

NORWAY

UN QUESTIONNAIRE 2004

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

Introduction

In the late 1970s, the national machinery for gender equality and the advancement of women was established and equality legislation entered into force. Inspired by the UN Women's Decade and the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies in 1985, two action plans for gender equality were adopted by the Norwegian Parliament (*Stortinget*) and enacted during the 1980s.

A gender balance in elected political assemblies was achieved in the early 1980s. Since 1986, all government bodies have 40-44% female cabinet members. Parliament legislated parental leave which has gradually expanded to its present level of 42 weeks at full pay or one full year at 80 percent compensation, and a four-week paternal leave was introduced in 1993. Publicly subsidised childcare has increased gradually, although the demand is still not fully met. Full development of childcare and the introduction of a fixed maximum price are now a top priority to be achieved by 2005.

During the 1970s and 1980s, women, including the mothers of small children, have entered the labour market at nearly the same rate as men. In 2003, workforce participation among women aged 16-74 was 69.1% compared to 76.7% among men. Overall, unemployment is relatively low, and is less prevalent among women (4%) than among men (4.9%). The labour market remains highly sex-segregated, with 2 out of 5 women working part-time. Since the 1980s, the absolute number of women pursuing a higher education has exceeded that of men.

The mean income of women is increasingly closer to men's. This is mainly due to the fact that their work activity is becoming more similar to men's both in terms of the percentage of women that are gainfully employed and the hours spent in paid work. The average pay gap for men and women working full time is 16%, but closing the gender pay gap is a slow process.

Since 1970, regular time-use surveys have documented changes in time spent by women and men in paid and unpaid work. Over the last 30 years, men have increased the time spent doing housework by approximately 30 minutes per day. Women, on the other hand, have reduced the time spent doing housework by two hours per day. In any case, a 75-minute gender gap remains. Women perform nearly 60% of all unpaid household and care-related work while men do approximately 40%. The opposite applies to paid work: only 43% of women's work time is compensated compared to 63% for men.

Men are spending more time on unpaid care for their own children, although this change in behaviour accounts for only a minimal portion of the overall reduction of the gender gap in time use. The decline in the time spent by women in unpaid household work is much more important. Nevertheless, an important gender gap persists. Structural changes in the labour market and

gender segregation seem to neutralise the positive effects of a rising educational level among women.

Violence against women surfaced on the political agenda in the late 1970s and 1980s. Norway has developed an infrastructure of refuges for battered women and their children that covers all regions of the country. Further improvement of these arrangements and achievements has remained high on the political agenda, during the 1990s and to the present. The role of men and masculinity has hovered on the periphery of the gender discourse since the first publicly-appointed committee on the male gender role was set up in 1986. Today, however, male roles and domestic violence figure more prominently on the political agenda.

Gender in foreign policy

Norway is bound by international conventions and agreements addressing equal opportunities for women and men and women's human rights. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in 1981. The Optional Protocol was ratified in 2002. In February 2004, the Norwegian government decided that the CEDAW Convention will be incorporated into national legislation.

Through the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, Norway is also bound by European Union (EU) legislation. The relevant EU directives have, to a large extent, had a positive effect on national equality legislation and enforcement. In 2003, however, the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) Court passed a judgement against Norway for trespassing the limits set by EU law for positive action in favour of the under-represented sex. The practice of earmarking a limited number of high-level academic positions aimed at increasing the representation of women professors was thus curtailed.

Gender in development cooperation and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Gender equality is a core value in and part of Norwegian foreign policy and development cooperation. About one-third of the bilateral Norwegian budget for development assistance is considered sensitive towards gender equality and towards strengthening women's rights in partner countries. Women are an important target group in overall Norwegian development assistance. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) constitute an important scale for measuring progress in development, including progress in the area of the empowerment of women and gender equality. In order to obtain the overall goal set forth in the MDG of reducing the number of people living in absolute poverty, Norwegian development assistance emphasises the importance of the empowerment of women and gender equality. Education is a core means of achieving gender equality, and education is a priority in the Norwegian development budget with most funds targeted towards women and girls.

