable, non-violent masculinities” as an important strategy in addressing SGBV. Specific strategies pertaining to engaging men and boys are integrated across eight of the nine sector plans. Following are some key examples:



EDUCATION SECTOR:

- Gender sensitization and empowerment of female and male students to prevent and counter SGBV and ragging”
- Attitudinal and behavior change against SGBV, gender stereotyping and gender discrimination in technical fields”



HEALTH SECTOR:

- Ensure premarital education on Gender/ SGBV and health to promote healthy relationship”



EMPOWERMENT AND PREVENTION SECTOR:

- Work with men and boys to promote positive values towards zero tolerance to GBV”
- Strengthen the police response to SGBV and capacitate the Women and Child Police Bureaus/ Desks and Police Units in hospitals”

For most part, the strategies and the policy as a whole skew towards gender-responsive/ gender-mainstreaming rather than gender-transformative. There is a strong focus on sensitization and awareness raising, but not a clear focus on transforming gender norms and power relations in society and in

social and political institutions. This is not so for lack of trying; civil society advanced feminist, rights-based, and gender-transformative approaches in the committees and consultations and some of the ministries also had this focus (while the rest had very little understanding of gender itself). There was resistance from some quarters to human rights and feminist analyses, including analysis of masculinities. In the end, care was taken that the policy not be too progressive in order to ensure that it would be approved. For example, instead of explicitly stating that laws criminalizing same-gender sexual activity should be repealed and marital rape should be criminalized, the policy states that it is “essential to review the current policies and laws to explore the gaps and areas that need strengthening and harmonize jurisdictions.”

The Action Plan calls for regular activity reports as well as monitoring reports. The sector plans include both qualitative and quantitative indicators. However, the majority of the indicators are quantitative, e.g. number of meetings held, people trained, and materials disseminated, among others. Qualitative indicators include the introduction of laws, debate on bills, setting up of institutional structures/ mechanisms, and development of guidelines and procedures. The plans include only outcome indicators, and no process indicators. The Action Plan aims for a mid-term evaluation to be conducted by 2018 and a final evaluation by 2020.



How well has the policy been implemented?

Sri Lanka has a number of national policies related to gender equality, including the Women's Charter 1993, the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005, the Plan of Action supporting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, the National Plan of Action on Women 2014, the Guidelines for a Code on Sexual Harassment, and the Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address SGBV 2016-2020. However, the country has a history of plans with little action.

The Action Plan stated, "a high level Steering Committee will be set up to provide policy direction, guidance on linkages among sectors and this Committee will comprise of Secretaries of the key relevant ministries, representative of UN agencies, CSOs and technical experts. The Steering Committee will meet bi-annually the Secretary MWCA will chair the committee." It also stated, "In order to ensure the effective implementation of the plan by respective sectors and the relevant agencies, an Implementing Committee will be set up under the direction of the Addition Secretary (Development) of MWCA. All the nine key ministries will be represented in this committee by Senior Officials as nominated by the secretaries of these ministries. The role of this Implementing Committee is to develop yearly plans based on the National Plan of Action to address SGBV 2016-2020, ensure effective implementation of the same, monitor the progress, troubleshoot when necessary and facilitate mid-term and final evaluation. The implementing committee will meet quarterly and will submit progress reports on each sector plan progress to MWCA and to the Secretary of the relevant ministry."

Key informants shared that some ministries have made good progress while others have done insufficient follow up and implementation since the Action Plan was approved. Key to this is the subject of accountability. The

responsibility for the implementation of each sector plan lies with a different Ministry and they are not held accountable: the lead Ministry for the Action Plan, the MWCA does not carry great political power and as a result it is unable to hold the other ministries accountable for implementation; the Ministers often do not have sufficient knowledge about SGBV and gender equality, and hence leave implementation to middle-level leadership and do not monitor their progress. The last point indicates another key challenge about the level of understanding and commitment of individuals within the government and the turnover of knowledgeable and committed people due to a change of administration or the retirement of individuals.

The UN system, INGOs and domestic CSOs have taken action to support the implementation of the Action Plan. In 2018, UNDP trained all ministries on gender, SGBV and Action Plan rollout. UNFPA has also recently developed an online dashboard for recording progress on the implementation of the Action Plan. Both agencies conducted awareness raising about SGBV and the Action Plan with the government and with communities. MenEngage Alliance Sri Lanka and the National Forum against GBV have supported implementation of the Action Plan through, inter alia, training, field programs, and acting as a watchdog for the progress of the Action Plan.

How are the policy targets and activities being funded?

The Action Plan has a total budget of approximately 2,000 million Sri Lankan rupees (equivalent to approximately 13.5 million US dollars in 2016). Key informants shared that the implementing ministries were modest with their budgeting because they lacked prior budgets to work on gender and wanted to be realistic about what they could raise and spend, and they were concerned that Parliament would not approve the policy if the proposed budgets were perceived to be too large.

Every year, each Ministry requests funds from the treasury to carry out its work plans. It is difficult to track the amount of funds allocated to the implementation of the Action Plan because ministries may have requested funds under existing line items, such as curriculum development, rather than 'SGBV Action Plan implementation'. Besides the treasury, funds were raised from donor institutions such as the UN system and Oxfam, among others. Civil society organizations could also raise funds for work to advance the implementation of the Action Plan. For example, MenEngage Alliance raised funds from donors such as the Asian Development Bank to implement the sections of the Action Plan focused on engaging men and boys. Using these funds, they developed and piloted training manuals, including through training Ministry officials.



Has the policy been monitored & evaluated?

Systematic monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of the Action Plan has not been prioritized by the Government of Sri Lanka. Ministries responsible for implementing sector plans prepared a few quarterly progress reports over 2017-2018, and these were published online. However, a mid-term evaluation was not carried out in 2018 as intended in the Action Plan. The Action Plan does not have baselines and targets, without which its impact cannot be monitored and assessed in a systematic manner. The monitoring dashboard recently developed by UNFPA may generate data that could be used as a baseline for an updated plan beyond 2020.

Anecdotally, the process of formulating the Action Plan has directly contributed to increased awareness and institutional transformation of various government ministries. For example, prior to participating in the drafting of the Action Plan, the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs had not considered the linkages between SGBV and their mandate, or interacted much with women's rights groups and other civil society organizations. After participating in the policy development process, there is a greater understanding of issues of gender equality among key staff in various government ministries. There is a need for this understanding to be more widespread among all government officials and workers.

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.

