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Gender mainstreaming in Sweden

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1. Description of the main elements of the good practice and background and general policy context of Sweden

In Sweden, there is a **broad political agreement** on gender equality policy in general and on the need for all central government activities to be informed by an equality perspective. This task is prescribed in a range of policy documents, action plans and appropriation directions.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve an equitable and long-term, sustainable society. This means briefly that a gender perspective is incorporated in all sectors and at all levels of decision-making, planning and execution of activities. Gender mainstreaming has been the Swedish Government's overall approach to gender policy since the government bill - a shared responsibility (Prop. 1993/94: 147)¹. This was presented by the Minister for Equality Bengt Westerberg and was passed by Parliament early 1994.

"Gender perspective must be placed on all politics. This means that proposals and decisions must be analyzed from a gender perspective in order to clarify the possible consequences for women and men. This is particularly important in the education-, labour-, business- and social policies and in the economic policy. It concerns particularly structural changes in society. A gender equality perspective must be carried on every policy area and actions must mainly be done within the frameworks of the decision-making authorities ordinary activities. Sometimes special efforts are needed to drive development in the desired direction. "

In 1995-1998 the Government allocated funds to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALAR) in order to stimulate the development of mainstreaming a gender perspective in local policy processes. A two-year programme was launched, JAMKOM, with the aim of examining how a committee or board can work systematically for gender equality in its own field of operation. In order to put mainstreaming into operation, JAMKOM tried out a method, the 3R method, the main purpose of which is to systematise a gender equality analysis. Its primary testing ground has been in municipal operations.

The 3R Method² was used to aid the survey and analysis of a given operation from a gender equality perspective. It provides a general picture of how the operation is run and financed at the present time and of what changes are required to meet the different needs of women and men.

¹ 1994 SOU 'Shared power, shared responsibility' (Delad makt – delat ansvar, Govt Bill 1993/94:147).

² You can read more about the 3R method in the pamphlet *Jämställdhetsverkstan. Om Jämtegrering och 3R metoden i svenska kommuner* ('The equality workshop. Gender mainstreaming and the 3R method in Swedish municipalities'), published by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities. The work was led by Gertrud Åström, gender expert.

The survey seeks to answer the question: Who gets what, and on what terms? (1R+2R) The analysis answers the question: How can we improve matters? (3R)

The idea is that the gender patterns you detect will form the basis for a discussion with those running the operation.

How can we formulate a vision and new objectives for our work when we look at the operation from a gender equality perspective? What must change if we are to achieve the objectives?

In 2001 the Act (2001:100) on Official Statistics was completed with §14: Official statistics shall be disaggregated by sex unless there is a special reasons for not doing this.

March 2006 saw the arrival of a new government bill, Power to shape society and your own life: Towards new gender equality policy objectives³. Here are the political ambitions expressed as the national gender equality policy objectives.

Gender Mainstreaming Support (JämStöd) was a Swedish committee of inquiry that worked for two years⁴ (2004-2006) under a government mandate to provide information about gender mainstreaming and to develop practical methods and models for mainstreaming gender into central government activities. A further task of the committee was to train central government administrators in the practical implementation of the process.

The Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee was successful in training central and regional government administrators and more than 1600 participants from 113 Governmental Authorities were educated.⁵ Most of the participants were very satisfied with the education and with the new methods for gender mainstreaming work.

In the final report⁶ the Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee recommended a continuous support for the gender mainstreaming work both at the central and at regional levels. Finally the report strongly recommended the Government to emphasize the instructions, demands and the follow-up work concerning gender mainstreaming.

