



Exchange of good practices on gender equality

**Gender Impact
Assessment**
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Approach to Gender Impact Assessment in Sweden

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1. Introduction

In Sweden gender mainstreaming is the principal strategy for achieving the national gender equality policy objectives since 1994. The first plan of how to implement the strategy in the Government Offices was adopted in 2004. In 2011 the Government adopted a platform on how gender mainstreaming is to be conducted at central, regional and local level. In 2012 it adopted a strategy of gender mainstreaming within the Government Offices.

1.1. A brief historical overview on the implementation of GIAs in Sweden

The first phase of developing methods for GIA started in 1995 when the Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) ran a project, financed by the Government. The project developed the assessment method 3R (Representation, Resources and Realia). It was then widely spread but often mostly the survey part of the method was used. Organisations started to survey the representation of women and men and also how the resources were distributed among women and men (or boys and girls). Many organisations stopped there – they did not carry out any analyses of the gender pattern shown in the surveys. This method has later been developed with a 4th R (Results) by the Government Committee JämStöd¹. This method is – as most of the methods – used in many organisations at local level. The surveys are carried out by the actors normally involved in the operations at hand (e.g. nurses in a hospital, teachers in a school, officials responsible for planning at local level etc.).

The second phase of developing methods was initiated and carried out in the Government Offices in the late 1990s. As a first step the Division for Gender Equality started some pilots, using methods developed within the project (Just Progress²) and the focus was planning and steering. These methods were not widely spread but served as an inspiration and to raise the level of awareness and knowledge in organisations to approach gender mainstreaming as a strategy. One of the methods that is still used is JämKas (Gender Equality – Review, Analysis, Conclusions. GERAC). The most important contribution from this method is that it provides a model for doing the analysis – not only mapping. The approach is very simple:

1. What is the gender pattern that you want to examine?
2. What are the underlying causes;

¹ SOU 2007:15 Gender Mainstreaming Manual.

² Just Progress, 2001.

3. What are the consequences of the gender pattern at hand?

Also this method was developed by JämStöd and in JämStöds Manual for Gender Mainstreaming it is named JämKas Plus³.

The third phase of developing methods for GIAs was the implementation phase of the Government's Plan for gender mainstreaming of the Swedish Government Offices 2004-2010. During this phase the Government Committee JämStöd (Gender Mainstreaming Support) was appointed to, under a government mandate, provide information about gender mainstreaming, to develop methods and models for mainstreaming gender into central government activities, and to provide support and counselling for ministries carrying out GIAs. JämStöd developed several methods for all stages of the process which are published in Gender Mainstreaming Manual⁴. During this phase also specific methods were developed for officials in the Government Offices who are responsible for drawing up terms of references for Government Committees (JämKAS KOM) and planning a Government bill (JämKAS Prop). These methods are published at the Government Offices' intranet website.

1.2. The Swedish "model" for GIA

The Swedish Government has adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy for the Government Offices for 2012–2015. The aim of gender mainstreaming efforts is to provide the Government with the best possible conditions to ensure a gender equality dimension in all areas of government policy. The strategy therefore covers all decision-making processes but identifies a number of key processes that are consequently given special priority. According to the GM-strategy, each ministry must have a working plan on how to conduct GM. The work plan is recommended to be developed in the context of departmental annual business planning and to be part of the business plan. The work plan should show how the work will be carried out, which support organisation exists for the work of the ministry and what actions or measures it intends to implement in order to work in accordance with the GM-strategy and the established guidelines.

The GE Division is there to support and assist the ministries in their work. The GE Division offers various types of training, such as for newly hired managers and desk officers about the government's gender equality work. For committee staff GE Division provides training in making GIAs. The main training effort for performing GIAs is the customised training that is provided to each department on demand. The GE Division is also responsible for providing methods and tools for GIA at the intranet website.