While the third goal of the MDG (including the target and the indicators) directly focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women, Norwegian development assistance considers the integration of gender issues and women's rights an important element for achieving most of the other MDGs, including reduction of child and maternal mortality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Norway's approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women has been two-pronged. While gender strategy is based on integrating

and mainstreaming gender equality in overall development assistance, Norway has also supported a number of initiatives that focus on strengthening women in the partner countries. Norway has also actively supported processes in several countries to integrate gender equality in national plans, including support for gender budgeting.

Recent developments in legislation and policy-making

In 2002, the Norwegian Parliament passed a revised version of the Gender Equality Act. New elements, such as protection against sexual harassment, have been added and existing provisions on equal pay and the duty to mainstream gender equality in public policies have been sharpened. Furthermore, all employers both public and private are now obliged to promote gender equality in the workplace, reporting annually on accomplishments.

A new legal provision criminalises trafficking in human beings, and action plans are being implemented to combat this trafficking, as well as violence against women, forced marriages, and female genital mutilation. The action plans involve extensive cooperation between relevant parts of the government machinery, public agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and research institutions.

One of the remaining gaps in gender equality relates to male dominance in economic decision-making, especially in the private sector. A decision has been made jointly by the Norwegian government and Parliament that the level of women's representation shall be no less than 40% on the boards of all large companies, both state and **public limited** companies. Already, a law has been enacted to ensure gender balance on boards in companies owned by the state. Limited public companies have until 2005 to achieve 40% representation by voluntary action before mandatory provisions are required. Achieving this goal in the private sector is a great challenge.

For the first time in 2002, the government's budget proposal for 2003-2004 contained an annex presenting gender-based allocations in a number of budget areas. This process is coordinated by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. In 2003, the gender budget initiative included contributions from nearly all ministries.

Early in 2004, a public commission presented proposals for a major reform of the public pension system. The major areas of focus are redistributive effects, gender effects, work incentives and sustainability of the system. The gaps in time use and paid employment between women and men are reflected in the pensions they receive. The work of the commission has been criticised for an insufficient analysis of gender effects. Gender effects will be among the concerns when the government decides on follow-up to the proposals of the commission.

Partnerships with civil society

Civil society is an important partner in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Notably, the umbrella organisation, FOKUS, is financially supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. FOKUS organises Norwegian NGOs active in development issues targeting women. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs also cooperates with FOKUS to spearhead a dialogue with civil society on gender issues and the UN processes. The annual Milestone Conference to monitor follow-up on the Beijing Platform for Action is organised by the Norwegian government in cooperation with FOKUS and the Centre for Gender Equality.

Important partnerships with civil society are also established as part of the concerted effort to combat domestic violence. There are more than 50 publicly supported refuges for battered women and their children throughout the country. The authorities cooperate mainly with two umbrella organisations, *Krisesentersekretariatet* and *Krisesenterforbundet*. Psychological treatment for perpetrators of violence in the family, who are predominantly male, is provided by *Alternativ til vold* (ATV), an institution receiving financial support from the health authorities. Another civil society partner, financially supported by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is the Centre for Men in Crisis, REFORM – a new voice in the gender equality debate.

The two “Feminist Universities” (private centres for education and training) are important partners as is the regional gender resource centre, “Fredrikkes Hage”. These institutions provide management training and networking for women, support for women entrepreneurs, consultancy, and development work on gender mainstreaming.

Public funds for NGOs active in gender issues are operated by a separate government agency.

Men and boys

The four weeks paternal leave, introduced in 1993, has been a great success and is utilised by 85-90% of eligible fathers. In 2000, an extension in rights ensured an autonomous right for fathers, which is that both mothers and fathers now earn an individual right to paid parental leave through participation in the workforce prior to birth. This reform has secured the right to paid parental leave for working fathers independent of the working status of the child's mother. The father's right is, however, conditional on the mother taking up studies or paid employment or being otherwise unable to care for the child. In April 2003, the Cabinet presented a White Paper to Parliament: *The obligations of family life and parenthood*. The White Paper outlines long-term goals for amendments to the parental benefits scheme where the emphasis is on further improving fathers' rights, including, in the longer term, an extension of the paternal leave linked to an extension of the total parental leave period.