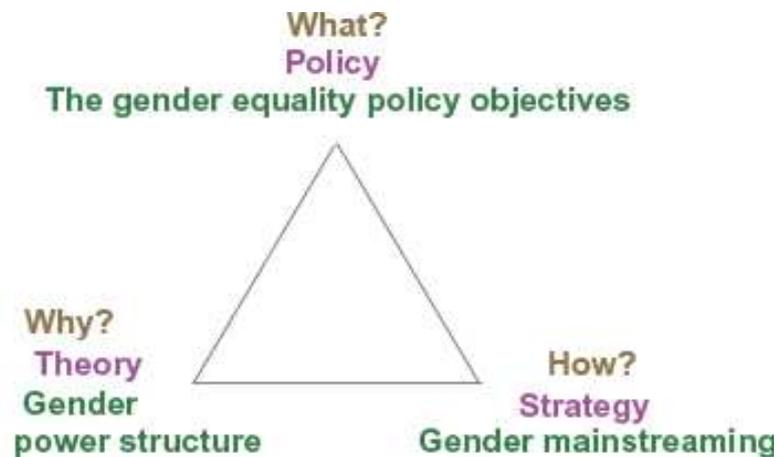
³ 2006 SOU The power to shape society and your own life: Towards new gender equality policy objectives' (Makt att forma samhället och sitt eget liv – nya mål i jämställdhetspolitiken, Govt Bill 2005/06:155).

⁴ Gender Mainstreaming Support (Jäm Stöd) was a Swedish committee of inquiry that worked for two years (2004-2006) under a government mandate to provide information about gender mainstreaming and to develop practical methods and models for mainstreaming gender into central government activities. The committee was led by Ann Boman, management consultant and gender expert.

⁵ Setterwall, Agneta, 2006, Jämstöd – evaluation and future demands.

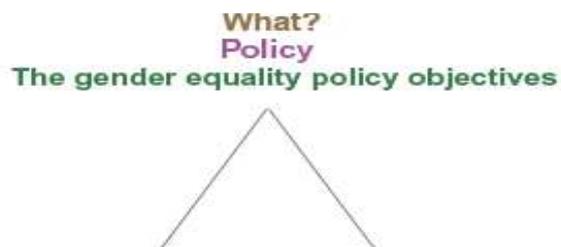
⁶ Support for the future – conditions for gender mainstreaming SOU 2007:15.

Swedish gender equality policy is divided into the following three parts:



Policy

Political ambitions in Sweden are expressed as the national gender equality policy objectives.⁷



Overall objective

Women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

Interim objectives

1. Equal division of power and influence between women and men. Women and men shall have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
2. Economic equality between women and men. Women and men shall have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education and paid work that provide lifelong economic independence.

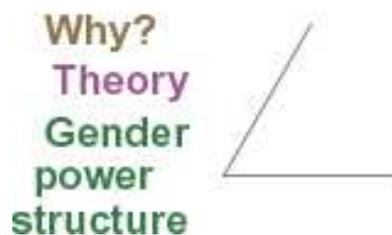
⁷ These objectives were adopted by the Swedish Riksdag in May 2006 (Govt. Bill 2005/06:15).

3. Equal distribution of unpaid care and household work. Women and men shall take the same responsibility for household work and have the same opportunities to give and receive care on equal terms.
4. Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, shall have equal rights and opportunities in terms of physical integrity.

These objectives were adopted by the Swedish Riksdag in May 2006 (Govt. Bill 2005/06:15).

Theory

The Swedish gender equality policy is based on the gender system theory⁸



Despite broad cross-party agreement on the objectives of Swedish gender equality policy, gender inequality persists in many areas. Why is this? The basic model frequently used in Swedish policymaking is the theory of the gender system.

The gender system is a theoretical model of explanation developed by Yvonne Hirdman, a professor of history. It is based on two logics, those of separation and hierarchy.

This is a structure which limits men's and women's power to make free choices. All of us – women and men alike – help re-create and maintain this system throughout our lives, by our everyday actions. The aim of national gender equality policy is to break down the gender system. Gender is our 'created' sexual identity as opposed to our biological sexual identity – the sum total of what we perceive to be 'male' or 'female'.

Examples of the two principles:

Separation

A clear example of separation is the gender-segregated labour market. Almost all of those working in care are women and almost all of those working in technical jobs are men.

Hierarchy

In the labour market, men generally earn more than women in just about every occupational category, and women are increasingly scarce the higher up you go in an organisation's hierarchy. Whatever men do, or whatever is regarded as male work, tends to be valued higher than whatever women do and whatever is regarded as female work. Male-dominated technical professions are generally better paid than female-dominated care professions.

