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**Item: the Human Rights Council requested the Expert Mechanism to carry out a study on the right to health and indigenous peoples with a focus on children and youth**

### **Introduction**

In Finland social- and health services are guaranteed for citizens by law. Also children's and young people's social and health services are guaranteed by legislation dealing with children and young people. Decree on child and prenatal health clinics, school and student health care and child and young people's preventive oral health services is supposed to assure that a guidance on health care and physical examinations are systematic and that the level of services is coherent and take into account also the needs of population in municipal health care system. These services are meant especially for pregnant women, families, school aged children, pupils and their families and students.

The Finnish Sámi Parliament describes in this submission, how the right of children and young people to health is implemented in the Sámi homeland and how municipalities monitor the well-being of children and young people. In addition to this, this submission introduces, how service system is working if a young person needs support and help. Sámi homeland in Finland covers the areas of Utsjoki, Inari and Enontekiö municipalities and in the municipality of Sodankylä the area of Lappi reindeer herding cooperative. Outside of Sámi homeland there is not research knowledge about the accessibility of culturally sensitive social and health services which are provided in Sámi languages.

In Sámi homeland it is challenging to provide services due to exceptionally sparse settlements, extent of area and long distances. There are hardly any private service providers in the region and services are concentrated in administrative centres of municipality. The Sámi who lives in Sámi homeland lives mainly dispersed in remote villages in their own traditional homeland areas. The constitutional right of the Sámi to maintain their language and culture applies to all Sámi people regardless of their place of residence. This is an important issue to develop in the near future and concerns especially services provided for families and elderly people.

### **Children's well-being in the Sámi homeland**

Child and prenatal health clinics encompass contraceptive, prenatal and child health clinics. These services are supposed to promote health, physical and psychosocial development and well-being of a child and whole family while taking into a consideration resources of a whole family. Child clinics help families with children with all issues concerning the health of a child and they aim to protect a healthy growth and development of a child.

Services of child clinics are based on promotion of health, prevention and early diagnoses of diseases, and on monitoring and supporting comprehensive psychological, physical and social

development. In health consultation the whole family is taken into a consideration by supporting especially early interaction. Services of the child clinics are meant for children under school age and their families. Child clinics monitor comprehensively the growth and development of a child in regular physical examinations. Physical examinations include vaccination of children according to immunization programme. By vaccination and consultation infectious diseases are prevented.

Child welfare act aims to ensure the right of a child to safe environment, balanced and versatile development and special protection. The definition of child welfare is wide in legislation; actions promoting well-being of children and young people to prevent a need for actual child welfare actions; and preventing child welfare aims to provide help and support at early stages so that uprising and degenerating of problems can be prevented. Prenatal and child health clinics, day care and schools have an important role in implementation of preventive child welfare.

### **Services for families in the Sámi homeland**

North Sámi speaking public health nurse work part-time in Utsjoki and Enontekiö. In Enontekiö public health nurse works 50 percent of her/his working hours in occupational health care services and 50 percent in home nursing, and if necessary also in prenatal and child health clinics, and in school health care in the region of Enontekiö municipality. In Utsjoki prenatal and child health services are available two days a week. Working hours of public health nurse are not sufficient considering the need of client families. In the municipalities of Inari and Sodankylä there is not a Sámi speaking public health nurse. The municipality of Inari is the only municipality in which four different languages are used. In addition to Finnish also three different Sámi languages are used; North Sámi, Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi.

Sámi families with children have continuously brought up the needs for prenatal and child health clinic services in Sámi languages. Especially observing and testing language development of a Sámi speaking child in Finnish language is seen as a deficiency. As a consequence of testing children in Finnish language it is often claimed that language development of a child is delayed. In fact the real reason for this is, that the child speaks Sámi language as her/his mother tongue and has not learned Finnish well enough yet. Parents experience lack of support and consultation in multilingual upbringing in prenatal and child health clinics. Material on health assistance- and multilingual upbringing is not available in Sámi languages.

