

Kingdom of Sweden: Position Paper

Claire Cunningham

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Sweden fully supports indigenous communities to have full access to quality health care and mental-health facilities. Sweden's indigenous people, the Sami have full access to health care among their communities. We recognize that our country has widespread reports of discrimination against the Sami, often leading to the reluctance of using these facilities. Comparatively, the Sami have statistically similar life expectancy and mortality as the non-indigenous people of Sweden. A traditional Sami lifestyle of physical activity and a diet rich in antioxidants and unsaturated fatty acids, leads to the prevention of certain cancers and cardiovascular diseases, often a problem in the non-indigenous population.¹ Studies have shown that Sami youth are opted to receive medical attention from a school practitioner as opposed to a general practitioner.² This is because of a history of discrimination and mistrust between the Sami People and the Swedish government. Recently the Swedish government has apologised for past actions of open discrimination against the Sami people.

Sweden has many controversial issues in regards to traditional indigenous lands, land rights and exploitation of lands. The indigenous people of Sweden, the Sami, are traditionally nomadic people, following the reindeer herds that they hunt. In current times, most families live in modern housing. Traditionally they follow the herds north during the winter to the migratory grazing grounds of these reindeer. When it is time for the reindeer to migrate north, many families will live out of traditional

¹ "What Is Known about the Health and Living Conditions of the Indigenous People of Northern Scandinavia, the Sami?" Global Health Action. Accessed November 09, 2016.
<http://www.globalhealthaction.net/index.php/gha/article/view/8457/12500>.

² "10.1186/1471-2458-9-378 - BMC Public Health." Accessed November 08, 2016.
<http://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-9-378>.

tents or will own a cabin or cottage.³ 20,000 Sami people live within Sweden's borders, although the majority of Sami peoples live throughout the Northern-Scandinavian countries.⁴ The first border to affect the Sami's migrating would be the border between Sweden and Finland in 1751. Both states agreed that the Sami people would be able to move between borders as they had done before the border demarcation. Traditionally, Sami would stay with the reindeer all year round, by walking alongside or skiing in the winter. Nowadays, reindeer are not watched year round and many people use snowmobiles, helicopters and other mechanical transportation.⁵

In March of 2011, Sweden allowed 2 000 wind turbines to be built on reindeer grazing lands. This angered many officials, Sami communities and was very criticized by the media, as no proper consolation of the Sami community took place. Lars-Anders Baer, a reindeer herder and a former president of the Swedish Sami Parliament, called recent developments 'windmill colonialism'. The government disrespected the Sami people's rights, and did not compensate for the loss of land and livelihoods.⁶ We acknowledge that this has affected the lives of some of the Sami people and we are willing to take responsibility and compensate for those individuals.

³ "Sami in Sweden." Sweden.se. 2016. Accessed November 07, 2016. <https://sweden.se/society/sami-in-sweden/>.

⁴ "Sweden's Sami Struggle over Land Rights." Reuters. 2007. Accessed November 07, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-arctic-sami-idUSL0320809920070108>.

⁵ "Sámi – Sweden ~ Reindeer Herding." Reindeer Herding SMI Sweden Comments. Accessed November 06, 2016. <http://reindeerherding.org/herders/sami-sweden/>.

⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Refworld | State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2012 - Case Study: Sami Rights to Culture and Natural Resources." Refworld. Accessed November 06, 2016. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fedb3de37.html>.

Poverty is most common throughout the world in indigenous groups. Indigenous people account for 5% of the global population, but 15% of the extreme poor.⁷ Food banks and government funding is the standard way of living for these people. Having government programs that would give young adults skills to provide and support themselves would immensely benefit these communities. The Swedish government would suggest that funding entrepreneurial programs and programs that focus in business and leadership. These programs would help develop important skills such as; critical thinking; working with others; learning the basics of business; and negotiating. Showing youth that they can pitch their own ideas and run businesses would help the economy, improve the mental health of youth, as they gain confidence and potentially motivate them to be active within the government.

Communicating between indigenous groups and non-indigenous groups will help bring solutions to current issues quicker, by combining knowledge of different cultures.

⁷ Crouch, David. "Sweden's Indigenous Sami People Win Rights Battle against State." The Guardian. 2016. Accessed November 07, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/03/sweden-indigenous-sami-people-win-rights-battle-against-state>.

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