⁸ It first appears in gender equality policy in the bill 'Shared power, shared responsibility' (*Delad makt – delat ansvar*, Govt Bill 1993/94:147).

Maintaining the gender system

Gender structures in society are created and maintained by all of us, women and men alike; such structures cannot survive unless individuals recreate them in their everyday acts. Carrying out gender equality analyses of all public service operations is one way of exposing how the gender system manifests itself at government agencies.

Strategy

Gender mainstreaming has been the strategy of choice for the Swedish Government and Parliament since 1994⁹.



Gender mainstreaming was adopted as a strategy by the Swedish Government in 1994, and by the UN at the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women¹⁰. The strategy was also adopted by the EU in 1996, and is the required method to be applied along with special measures on behalf of the under-represented gender.

Definition

The following quote is from the Swedish government bill 'Shared power, shared responsibility': "*Gender equality work must be conducted in every area of policy, and measures should primarily be undertaken as part of the regular operations of the body concerned.*"¹¹

This means that public services are to be equally accessible, of equally high quality and equally well adapted to all citizens, regardless of gender. Services and resources must be adapted to the needs of both sexes by basing them on women's and men's living patterns.

A gender equality analysis is needed to determine what gender patterns exist among the citizens the operation serves.

⁹ It first appears in gender equality policy in the bill 'Shared power, shared responsibility' (*Delad makt – delat ansvar*, Govt Bill 1993/94:147).

¹⁰ Official definition of gender mainstreaming by the Council of Europe: "Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making."

¹¹ A quote is from the Swedish government bill 'Shared power, shared responsibility' Bill 1993/94:147, p. 17.

1.2. Good practice so far

In 2006 Sweden was very well equipped for the next steps ahead regarding gender mainstreaming.

- The parliament had recently adopted new political objectives – one overall and four interim objectives.
- Gender mainstreaming had been the strategy of choice for the Swedish Government and Parliament since 1994.
- The Swedish gender equality policy has been based on the gender system theory since 1994.
- Methods like the Swedish Government's Gender Equality Policy Triangle and the 3R-method were accepted and used when educating politicians and government administrators in gender mainstreaming.
- The Act on Official Statistics from 2001 says that official statistics shall be disaggregated by sex unless there are special reasons for not doing this.
- The Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee had successfully trained central and regional government administrators and more than 1600 participants from 113 Governmental Authorities were newly educated in gender mainstreaming.

.....and the red carpet was waiting to be rolled out.....

2. Good practice in Sweden – three evaluations on gender mainstreaming work 2004-10

2.1 The government offices' plan for implementation of gender mainstreaming 2004-10

Gender mainstreaming has been the guiding principle of how to achieve gender equality since 1994, when a governmental decision was made through the Gender Equality bill.

Within the government offices a plan for implementation of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas was adopted in 2004 and in this policy document a structure was set up for the gender mainstreaming work at each ministry. The planned period was to be ended in 2009.

In the policy document main goals and key processes within the government offices were defined, identifying what governmental processes are the most essential for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Moreover, organisational support structures for gender mainstreaming work within the government offices and key roles at each ministry was also stipulated. This pertains to policy making at national level.

The carrying out of the work with gender mainstreaming has been directed by one mutual plan for the whole period. Each ministry has then made a plan of its own yearly. Quantitative follow-ups have been made currently.

A qualitative evaluation¹² has been effected during 2010 on order by and in close cooperation with the Gender Equality Office at the Government

The *Checklist for Planning and Organising Development Work* is known as '**METS**'. This tool is appropriate when a management group is about to undertake the task of organising gender mainstreaming work, and provides an overview of what organisation of the work requires. METS is hereby used in order to find the important lessons in the evaluation report.

Management and objectives: clear directives throughout the organisation that is to undergo gender main-streaming, with gender equality objectives for each unit?

- The evaluation says that there has been confusion between gender mainstreaming and gender equality politics.
- The main goals were neither clear to understand nor easy to remember.
- Most people looked upon the gender objectives as visions - hard to realize on a smaller scale and often incoherent.
- The objectives were concentrating on achievements – but they should preferably have been more pointed on the desired effects.

