



Turkey

POLICY SCORECARD



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



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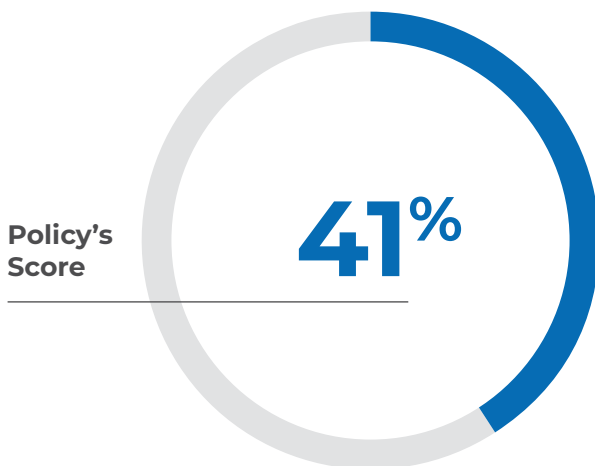
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A review of the Turkish national policy:

National Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women

At a glance

The content of the policy is, in many ways, bold and transformative. Yet the evidence around its implementation shows a stark contrast between policy and practice. At the same time, there are signs of significant shortcomings when it comes to transparency, public engagement, and consultation with key constituent groups. These issues are reflected in the policy's overall score of 41%.



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 Turkey and other countries assessed at menengage.org/advocacy.

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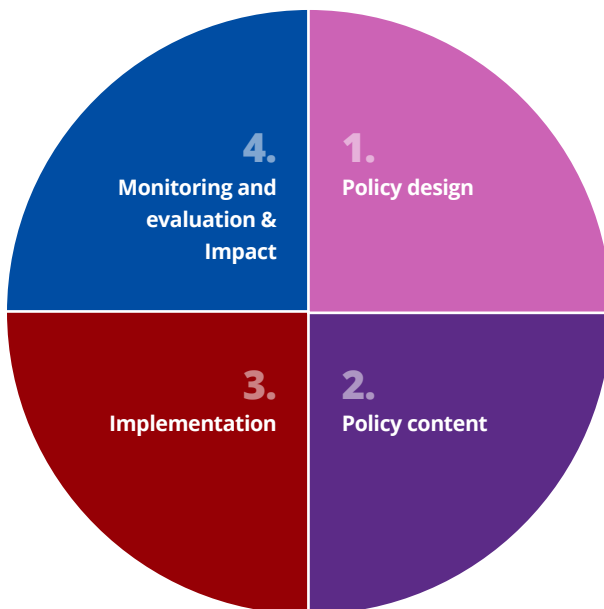
THIS IS A REVIEW OF THE POLICY:	‘National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women’
DATES OF THE POLICY:	2016-2020
SCOPE:	National policy of Turkey
POLICY DEVELOPED BY:	The General Directorate on the Status of Women (GDSW) of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services

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?

