Swedish contribution to the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 35/10

*Sweden thanks the OHCHR for the opportunity to provide information for the report of the High Commissioner on engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls. The information in this document may be made available at the OHCHR website, as appropriate.*

Question 1

*What are the concrete steps your Government has taken, at normative, institutional and programme levels, to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality and challenge gender stereotypes and the negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours that underlie and perpetuate violence against women and girls?*

Sweden has a feminist Government. This means that gender equality is central to the Government’s priorities – in decision-making and resource allocation. A feminist Government recognises the prevalence of gender inequality and how that limits and shapes conditions for women and men, girls and boys. A Feminist Government works to make a difference in people’s lives. The policy agenda strives to combat inhibitive gender roles and structures, so that women and men, boys and girls can live their lives to their full potential.  Men and boys must be involved in and invited to participate in gender equality work.

The goal for Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives. With this as its starting point, the Government is working towards six sub-goals:

1. **Equal division of power and influence**. Women and men must have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
2. **Economic equality**. Women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to paid work which gives economic independence throughout life.
3. **Equal education.** Women and men, girls and boys must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education, study options and personal development.
4. **Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care**. Women and men must have the same responsibility for housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms.
5. **Equal health.** Women and men, girls and boys must have the same conditions for a good health and be offered care on equal terms.
6. **Men's violence against women must stop.** Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right to and opportunity for physical integrity.

In accordance with the overall goal for Swedish gender equality policy and especially the sub goal that Men's violence against women must stop, Sweden has taken a number of actions to engage men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls.

Involving men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in particular efforts to challenge gender stereotypes that underlie and perpetuate violence against women and girls is a field prioritized by the Swedish government.

Matters on men, boys and gender equality are important tasks with significant gains for both welfare and economy. For example, if men were to shoulder a larger responsibility within the household, we would, to a greater extent, be able to free the expertise and capacity that women possess. By engaging men and questioning negative norms of masculinity we can counteract violence, human suffering and the significant costs that gender based violence and negative stereotypes incur on our society.

Sweden works actively to raise awareness on men and equality through state agencies such as the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Agency for Youth and Civil Society. There is a joint agreement where the state and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions work together to strengthen questions on men, boys and masculinity in gender equality work in municipalities, and civil society is encouraged and supported financially to work with men, boys and masculinity.

In 2018, a new national agency for gender equality will start its work which will include involving men and boys in gender equality measures in general and in measures to prevent and combat violence against women and girls in particular. In May 2018 Sweden will also organize an international conference on men and gender equality.

One component of changing gender stereotypes concerns the need to promote caregiving norms for men. In Sweden, policies on parental leave insurance and legislation promote and enable fathers to be active as caregivers and share the responsibility for unpaid care work equally with their partners. Parental leave policy has been of fundamental importance for gender equality and men’s engagement as active parents.

Men’s equal sharing of parental leave with women has proven to have a positive effect on the development of women’s wages and not least on men’s relationships with their children. Gender equal parenting also leads to a reduction of violence. In order to promote a more even sharing of parental leave days and to encourage men’s use of them, the Swedish government introduced a third reserved month for each parent in 2016 and is currently reviewing how to further modernise the policy to promote gender equal parenting.

The Swedish National Agency for Education was in June 2015 commissioned to offer schools and education providers in compulsory and upper secondary education extensive continuing professional development, so called national school development programs. These are to include support in working with gender equality and a norm critical perspective in schools. Swedish education act emphasize gender equality and national curricula stress the assignment for not only teachers but all school staff to counteract gender stereotypes and excluding norms. Sexuality education is a broad comprehensive cross curricular subject in Swedish schools which includes the awareness raising of norms of masculinity/femininity. Education focus on anti-bullying, inclusion, and relations built on trust can prevent violence in schools.

*National strategy to prevent men’s violence*

Ending men’s violence against women is a top priority for Sweden’s feminist government. To meet the goal of ending men’s violence, the Swedish government has decided on a national ten-year strategy to prevent and combat men’s violence against women, 2017-2026. The strategy includes actions against gender based violence including domestic violence, honour related violence, and actions against prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes.

Violence prevention is highlighted throughout the strategy. Specific focus is on universal violence prevention targeting stereotypical norms of masculinity as a cause of violence. This is shifting the focus from a reactive to a pre-emptive approach. The ten year national strategy is developed to enhance the coordination and sustainability of work to prevent and combat men’s violence towards women which involves a wide range of public authorities and agencies as well as many other actors in society.

The national strategy also aims to spread violence prevention programs with the objective to reach all youth. The hope is that programs such as “Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)” that are being piloted in Sweden and which address stereotypical norms around masculinity and violence among young people, will show effect on reducing violence in society. Schools are central arenas for this task and the Swedish National Agency for Education has been assigned to evaluate the results programme 2015-2017.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has been commissioned to actively promote violence prevention programs that have shown good results to the municipalities and civil society organisations. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has also a special mission to spread information on comprehensive sexuality education, health and gender equality to migrant youth.

The Division for Gender Equality at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs together with the new National Agency for Gender Equality will be responsible for monitoring the national strategy to prevent and combat men’s violence against women.

Question 2

*What are the challenges that your Government faces, at normative, institutional and programme levels, in involving men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in particular efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and the negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours that underlie and perpetuate violence against women and girls?*

Challenging traditional norms for masculinity is controversial and measures can be met with criticism from parts of the general public. It should also be underlined that although Sweden has a top position internationally when it comes to gender equality, Sweden is still far from a gender equal country. Sweden will need to uphold a long term commitment and further work to analyse, spread and implement methods and measures that are shown to be effective.

In Sweden, attitudes towards gender equality are increasingly positive amongst men, but they are still in part challenged by ignorance and indifference, as well as the sexism and anti-feminism that are being spread publicly, especially online. Sweden therefore works to strengthen gender equality policy efforts through actively engaging men in the work and raising awareness on how stereotypical and negative norms of masculinity bring costs on society, women, men, girls and boys alike.

Question 3

*Are women and girls, including women rights organizations involved in the efforts by your Government to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in particular efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and the negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours that underlie and perpetuate violence against women and girls?*

Swedish NGOs and civil society actors, in particular women’s organisations including organisations for women’s shelters, have long been at the forefront in shaping the public’s opinion against men’s violence against women through awareness raising and advocacy, as well as in providing active support to victims of violence. These important contributions and the knowledge that exists within civil society are recognised, encouraged and supported by the Swedish government. The Government also supports NGOs and civil society actors financially through grants.

The Government includes NGOs and civil society actors in structured dialogues in the process of developing new policy measures, strategies and action plans, in the field of gender equality. NGOs and civil society actors are also given the possibility to react on and comment the reports by government committees and inquiries.