Each ministry will annually monitor their work for GM and report to the GE Division. The GE Division is responsible for an annually external monitoring of work in government offices undertaken by Statistic Sweden. The results from all monitoring are reported to the Minister of Gender Equality. Each ministry will get feedback from the external evaluation via their gender coordinator. Recently the Government appointed a Government Committee⁵ to monitor the progress towards gender

³ SOU 2007:15 Gender Mainstreaming Manual.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dir 2014:55.

equality and the implementation and efficiency of the gender equality policy. The work is to be reported to the Government in August 2015.

The GM Strategy points out **five** guidelines for the work and also declare that the strategy aims at integrating a gender perspective in all parts of the decision making process (if not obviously irrelevant).

The five guidelines if the GM Strategy

1. All individually based statistics presented in government bills and written communication should be disaggregated by sex
2. Government bills should include an analysis of what consequences the proposal might have for women and men, girls and boys. National policy goals for gender equality are the starting point for the analysis.
3. Instructions for government authorities should be clearly gender mainstreamed. Instructions, appropriation directives and monitoring shall contribute to fulfil the national policy objectives for gender equality
4. Terms of references to Government Committees shall present how a gender perspective should be applied by the committee, if not obviously irrelevant.
5. A gender equality analysis should be conducted as part of the preparation of EU matters within the Government offices, when decision are to be made by the Council of Ministers - The purpose is to ensure that a gender equality perspective will be applied to issues that may have an impact on the equality between women and men

1.2.1. Results

Each year Statistic Sweden makes an evaluation of how the guidelines are followed in all ministries. The result of the follow up for the year 2012 and 2013 is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Evaluation of the requests in the GM strategy in all ministries 2012 and 2013. (Statistics Sweden)

Documents	Number (relevant)		Meets the request	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Tables and graphs in the Budget bill disaggregated by sex	301	325	41%	60%
GIA in Government bills	42	50	76%	92%
GIA in Terms of reference to Gov. committees	35	36	57%	69%
GIA on Proposals from Government committees	72	64	93%	95%

It is worth noticing that the ministries follow the requests in the strategy regarding GIAs to a relatively high extent and that the numbers are improving.

1.2.2. What works well and what works less well?

In the Government Offices this works well:

- **“Joint drafting procedure”** is an important part of the management policy of the Government Offices. It might be the major factor for success when it comes to implementation of GM and GIA. When a government matter impinges on another ministry's or department's area of responsibility the matter is dealt with in consultation with the other ministry/department concerned. The GE Division has the right to block e.g. a draft bill if they find it not being good enough regarding gender equality;
- **The spread responsibility** is another factor of success: each minister is responsible for gender equality within his/her policy areas;
- **Knowledge and skills.** The GM Strategy proclaims that GIA should be performed in all decision-making-processes. One important reason that it works relatively well, is that officials in the Swedish Government Offices are used to doing analyses in general. Their knowledge on gender, gender equality policy and assessments on impacts on gender is over all relatively high;
- **Monitoring.** The strategy is followed up each year by Statistics Sweden and by self-evaluation in each ministry;
- **The tailored trainings** provided by the GE Division help departments and ministries to improve quality of their GIAs;
- **Political commitment.** Gender equality is an issue at political level. The Minister for Gender Equality is discussing the outputs of the other minister's work for gender equality. The State Secretary for gender equality also discusses, on a more detailed basis, the outputs and challenges for each ministry with her **colleagues**. The starting point for these discussions is often the report from Statistics Sweden on the monitoring of implementation of the Strategy in each ministry.

This works less well in the Government Offices:

- The GE Division provides methods for GIA but doesn't know to what extent they are used;
- There are relatively few Central Government Agencies with instructions to make GIAs (40%). The steering and follow up from the ministries has to improve;
- Since the responsibility for making GIAs lies in each ministry it is not known to what extent the GIAs have had any impact on the policy making process;
- The spread responsibility also means that the GIAs are not compiled and cannot serve as good examples for others.