Education and training: in gender impact analysis methodology, in theory to promote correct understanding and analysis, and how to apply new knowledge?

- A lot of education in gender mainstreaming was offered and carried out when the plan was newly adopted.
- There were fewer possibilities to access education during the end of the plan period.
- There was also much less interest in participating in education opportunities during the second part of the plan period since there was "less focus on the issue itself = gender mainstreaming".

Tools and procedures: impact analyses such as sex-disaggregated statistics, key ratios and value exercises?

- The participants emphasize that there have been no follow-ups emanating on sex disaggregated statistics regarding the effects of the work.
- Many civil servants have not understood WHY gender mainstreaming should be used recurrently and strategically in their ordinary work.
- Either value exercises or key ratios are mentioned as absent or missed.

¹² Utvärdering av arbetet med jämställdhetsintegrering inom Regeringskansliet 2004-2010, Karlöf Consulting.

Support coordination of gender mainstreaming within the organisation, clear mandates in e.g. the production of bases for strategic planning, ongoing support from management, organised exchanges of experience and evaluation?

- There have been no support or regular follow-ups from either the administration or from the political level.
- It is no longer a political focus on gender mainstreaming as a strategy
- The political steering model is no longer built on achievements.
- Instead the political steering model now is described as “to tell what should be reached without giving any details on what should be done”.

2.1.1. Some lessons learned on approaching a continuous work with gender mainstreaming within the government offices

- Keywords for the future: sharp demands, concrete targets, deadlines and frequent demands on follow-ups;
- One steering document on each ministry;
- The managerial positive attitude is crucial;
- The issues must be represented in the budget planning;
- There must be a support coordinator on each ministry;
- Recurrent required education opportunities;
- Focus on the most important political issues.

2.1.2. Assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the good practice with gender mainstreaming within the government offices

The most distinct result of The Government Offices plan - after five years work – is that there is a growing awareness of the importance of a gender perspective. The reason for this is that the engagement in the work so far mostly is built on voluntary and benevolent attitudes instead of on steering documents, continuous evaluation and follow-ups.

Gender mainstreaming within the Government offices is not looked upon as quality development work. Gender mainstreaming is an important part of the ordinary efficiency work.

The Swedish Act on Official Statistics from 2001 is a support for gender mainstreaming work in the Government Offices.

In order to climb from awareness of the problem to willingness of making a change there is a lack of an imperative document.

It is therefore now time for a next step – a **Swedish Act on Gender Mainstreaming**.

This is prerequisite for progress ahead since the Government prefers to give up “political management in detail” and instead “support progress within the organisation that will grow without any explicit political backing¹³”.

2.2. Support for gender mainstreaming efforts of government agencies

In July 2008, the Government assigned the University of Gothenburg (National Secretariat for Gender Research) to support the efforts of government agencies to promote gender mainstreaming.

The assignment included:

- Further developing gender mainstreaming methods;
- Creating a forum for exchanges of experience concerning gender mainstreaming;
- Disseminating information about gender mainstreaming;
- Paving the way for long-term support for gender mainstreaming.

The total cost of the assignment was estimated at SEK 13 million.

The evaluation of the work¹⁴ described above – called **the Jämi Programme** – concentrated on

- the organisation of the work;
- cooperation with other organisations involved;
- impediments and interacting positive factors for progress.

Gender Mainstreaming Support (JämStöd) (see page 2) was a Swedish committee of inquiry that worked for two years (2004-2006) under the former government mandate.

The purpose was to provide information about gender mainstreaming and to develop practical methods and models for mainstreaming gender into central government activities.

The Jämi Programme was a continuation during 2008-2009 and a drive that the new government started.

2.2.1. Some lessons learned on the Jämi Programme:

It was very clearly politically outspoken that no permanent public support for gender mainstreaming of government agencies was to be created in Sweden. However the

¹³ Utvärdering av arbetet med jämställdhetsintegrering inom Regeringskansliet 2004-2010, Karlöf Consulting.

