

Sweden's feminist foreign policy
Examples from three years of
implementation



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Summary

Sweden is the first country in the world to pursue a feminist foreign policy. The aim is to contribute to gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. The policy was launched in October 2014 and a follow-up by the Swedish Foreign Service has revealed an intensive implementation process that, in just three years, has made its mark at multilateral, regional and bilateral level, and in relation to all the objectives of the Foreign Service's action plan. Efforts to achieve the action plan's six external objectives have taken the following form.

1) Human rights. Sweden has used a number of different platforms, roles and tools to promote the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls globally. Examples include promoting the Swedish legislation on prohibiting the purchase of sexual services, publishing 135 country reports on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, increasing the focus of development cooperation on gender equality, including through a new strategy, and in various ways supporting civil society's efforts to empower women and girls.

2) Freedom from violence. Sweden has worked actively to give visibility to and combat destructive masculine norms and to strengthen countries' capacities to prosecute perpetrators, assist crime victims and reintegrate soldiers. Sweden has also contributed to increasing knowledge about the link between the uncontrolled spread of weapons and sexual violence against women, and to more actors joining efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence in crisis situations, and making more than 300 commitments.

3) Participation in peace efforts. Sweden has assisted in boosting the participation of women in peace processes in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and has

both established and encouraged networks of women mediators. Sweden has also made the women, peace and security agenda a top priority for its term on the United Nations Security Council, assumed a leading role in pushing EU efforts forward and adopted a national action plan for Sweden's implementation of this agenda.

4) Political participation. Sweden has contributed to furthering women's political participation in a number of countries, supported women human rights defenders and pushed for active advocacy for freedom of expression and opinion. Sweden has also pushed for the implementation of gender equality strategies at development banks and in environment and climate funds, and has assumed a leading role in the International Gender Champions Geneva initiative, with special responsibility for representation issues.

5) Economic empowerment. Sweden has promoted girls' education and women's employment, actively pushed to ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated into the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda, and advanced gender equality efforts in trade policy and corporate social responsibility. Sweden has also given visibility to the role of men in gender equality through the HeForShe campaign and the 'Swedish Dads' photo exhibition.

6) Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Sweden has intensified its SRHR efforts to keep pace with the challenges through alliance-building, board responsibilities, development cooperation and dialogue, and by initiating the global #SheDecides movement. At country level, efforts have helped increase the number of midwives and improve access to comprehensive sexuality education, contraceptives and safe abortions.

Introduction

Why does Sweden pursue a feminist foreign policy?

Systematic subordination is still commonplace for countless women and girls all over the world. Sweden, which wants to see an end to discrimination, is pursuing a feminist foreign policy, and is the first country in the world to do so. Recent years have unfortunately involved new setbacks for global gender equality efforts and women's and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights, making feminist foreign policy more important than ever. This policy is an agenda for change to strengthen the rights, representation and resources of all women and girls, implemented by the Swedish Foreign Service integrating a gender perspective in all its activities.

What steps has the Swedish Foreign Service taken?

Continuous strategic analysis, alliance-building and advocacy have been important tools for the Foreign Service. Implementing this policy has also required systematic internal efforts characterised by four components: leadership, ownership, governance and support. *Leadership* has been clear and consistent from the beginning, spreading quickly from political level to other management levels. Some managers are participating in a special Gender Coach programme.

Ownership was established when Foreign Service management invited all staff to contribute their thoughts on these efforts. The response was considerable and was used as the basis for an action plan.

Governance has taken place since November 2015 through the Foreign Service's action plan for feminist foreign policy, which has been incorporated into regular governance and updated annually.

Support has been provided by a coordination function assisting with communication, training and skills development in consultation with focal points at all departments and missions abroad.

How have follow-ups and results assessments been conducted?

Implementation and follow-up of the feminist foreign policy is based on the Swedish Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015–2018,¹ in which objectives 1–6 apply to the Foreign Service's external work, while objective 7, added in 2017, applies to its internal work. The action plan has been incorporated into the Foreign Service operational plan, making both continuous and annual follow-ups possible. The Foreign Service has carried out a mid-term review of the action plan, comprising internal and external consultations conducted by departments and missions abroad in different regions forming '360-degree teams' around each one of the six external objectives. Members of the teams then assessed what they considered to be the most significant changes and results in their areas of responsibility during 2014–2016. This report is largely based on this process, but also on other internal and external consultations conducted both before and after this time. The following pages contain examples of these observations from October 2014 to October 2017 under each of the seven objectives.