2. Policy debate

2.1. National gender equality objectives to serve at local level

At local and regional level – the level where public services are provided to the citizens – there is also a policy making level that has started to mainstream gender into its steering mechanisms. At this level of society it is common that departments, schools, hospitals, etc. get assignments from their politicians, to undertake and report GIAs and also to change their operations in a more gender sensitive way. In local and regional organisations the analysis are not carried out in an “academic way” – they are performed by staff in each organisation which means there is a good chance of immediate implementation of change, which is not the case at central policy level.

To serve as guidelines in specific operations on local, regional or national level, the GE-objectives must respond to gender inequalities in each policy area. A report on GM in all levels of society recently pointed out GM work at local and regional level to be more efficient if local authorities focused on national, well known, areas of inequality⁶. To support the implementation of GM at local and regional level national gender equality objectives is required in a wide range of policy areas such as policy for elderly-care, policy for health and social security, policy for education, policy for employment etc. In the Swedish Government Offices work is in progress to generate such objectives.

2.2. National Government Agency

In Sweden there has been a discussion for many years on the need of a national Government Agency to support, coordinate develop and evaluate on-going and future work for gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is implemented widely on national, regional and local level and all these efforts have to be coordinated and evaluated. The lack of responsibility for studying long term effects of GM and GIAs and possibilities for sustainability is obvious.

3. Transferability issues

In Austria there is a strong legal basis and broad political consensus to undertake GIAs. In Sweden there is no legal basis – but a strong policy basis. In Sweden it is considered more important to build a strong political commitment and a well-functioning “infrastructure” for gender mainstreaming. It seemed to be very good timing though, to integrate GIAs in the budget reform as in Austria.

In Finland and Austria guidelines for undertaking GIAs are included in general law drafting instructions. In Sweden there are no such guidelines to follow but it is mentioned that GIAs should be included in Government bills. Since the GM Strategy is adopted by the Government it is mandatory. Nevertheless probably it would strengthen the implementation of the GM strategy to include instructions of how to follow the Strategy for GM in guidelines from the Ministry of Finance when starting the yearly budgetary process for the Budget bill.

⁶ Boman, et al 2013.

Both Finland and Austria have ways to prioritise when to carry out GIAs. That could be an efficient way to secure that GIAs are undertaken in areas that are of certain interest for developing gender equality in society. These kinds of prioritisation do not exist in Sweden. Development work is in progress for all policy areas to generate gender equality objectives, based on the national gender equality objectives. That might be a step in a direction to focus GIAs in areas that are known to be of great importance for gender equality.

Simplicity vs. complexity, or superficial vs. in depth is another interesting issue raised in the reports from Finland and Austria. The Swedish methods are, like in Finland, quite simple. On the other hand the officials are not obliged to follow the suggested methods, this means some perform very complex and advance analysis others stay on a more superficial level.

Participation of civil society, stakeholders and external experts is another issue raised in the Finish and Austrian reports. In Sweden there is no such participation in general in the GIA work. In long term and complex political issues the Government often appoints a Government Committee on a temporary basis to inquire into the matter and to submit recommendations. These committees often have a broad composition from relevant spheres of society. It is though very rare that representatives from gender – or women's organisations are appointed. On the other hand these Committees often hire a gender expert from the academy to the secretariat to carry out a GIA.

The most important external "participation" regarding the Governments work for gender equality is the annual analysis of the Governmental budget performed by the Swedish Women's Lobby. They analyse the state budget bill from a gender perspective in order to see how resources are divided between women and men, as well as if the government has a gender perspective in their budgeting work. The focus of the analysis varies from year to year. These analyses have been made annually since 2007 and give important input to the discussions on the Governments work for gender equality.

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SOU 2007:15 ***Gender Mainstreaming Manual***. A book of practical methods from the Swedish Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee (JämStöd).

Methods from the Governments intranet website:

- ***JämKAS KOM***. (Method for conducting GIAs for terms of reference to Committees);
- ***JämKAS Prop*** (Method for conducting GIAs for Government bills);
- ***JämKAS Plus*** (General method for conducting GIAs) can also be found in Gender Mainstreaming Manual, SOU 2007:15.