In Enontekiö it is possible to patronize with the Sámi speaking social worker with issues concerning social services of children and families. Also the services of child welfare officer are available in Sámi. In the municipality of Inari one social worker has studied North Sámi (satisfactory knowledge). In Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki families with children can have home help service in North Sámi, in Sevettijärvi in Skolt Sámi and in northern parts of Inari in Inari Sámi. Home help services for families with children aims to strengthen well-being of families and prevent problems from appearing. Services are available for families with children, which have a need for temporary help with childcare or necessary home care services.

As a measure of support for open child welfare there is a North Sámi speaking family carer in Utsjoki.

In other municipalities in Sámi homeland there is not such a service available. In specialized medical care in outpatient and ward treatment for children there is not Sámi speaking personnel. Interpretation is mainly organized through Sámi speaking personnel in hospitals. There is not specific interpretation system in use.

In Norway in Karasjok family clinic provide services in North Sámi (preventive community activities, family therapy, family consultation, child welfare) and crisis and incest centre services.

SámiSoster ry organizes annually supported vacations for families with children.

### **Well-being of youth in Sámi homeland**

Health behaviour and well-being of young people is investigated with school health surveys. Unlike in the municipalities of Inari and Sodankylä, the municipalities of Enontekiö and Utsjoki do not claim back results regularly in Sámi homeland region. Results are not analysed based on ethnic backgrounds.

According to the welfare report of the municipality of Enontekiö (2010) consumption of alcohol among young people aged from 12-16 as well as the number of offences have increased. In addition to this pupils feel that their voices are not heard in a school and they do not know about their possibilities of influencing in issues. However, the most concerning issue is pupils' experiences about deficiencies in pupil welfare care. Approximately 78 percent of respondents experienced difficulties to have an appointment with school social worker or psychologist. Respectively 28 percent experienced a lack of assistance in school attendance and studying. These figures are notably higher than average figures in the country and province, and in the future more attention should be paid to these issues. Quarter of respondents claims to experience school burn-outs. Long distances in school transporting which also prolong duration of school days may partly be a reason behind this.

According to the welfare report of the municipality of Inari 21,9 percent of young people aged from 13 to 16 experience depression in 2010.

According to the welfare report of the municipality of Sodankylä (2010) 20 percent of pupils aged from 13 to 16 who answered to the school health survey estimated that their health condition is average or weak. Short of one fifth of respondents aged from 13 to 16 experience depression. The same amount suffers from school burn-outs. Almost ten percent of respondents said that they do not have any close friends, and as many of pupils in comprehensive school have to face bullying at least once a week.

According to the welfare report of the municipality of Utsjoki (2011) the number of young people aged from 17-24 who are dropping outside of education system is growing (21,8 percent) and the number is biggest of all the municipalities in Sámi homeland region. In the municipality of Utsjoki also the amount of nursing of substance abuse disordered people aged from 15 to 24 has increased.

### **School social worker**

In Finland it is set by law that the organizer of teaching is obliged to provide services of school social worker and psychologist. School social worker aims to promote social growth and performance of pupils. School social worker assist pupils, who have problems with school going and in their relationships, or who have problems concerning their own growth and development.

According to the research conducted in 2011 there are municipalities in Lapland, in which services of school social worker are not provided at all. This was the case among others in the municipalities of Enontekiö and Utsjoki in Sámi homeland region. In these municipalities social worker in child welfare work attends to the meetings of student welfare group. In Utsjoki the situation has improved since ten percent of social workers' working hours has started to use for school social worker's work since the year 2015.

In the municipality of Inari there is a school director. The social worker in child welfare attends to the work of student welfare group if needed.

In the municipality of Sodankylä works one school social worker.

### **Youth work and young people's possibilities to influence**

Municipalities are responsible in organizing youth work, which aims to advice, guide, support and provide consultation for young people. In addition to basic youth work, municipalities can apply for funding to hire an outreach youth worker. Outreach youth work is special youth work form that aims to be present among young people and to provide a possibility for a safe and confidential adult contact. Outreach youth work looks for solutions for young people's problem with young people and helps to find services which are necessary for them. Outreach youth work aims to help young people who are under 29-years old and who are outside of education and labour market system, or need help to find services needed. Outreach youth work provides early stage support for young people if they want it by themselves.