¹<http://www.government.se/information-material/2017/02/swedish-foreign-service-action-plan-for-feminist-foreign-policy-20152018-including-focus-areas-for-2017/>

Objective 1: Full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls

Sweden's feminist foreign policy has clearly contributed to efforts to promote the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. For example, Sweden pursues these efforts at the UN General Assembly and in the UN Human Rights Council, increasing the impact of a gender perspective in international responses to migration and humanitarian emergencies, and focusing on the link between refugees, migration, human trafficking and prostitution.

Sweden has:

- *Pushed* for the inclusion of women's and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights in resolutions and statements by the **UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council**. Several examples are: the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the resolution on child, early and forced marriage; the UN Human Rights Council's adoption of a resolution on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; and the emphasis now placed on gender and age disaggregated data in several resolutions.
 - *Advocated* gender equality, non-discrimination and the full enjoyment of human rights by women, girls and **LGBTI** people within the framework of board activities and bilateral policy discussions at **UN funds and programmes**.
 - *Taken action* to strengthen the human rights of women and girls who are **refugees or migrants**. For example, Sweden has used multilateral and bilateral meetings to emphasise the link between displacement and migration and the increased risk of human trafficking, prostitution, sexual and gender-based violence, and the lack of access to SRHR and health care, water, sanitation and hygiene. Sweden has also successfully taken
- action to ensure that these issues are included in UN resolutions and in the declaration from the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants 2016, where Sweden's position is reflected in commitments to ensure women's and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights and their participation in solution development.
- *Worked* to mainstream gender equality in the new Paris climate agreement (COP21), with regional support, by putting women in focus for climate change and **climate justice**. This support also contributed to establishing the Women's Global Call for Climate Justice, a global campaign supported by more than 7 700 organisations.
 - *Pursued* these issues in the **Council of Europe** by participating in the Gender Equality Commission and sharing Swedish experience as Member States have implemented the Council's Gender Equality Strategy. Sweden has also contributed financially to the implementation of the Council of Europe's action plans for various Member States. In addition, a Swedish expert has trained the Gender Mainstreaming Team. Sweden has also carried out a successful campaign to elect a Swedish expert to the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.
 - *Pursued* the implementation of the **EU Action Plan** on Human Rights and Democracy 2015–2019 by highlighting the equal rights of women and girls in Council conclusions and other central policy documents that guide the EU's external relations.
 - *Increased* the focus on gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls

through a new **development cooperation** policy framework and stronger wording in the regulations of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). A new global strategy for gender equality and the rights of women and girls will be developed for the period 2018-2022. The financing of the strategy will amount to around 100 million euro (800 million-1,2 billion SEK). Sweden is also one of the largest donors to several multilateral organisations promoting gender equality. Swedish core support to UN Women has enabled Sweden to contribute to both global normative efforts and changes at country level, including legislative changes.

- *Made* concrete commitments to ensure that gender equality, a gender perspective and measures to combat sexual and gender-based violence are integrated to **humanitarian operations** and the humanitarian reform process. For example, Sweden has committed to ensuring that crisis-affected people have more influence over humanitarian efforts, and intends to support only humanitarian actors that base their work on gender analysis and gender and age disaggregated data. Sweden has also consistently emphasised the importance of a gender perspective in international humanitarian law (IHL), including at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, and by publishing the report *IHL and Gender – Swedish Experiences* in cooperation with the Swedish Red Cross.
- *Hosted* a high-level meeting on laws and practices that discriminate against women and girls. The meeting, led by Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström, brought together representatives of the World Bank, the International Criminal Court, the EU and others, and was followed up through Swedish

support to the World Bank to identify and combat **discriminatory legislation**.

- *Contributed* to strengthening conditions for a large number of **civil society organisations** around the world to promote women's and girls' human rights through knowledge exchanges, visibility, networks and financing.
- *Published* **135 country** reports on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The focus on women's and girls' enjoyment of their human rights is greater in these reports compared with previous years.
- *Intensified* the dialogue on human rights and gender equality at political level and by establishing three ambassador positions: for human rights, democracy and the rule of law; for gender equality; and to combat human trafficking. This dialogue has led, for example, to Northern Ireland, France and Ireland adopting the same kind of **legislation on prohibiting the purchase of sexual services** as Sweden has, and to several other countries becoming interested in this legislation and the Swedish view of prostitution as violence and exploitation of vulnerable people.

