



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF CHILDREN AND EQUALITY

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“Diversity deployed: The Norwegian Story”**





## Basics:

Equal chances or equal output/results ?

Rethorics or affirmative actions ?

A culture and climate for change

A human rights perspective

An economic perspective; diversity as added value /GE is high productivity

The combination of GE policies and family politics

A modern labour policy is based upon GE

## Modern Gender Equality Policies deals with both genders.

- You will not succeed unless you address gender stereotypes among both genders.
- You need to address collectively shared stereotypes and images of gender, called "culture and tradition".
- Culture or tradition **can never excuse inequality between the genders or gender based discrimination !**
- It seems like women and girls always do initiate actions and address gender issues, not men and boys.
- However, unless you invite men and boys onboard, almost half of the population remains "outside" the common understanding of the challenges and put up resistance.
- Make clever alliances.

## Sharp tools and clever arguments

- The "evidence" for advocating GE as to modernise society, rests always on the party raising the issue
- Gender-disaggregated statistics is needed from all sectors
- Studies in the socio-economic history of your nation is vital
- Economics and gender- budgeting studies must facilitate your policy-making
- You need alliances from academia and business circles

## Legal analyses based upon HR and international law

- Alliances with experts in international law is needed
- Use the HR-conventions to "wash" trough national laws
- Use a distinct gender perspective to assess national laws ,regulations and measures in all sectors
- Dive into business regulations and company laws with a gender and diversity perspective: What constitutes added value ?
- Challenge companies: What is stereotyping and traditional culture contra sound economic principles ?

## Examples from gender statistics and gender budgetting:

- demographic data
- ownership to property
- ownership to other assets and capital in a certain field of industry or sector of society
- ownership to "cultural capital" in a given sector
- company structures
- power structures; eg the number of male and female directors
- Leadership in politics / local, regional or national
- or positions on boardrooms and other steering groups
- earnings and income related data
- types of educations and how they are made use of
- standards of living in specific geographical areas
- job opportunities / industrial and service sector structure in a given area
- household types
- family policies and flexibility in work-life
- early child care institutions at hand
- transport systems
- Incidents of violence in families if it is gender based
- research and scientific structures

## Some simple questions....

- How can any nation, any government, any sector, any industrial enterprise – afford to **loose out on talents** – divided evenly among the genders ?
- How can any firm or enterprise afford **not to engage all the creativity** it can lay hands on ?
- How can any industry or sector, loose the opportunity **to** build a good reputation in the market by not including both genders and recruiting for diversity ?
- Name and blame is very effective in a market economy; use gender statistics and gender analyses when presenting a firm or a product

## Methods and tools

- What kind of ambitions does a nation or an enterprise have, as to reach GE ?
- The ambitions will define the methods and tools
- Promoting equal chances for men and women, boys and girls can be done by legislation securing formal rights and through campaigns, action plans and advocacy
- However, securing **equal outputs/ real and material GE**, demands affirmative actions and sometimes quotas by law
- Norway has used a mix of both the last 50 years
- The results are in and attitudes have changed, old stereotypes have died

## Stereotypes...

- A core in all our equality strivings, is to abolish harmful and unsound stereotypes that reproduces inequality between the genders
- All cultures, traditions and religions in all types of societies have stereotypes
- Business life has distinct cultures
- We have to respect traditions and religions, but...
- It is also our duty, in accordance with the CEDAW, the CRC and other UN Human Rights Conventions to point to the fact that **all individuals regardless of gender**, have the right to:
  - participation in society
  - to freedom of speech
  - to gainful and paid work
  - to own or inherit property
  - to reproductive health
  - the right to freedom from violence and so forth.

## Stereotyping is done everywhere....

- Avoid the fallacy in believing that only men carry stereotypes, not women.
- Women in Scandinavia and Europe still talk of home and children as “the women’s and mothers domain”, as if women have a specific gene for housework or child rearing, excluding the men as if not possessing such a gene....
- Women speak of “the husbands helping out in the house and with the children”. Again, exclusion of the men, or men as mere “assistants” in the house. As if the house work is not a shared responsibility, regardless of gender. Women must let go, too.
- When Parliament voted for gender balance quotas on boards of private companies in 2003, the elite men of the upper echelons of economic life in Norway exclaimed: ***Able women cannot be found, the women will not take on such responsibilities, our firm will be broke or have to flee Norway as to prosper etc etc.***
  - None of this was of course true. It was stereotyping
- Many men in decision making positions speak of “typical female workplaces or jobs”. There are no such things. There are only historical and social traditions that have made women and men choose different occupations and professions.