Since 2001, the Norwegian government funds a resource centre for men, REFORM. The aim is to mobilise men's resources and to assist individual men in tackling crises related to masculinity, fatherhood, stress in the workplace, divorce, sexuality, anger, violence, etc. REFORM offers: confidential telephone conversations with advice and support, personal conversations with professional male counsellors, men's groups, legal advice, seminars, projects regarding men's life and websites.

Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Women and poverty

Norway is a country with a relatively minor poverty problem from an international perspective, even by comparison to industrialised countries alone. A comparison conducted in 1995 on the proportion of people earning incomes less than 50% of median income shows that in Norway 4.4% are in this category. Only Luxembourg and Finland could report an equally low figure.

Relatively small wage differences that prevail in Norway, combined with a well-developed welfare system and high rate of employment account for the low poverty level. The average income of women is increasing more rapidly than that of men (Statistics Norway, tax statistics 2003). This is largely attributable to the fact that women's level of employment is approaching that of men's – in terms of the percentage of women gainfully employed, as well as of the average number of hours worked.

Action plan against poverty

Poverty does exist, however, and it is a problem, also in Norway. In 2002, the Norwegian government presented an Action Plan against Poverty (2002- 2005). The target group of the plan consists of households with persistently (minimum three years) low incomes, defined as less than 50% of the median income. The plan does not highlight gender, but refers to households as a unit. It does, however, focus particularly on children, as “no child should need to grow up in poverty in a wealthy country like Norway”. The government's strategy to combat poverty is to provide for suitable arrangements for employment and self-support, more targeted welfare schemes and social inclusion [Report to Parliament No. 6 (2002-2003)].

The types of households that are strongly over-represented among the poor are single persons under the age of 45 and single providers. The figures indicate, however, that poverty is significantly more widespread among single people living entirely on their own than among single providers. The former group comprises a vast majority of men, often with complex substance abuse and psychiatric problems that exclude them from working life, whereas in more than 90% of single-parent households, a woman was the main provider. Families whose adult family members were born in a non-Western country are also strongly over-represented among the poor.

The number of single providers has increased as a whole. Recently, the rules applying to the child support payments have been amended, the goal being to better adapt support payments to the actual costs of children's upkeep. These amendments have yet to be evaluated. In instances where the contributor is unable to pay, public welfare schemes play a stronger role. Generally speaking, it can be concluded that it is increasingly difficult to support children alone without an earned income, but that conditions have slightly improved for those single parents who are gainfully employed.

Feminine and masculine poverty

The feminisation of poverty has been little discussed in Scandinavia, contrary to what has been seen in international poverty research. A summarising article from 1997 concluded with the thesis that the feminisation of poverty is too general to be useful as a point of departure for discussion of poverty in Norway today (Syltevik, *Sosialistisk Tidsskrift* 1997). Instead, the article proposes a discussion of feminine and masculine poverty, as modern poverty is often associated with widely different, but still gender-typical situations for men and women respectively. Many single parents, who are women in almost 90% of cases, can be found in this category.

Education and training of women

Promoting gender equality in training and education represents an overriding objective of education policy in Norway. As far back as the 1970s, gender equality was integrated into the curricula of compulsory primary and lower secondary schooling, as well as in elective upper secondary education. Today, equality between girls and boys is a self-evident element of all curricula, of the Education Act, and in other policy and management documents in the education sector. Furthermore, the Gender Equality Act is also applicable in schools and enterprises of learning. Gender mainstreaming is, in other words, to be carried out in all forms of education and training and at all levels.

Gender differences in grades in primary and lower and upper secondary education

Examination grades and class work achievement grades reveal clear gender differences. School grade statistics for 2002 show that in the seven subjects where final examinations were taken upon leaving compulsory primary and lower secondary school, girls obtained better grades than boys in all subjects except mathematics. In the eleven subjects in which grades were awarded for average class work achievement, girls obtained better grades in all subjects except physical education. It has been asserted that the explanation for the higher performance of girls compared to boys in compulsory schooling is that girls mature earlier than boys and that school content and working methods appeal more to girls than to boys, or that adolescent girls and boys are subject to differing demands that might contribute to the differences seen in school achievement. Girls, however, achieve on average better grades than boys in most subjects in upper secondary school as well. Here, girls obtain on average higher grades for class work achievement upon leaving their third year of schooling in the subjects of Norwegian, physics, biology, social studies and mathematics in general study streams. In English and chemistry there are no significant differences.

