



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 033 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 8, 2008

—
Chair

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Thursday, May 8, 2008

• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): Order, please.

Welcome to Madame Dwyer-Renaud and Michèle Bougie.

We're going to go through a training session, and I'll let you basically take over from here. I won't say a word.

Welcome. The floor is yours.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud (Director, Gender-Based Analysis and Accountability Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to this training session.

I wanted to give you a bit of housekeeping and historical detail before we start, and then I'm going to leave it in the capable hands of Michèle, but I'll stay for the whole session.

The training you're about to engage in is, as you know, one component of our GBA implementation strategy. It was developed between the years 2000 and 2003. At the time, the content was pilot-tested with a variety of people, including federal department officials, representatives from non-governmental organizations, provincial counterparts, and people like that.

We knew we needed to provide training, and we knew we needed a train-the-trainer program as well, so that was also developed between the years 2000 and 2003. What's interesting is that in the first session that was given to a variety of participants, feedback from those participants, from the Canada School of Public Service, and from other people was basically that we should use professional trainers.

The people who were giving the session at the time were not professional trainers; they were the people you are looking at right now. As a result, at that time Status of Women Canada decided to create an outreach program to recruit professional trainers, who basically became trainers licensed by Status of Women Canada.

The program itself and the trainers' manual was also tested by professional trainers who were experts in gender equality. At the time, the administrative burden of having one's own trainers was pointed out to us, especially at a time when many of the institutions in government, including the Canada School of Public Service, were divesting themselves of teachers, educators, and that kind of thing.

This was such a specialized training that not too many people knew how to take it on, including the school at the time, and we

wanted to make sure the trainers were meeting very specific criteria. Also, to have this network of trainers—we now have six bilingual francophone trainers and six anglophone trainers—permits us to be able to carry the word of GBA much wider across Canada and across the world, because they also do the training in several other countries.

Unfortunately, the trainer we were to have today is ill; she has this flu that I guess a lot of people are getting today. So you're stuck with me and Michèle. We will do the best we can with the materials. It's not as if we haven't seen this material before, and that's important for you to know. This material was conceived, designed, and conceptualized by Michèle and me, with the help of all these other stakeholders, so we know it pretty well.

I suppose when our trainer was preparing, she was preparing to work on the Anti-terrorism Act or something like that, and it was changed. I believe the request was to receive the same training as the finance department is receiving, and we had to ask the permission of the finance department. They were very gracious in permitting us to use the same training; however, we will not be able to use the same case studies.

Case studies, when they are what we would call home grown, or created by the department themselves, are not shared. They remain confidential to the department. However, often that doesn't happen in Status of Women Canada, and we have already created comprehensive case studies for those departments that don't bring case studies to the table.

We have case studies that range from emergency preparedness, to transportation, to HIV/AIDS. There's a variety of them. I think we're up to nine now. However, for this purpose this morning, the case studies will be two budgetary initiatives, one that came out in 2007 and one that came out in 2008, which I believe you have in front of you, and Michèle will help you work through it.

What's important to remember is that—

• (0910)

The Chair: I'd like to interrupt a little. You said we asked for an anti-terrorist study—

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: Yes.

The Chair: —which is not what we had asked. But if you have that study and you feel it is going to give us a better feeling for this or that it will help you get a better return on your investment, perhaps we can...

They have done that study; that's their case study, no?

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): No, sorry. We want to know what they do with Finance.

The Chair: Okay, fine. Thanks.

Anti-terror bills are not ours to even worry about, so I don't know how anybody would have communicated that we study an anti-terror bill.

We have been focusing on budgets and how the revenue and the programmatic aspects affect the gender equality. So I guess we'll stick with the budget.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: I'll stick with the budget.

Usually in a training session—and I'm sure some of you have been educators in the past—when you have the students in the room, you usually don't have visitors or parents in the room. So depending on how the committee wants to proceed, if the committee permits, people who are sitting in may want to join in. It's a little odd to have people not participating and engaging in the training.

At the minimum, can we ask that there be no BlackBerry's and no cellular phones, because that trips us up in terms of the procedures.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: Okay.

To you, my dear.

Mrs. Michèle Bougie (Senior Policy and Program Analyst, Status of Women Canada): Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. *Bonjour, tout le monde.*

As Hélène mentioned, we prepared something prior to being told what you actually wanted. That's fine. It gives me the opportunity to explain a little bit about what we said on February 14. I think it will help you understand as we work through the case study.