Objective 2: Freedom from physical, mental and sexual violence for all women and girls

Sweden has tackled violence against women and girls using a number of different approaches. Efforts have included giving visibility to and combating destructive masculine norms, strengthening the capacity of countries to prosecute perpetrators of violence, and securing hundreds of concrete commitments to combat gender-based violence in crisis situations. These efforts have been carried out in collaboration with a number of organisations, actors and countries, and have been highlighted at all levels, globally, regionally and bilaterally.

Sweden has:

- *Promoted* this issue in the United Nations. In the UN Security Council, Sweden has helped make sexual and gender-based violence a listing criterion in **sanctions regimes**. Sweden has also collaborated with, and provided support to, the UN's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In addition, Sweden has taken action to ensure that gender issues are taken into account in the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's action plan to prevent violent extremism and to secure satisfactory wording about women and girls in the review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.
- *Collaborated* with the International Criminal Court (ICC), its chief prosecutor and bilateral actors to combat the occurrence of, and impunity for, sexual and gender-based violence in conflicts. These efforts aim to **strengthen national capacities** to investigate and prosecute such violence. In line with this, Sweden and Botswana were responsible in 2014–2016 for facilitating experience exchange on investigating and prosecuting crimes under the ICC Statute. In 2016, the work involved facilitating interaction between actors at regional, national and international level. Issues addressed have included the need to combat stigma, enhance crime victim and witness protection, and recognise the importance of the role of civil society organisations in these efforts.
- *Contributed* to raising awareness of, and improving knowledge about, the link between the uncontrolled spread of **small arms and light weapons** and gender-based violence through such measures as support to UN bodies and civil society organisations, and collaboration with authorities. Swedish support has enabled research and the development of policy documents in this area, as well as targeted initiatives in connection with international negotiations and procedures concerning small arms and light weapons and international control.
- *Helped* to develop EU efforts through proposals to improve the reporting of the European External Action Service (EEAS) on sexual and gender-based violence by using **gender and age disaggregated data**. Sweden has also pushed for the EU to have a gender-responsive approach on issues concerning violent extremism. Sweden's secondments of experts to the EEAS have been crucial in moving these issues forward.
- *Led* the international 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies' initiative that brings together countries and organisations to prevent and improve protection against gender-based violence in **humanitarian emergencies**. As Lead of the Call to Action, Sweden assisted in 17 new members joining and, together with the previous 50 members, making 310 commitments within the framework of the Call to Action Road Map. For example, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) committed to improving its data collection, while the UN Office

for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) committed to adopting a gender perspective in projects receiving grants from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Sweden has also led the work of the Steering Committee and conducted advocacy efforts in relevant forums, both in the field and at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016.

- *Been* the largest donor to both UN Women and UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, which develops gender-responsive **early warning** systems.
- *Pushed* for both the EU and other states to accede to and implement the **Council of Europe Convention** on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).
- *Supported* civil society organisations and other actors involved in combating gender-based violence through, for example, **support centres for vulnerable women**, telephone helplines, legal support for victims of domestic violence, work with perpetrators and political advocacy. These efforts have been carried out in a number of countries, including Georgia, Russia and Turkey.
- *Carried out* extensive efforts to highlight the link between destructive **masculine norms**, violence and conflict. For example, the Swedish Embassy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has devoted considerable attention to this by supporting advocacy efforts directed at men, including funding a study on masculine norms in the DRC in collaboration with UN Women and others.
- *Cooperated* directly with countries and legal institutions in their work to combat sexual and gender-based violence. For example, Sweden has channelled

development support to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Guatemala and is therefore deemed to have contributed to the success of **legal proceedings**, such as in a landmark sexual slavery case. Sweden has also supported Georgia in its introduction of new legislation on gender-based violence.

- *Taken action* for the **reintegration of soldiers** in several countries, such as Somalia, by providing financial support and engaging in political dialogue to combat violence against women and girls.
- *Carried out* broad efforts to combat sexual or other exploitation of children, including by supporting organisations such as UNICEF, engaging in dialogue with the tourism sector, and carrying out targeted measures to prevent **child abuse by Swedes** abroad, such as in South-East Asia. For example, the reopened Swedish Embassy in Manila has received special resources to combat Nordic citizens' abuse of children in the country.

