Best Practices of Gender Mainstreaming and Implications for Major Policy Areas: The Swedish Experience

International forum on Gender Mainstreaming, The University of Hong Kong, January 13 – 14, 2017

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Swedish gender equality has a long history, some examples...

1921 Women gain national suffrage and the right to hold office at the national level
1931 Maternity insurance benefits introduced
1938 Legalisation of contraception
1965 Rape within marriage is criminalised
1980 Law against sex discrimination in employment.
1999 Law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services
2009 The new Discrimination act entered into force. It combats discrimination on grounds of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability and age.
2016

- The number of days of parental leave that cannot be transferred ("daddy’s months") is increased from 60 to 90 days.
- Single women have the right to insemination in Sweden.
- The gender equality goals are expanded with two sub-goals and the Government starts to establish a Gender Equality Agency.
- Gender budgeting, as an application of gender mainstreaming in the budget process, has been given renewed focus within the current Government, and an extensive effort to further develop gender budgeting in the state budget is now under way in Sweden.
- SEK 239 million is allocated to gender equality policy in 2016.
Swedish Gender Equality politics

The objective of Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

The six sub-goals are:
1. Equal division of power and influence
2. Economic equality
3. Equal education
4. Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care
5. Equal health
6. Men's violence against women must stop
Two important strategies

Gender mainstreaming

- The aim is to ensure that a gender equality perspective and analysis is part of all policy making. Sustainable change in decision-making processes can only be achieved through long-term strategic work on gender mainstreaming.
- The Swedish Government Offices uses the Council of Europe definition of gender mainstreaming, which means an incorporation of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas, at all levels and all stages, by the actors normally involved in the policy-making process.

Gender-responsive budgeting

- A gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budget process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality. A gender equality perspective is to be applied in the budget process so that reforms are implemented with a gender-sensitive approach.
- This requires improved gender equality impact analysis and systematic use of data and statistics disaggregated by sex.
Number 1 in the EU, but still a way to go!

- High employment rates for women (77% women, 82% men), but many women work part time (34%), pay gap (15%) and sex-segregated labour market
- High level of political representation (Swedish Parliament, 44% MPs are women), but men control business (24% women in company boards)
- High level of parental leave for men (24%), but women work more unpaid time at home (47 minutes per day = 6 years in a working life!)
Swedish Gender Equality - resulting from several factors

- Major reforms mainly motivated by a demand for increased labour force, not primarily gender equality
- Strong women’s movement
- A political will to shape a fair and gender equal society, institutionalised in the 1970’s
- “Femocrats”= civil servants with a special task to work with gender equality within public administration
- Strong legislation including active measures to promote gender equality at workplaces and in schools
- Gender Mainstreaming, (i.e. the integration of a gender perspective in all policy areas) main strategy from the early 1990’s
Father’s share of parental leave

Parental benefit days 1974–2013

Percent

Source: Swedish Social Insurance Agency
The case of Swedish family policies – a holistic model!

- High quality, low cost and available to everybody - child care
- Paid parental leave
- Ban against sex/parental discrimination and obligation for employers to undertake reconciliation measures in the workplace
- Awareness raising
- Gender equality politics
- Dual earner model/equal tax system and employment security mechanisms
Gender mainstreaming in Sweden

Gender mainstreaming has been the Swedish government’s overarching strategy for gender policy since its 1993 bill Shared Power, Shared Responsibility. 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.

1. Strategy for gender mainstreaming in government offices
2. A development programme for government agencies (including all colleges and universities and 59 agencies in 2016)
3. Support for gender mainstreaming at regional level (regional gender experts)
4. Quality assurance of the development of gender mainstreaming in municipalities and county councils
5. Initiatives to gather and share experience and knowledge about the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming (eg www.includegender.org Secretariat for Gender Research at Gothenburg University www.gender.gu.se)
The implementation gap: a challenge!

Studies conducted on the work with gender mainstreaming of in Swedish government agencies have revealed a implementation gap gap, i.e. between the description of measures taken and the degree of perceived success of the implementation (Olofsdotter Stensöta 2009, 2010)

Questions have been raised about both the potential of the strategy itself and how it has been implemented (eg in national investigation 2015)
Is Sweden a most likely case for gender mainstreaming?

Capacitation elements:

• gender equality has a long history of institutionalisation;
• gender equality issues have been introduced into multiple policy areas and the formulation of gender equality as a goal has been comprehensive;
• the specifics of the national gender equality regime are favourable (with a dual-earner model, affordable childcare, generous paid parental leave etc.);
• gender equality has generally been placed high on the equality agenda in politics and the resistance is low and support high from the public

However, might be difficult to compare to other countries because of egalitarian values, the dominance of left-wing parties, and the high representation of women in senior positions in politics (Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009).
Incapacitation elements include:

- the weak steering and support for gender mainstreaming in relation to government agencies
- a lack of understanding of how to relate a gender perspective to specific policy areas
- a lack of interest in the matter because it is also widely believed by many that Sweden is already a gender equal country.
- anti-feminist movements and radical men’s groups (Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009)
Research on the implementation of gender equality policies

Implementation problems frequent in all policy areas...but some problems are particularly common in gender equality initiatives such as;

- gender equality objectives is seldom prioritised in an organisation,
- there is often a lack of support from the management
- a general lack of resources
- the work is largely driven by enthusiasts (Callerstig 2011).