During the February 14 evidence we gave, I explained how we developed our training based on the culture of the organization—its openness and willingness, its prior knowledge, its level of senior bureaucratic support, its resources, etc. We created something especially for you, which you won't be receiving today. Instead, you're getting this one.

With the finance training, you need to know the context. In 2005, we did what we called the mother of all trainings. It's a full day—they break into small groups and go through each step to a case study. This is what we're going to do with you today. The important thing, which I also mentioned on February 14, is that it's not a mechanical exercise. You're not dealing with widgets and gadgets and gadgets. It's teaching people to think differently. Part of the value of the training, particularly for a department like Finance, is the opportunity to think outside the box, think differently, and even more important, discuss things. Equality is something that has many layers. It has history; it has socio-economic impacts. People in the training need the time to discuss things, look at the underpinnings of the causes, of the impacts of policies and programs, look at how they can change them. We did this in 2005.

We know from some of the testimony that Finance did not get the universally approved, if you will, GBA training. That refers to gender budget training based on tools developed by Diane Elson.

Now, this is a particular form of training. When you go into a training like gender budget training, you need to know that you have the administrative and political support, together with the will to make such a budget happen. This was not the case. According to the agreement, Finance was going to learn gender-based analysis because they needed to be able to understand the underpinnings of gender in the context of the budget, which means understanding how to apply the analysis. If we don't use terminology like Diane Elson's "gender-disaggregated beneficiary assessment tool", for example, it doesn't mean that the training itself is not doing exactly that. It's just not using the terminology.

The Finance people had a backgrounder we prepared on gender and budgets, which enabled them to understand the context, the terminology, the tools, the different models around the world. We agreed to this because they needed to understand how to apply the methodology within the constructs of the federal government model. They also needed to be able to examine whether departments had done a GBA of the proposal for which they were submitting the item to the budget, which means they had to know how departments were doing GBA.

That, however, is not the training you're getting today. Over the year, we condensed our training into half a day. It went beyond the taxation and the budget people. It became more important to focus on how to do GBA, how to use it as a tool. For context, of course, they could refer to gender budgets, if that's the area they work in.

So what we're going to do today is walk you through what they would have done. I want us to have a bit of fun with it. I'm not a trainer, so bear with my attempts to be Carmen Paquette. She would have had a lot more fun with you.

● (0915)

What we're going to do is simply walk through a bit of the bigger picture of GBA. We're going to talk a bit about the different underpinnings of it. Then you do have, as Hélène said, two case studies that we pulled out of the 2007-08 budget. It is part of the analysis that all of you already received in previous testimonies, and we're going to go through the steps of the GBA and you are going to do the analysis.

One of the things we always hear in case studies is that there are not enough data, there's not enough information, we're guessing, we're not sure. That's fine, because the purpose is not to have a perfect thing while you're working. The purpose is to generate the discussion, the thinking, and to start looking at how you would do things differently. So we will be working through these two case studies in approximately 15 minutes or so.

Generally, again, in the context of the training we have little working groups. We split you up into two or three groups. If the committee would like that, we can split you up into two groups—you're a sizable number—and you would each be working through the steps and sharing back and forth. But I'll explain that as we get to it.

So this is the context. At the end of the session, by the time you leave, we are hoping you will have an increased understanding of what GBA really is. There is still a lot of mythology—and not necessarily for you, but certainly for Finance—around how GBA applies to your daily work.

So there are principles that not only underline the training session but also underline the practice of implementing GBA, and they're consistent, no matter who is doing it. GBA is an integral part of your work. In other words, don't wait until you've developed a policy program or legislation to look at it then and say, "Did we incorporate gender?" Start thinking of incorporating gender right from the concept of your policy or program, which we'll be doing with the case study.

You need to recognize the importance of understanding the social and economic context, and that is pretty self-evident. People don't operate in a vacuum. You have an income, you live in a certain area, you have certain jobs, you have certain characteristics based on who you are—ethnicity, etc.

The thing about GBA also is that it underlies the diversity, because women and men are not homogenous, and oftentimes what you'll find is that there can be greater inequalities between different population groups of women than there are differences between women and men. So again, GBA is not just men-women; it's also diversity.