Objective 3: Participation of women and girls in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding

Sweden is a strong player in promoting women's participation in peace efforts, and implementing the feminist foreign policy has intensified these efforts. A Swedish network for women involved in dialogue and peace processes has been established, and a new national action plan for women, peace and security has been developed. Sweden has also promoted women's participation in several ongoing peace processes and through its work in the EU and its membership of the UN Security Council.

Sweden has:

- *Developed* a new **national action plan** for the implementation of the UN Security Council's resolutions on women, peace and security. The action plan is directed at ministries, government agencies and embassies, and has been developed in dialogue with Swedish and international stakeholders, including in five conflict and post-conflict countries.
- *Made* women, peace and security a **top priority for Sweden's work in the UN Security Council** in 2017–2018, and initiated raising the issue of women, peace and security in mandate extensions and various resolutions. Sweden has also helped ensure that Security Council statements stress the importance of women's participation in peace efforts, for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Gambia. Sweden has also consistently sought reporting, and posed questions to the UN Secretariat, on women, peace and security, and has actively pushed to enable women's organisations to brief the Security Council. Moreover, Sweden is the co-chair of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which offers further opportunities to move these issues forward.
- *Carried out* determined efforts in **the area of disarmament and non-proliferation** to call attention to the impact of the use and irresponsible spread of weapons on women, men, girls and boys. As part of these efforts, Sweden has supported the development of gender disaggregated data on the consequences of armed violence. Sweden has also taken action to increase women's representation and participation in the discussion, negotiation, drafting, interpretation and implementation of resolutions and key documents on disarmament and non-proliferation. Sweden has also actively pursued efforts to ensure that the gender perspective is mainstreamed in procedures concerning international weapons control, for example regarding the Arms Trade Treaty.
- *Assumed* a **leading role in EU Member States' cooperation** to strengthen the EU's implementation of the agenda for women, peace and security. For example, Sweden initiated a study, conducted by the European External Action Service, on gender equality and human rights efforts in EU crisis management operations. The study identifies deficiencies throughout the entire process, from planning to implementation and follow-up of operations, and is an important starting point for future efforts, both internally and externally. Sweden has also pushed for the appointment of a Principal Advisor on Gender and on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security at the EEAS, and has reinforced the Principal Advisor's office with a Swedish secondment. Together with other Swedish secondments to the EEAS, this has strengthened the EU's work on women, peace and security.

- *Established* a Swedish **network for women involved in dialogue and peace processes** as part of a Nordic network, focusing on assisting local women peace actors with policy support, technical advice, logistics and dialogue platforms. Sweden has also encouraged the establishment of similar networks and was consulted in connection with the establishment of corresponding networks in the Mediterranean region and the African Union.
- *Advanced* efforts in the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**, including by responding to OSCE interest in the network of women mediators and by laying the foundation for the OSCE's current introduction of gender equality training for senior management based on Sweden's Gender Coach model.
- *Contributed* to the clearer inclusion of gender equality in the **International Dialogue on Peacemaking and Statebuilding** through the Stockholm Declaration, adopted in 2016.
- *Instituted* a research initiative on women, peace and security, including a **professorship** at the Swedish Defence University, called the 'Anna Lindh Chair of Women, Peace and Security'.
- *Contributed* to women's increased participation in peace efforts, for example in **Colombia, Mali, Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Somalia**, through policy, technical and financial support. Sweden's efforts contributed to the incorporation of a clear gender perspective in Colombia's peace agreement, which can in turn serve as a model for others.
- *Supported* the **participation of Syrian women in political processes** at local and international level, and in the Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) of the Syrian opposition. With support from Sweden, the WAC has contributed to several rounds of the UN-led peace talks in Geneva and strengthened its influence, thereby enabling it to impact the opposition's vision for the future so that it sets a quota of 30 per cent women in political bodies.
- *Initiated* **mediation training** for women in Afghanistan through cooperation between the Swedish Embassy, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and the Swedish network for women involved in dialogue and peace processes. The aim is to provide tools for women at local and provincial level who play, or may play, a key role in increasing women's participation in the country's peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts.
- *Contributed* to the development and implementation of **national action plans for women, peace and security** by means of advice, experience exchange and, occasionally, concrete support in drafting of the actual action plans for countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the Czech Republic, Iraq, Myanmar and Sudan.