Although girls and boys perform almost equally well in mathematics in compulsory and upper secondary schooling, surveys indicate that girls, when given the opportunity, choose other subjects instead of mathematics to a much greater degree than boys. An Action Plan (2002-2007) has been launched aimed at strengthening scientific subjects, including measures to encourage more girls to opt for scientific lines of study.

University grade statistics show that men perform slightly better than women in their master's degree. Nevertheless, women are in a majority among students at the high school and university levels.

The challenges ahead will be to continue efforts to counteract gender-traditional choices of study in upper secondary education and also to pursue projects aimed at increasing girls' interest in scientific subjects and technology. Moreover, the Ministry will more closely study the reasons for the generally poorer scores achieved by boys.

Schools should have both female and male roles models so that pupils are able to socialise in a flexible and balanced pattern of gender roles. Hence, recruiting more men to teacher training, combined with special measures to retain men in primary and lower secondary schooling, will be important actions for the future in order to ensure that the school system is in a position to safeguard this particular responsibility in a constructive and positive fashion.

Non-traditional educational and training choices in upper secondary schooling

The project "Deliberate educational choices" (1998-2000) was launched by the Ministry of Education and Research in 1998, when it was noted that Norwegian youths were falling back into more gender-traditional educational and vocational choices than it had done for several decades. The goal of the project was to contribute to providing young people with the necessary help to make informed and deliberate educational choices as independently as possible from traditional gender roles and to creating a labour market that was less distinctly characterised by traditional gender segregation. The lessons learned from the project show *inter alia* that efforts to change traditional gender roles and educational and vocational choices are a long-term and time-consuming enterprise. The results also showed that actions providing pupils with personal practical experience and the opportunity of meeting good role models are the most effective and those initiatives to follow up closely on those making untraditional choices – in upper secondary schooling and at the workplace – are instrumental.

Educational trends among indigenous and ethnic minority populations

Traditional choices also distinguish the Sámi population. Young men and boys are brought up to enter traditional occupations (hunting, farming and reindeer husbandry), while young women and girls are encouraged to pursue an education, resulting in a reinforcement of gender differences in employment.

Immigrant girls choose traditional fields of study at the upper secondary education level, mostly within health and social studies, arts, crafts and design. To an even greater extent than female students in general, immigrant girls and young women avoid fields of study that are considered "masculine". There is, however, one exception to this pattern, namely the chemical and processing industries which attract more young women than men among students with immigrant backgrounds.

There has been an increase in the participation of the immigrant population in upper secondary education in recent years, particularly among first generation immigrants and among girls. From 1994 to 2000, the proportion of young women students born abroad increased from 57 to 69 percent. The immigrant population participation in upper secondary education, however, remains lower than that of the population at large. Direct transition from upper secondary education to tertiary education is, on the other hand, more common among immigrants than for the young at large, and this is particularly the case for young women with a background from Asia.

There are also portions of the immigrant population in Norway that never complete their education, and this situation applies to women more than to men. The percentage of women with

an immigrant background with no completed or with unknown education varies from 11 to 56 percent according to country of origin.

Promoting gender mainstreaming in education

In 2001, the Ministry issued a guide for gender mainstreaming in compulsory primary and lower secondary schooling, upper secondary education and adult education entitled “Kjekk og pen” (Handsome and pretty). The guide provides information about gender equality, examples of how gender equality has been implemented in various subjects and topical, everyday issues placed in a context of gender equality. The guide also describes specific examples of how gender mainstreaming can be carried out in practice.

In 2004, this guide was followed up with a handbook for teachers in compulsory and upper secondary education. Its goal is to update issues related to the gender perspective and gender equality for children and young people. Furthermore, it aims to provide teachers with simple, activating teaching tools to focus on gender and equality, ideally in subjects such as Norwegian, social studies and religious and philosophical instruction.

Women and health

Report on Women's health

In 1997, the government appointed a committee to assess women's health in Norway. The background for the committee's work was to ensure that Norwegian health care services and welfare schemes were as good as possible for all inhabitants in the country – for women and men alike. The Norwegian Public Report, NOU 1999:13 “*Women's Health in Norway*” laid the foundations for the government's future work to improve health care services for women.