¹⁴ Utvärdering av Program för jämställdhetsintegrering i staten (Jämi) 2010/2011/ KONTIGO.

evaluation report says that there was a vague obscurity regarding the mission for the Jämi Programme. The Gender Equality Office at the Government had had hopes for more active practical support in gender mainstreaming to the Governmental Authorities. Instead the Jämi Programme has focused on indentifying positive factors for progress plus creating an infrastructure concerning gender mainstreaming - i.e a data bank and a homepage (www.jämställ.nu).

The Jämi Programme was wrongly organised. Academic studies and research on gender mainstreaming are very important but a university is not the best place for developing practical methods on gender mainstreaming.

The project leader had no experience at all from working with gender mainstreaming and her academic interest was not primarily gender equality issues.

It was politically very clearly emphasized that further support ahead (e.g. education, process support etc.) for gender mainstreaming must be found at the freestanding market for consultants. During the two years of the Jämi Programme the evaluator noted that there were neither demands made for a freestanding market nor any demands at all on support in gender mainstreaming from Governmental Authorities in Sweden.

The evaluation report also concentrates on the lack of political and administrative leadership, the non-existing steering process and the reluctance of following -up.

2.2.2. Assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the good practice on the Jämi Programme

Lewis Carroll would sometimes say: "If you do not know where you are going you will end up somewhere else!"

The Jämi Programme was a big failure and did not leave much worth remembering to the world. The evaluator emphasizes that it is ever so important that the government **develop a distinct operating system** for the responsibilities that the governmental authorities have regarding gender mainstreaming. It is the only successful way to reach the national gender equality policy objectives and to use gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve an equitable and long-term, sustainable society.

The government must have the courage to order a gender mainstreaming work at the governmental authorities, follow-up and make it clear that there are no longer any excuses for unwillingness or absence of knowledge.

2.3. Gender equality initiatives at local and regional level

In December 2007, the Government decided to grant the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) SEK 120+25, primarily for the purpose of ensuring that activities and services to citizens are the same whether you are a man or a woman. During 2007-2010 SALAR and the Sustainable Gender Equality Project distributed grants to 87 different development projects all over Sweden.

The aim was to create tangible and permanent improvements of services provided by municipalities and county councils and the funds specifically target efforts to develop gender mainstreaming in the country's municipalities and county councils.

This work included

- training key staff in organisations;
- building up a web-based knowledge bank for the ongoing dissemination of experience and instructive examples;
- developing managerial systems.

The evaluation¹⁵ of the Sustainable Gender Equality Project shows that commitment and support from the high level management is essential for successful implementation of gender equality projects.

Also, the evaluation shows that the projects within the Sustainable Gender Equality Project have had a concrete impact on quality on services provided e.g. through a rise in the use of statistics disaggregated by sex, that gender equality analysis is to a higher degree conducted as part of the decision making processes and in addition to a raised awareness among key stakeholders such as decision makers and politicians as well as civil servants.

Examples on improvements:

- awareness rising among politicians, key persons and staff in local authorities and regions;
- better knowledge of what citizens, patients and customers really need;
- a gender perspective on surveys and questionnaires;
- a better identification on special problems;
- an altered and improved daily run on treatments;
- an altered and improved routine concerning scrutinizing decisions;
- a greater feeling of security among citizens, patients and customers;
- a beginning of building a gender perspective on operating systems concerning steering and following-up.

2.3.1. Some lessons learned on the Sustainable Gender Equality Project:

The evaluation means that the success with the SALAR-project depends on some important issues

1. In order to contribute to the improvement of the conditions of Swedish municipalities, county councils and regions with regard to their functions as employers, service providers, supervisory authorities and community developers, SALAR works proactively towards the Swedish government as well as European institutions.

¹⁵ Utvärdering av Program för Hållbar Jämställdhet (HÅJ) 2010/2011/ KONTIGO.

SALAR is an important organisation with a solid reputation in Sweden and the local authorities and regions look upon SALAR with respect. Thus SALAR has a strong legitimacy among its members.

SALAR asked pro-actively for economic support from the government in order to support its members all over the country with gender mainstreaming.

The guiding principle for the Sustainable Gender Equality Project was that services provided by the public sector should treat citizens equally and services must be designed and resources distributed without prejudice, in response to conditions and needs of women and men on equal terms.