Objective 4: Political participation and influence of women and girls in all areas of society

Sweden's feminist foreign policy has entailed actively working for women's and girls' political participation and influence. These efforts have been carried out in the UN, the EU, development banks, climate funds and countries, and have focused on issues such as freedom of expression and electoral participation. Sweden has also taken a leading role in the International Gender Champions Geneva initiative, assuming particular responsibility for representation issues.

Sweden has:

- *Supported* and collaborated with women's organisations and other actors to give visibility to, support and strengthen **women human rights defenders** and others who defend the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls.
 - *Advocated freedom of expression and freedom of opinion* by working to strengthen protection for women journalists, human rights defenders, environmentalists, politicians and cultural workers, as well as stakeholders that defend women's and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights. These efforts included hosting an international seminar on hate and threats against women journalists on the 250th anniversary of Sweden's Freedom of the Press Act.
 - *Pursued* the **implementation of the EU Action Plan** on Human Rights and Democracy 2015–2019, whose focus includes strengthening local actors and civil society organisations and highlighting women as agents of change. Sweden has also ensured that the second EU Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 (GAP II) on gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external relations has been discussed in Council working groups and the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC), thereby reminding institutions and Member States of their responsibility. These systematic efforts have been under way since the Gender Action Plan was adopted in 2016, and are deemed to have contributed to both institutions and Member States highlighting these issues and perspectives more often.
- *Assumed* a leading role in the International Gender Champions Geneva initiative, which brings together more than 120 UN ambassadors, heads of UN organisations and leaders of civil society organisations, and which encourages members to make **commitments** to strengthen gender equality in their organisation and/or their work. Sweden is part of the steering group and co-leads an advocacy group on representation issues with Afghanistan and the International Labour Organisation. The International Gender Champions initiative is now spreading to more cities and types of senior leaders, providing Sweden with an important platform.
 - *Advanced* gender equality efforts and the development of gender equality strategies at **development banks**, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Investment Bank. In dialogue with the Asian Development Bank, Sweden prompted the bank to set gender equality objectives for the Clean Energy Fund.
 - *Pushed* for the implementation of gender equality strategies in **environment and climate funds**, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility and the Adaptation Fund. Since 2015, Sida has also focused extensively on gender equality in its climate change-related activities. One example of this is the strategy for Sweden's regional development

cooperation in Asia and the Pacific region, which integrates gender equality, the environment and climate change. Another is support to the Huairou Commission, whose mission is to advance women's sustainable, resilient community development practices.

- *Achieved* greater focus on gender equality in the Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) initiative and its Strategic Framework for Results 2016–2021. Via Sida, Sweden supports the SEforALL network ENERGIA, which advances action on **gender mainstreaming in energy policy**.
- *Contributed* to gender equality efforts in the **Eastern Partnership** between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This includes pushing through the inclusion of gender equality in the Eastern Partnership's central plans and objectives.
- *Promoted* **women's political participation** in a number of countries. In Somalia, the Swedish Embassy has played an important role in women's electoral and parliamentary participation through intensive cooperation with a range of actors in combination with dialogue, development cooperation and public diplomacy – a drive deemed to have increased the proportion of women members in parliament from 14 to 24 per cent in the last election. In Moldova, the Embassy has focused on contributing to an environment that promotes women's political participation. Since 2014 this has primarily been through the Women in Politics (WiP) programme, implemented by a number of organisations. The WiP programme helps encourage capacity development of women candidates before, during and after elections at central and local level. Through the WiP programme, Sweden contributed to Moldova adopting a law in 2016 stipulating that party lists in connection with parliamentary elections,

the government, the parliament's secretariat and other state institutions must include at least 40 per cent women in electable positions.

- *Contributed* to greater gender equality in **political parties** in developing countries through collaboration with Swedish party-affiliated organisations.
- *Exchanged* experiences and conducted dialogues at political and expert level within the framework of the **bilateral memorandums of understanding** on social issues entered into with Romania and Bulgaria in 2015 and 2016, respectively, which include gender equality as an important component.
- *Sought* new ways to increase **women's visibility and participation in the public sphere**. The Swedish Embassy in New Delhi hosted a writing workshop with local actors to increase the number of articles about Indian women researchers on Wikipedia, published in four of the country's languages. Similar initiatives have also been planned in other countries.