## Historical and social gender...

- Corporate culture is like invisible glue; it sticks to you even when you do not think it does. Many able, corporate males do not think they have biases. To them the perception of a **business person, still is the "rational economic male"**.
- **Important:** We should avoid "essentialism" either way; the notion of difference based upon an inherent "quality" or disqualification, being born as biological women (or men).
- The issue is to change notions of **historical** and **social gender** if they are harmful and lead to discrimination and inequality.
- We should also avoid speaking of "men as such " as elite or powerful, contrary to all women being some sort of victims. Statistically few men have elite position and power on a world wide basis, and hence; **We have to be aware of social class when we discuss gender issues.**

## Norwegian examples of systematic work:

- GE is seen as an intrinsic part of labor policies and the social dialogue between the State and the partners in work life.
- 1950: The tripartite cooperation between the State, Employers Federations and the Unions: The 1st Main Agreement. It lifted in GE and family issues in the social dialogue.
- 1959: Norway ratifies the ILO Convention no.100 on Equal Pay; an Equal Pay Council is established and equal pay is included in the MA
- In 1982 a specific Equal Status Agreement is included in the MA.
- 1966: The largest social reform ever; The National Insurance Scheme, covering almost all welfare issues like minimum pensions for all, sick insurance, parental benefits, reproductive rights and gender issues (The financing of this Scheme / Law was and still is tripartite: State, employers and employees, and the self-employed).

- **1975:** The first Kindergarten Act with measures to expand the Early Child Care sector in all municipalities (The next Act came in 2002 and a nation wide program to provide full coverage of early child care places from 1ste year of age, with 80% subsidies from the State).
- **1979:** The Gender Equality Act, covering all sectors of society, giving protection especially to women from being discriminated against. It forbids all discrimination on the basis of gender (implemented and enforced by the Anti-discrimination and Equality Ombud).
- **1981/88:** New amendment in the GE Act, requiring that all public appointed councils, boards, groups and committees, shall have not less than 40 % of the underrepr.gender. This was an affirmative action/quota by law. (overseen by the Ministry of Children and Equality)
- **1980's:** Most political parties employ quotas for women, voluntarily (not by law)

## Quotas...

- **1993:** The Municipal Act, requiring that all committees appointed by the politically elected Council, shall have a 40 -60 % gender balance. Affirmative action by law. (Overseen by County Governors).
- **2003:** The legal duty to take actions for gender equality in any private firm or public institution and to report annually, is included in the GE Act. (overseen by the Anti-discrimination and Equality Ombud).  
Very important tool!

**2003:** 4 laws amended in Parliament: The Public Limited Company law (the large enterprises noted at the stock exchange and with a wide spread of shares), the law governing the wholly State Owned Companies , the inter-municipally company law, and the Companies ruled by specific laws. A very strong affirmative action, the requirement of a 40% quotas of the underrepr. gender in the boardrooms. Smart economy and democratic/fair.  
(Overseen and with sanctions by the National Business Register)

- 1993: The Parental Leave Scheme (in the National Insurance Act) was enlarged to 42 weeks of which 4 weeks was obligatory leave for fathers, not transferable to the mother. Unless the fathers take his leave, the family will lose the refunding of his salary. This is a quota ! (heavily debated at the time in business circles)
- The fertility rate slowly increases !
- 90 % of the fathers with the right to a quota, enjoys it (2003).
- This quota is enlarged to 6 weeks in 2005 and 10 weeks in 2009. With 56 weeks in total, 9 weeks are obligatory for the mother, 10 for the father and the remaining can be shared between them. Both have to qualify through work life before birth. Most mothers take at least a 6 month paid leave

## The most radical quota ever....

- Norway was the first country to use affirmative action in this manner (Spain has followed suit, France is discussing, Sweden put it to a halt)  
Why quotas ?
- Quotas worked well in other sectors
- Women were increasingly filling top positions in politics, academia, management, public services
- But NOT in the powerful boardrooms of private enterprises
- Cross-party agreement that Norway needed a redistribution of power within the private sector, to make use of all talents, heads and competence
- Even conservative circles were impatient.... nothing seemed to change, old boys networks prevailed