2. The project management and the secretariat have worked professionally and strategically.

The programme was led by a steering group represented by persons from municipalities and counties. The ongoing evaluation team has been an important support for the project management and the steering group.

3. Nearly 50% of the project leaders of the 87 different development projects all over Sweden had studied gender issues at a university level before and 91% of them had earlier experience of development work.
4. 45% of the projects all over the country report that the most important condition for success is that the managerial level supported the work. The other big issue that is necessary for a good result is TIME – but if the management supports the work there will always be time for it!
5. The most time demanding work within the projects has been to develop statistics disaggregated by sex. On the other hand it is worth the time spent since it often gives the continuous work a better mandate.
6. 66.000 leaders, elected representatives and staff all over Sweden have been educated within the Sustainable Gender Equality Project. Since a majority of those who have got education are in charge of different areas of responsibilities within the public sector there will be a lot of chances of change in decision making and behaviour ahead.

On the other hand there must be a continuous support from the governmental level for change if this investment will result in positive actions.

7. Investments and projects for gender mainstreaming in local authorities and regions can be successful – but there will be no far-reaching results if the Governmental Authorities neglect to take responsibilities for the Governmental control and follow-ups.

2.3.2. Assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the good practice on the Sustainable Gender Equality Project

The organisation (SALAR) who was responsible for the work was the best organisation to accomplish the Sustainable Equality Programme in the country's municipalities and county councils. SALAR was pro-active and showed an interest to take the responsibility for the strategic work of gender mainstreaming.

The organisation took a serious responsibility for the work and the leading structure in SALAR participated quite seriously all the way through.

Most of the management staff in Sustainable Gender Equality Project was professional regarding the development work and well educated and experienced in gender issues. This is important since if the power perspective in the relation between men and women is lost there is a risk that gender equality is looked upon only as a win-win situation for both men and women. The result can be that some sensitive issues are avoided. The knowledge of gender and power is therefore essential when you work with gender mainstreaming as a project of development.

A strong support from the managerial level was an important positive factor in most of the local and regional projects in the Sustainable Gender Equality Project. This is essential in all processes of change and a prerequisite of gender mainstreaming.

Statistics disaggregated by sex was the most time demanding work for many projects. On the other hand statistics disaggregated by sex is a prerequisite for gender mainstreaming.

Continuous support for making alterations is a major condition for gender mainstreaming. Future continuous support is demanded if the good results of the projects will be sustainable and lasting.

An expressed existence of Governmental governance is the most important building stone if a country will reach the goals in a sustainable gender equal society.

3. Assessment of the strengths and of the good practice in the Swedish work with gender mainstreaming

1. There is a broad political agreement on gender equality policy in Sweden.
2. There is a strong awareness and will among the Swedish people to live a life in a gender equal society in Sweden.
3. There are very many people - different kinds of professionals (e.g. controllers, consultants, project-leaders etc.) - within and outside all kind of organisations all over the country with a strong will, a good knowledge and many years experience who today work in order to reach a gender equal society. The gender equality work did not start in the academic world and is not based in the Universities in Sweden.
4. During periods of a strong and outspoken political will for gender equality there has occurred a positive National machinery for gender equality work.

5. Traditionally Swedish gender equality policy has been very low funded. Thus the progress of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Sweden is not explained by a strong financial support. Instead the explanation of progress is that normally gender equality work has been conducted in ordinary structures and in ordinary policy fields. It must be noted though that an increased funding through the framework of a strong political will and within ordinary structures has shown that it can speed up the work considerably.
6. Thus an increased budget and an Act on gender mainstreaming could without doubt boost the development towards a gender equal society in Sweden.

4. What are the main challenges for gender mainstreaming as a successful strategy for a sustainable gender equal Sweden?

Restore the political will. A government that does not want an active governance process to express a political will abdicates from the strategic work with gender mainstreaming.

Maintain the political economic support focused on gender mainstreaming within the ordinary structures.

Gender equality work and gender mainstreaming require a professional knowledge. Studies of gender issues in general will not provide the knowledge and skills needed.