Objective 5: Full enjoyment of economic rights and empowerment of all women and girls

Sweden's feminist foreign policy has raised the profile by the country's efforts to promote the full enjoyment of economic rights and empowerment of all women and girls as a result of initiatives in development cooperation, trade and promotion activities, and negotiations. Sweden actively pushed to ensure that a gender perspective was mainstreamed in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

Sweden has:

- *Helped* ensure that the agreements on the Sustainable Development Goals and financing for development integrate and emphasise gender equality, and that key recommendations from **governing financial bodies**, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, stress the importance of inclusive growth and women's participation in the labour market.
- *Pushed* to ensure that gender equality is better integrated in EU **trade policy**. Sweden wants to see strengthened gender mainstreaming in the work of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and in EU free trade agreements with third countries, and welcomes the fact that the EU Commissioner for Trade has urged the WTO to more effectively integrate gender equality.
- *Worked* actively to increase awareness of the impact that trade policy decisions have on women and men, including through a study by the National Board of Trade on trade, social sustainability and gender equality, and a seminar on trade and gender held during the **Fifth Global Review of Aid for Trade**. Sweden has also funded the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to produce a toolbox for the ex-ante gender assessment of trade measures, launched in July 2017.
- *Intensified* efforts to promote decent working conditions and inclusive growth through the **Global Deal** initiative. One example is that Sweden and Bangladesh have concluded a cooperation agreement to contribute to better dialogue between employers and workers in Bangladesh's women-dominated textile industry. This project is being carried out by the International Labour Organisation in cooperation with local trade unions and employer organisations. H&M and IF Metall are also involved.
- *Contributed* to giving visibility to gender issues in **corporate social responsibility**. This has been done through intensified bilateral efforts aimed at strengthening the role and rights of women in labour markets of countries such as Cambodia, Croatia, Iran, Nigeria, Poland and Turkey. Efforts have often taken place within the framework of the Team Sweden initiative and in cooperation with Swedish companies, trade unions and government agencies.
- *Given* visibility to the **role and responsibility of men** in gender equality efforts through the HeForShe campaign, support for the formation of father groups in Belarus and Russia, for example, and the promotion of Sweden abroad. The Swedish Institute's 'Swedish Dads' photo exhibition has also garnered great interest around the world and many missions abroad have made local contributions, such as photo competitions in social media inviting local dads to take part. Local projects include 'Baba' in Shanghai, 'Ugandan Dads' in Kampala, 'Thai Dads' in Bangkok and 'Swiss Dads meet Swedish Dads' in Berne.
- *Taken action* to ensure that the gender perspective has been highlighted in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which led to the first ASEM **high-level conference** on women's economic empowerment.

- *Supported* the OECD Middle East and North Africa programme on **gender-mainstreamed entrepreneurship** and helped to establish a Women's Economic Empowerment Forum to improve economic opportunities for women in the region.
- *Contributed to women's entrepreneurship and employment* in a number of developing countries. In Bolivia, for example, Sweden has contributed to 500 new jobs opportunities for resource-poor women (in their own businesses or through employment). Similarly, by funding the EBRD Women in Business programme, Sweden has been able to provide women entrepreneurs in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans with capacity development and advisory services, as well as concessional loans with local banks. Another example is the networks of local support centres for women based on the Swedish model of women's networks for economic empowerment (Winnet Sweden) and on collaboration between civil society, the state, the private sector and academia. In Armenia, support to local networks has resulted in the establishment of more than ten support centres. These centres have created jobs and skills development opportunities for vulnerable women as a way of promoting their empowerment, leading in turn to greater self-confidence and increased interest in political engagement and participation.
- *Contributed* to highlighting the link between **gender equality and childcare** in Tunisia. In 2016 an expert visit and seminar on preschools and Swedish children's literature focusing on gender equality were held in cooperation with the Swedish Institute and attended by, among others, Tunisia's gender equality minister. The Swedish Embassy has followed up on this with other initiatives, including the launch of the 'Swedish Dads' photo exhibition and a collaborative project with UNICEF to further develop the concept with a focus on Tunisian fathers. As Tunisia is in the process of building and reforming its childcare system and thus increasing women's ability to participate in social and political life, this active exchange of experience is believed to have contributed to the thinking around these issues.
- *Contributed* to more than 21 000 girls completing upper secondary school, 5 700 girls receiving school meals and more than 800 girls receiving school uniforms and school supplies in Ethiopia. These initiatives are assessed to have contributed to **reducing early school leaving and child marriages**.
- *Supported* a major **gender-responsive budgeting** initiative in Ukraine, focusing on capacity building and reforming budget work at both central and local level. The aim is to increase the effectiveness and equity of budget allocations.