In the municipality of Utsjoki was a Sámi speaking youth worker hired with the project funding money provided by Ministry of Education and Culture. She/he worked there for one year and finished his/her work in the autumn 2015. Young people liked Sámi speaking youth worker, since for the first time they had an opportunity to use their own mother tongue in youth work.

Young people should also have an opportunity to participate in processing of issues dealing with local and regional youth work and politics. Youth council is working in all municipalities in Sámi homeland region. In youth councils young people have an opportunity to influence in issues dealing with them. In addition to youth work provided by municipalities, young Sámi people can apply to be a member of the youth council of the Sámi parliament. 19 members are elected for two years period at the time, and they have to present as well as possible all the Sámi languages and regional Sámi groups in Finland. Youth council is one of the committees in the Sámi Parliament and it aims to influence in and to improve the position of young Sámi people and living conditions in Finland. Also Finnish Sámi youth organization works in

Finland, and it aims to strengthen the Sámi identity of young Sámi people and increase their knowledge about Sámi culture.

### **Accessibility of social and health care services**

According to the research conducted in the University of Lapland in 2013 Sámi people are not as satisfied with social and health care services and their accessibility as people in average. This research examines Sámi people's views and experiences about basic services in municipalities. Survey concentrated especially in social and health services provided in Sámi languages in northern part of Lapland. Approximately half of the Sámi respondents (55 percent) were satisfied with health care services and less than third of respondents (30 percent) were satisfied with social services. According to the survey the differences among municipalities are big. Also long distances and the lack of public transportation increases dissatisfaction.

In Finland hospital districts are responsible in organizing psychiatric services in the region. In Sámi homeland municipalities are part of the hospital district of Lapland. According to the contract between the hospital district of Lapland and Helse Finnmark the inhabitants of the municipality of Utsjoki have been allowed to use specialized medical care services in Norway in the region of the county of Finnmark since 2007. Utsjoki is the northernmost municipality in Finland and the only municipality in Finland where the most of inhabitants are Sámi speaking. The contract provides specialized medical care services of Helse Finnmark primarily for Finnish North Sámi speaking population.

Cultural sensitive special services are concentrated to the county of Finnmark to the municipality of Karasjok. The development centre of Sámi people's psychiatric health care (Samisk nasjonalt kompetansesenter – psykisk helsevern, SANKS) is the only unit providing specialized medical care which provides psychiatric services for children, young people and adults based on Sámi language and culture. Also the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (Barne- og ungdomspsykiatrisk poliklinikk, BUP) works under this unit. The Sámi in Finland can get treatment in SANKS, if they have a referral from a doctor. However information about the opportunity for this service is not widely delivered and thus it is up to the activity of a patient if she/he wish to use these services.

The region that the hospital district of Lapland covers has not a consistent operations model for mental health services. The accessibility of services varies in different municipalities. Clients are messed around between social and health care or between specialized medical care and basic health care system. Only the municipalities of Inari and Sodankylä provide mental and family health clinics in Sámi homeland region. In the municipalities of Enontekiö and Utsjoki issues dealing with mental health can be discussed with a doctor or with a public health nurse. Culturally sensitive easily accessible mental health services are not provided in Finland in Sámi languages.

Sámi speaking young person cannot get social and health care services in his/her own mother tongue since the services are provided in Finnish. Only one psychiatric nurse is working only in the municipality of Utsjoki. Issues dealing with mental health and self-harm should be able to be discussed in one's own mother tongue.

### **Intimate partner violence and domestic violence**

Intimate partner violence and domestic violence are closely connected to the drug abusing and mental health problems. In situations where intimate partner and domestic violence appear the ward in the health centre of Ivalo provides the primary asylum and if needed also shelter of Lapland in Rovaniemi is used. Also the other municipalities in Sámi homeland send their clients to shelter of Lapland.

The municipality of Utsjoki had a contract with crisis and incest centre in Karasjok which provides crisis phone and shelter services for the inhabitants of the municipality since the year 2002. The municipality of Utsjoki has served notice of termination of this contract.