A lack of understanding and awareness about gender equality issues is common (Andersson 2009)

Lack of results or results that do not transform existing inequalities

- “projectification”
- “technification” and “bureaucratisation” e.g. search for methods producing check-lists becomes the end-goal

Two dominant themes;

- The *vagueness and different interpretations* of the concept of gender equality
- The *resistance and conflicts* that surround its implementation (Callerstig 2014)

Most studies on policy level, less on the practical work (Mergaert 2011)
Four conditions for effective gender mainstreaming

- The willingness of the organisation to question and effectively address the deeply rooted structures of power, gender hierarchies, values and frames that exist within the organisation;
- Tackling gender mainstreaming implementation as a phased process, consisting of the following stages: thorough analysis and questioning of existing structures precedes the planning and definition of actions and of structural provisions. This is followed by the careful and comprehensive equipping of all actors (with tools and resources) and duly monitored implementation;
- Consultation with and involvement of civil society and/or experts during the policy process;
- Accountability structures and systems or “hard incentives”: holding people responsible for actions undertaken and their results (Mergaert 2012, p. 55).
Programme for programme for sustainable gender equality 2009-2013 (Hållbar jämställdhet)

- Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)
- Support for targeted, sustainable and knowledge-based work to mainstreaming gender into public services
- Focus on gender equality as a “win-win situation” ie it’s good for both the citizen and the municipalities. A strong focus on practical impact on citizens. It was argued that gender equality will lead to equivalent service, allocation of resources and attention. But also increase monitoring and quality management in local governments, ie “more and better activities for the money”
- Run between 2009-2013, 237 million SEK, 87 projects
- Ongoing interactive research with the aim to study conditions for establishing sustainable change processes in Local Municipalities and long term effects (Professor Lennart Svensson, Dr. Anne-Charlott Callerstig, Dr. Kristina Lindholm, Fil.lic Karin Forssberg)
The program has been successful in several respects

• Increased awareness, new questions have been raised, surveys, organizational development and change of practices
• Effects for users mainly in culture and recreation policy area, social services, childcare, care for the elderly and disabled, urban planning and education (eg changed attitudes, new working methods and higher quality of services)
• 66,000 politicians, managers, officials and clients have undergone gender training
• 63% of the projects shows improvements and 80% have worked with gender mainstreaming in control and management systems
• Many concrete examples eg better scores/grades of boys at school, better care for female hip replacement patients, improved public transport, gender sensitive garage houses, gender sensitive snow removal etc
Needs

• Difficulties:
  • analyze the results from data,
  • influence political decisions and contribute to the redistribution of resources, gender budgeting and public procurement,
  • affect the operations' core processes; welfare services,

• Biggest obstacles:
  • "drowns" in other ongoing development processes,
  • competition with other perspectives,
  • lack of involvement of managers,
  • difficulty to measure and monitor the work and
  • lack of time.
Success factors

• The program has been well managed and served as a support for local development work.

• Some important explanations for this success are;
  • the integration approach,
  • a holistic approach,
  • programme structure with a national support structure and cooperation between the local development work.
Lessons

- Gender equality initiatives need to take time order to become sustainable
- The management and ownership of gender equality initiatives are crucial for long-term effects.
- Sustainability requires a strategic work that makes project results affect the routines, rules and systems of organisations.
- It is important that a gender equality initiative is action-oriented, but action must be combined with a critical reflection on their experience.
Reflections

- Bottom-up and top down factors can vary over time in the implementation process.
- Different equality strategies lead to different outcomes and are good for different purposes, e.g., GM can lead to new discoveries and policy transformation in mainstream policy areas where a gender perspective is missing, but specific actions are more effective in getting specific results.
- Context have a large impact on the implementation process but implementation designs/strategies often very general (see also Connell 2006).
- Different types of dilemmas can be hinder but also a way to develop more effective strategies if they are used for reflection and learning.
- Changes that involve a shift in division of power and resources requires that new decisions are made (often on a political level).
Thank you for listening!

Gender equality policy in Sweden (information leaflet)
http://www.government.se/4afec2/contentassets/efcc5a15ef154522a872d8e46ad69148/161219-infokit-uppdatering2.pdf

Callerstig, Anne-Charlott (2014). Making equality work: Ambiguities, conflict and change agents in the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations


Women and men in Sweden - Facts and figures 2016