Objective 6: Sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls

Sweden has continued to pursue uphill issues. Feminist foreign policy and growing challenges in the area have increased the focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues. Against this background, Sweden has worked to protect and promote SRHR as a health, gender and rights issue by using a broad range of tools, including development cooperation, board responsibilities, public diplomacy, communications, dialogue, negotiation and, not least, alliance-building.

Sweden has:

- *Advanced* SRHR efforts to create **new alliances** and combat polarisation. This had been done through dialogue and meetings at both bilateral and multilateral level and with the help of development cooperation, promotion activities, dialogue, public diplomacy and seminars. In these contexts, Sweden has presented SRHR as a health, gender and rights issue and also highlighted the link between SRHR and sustainable development for women, girls and society as a whole.
- *Co-organised* the ‘She Decides’ conference in Brussels in March 2017 with Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. The conference was part of efforts to mobilise and **broaden political and financial support** for SRHR and safeguard the international commitments in the area. It also served as a launching pad for a movement for universal access to SRHR for women and girls. At the conference, Sweden pledged to commit an additional SEK 200 million to global SRHR efforts.
- *Used* **dialogue and board responsibilities** to highlight the importance of women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive rights in the UN and other international forums. This applies in particular to funds, programmes and UN bodies such as UNFPA, UNAIDS, OHCHR, WHO, UNICEF and UN Women, including in humanitarian activities.
- *Sent* letters to the leadership of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women to present Sweden’s priorities in the organisations’ **strategic plans** for 2018–2021 and emphasise rights issues, including SRHR.
- *Supported* UNFPA through extensive **core support**, which in 2014–2015 enabled the organisation to prevent 657 000 unplanned pregnancies, 204 400 unsafe abortions and 978 cases of maternal mortality, and provided 1.6 million people with contraceptives. Sweden’s support to UNFPA’s normative work has also led to some 90 local communities abandoning female genital mutilation.
- *Put* pressure on the **European Commission** to be a stronger supporter of SRHR and include SRHR in the Commission’s annual report on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on gender equality and women’s empowerment in EU external relations. This was done, for example, in letters by ten or so likeminded EU Member States to the Commission urging it to take this action. Sweden was also a driving force for SRHR in the work on the Council conclusions on gender equality in development cooperation from May 2015 and continues to pursue these issues in the work on the EU’s new development policy and elsewhere.
- *Put* the spotlight on SRHR in **development cooperation** at global, regional and bilateral level. One quarter of bilateral development cooperation strategies include health goals focusing on robust health systems, SRHR and improved child and maternal health. Support has helped to increase access to contraceptives

and safe and legal abortions; improve young people's ability to make informed decisions about their health, sexuality and reproduction; and strengthen the conditions for LGBTI people to enjoy their human rights. In Mozambique, the Swedish Embassy has been able to contribute to the development of new national guidelines for abortion care, and in Zambia, a Swedish-backed programme on comprehensive sexuality education in schools has resulted in preventing about 50 000 unplanned pregnancies.

- *Contributed* support to a regional commitment to introduce **comprehensive sexuality education** in schools in 21 African countries. UNESCO has participated in designing the sexuality education curricula, which will also be followed up bilaterally, regionally and globally.
- *Promoted* the midwifery profession through the **Midwives4All campaign**, which has reached millions of people since its launch in 2015. In Uganda alone, the campaign reached an estimated 4.5 million people through the media but also with the help of well-known Ugandan personalities whom the Swedish Embassy has involved as 'champions' and who represent political and religious leaders, the media, academia and the cultural sphere. Since 2015 the Embassy has also awarded the midwife of the year prize in cooperation with the National Midwives Association of Uganda attracting attention and strengthening motivation.
- *Contributed* to thousands of people undergoing a **midwifery training programme**, which has led to millions of women being able to give birth attended by trained staff. For example, Sweden has funded midwifery training in Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan and Zambia. Sweden has also contributed expert support

to Colombia, which is now drawing up regulatory frameworks and university curricula for midwives. This has played a key role in further developing midwifery training in the country.