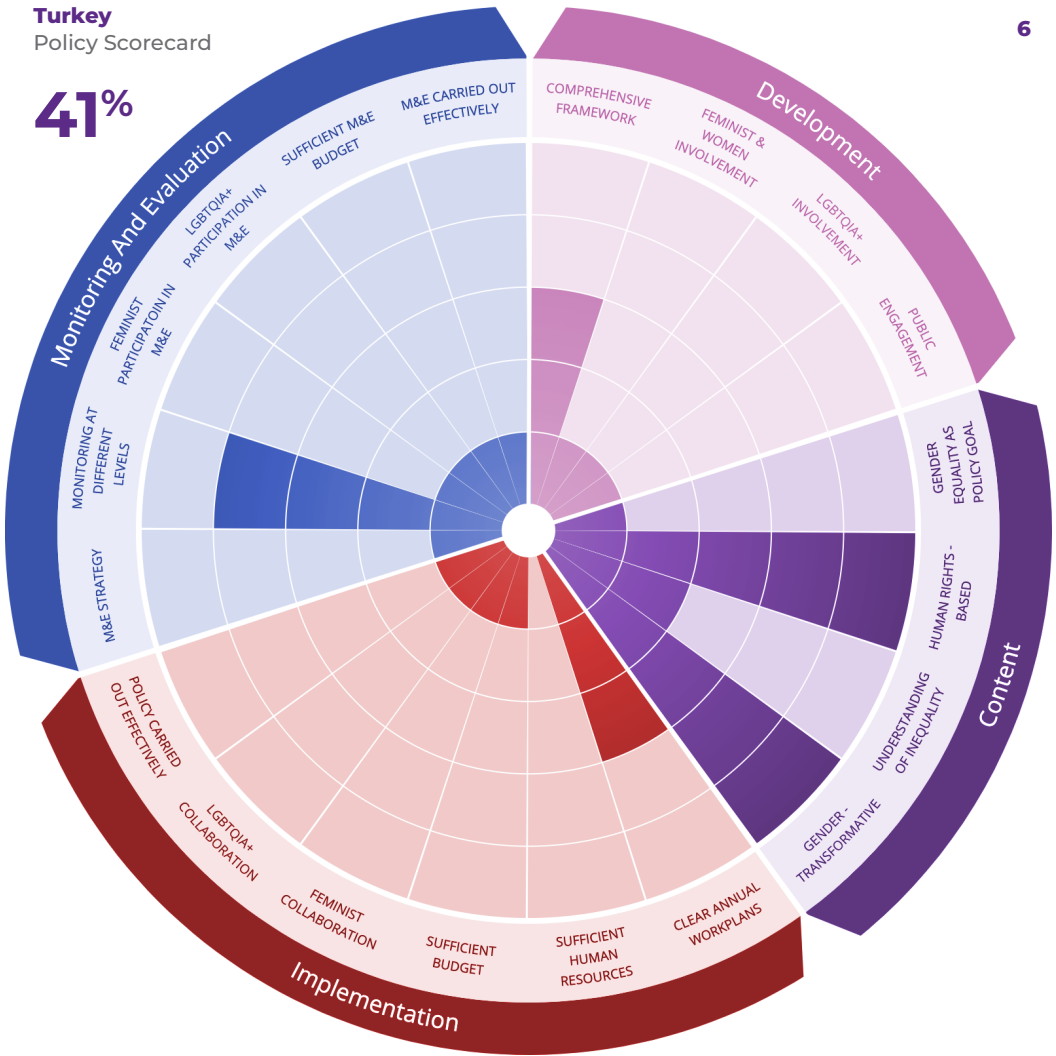
A gender-transformative policy aims to: dismantle harmful and oppressive social and gender norms, create new norms that affirm people of all gender identities and expressions, and redistribute gendered and other intersecting forms of power and privilege. It also puts into practice the human rights principles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

41%



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 is grounded in the human rights of women, recognizes gender inequality as a root cause of violence against women, and acknowledges that unequal power relations between men and women are responsible for violence against women.
- ▲ A number of gender-transformative strategies are included that seek to change men and boys' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (e.g. awareness campaigns); challenge norms and stereotypes (e.g. male targeted interventions about sex roles); shift policy and legal frameworks (e.g. amendments to basic laws to align them with international conventions and documents on human rights of women, especially the Istanbul Convention); and institutional initiatives (e.g. training and seminars).



Lowlights

- ▼ The policy only looks good on paper. On the ground, the government has proposed to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention; demonizes feminist and LGBTQI organizations and excludes them from policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes; and furthers a family-centered agenda that marginalizes women's economic, social and cultural rights.
- ▼ There has been little to no action to implement the policy, or even to advance gender equality. On the contrary, recent efforts have served to protect traditional, unequal gender roles (e.g. changes to school syllabi, regressive social campaigns, and forced closures of organizations working on rights of women and LGBTQI people).
- ▼ While the policy contains an adequate monitoring framework and strategy, there is no transparency surrounding budgets or actions to monitor and evaluate the policy.



The backdrop for the formulation of Turkey's National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women (2016-2020) is one where gender equality is discredited and women's rights are under attack.

In 2010, Turkey's President and former Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, publicly declared that he did not believe in the equality of women and men. Early on, the Justice and Development Party to which he belongs rejected the concept of gender equality in favor of their interpretation of gender justice based on 'the complementarity of gender roles'. In recent times they have further rejected the notion of gender itself, joining the 'gender ideology' movement sweeping across many parts of the world.



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“When the ruling party’s political view is based on the belief that women are inferior to men, we cannot talk about gender transformative politics that include men and boys in this political situation.”

KEY INFORMANT

In what landscape did the policy emerge?

The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; AKP) has been in power in Turkey since 2002. Its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was Prime Minister from 2003-2014 and has been the country's President since 2014, publicly declared in 2010 that he did not believe in the equality of women and men. Early on, the party leadership rejected the concept of gender equality in favor of their interpretation of gender justice based on 'the complementarity of gender roles'. In recent times they have further rejected the notion of gender itself, joining the 'gender ideology' movement sweeping across many parts of the world.

In addition to shaping public discourse, the party has sought to advance an agenda that seeks to maintain oppressive gender norms and promote 'traditional family values'. In 2011, for example, the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs was replaced by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, an institutional reform that is considered highly symbolic for the introduction of family-centered policies. The focus on the family serves to do two things: it masks harmful masculinities and prevents a critical discussion about them, and it relieves the state of its responsibility towards providing social security by transferring this to families.

