

The World's First Feminist Government



By Sara Morshedi

Gender equality is a widely discussed topic both nationally and internationally. Women's rights movements are taking actions worldwide aimed at decreasing and eventually eliminating the financial gap between men and women. Women are taking a stand by letting their governments know that gender discrimination cannot stand if we envision a more democratic and advanced future.

Sweden, a country located in Scandinavia, today calls itself the world's first feminist government¹. Gender equality is one of the Swedish government's most prioritised issues. It is a matter that is of utmost importance to the majority of political parties in Sweden. When governmental decisions are made, equality between the sexes is almost always factored into the decision-making process. The Swedish government states on their official website that there is consensus in government that women and men should receive equal opportunities nationwide. Gender equality is a human right which Sweden wants to uphold at all costs. The government believes that democracy cannot succeed without women becoming an essential part of Swedish society. Sweden also believes that in order to solve financial and societal challenges, women must be integrated into the workforce².

The Swedish government is striving to attain gender equality in Sweden, by pursuing the following six goals:

1. The equal distribution of power and influence between men and women - both should have the right to influence decision-making.
2. Financially, both genders must be presented with equal opportunities and working conditions.
3. Women and men must be treated in the same manner in the education sector, this means that they may have the same opportunities to study, and also receive the same opportunities for personal development.
4. Both sexes must split the housework and care-taking in the home; taking on the same obligations.
5. Health-wise, both genders must be presented with healthcare on equal terms.
6. Gender-based violence must come to an end; violence against women has no place in society. Both sexes deserve the same opportunity and right to physical integrity³.

Swedish women's status is considered high compared to other EU countries. Sweden is on top of the European Union Gender Equality Index. The highest score one can receive on the index is 100.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39004991>

² <https://www.government.se/government-policy/a-feminist-government/>

³ <https://www.government.se/government-policy/gender-equality/goals-and-visions/>

Sweden has scored 82,6; while the average for the EU is 66.2⁴. Women also make up 44% of parliament in Sweden while the EU average is 28%⁵. In comparison, gender equality in South Africa is more fluctuating- good in some areas, and poor in others. Women account for 43,8% of total employment, yet only 32% of managers in South Africa are women⁶. However, parliament is a space where women have been notably well represented in South Africa. About 41% of South African MP's are women, which is positive compared to many European countries. 33,3%⁷ of German MP's are women, while in the UK this figure sits at only 30,8%.

The Swedish government uses many relevant tools to uphold gender equality in their country. At the same time, Sweden is also actively working to raise gender equality within the United Nations and has developed a promising strategy with UN Women aimed at fostering equality between men and women on a global scale. The strategy is intended to be implemented between 2018 and 2022 at a global, regional and national level⁸. The strategy entails developing and putting into action an inclusive and powerful set of international norms, policies and principles on gender equality. It intends to encourage women to lead, engage in and benefit from governance structures, so that they can play a role in decision-making- both locally and globally. The strategy intends to empower women of all ages, and seeks to give young girls of today the opportunity to contribute towards the building of a sustainable future internationally. Women should not feel that they are excluded from peace making processes. Sweden and UN Women have developed this plan together in the hopes of creating a better future for women and girls globally. Through proper communication, economic donations and hard work on the Executive Board, Sweden will work towards ensuring that their plan is fulfilled and that their goals are met before the project period is over.

I believe that the Swedish government is an inspiring example. Every country should aspire to give their women the best and most equal opportunities in society, as Sweden endeavors to do. Historically, women have always been portrayed as the 'weaker' gender, which has resulted in the disastrous gender gaps that many women face in today's world. This perception of women being the weaker, 'lesser' gender is a major contributing factor in the global pandemic of gender based violence. It is

⁴ <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2017/10/sweden-best-in-the-eu-on-gender-equality/>

⁵ <https://sweden.se/society/sweden-gender-equality/>

⁶ <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=11375>

⁷ <https://www.moneymarketing.co.za/the-status-of-women-in-south-africa-a-mixed-bag-of-success-and-failure/>

⁸ <https://www.government.se/information-material/2018/09/strategy-for-swedens-cooperation-with-un-women-20182022/>

crucial that governments obtain an understanding that women are equal counterparts, and as such should be treated equally in every aspect of life. More women should sit in parliament; more women should be CEO's and all women should be able to live their lives without fear. I believe in a world where women can lead nations and make impactful international decisions. I also strongly believe that when women are not represented in government, and don't have the opportunities to impact decision-making, countries suffer greatly. South Africa is a country with immense potential, and I am convinced that by implementing some of the same practices that Sweden is promoting, we can make a significant change not only for South African women, but for South African society in general.

As for the Swedish government's future; I do not know what will happen, but I'm hoping for the best. Swedish elections took place in September and the results were somewhat worrying, with the Swedish Democrats (one of Sweden's more conservative and controversial parties) gaining 17,6% - making them the third most powerful party in the country⁹. Conservative parties aren't always in favour of change, especially for women, and this can result in a potential setback in parliament. I am eagerly waiting to see what will happen, and hoping that the women of Sweden will not be robbed of their rights.

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<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1015465/sweden-election-result-will-sweden-democrats-coalition-government>

⁹ <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1015465/sweden-election-result-will-sweden-democrats-coalition-government>

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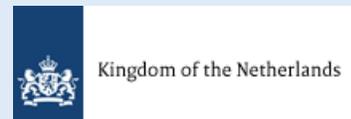
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