We constantly talk about GBA being based on sound data, research, and information. This is because if you are going to look at policies, programs, and legislation, and let's say you're creating or adapting, you need to know the basis of reality upon which you are creating your initiative. It's not enough to go on assumptions; you need to know, if the government is spending X amount of dollars on this policy and it is not working, what the evaluation tells you about why it's not working. You might discover it's a gender issue. You have to go back and you'll discover there wasn't enough data at the development from a gender perspective to really ensure you were creating something that did meet the needs of the population.

It also recognizes the effects of personal values, experiences, and education, and this is on the part of the people developing the policies or programs. People need to understand that just because they belong to a certain population group, it doesn't mean the reality they identify with will produce a policy or program that matches the reality of the rest of the population of the country. So it really forces people to question their assumptions, and you'll be doing a bit of that as you walk through the case study in a few minutes.

And it leads me to the next point, which is that GBA also requires you to examine and question your assumptions. Sometimes the assumption can be that women are not reaching the same outcomes as men, but when you do the analysis you might discover most women are, but it's only a succinct group—perhaps aboriginal women—who are not. So what does that tell you? How does that inform what you're going to do in terms of your policies and programs?

Of course, GBA is enhanced by collaboration. This is because issues that affect women and men exist across the spectrum. They exist in all kinds of policy areas and program areas, so you need to

work with the people. As we said when we were here the first time on the 14th, you need to work with the people who have the expertise in terms of the substantive knowledge of what they're working with.

• (0920)

So GBA is basically a systematic approach to gender inclusion. It's not hit or miss. It's not looking at a policy and saying, "Oh gee, we didn't think of women, so let's fix it". Let's ensure that as we develop the policy we're looking at the realities of women and men.

It's a tool for gender equality. When gender-based analysis is applied appropriately, it will lead you to certain trends, data, and knowledge that will help you determine how to achieve equality. It will also help you determine, which is important for many departments, within a gender-neutral policy or program—and most federal government policies and programs are gender neutral—even if the policy or program has a gender-neutral outcome, what is actually happening for the women and men in diverse population groups when they interact with this policy or program. You may discover that you need to make adjustments. You may discover that even though the broader objective is not specifically equality, you can have an equality objective component within the bigger objective. You'll be doing that as you walk through the case study.

GBA is also part of an approach known as mainstreaming. Mainstreaming is basically ensuring that gender is an integral part of absolutely everything a government does, to put it bluntly, and gender-based analysis is a tool to help ensure you can get there.

A lot of times people confuse diversity employment equity and gender-based analysis. We like to let people know that GBA is a methodological tool. Diversity is about population groups, and employment equity is about legislation for the representation of people in the paid labour force. Those are very different things. GBA can inform the other two because it's a methodological tool. One of the things we love about GBA is that, as a tool, it can be applied and adapted to just about any situation.

Many people wonder why we should do GBA and what the value-added is. There is a bit of an assumption in Canada that we're doing very well on equality because of the charter, so the question does come up. GBA allows you to have certain things. It has gone through an evolution. We have gone from equitable access or equal opportunity—where everyone gets the same shot at a program—to equal treatment, which is formal equality, where if we treat everybody the same they will all receive the same benefits. We realized that wasn't quite it. Then we moved into the evolution of substantive equality, or equality of outcome. That means the outcomes are going to be equitable for the various population groups. So you look at the impact to see if it is serving your population fairly, adequately, and equitably.

We also do GBA for sound policy development reasons. Policy is about serving the people of Canada. If you don't know who in Canada you're serving, your policies are not going to be effective. It's quite simple, in the sense that it informs your policy so you actually meet the needs of your population. If you have the policy, then move into a program. In order to bring the theory of the policy into the reality of a program, you need to continue thinking of the gender perspective as you implement your program. Of course—sound legal reasons—we have the charter.

We're moving into how to do GBA now. You're really going to have to pay attention, because you're going to start working in a few minutes.

• (0925)

On fundamental questions for GBA, although we have a million questions that people use to help their thinking processes—of which you have a selection in these laminated sheets—does the policy or program support full participation and equality for women and men? That really covers a lot right there. Does it create barriers? Again, sometimes we know that it's not necessarily the policy or program per se that has been badly designed, but there might have been unintended barriers. They can be a very simple thing, like a walk-in centre for employment programs shutting the doors at six o'clock in an area where a higher percentage of women are shift workers in the hospital and they can't access services until midnight or two in the morning.

These are the realities of implementing programs to ensure you meet the needs and don't create barriers.

The second fundamental question is whether the policy or program discriminates against men or women in its outcomes. Are the outcomes equal for both sexes?