Emboldened by the success of the Justice and Development Party, the anti-gender movement in the country has grown increasingly vocal, challenging the established women's rights policy framework, including the national law on violence against women, alimony law, and the Istanbul Convention¹, among others. The movement comprises 'men's rights organizations', some of which are believed to be government-organized non-governmental

1. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which Turkey signed in May 2011 and ratified in March 2012.

organizations (GONGOs), that posit these policies as victimizing men and “destroying families”.

Political leaders, in turn, are listening and responding by attempting to roll back women’s rights. For example, in recent years, they have: sought to limit alimony to five years; attempted to provide amnesty for men convicted of statutory rape if they marry their victim; spoken out against abortion, contraception, and women not wearing the hijab; and exhorted women to have at least three children. Turkey has strong feminist movements; however, the current context forces them to focus their efforts on resisting attempts to erode women’s rights and simply maintaining status quo, rather than advancing women’s rights and gender equality.

All put together, the backdrop for the formulation of Turkey’s National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women (2016-2020), which contains a strategic focus on engaging men and boys, is one where gender equality is discredited and women’s rights are under attack.



How was the policy design process carried out?

The General Directorate on the Status of Women (GDSW) of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (now the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services) coordinated the preparation of the Action Plan. The Action Plan states that it was “prepared with the participation and contributions of relevant governmental agencies and organizations, non-governmental organizations and the women’s studies research centres of various universities...” However, key informants shared that no independent women’s rights organizations working on violence against women or organizations working with LGBTQI communities were consulted in the process of formulating this Action Plan.

The Action Plan also states that follow up and evaluation reports of previous action plans, and related studies, were taken into consideration during the policy formulation process. However, key informants shared that the government did not make available data on outcomes, results and any gaps in implementation of previous action plans on violence against women. They also shared that the government did not publish the results of research conducted in 2016 on the implementation of the law on violence against women. This lack of transparency makes it impossible to ascertain whether the Action Plan drew on progress, gaps and lessons learned from past efforts.



How are masculinities addressed in the content of the policy?

This Action Plan was preceded by two plans, for the periods 2007-2010 and 2012-2015. Some progress is observed in the content of the three successive action plans, perhaps as a reflection of the dialogue surrounding the Istanbul Convention and the standards set by it. For example, the subject of the policy has over time expanded from domestic violence to all forms of violence against women. However, it has not yet expanded to focus on GBV against women, girls, trans and non-binary people, and men perceived to be not masculine or gay. In another example, strategies to engage men have expanded from a focus on rehabilitation of perpetrators to transforming the attitudes of men more broadly through television, radio and print content.

The Action Plan recognizes gender inequality as a root cause of violence against women. Relying on international policy documents, it acknowledges that unequal power relations between men and women are responsible for violence against women. It takes into account provisions from the Istanbul Convention, CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 and the instruments adopted at its reviews, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among others.

The main objectives of the Action Plan are the prevention of violence against women and the protection of victims of violence. The plan has 5 targets pertaining to: legislation, public awareness, protective services, health services, and interagency cooperation. Activities related to engaging men and boys are integrated across all the targets, for example:



TARGET 2:

Raise public awareness, increase sensitivity and achieve mental transformation on gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence in order to eliminate attitudes and behaviors that generate and reinforce violence against women.

ACTIVITY 2.3

In order to increase sensitivity among policy makers, decision makers, service providers and the general public, television, radio shows as well as audio-visual and printed materials will be prepared and disseminated/ distributed in cooperation.

ACTIVITY 2.4

Activities will be carried out to raise awareness and transform mentality of men within the scope of combating violence against women.²



TARGET 4:

Organize and implement health services for women victims of violence, their child(ren), if any, and perpetrators or potential perpetrators.”

ACTIVITY 4.3

Psychosocial support centres will be established to conduct rehabilitation and support programmes for perpetrators of violence for whom a preventive injunction order has been issued under Law No. 6284, and their capacities will be improved.

ACTIVITY 4.4

Special therapy and rehabilitation programmes will be conducted for children, who have been exposed and witnessed to violence, and who are inclined to violence, or who have committed any act of violence.

2. Description:

“The target audience is all male individuals.

Within the scope of the campaign informative activities/certificate programmes will be organized for all male groups, including boys, male youth and male adults on factors contributing to violence against women, such as sexist language, gender roles, behaviors, the notion of “manhood” and on value training. In this framework, awareness raising and mental transformation of disabled, refugee men should be considered. It is important that public service advertisements include sign language, subtitles and description, and that printed materials are not long and complex, but simple and lucid, and are available in Braille and audio formats. In addition, it is also important that such materials are available in languages of refugee and immigrant groups so that they can be informed in their own languages. It will be ensured that curriculum for human rights education for convicts and detainees at correctional facilities also include topics, such as combating violence against women, women’s rights, elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and sending girls to schools etc.”





TARGET 5:

Strengthen the mechanisms of cooperation among agencies/institutions and relevant sectors and formulate policies to ensure effective service provision for combating violence against women.