- **2005:** A new law governing cooperatives in agribusiness, forestry, consumers' and housing coop's. A requirement of 40 % women when the business has 1000 members or more. (the same sanctions as for the public ltd companies)
- **2007:** The comprehensive Strategic Plan for Gender Equality in agriculture, forestry and agribusiness launched. Measured every year, as how targets are reached
- **2008:** The Cabinet launches the National Gender Equality Plan for kindergartens, schools and secondary schools, building upon 20 years of G.E. Curriculas for teachers and experiences from projects in kindergartens and schools – to teach G.E and counteract stereotypes of girls and boys as early as possible. (overseen by the National Authority for Education)
- **2008:** The Cabinet launches the National Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurs, with a budget line. (overseen by the Ministry of Trade and Industry)
- **2009:** Quota introduced for small companies where municipalities hold 2/3 of the stocks, demanding 40 -60 % gender balance on the boards. (Several 1000 companies produce welfare and services to the public, and should therefore mirror the population). Typical affirmative action.
- **2009:** Full coverage and Early Child Care places to an affordable price/max tax. New legal action concerning every child's right to a place.

## Quotas work !

- From 2003 to 2008 we saw an increase from 7 % women to 40 % , on the boards of the Public Ltd. Companies (as mentioned above). On an average: 43 % women in all the 4 mentioned types of companies. The Coop's are soon there. The women were not hard to find...
- These quotas has changed the mental images of women's abilities and possibilities forever
- Research shows that diversity pays, at the bottom line of business. Strategic work in boardrooms needs to mirror the diversity outside; the complex markets and different demands. Half of the consumers are women, with their own purse
- The male roles and models of masculinity changed forever after introducing the father's quota in the Parental Leave Scheme. After 16 years in action we can tell by research, that this law has changed the women's and mothers roles and how they perceive the balance between work and family life.

- Quotas have shown that not only is gender equality in outputs secured, but that images, attitudes, stereotyping changes....
- Quotas should not be used everywhere; there is no quotation to jobs in Norway, and there cannot be quotas for academic positions
- Norwegian anti-discrimination laws, however, give the possibility to apply moderate /mild affirmative action as to promote persons of the underrepr.gender, non-western ethnic origin/minorities, disability...to a job. If the qualifications of two candidates are equal, one should choose diversity.

## Campaigns and programs work ...

- The National Employers Federation set up (2004) **Female Future**. A program to recruit and train women to board-room work that has been very successful. (Won a European Prize).
- Similar programs are set up in the public sectors, in the financial sector etc , with great success.
- Several databases have been set up with women's CV's to pick from, when you look for able women to be nominated for election to your board or to invite to compete for top management positions.
- Many different mentor-adept programs have been set up the last 15 years, most of them very successful
- Research and measurement is done to investigate the effects of diversity
- The University Act requires all colleges and universities to have a Gender Equality Action plan.

## **In any effort, program, action, measure or legal system, accountability rules:**

- Who is accountable and what are the sanctions when targets are not met ?
- One will never change the world with merely hopes, good intentions.
- Who /what could be positive models and set examples ?
- The road from well-meant rhetoric and dinner speeches - to material results, is hard and demand devoted and systematic work. It takes time.
- You need Governments and boards with distinct political will.
- You need able partners for change, like Employers Federations, Trade Unions, NGO ´s and International cooperation.

## Using the media when advocating...

- Whenever launching a project, a program, a campaign, a research result on GE, use the media
- Whenever an enterprise or a public institution is measured as to GE status, involve the media
- Sell "good stories" on GE /family policies exclusively to well known media houses or television
- Train the media people in GE; they love it !

## The young people

- Develop National og Local Action Plans for GE in schools, make it fun
- Start as early as possible with equality training, give priority to recruit men in kindergartens
- Teachers colleges must develop curriculums in GE; you have to train the trainers
- Set up awards and prizes for the best academic institution or school in GE
- Support young peoples' NGOs, to work with GE , HR and anti-discrimination

## Challenges ahead...

Gender Equality in Norway would be

- when there are just as many men in the kindergartens/schools as women in boardrooms
- when there is equal pay for work of equal value (no gender gap)
- when fathers take more of the parental leave than their obligatory quota
- when women and mothers work less part-time and more full time
- when family violence is eradicated
- when women own as many assets and stocks as men
- when harmful gender stereotypes are gone



## Mission not yet accomplished in Norway

- Or in any other country
- Let us work together and share experiences and lessons learned
- Let us do bench-marking
- GE means modernizing a society, and it is good for business !

Good luck with your work in Australia, and thank you for your attention