

# INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION FOR SWEDEN'S SECOND UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW 2014

**Submitted by the Swedish Women's Lobby, May 2014**

## **Background**

This report is issued to specifically provide comments on Sweden's implementation of the UN Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the context of the Universal Periodic Report of Sweden.

## **About the Swedish Women's Lobby (SWL)**

The SWL is a politically and religiously independent umbrella organization for women's organizations in Sweden. We work to fulfill women's full human rights and towards a gender equal society within Sweden, the EU and internationally. The SWL gather 41 member organizations with the mutual aim to improve the status of women in the Swedish society. Our aim is to integrate women's perspectives into all political, economic and social processes, locally as well as internationally. The organization is based on feminist grounds. The foundations of our activities are the UN Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action.

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## **Responsibility to eliminate all discrimination against women**

There is a lack of knowledge of CEDAW in the general public, and insufficient understanding of the responsibility of government structures for the implementation of CEDAW at national, regional and local levels.<sup>1</sup> As a result structures in society preserve stereotype expectations of women's and men's roles and contributions, which undermine the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender.

A new anti-discrimination law was approved in June 2008,<sup>2</sup> which covers seven grounds for discrimination, including gender. The National Human Rights Institution which is mandated to oversee the application of the new legislation on anti-discrimination – *Diskrimineringsombudsmannen* – entered into force on 1 January 2009. The Swedish Women's Lobby considers that the new law has weakened the status of CEDAW in Swedish legislation.

## **Recommendations**

- The government should ensure that gender main-streaming is consistently applied in all sectors, including through gender budgeting. By improving statistical data progress on gender mainstreaming can be continually monitored.
- The government should ensure better knowledge and implementation of CEDAW. To reach such goal the government should define and assign a mandate to women's organizations to carry out massive communication, training, advocacy activities as well as research to monitor implementation of CEDAW at all levels.
- The government should review the possibility of strengthening gender equality legislation and monitoring of gender equality, through reinstating the gender equality ombudsman.

## **Women in the workplace, equal pay and career opportunities**

The pay gap between women and men in Sweden is improving slowly. Women earn 13,9 % less than men, based on a full working day.<sup>3</sup> The labour market is segregated based on gender, with a domination of women in the school sector, health institutions and care

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<sup>1</sup> Sverige + Kvinnokonventionen = sant? A report on CEDAW in municipalities and regions, UN Women Sweden and Fredrika Bremer Förbundet, 2012: [http://unwomen.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/UN-Women-rapport\\_19Juni2012\\_WEBB3.pdf](http://unwomen.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/UN-Women-rapport_19Juni2012_WEBB3.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> SFS 2008:567: [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Diskrimineringslag-2008567\\_sfs-2008-567/](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567/) and SFS 2012:913: [http://www.lagboken.se/dokument/Andrings-SFS/1454845/SFS-2012\\_913-Lag-om-andring-i-diskrimineringslagen-2008\\_567?id=168198](http://www.lagboken.se/dokument/Andrings-SFS/1454845/SFS-2012_913-Lag-om-andring-i-diskrimineringslagen-2008_567?id=168198)

<sup>3</sup> The National Mediation Office in Sweden, 2012: [http://www.mi.se/files/PDF-er/att\\_bestalla/loneskilnader/skillnaden12.pdf](http://www.mi.se/files/PDF-er/att_bestalla/loneskilnader/skillnaden12.pdf)

organizations. Wages in those sectors have lagged behind, and insecure employment conditions and part-time work are predominant.

Parental leave is a right for women and men, as is sharing of the upbringing of their children. Yet, about 75 %<sup>4</sup> of the parental leave in Sweden is still taken by women, and women perform 60 % of the unpaid domestic work. This situation is detrimental to women's position in the labour market. It results in lower salaries and hampers the development of career opportunities. However, the two months of parental leave that have been reserved for each parent has had a normative impact and has led to an increase in men's use of parental leave. A reform to introduce individual parental leave would increase women's labour market participation and counteract the statistical discrimination of women, which results from an expectation that women will use a larger part of parental leave.

According to Central Bureau of Statistics<sup>5</sup> – SCB – 40 % of mothers with children aged 0-7 years, work part-time. Hours worked by fathers correlate insignificantly with the age of children. Some 22 % of women have indicated that care of children or family members are reasons for their part-time work. The corresponding figure for men is 8,1 %.

## **Recommendations**

- The right to full-time employment should be stipulated by law, with the option to work part-time.
- The government and the partners of the labour market should implement effective measures to ensure full-time employment in sectors dominated by women, including regulations on working conditions.
- The government should reform the parental leave benefit, to make it an individual right.
- Professional geriatric care should be strengthened and, by allocating sufficient resources, ensure that this social service is publically fully funded.
- Professional pre-school facilities should be accessible to all in order to ensure that women can combine parenthood with participation in the labour market. In particular, child care should be available outside normal working hours.

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<sup>4</sup> Försäkringskassan, 2013: [http://www.forsakringskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/54ab7667-6b2a-4325-8c8d-ad102b48c106/socialforsakringsrapport\\_2013\\_08.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.forsakringskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/54ab7667-6b2a-4325-8c8d-ad102b48c106/socialforsakringsrapport_2013_08.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

<sup>5</sup> Women and Men in Sweden - Facts and figures 2012, SCB: [http://www.scb.se/sv/\\_Hitta-statistik/Publiceringskalender/Visa-detaljerad-information/?publobjid=17389+](http://www.scb.se/sv/_Hitta-statistik/Publiceringskalender/Visa-detaljerad-information/?publobjid=17389+)

## **Women's full enjoyment of human rights and freedom from violence**

Sweden needs to expand, develop and strengthen the protection of women from exposure to violence within the family and domestic violence<sup>6</sup>. Additional resources are required to expand effective, preventive measures which are to cover the entire society.

In recent years the exploitation of women's bodies has found a new expression, as a result of medical research to help childless couples to conceive – IVF. The purchase of a woman's womb through surrogate motherhood should be considered a violation of the right of the woman and the unborn child.

Since the law against sex purchase was introduced in Sweden, demand has drastically diminished. However, investigations show that 80 % of sex purchases by Swedish citizens occur abroad.<sup>7</sup> Human rights are universal and should be applicable wherever you are. Therefore it should be punishable for Swedes to purchase sex outside of Sweden, even if it is not a crime in country of purchase. The government should remove the requirement of double prosecution to purchase sexual services abroad.

### **Recommendations**

- Public funding should be guaranteed for women's and girls' shelters.
- The government should speed up ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- The government should prohibit surrogacy motherhood in order to actively protect the human rights of the mother and the child.
- The government should ensure that persons travelling abroad and purchasing sexual services should be prosecuted in Sweden.
- The government should actively spread information on the Swedish model law to limit demand of purchasing sexual services within the EU and internationally.

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<sup>6</sup> Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

<sup>7</sup> Sälja och köpa sex i Sverige. Förekomst, hälsa och attityder, 2011: <http://liu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:505995/FULLTEXT02.pdf>