ACTIVITY 5.5

Researches will be conducted to reveal men's perception of violence.

The strategies included in the Action Plan are fairly wide-ranging and touch upon many key aspects of engaging men and boys for gender equality. However, they would have been more robust had they included an explicit focus on promoting respectful relationships, disrupting harmful gender norms and stereotypes, promoting men's understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ensuring gender-equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities. Further, the Action Plan lacks a focus on empowering women and girls so that they can exercise greater control over their lives, particularly when faced with violence or the potential for violence. It is considered to be misguided and ineffective to focus on engaging men and boys without empowering women and girls.





How well has the policy been implemented?

According to government reports, Provincial Action Plans on Combating Violence against Women have been developed in 81 provinces to specify responsibilities of agencies and institutions involved in combating violence against women at provincial level. The Provincial Action Plans are meant to complement the National Action Plan and serve as a tool for its implementation and monitoring at the local level. They have included “activities for men and boys”, training and sensitization of “public servants” and military personnel, and services for the rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence against women.

According to key informants, however, there is little the State is doing to advance gender equality. On the contrary, recent efforts have sought to change school syllabi to protect traditional, unequal gender roles and entrench them among younger and future generations. Turkey’s Presidency of Religious Affairs published a document in early January 2018 which suggested that girls could marry from the age of nine years, when they reach puberty. In November 2019, the same Presidency released a video to the public showing a woman serving tea to her husband who puts his phone down and talks to her, which many in Turkey thought suggested that when women are subservient men will not be violent towards them. The Action Plan commits to increase the number of women’s shelters but in practice no new shelters have been opened in the past two years. Furthermore, following the coup attempt in 2016, several independent organizations working on the rights of women and LGBTQI communities have been closed down under the country’s state of emergency.

In 2019, spurred by the increasing incidence of violence against women and by the results of monitoring of the Action Plan, the Combating Violence against Women Coordination Plan 2020-2021 was formulated to coordinate

the actions of various institutions responsible for carrying out activities contained in the Action Plan. Following this, on January 1, 2020, the Ministry of the Interior published a circular on combating violence against women to provide guidance to public institutions on implementation of the Action Plan.

The circular focuses mainly on the provision of services to victims of violence and training to State officials such as police officers and military personnel. Existing training modules do not include critical analysis of patriarchy and masculinities, or discussion of their role in perpetuating violence against women. There is no significant focus in the circular on activities to engage men and boys to prevent violence against women. The role of men in violence against women has been reduced to that of perpetrators, with a focus on providing rehabilitative training, including stress and anger management. This is unfortunate as State institutions will focus on implementing the guidance in the circular rather than the whole Action Plan, and the gender-transformative parts have been left out. Emphasizing select activities from the Action Plan serves to undermine the rest.

In spite of, rather than enabled by, the views and actions of the current government, UN agencies, international development agencies, independent media organizations, and civil society groups and organizations are working to advance gender equality and engage men and boys towards this objective. For example: AÇEV (Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı / Mother Child Education Foundation) runs a very effective program to engage men towards gender equality, through good practices of parenting, including democratic relationships, healthy communication, and non-violence. UN Women carried out a research project on early and forced marriage and men's perception of these marriages. The independent press agency, Bianet started weekly opinion pieces called '52 weeks, 52 men', where men write about masculinity and violence.

How are the policy targets and activities being funded?

The Action Plan does not include a budget for its implementation, which renders it incomplete and suggests a lack of political will for its implementation. The budget of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services is one the highest among all the ministries in Turkey. However, the bulk of the budget is spent on social aid to disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities, people living in poverty, and families of soldiers killed in combat. There is not a prioritization of funding policies and programs pertaining to women's rights and gender equality. The GDSW's budget is relatively low and shrinking every year.



Has the policy been monitored & evaluated?

The Action Plan tasks the GDSW with developing a format for monitoring and reporting on implementation of activities. The agencies and institutions responsible for implementing specific parts of the Action Plan are required to prepare and submit annual reports to the GDSW using the format. The GDSW is meant to then compile these reports and develop an Annual Monitoring Report, and publish this on the website of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. No such annual reports could be found on the Ministry's website, raising the question of whether they were prepared and not published, or not prepared at all.

The Committee for Monitoring Violence Against Women is comprised of representatives of agencies and institutions, chaired by the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Services, and coordinated by the GDSW. The Action Plan tasks the Committee with meeting once a year to assess the Action Plan based on the Annual Monitoring Report. The Ministry of Interior's recent circular is a result of the latest meeting of this Committee in November 2019.

According to key informants, the relevant ministries, agencies and institutions have been submitting monitoring reports, but in the absence of meaningful implementation of the Action Plan, these are likely just efforts at window dressing.

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.