The overall checklist that we ask people to keep in mind in order to think about the framework of applying GBA is to integrate your questions concerning gender throughout the whole initiative, throughout the whole analysis—and we'll be doing that with the walk-through on the case study—clearly presenting the gender implications.

Sometimes the gender implications are hidden. You really have to, as we say, drill down or peel the onion layers to get to the gender implications, because sometimes on the surface, a policy or program can appear to be quite “neutral”—and I put that in quotation marks because a lot of people think neutral means it's going to be okay for both men and women. You need to substantiate the claims with relevant, reliable gender-disaggregated data. So you need to have reality. You can't be looking to establish policies or programs or spending public money based on assumptions.

As politicians, you're on the other end of the spectrum, but for the bureaucracy, for policy people, you need to be able to present and support policy recommendations that support gender equality to your ministers in a credible and practical way. So this is something that analysts really have to be able to discern: how do we present the equality impacts—whether positive or negative—of what we are developing, and how can we best recommend a direction that will take into account, at least, the equality consequences of doing or not doing the options that are presented? And of course, we do look at

ensuring that gender equality is congruent with other government positions.

We're going to introduce you to the shower sheet. These are selected highlighted questions taken out of the training manual that people use in order to inform the thinking process. Now, generally in a full day's training you'd have the manual with many more questions. In a two-hour session, it's much more practical for people to go through these questions to generate the thinking process on the case study.

• (0930)

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: I'd like to interject for a moment on why we call these the shower sheets. It's a little bit of a joke for us. We are hoping that the public servants will hang them in their showers in the morning before they come to work and memorize these questions, so once they've done their training, when they come to work they will remember what they're supposed to do. We're happy to be able to have them plasticized, although probably it's not a green option in some ways.

I just had to tell you why we call them shower sheets.

Mrs. Michèle Bougie: Thank you, Hélène.

So we're going to look at the two case studies you have in front of you. There's the tax-free savings account, and there's the working income tax benefit, which came out of the budget of 2007.

[Translation]

I'd like us to split into two groups. Persons on each side of the table will form one group.

[English]

And what you're going to do is this.

[Translation]

Each group will select a case study. Together we will review the questions in the reference guide.

[English]

I would ask, since we have three of you there, that maybe two of you move to that side of the table.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: Is it agreeable to the committee to work in small groups?

An hon. member: I don't have any problem with that.

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Michèle Bougie: Do the people on this side of the table have a preference for a particular case study? The other side could tackle the other case study.

[English]

The Chair: We're going to do tax-free.

• (0935)

[Translation]

Mrs. Michèle Bougie: The three main issues, the three broad...

[English]

As you work through the steps, this is going to guide how you use the questions in your reference guide on the shower sheet—and H  l  ne has explained why I called it that.

What you want to keep in mind is—and this is the big picture; you're working on something like a budget—the key GBA questions to ask about the development or implementation of the measure you're looking at. Where would you find the answers? A lot of times it's where would you get the data and how would you find the information you're looking for? And finally, what would be the gender implications on the development or implementation of the measure, depending on the information and the answers you find?

So keeping in mind that's your big framework, we're going to start with step one. If you look on your shower sheet, step one is the preliminary assessment of the gender equality impacts. Basically it's like an environmental scan of the issue, but from a gender perspective. You always have an environmental scan that shows you everything, but not the particularities of the gender dimensions.

I would propose we have five minutes, because this is a condensed two-hour training. For the five minutes of work on the two questions in step one on your shower sheet, how can the issue be clearly defined? As you look at your case study, what is really the issue at hand of your case study from a gender perspective?

[Translation]

In the shower sheet, in Step 1: Preliminary Assessment of Gender Equality Impacts, the second question is as follows: “How can the issue be clearly defined? The second question in Step 1 is:

[English]

What are the root causes of this issue?

[Translation]

“What are the root causes of this issue?”

[English]

So for your case study, look at those two questions.

Oui?

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): If I understand correctly, we're starting with steps 1 and 2.

Mrs. Mich  le Bougie: Yes.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: And that will be for the first five minutes.

Mrs. Mich  le Bougie: Correct.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): And we're going to consider this fundamental question.

[English]

The Chair: Committee members, I have a request. Can we make this in camera so that we can say what we want without having it recorded? We're going to clear our slates. This is not government policy that we are looking at; this is not something that's in the income tax.... You are consultants for the government. If we can close the door and make it in camera, I think we will feel freer.

Is that agreeable?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.