- *Promoted* systems enhancement initiatives in Myanmar through the 'Women and Girls First' programme, which focuses on the enjoyment of SRHR of the most vulnerable women and girls in conflict areas. The work has promoted, for example, **policy and legislative improvements** that protect women and provide police training programmes. The aim of the support is to strengthen the link between humanitarian development work and more long-term development cooperation.

Objective 7: Swedish Foreign Service internal activities support and advance the policy

The Swedish Foreign Service has long experience of gender equality work and of promoting a gender-equal foreign service. Human resources policy, management and operational support have been among the focus areas with a view to ensuring that the organisation will be a leader in this area. The feminist foreign policy agenda has led to a higher level of ambition and more initiatives in more sub-areas, including property and security work.

The Swedish Foreign Service has:

- *Taken steps* to further strengthen the gender perspective in **human resources** work by launching a review of the entire process, from recruitment to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' regular admission programmes and leadership programmes to appointment of managers. Special measures are in place to increase the number of women applicants for management positions, including ambassador posts. And the proportion of women managers has risen. In the spring of 2017 roughly half of the managers in the Foreign Service were women.
 - *Tackled* unjustified gender pay inequality by continuously monitoring and reviewing **wage developments**.
 - *Developed* the work on **governance, planning and follow-up** of gender equality efforts, for example, by incorporating the feminist foreign policy action plan into the Foreign Service operational plan to ensure that the objectives inform the planning and are followed up in regular systems and on an annual basis.
 - *Pursued* ongoing efforts for **gender-responsive budgeting**. For example, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has clarified the grant management guidelines and taken steps to ensure that its courses include gender mainstreaming and that staff
- have been able to take part in the Government Offices training in this area.
- *Reviewed* internal **regulations, templates, routines and check lists** to ensure that they include and/or reflect a gender perspective.
 - *Developed* an internal online **training programme** and home page containing material to support feminist foreign policy efforts and at the same time incorporate a gender perspective in other internal programmes and workshops. Some managers also take part in a special Gender Coach programme focusing on methods and leadership tools for gender equality work.
 - *Taken steps* to review, give more visibility to and strengthen **the personal safety** of women working at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs based on consultation with our missions all around the world. Other measures include reviewing the gender balance of the security personnel posted abroad and requiring that procured security providers have an integrated gender equality policy. The Swedish Foreign Service has also emphasised the gender perspective in multilateral consultations to follow up on the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers.
 - *Developed* the gender perspective on the Foreign Service's **properties** to ensure that these reflect Swedish values and are welcoming and functional for all staff and visitors. In keeping with this, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has reviewed the guidance document on choosing residences for heads of mission and, in consultation with the National Public Art Council, included more works by women in the selection of art for residences and offices.
 - *Given* priority to 'family conflict matters' in strategic

work in the **consular area**, for example, issues concerning women with children who, during a visit abroad, are exposed to threats and violence from family members, and young adults and children who risk being, or have been, subjected to forced marriage. The focus has been on prevention efforts in Sweden, including communications activities and travel information. Efforts have also included strengthening cooperation with other actors, such as the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Police Authority, and initiating experience exchanges with other countries with extensive experience in the area, such as the UK.

- *Used external **communications and public diplomacy** to advocate, spread messages and inform about our feminist foreign policy efforts. Advocacy efforts have been conducted with the help of communications campaigns, where Midwives4All has highlighted the vital role of midwives (see Objective 6), MoreWomen-MorePeace has been used in women, peace and security work and EqualityMakesSense has emphasised that gender equality is smart. Alongside this, internal communications has been used to spread information, develop skills, gain support and further develop Sweden's feminist foreign policy.*

Read more:

<http://www.government.se/government-policy/feminist-foreign-policy/>

<http://www.government.se/information-material/2017/02/swedish-foreign-service-action-plan-for-feminist-foreign-policy-20152018-including-focus-areas-for-2017/>

<http://www.swemfa.se/theme/feminist-foreign-policy/>

<http://midwives4all.org/>