In 2003, the Norwegian government presented a report to Parliament on public health policy, drawing up new strategies for the next decade. This report contains a section on women's health that is based on factual information and recommendations provided in the above-mentioned NOU 1999:13. Emphasis is placed on adopting a gender perspective when designing research programmes, preventive work, health care services and welfare schemes.

Recent research indicates that the responsibility for men's health as well as the responsibility for taking care of men's and boy's risk-taking lifestyles fall on women. This again leads to a further burdening of women and their health.

Important achievements for the future will be to improve women's health by means of decision-making processes, knowledge enhancement and transfers, as well as health care practices. The gender perspective should be emphasised more strongly in key policy documents and in administrative procedures, studies and evaluations.

The Escalation Plan for Mental Health (1999-2008) comprises a qualitative and quantitative improvement of the services on offer. An important premise is to develop services in line with users' needs, as well as design services that are distinguishable as a whole, and are cohesive and interactive with other sectors.

Research and information on women's health

The Norwegian strategy on women's health aims at intensifying research on gender differences in terms of risk of disease, progress of disease, diagnostics, optimal treatment and prevention. Research should focus particularly on gender differences in health, the causes and treatment of diseases that particularly affect women and research on women's mental health. Research on biological gender differences and problems related to women's somatic and mental health should be incorporated into strategies for research programmes and other knowledge-building projects.

The Norwegian Research Council has stimulated the review and discussion of the gender perspectives of health and disease in all relevant projects, and specific documentation requirements have been drawn up in this respect. The National Committee on Research Ethics in Medicine has formed guidelines for the inclusion of gender as a variable in all medical research involving human-beings, thereby enabling gender-specific analyses. Whether similar guidelines should be prepared and applied in the field of health research in general will also be considered.

HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues

In 2001, the Ministry of Health put forward a strategy plan entitled "*Responsibility and consideration – a strategy for the prevention of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Diseases*". This plan, which is the fourth national plan for the prevention of HIV/AIDS since 1985, focuses strongly on the gender perspective. The plan lists a number of objectives and policy instruments aimed at ensuring that "gender-related issues are taken into consideration in plans, priorities and measures":

- Organisations receiving public grants must take the gender perspective into account in their applications and project descriptions.
- Awareness of the gender perspective must be increased through information and advice from the central health authorities.
- Networks for women with HIV should be established.
- Measures to increase the awareness of the role played by men should be implemented.

The gender issue has become more prominent as heterosexual practice now causes more new HIV cases than in the early phases of the epidemic. Women have not been given sufficient attention in HIV prevention work, and increased efforts to reach women especially have been requested. Organisations receiving public grants are required to take the gender perspective into account in their applications and project descriptions, and such applications from NGOs have been prioritised in the last few years. Various NGOs are consequently reporting that networks among HIV-positive women have been established.

This is a difficult task, especially among immigrant women, but improvements can be seen. The Directorate for Health and Social Affairs is supporting organisations for and among women selling sex, by distributing free condoms, financing information activities and seminars, as well as producing brochures in 17 languages on various sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The Directorate also organises a service of importing femidomes for certain groups of women in need of special protection. Measures to increase the awareness of the role played by men have not been given sufficient attention when it comes to women's vulnerability to sexually-transmitted infections.

Differing prices for health care services provided to women and men

Norway practises a system of user fees for health care services, and the price of sterilisation is higher for women than for men. This matter was raised in a complaint to the Gender Equality Ombud and its Board of Appeals issued a decision stating that applying a different price for the sterilisation of women and men was in contravention of the Gender Equality Act. The decision of the Board refers *inter alia* to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the obligation to secure women and men equal access to health care services, which means that the pricing of services should not be such that access to such services becomes illusory.

Violence against women

The Action Plan to combat violence against women (2000-2002)

The Norwegian government's first action plan (2000-2002) to combat violence against women was concluded in November 2003. The plan was a joint project between four ministries; the Ministry of Justice, Social Affairs, Health, and Children and Family Affairs. The Ministry of Justice performed a coordinating function for the work involved. As part of the programme, a new position was established in the Ministry of Justice to coordinate actions and policies. The programme consisted of a wide range of activities to reduce domestic violence and to improve services to victims.

Focus was directed at improving existing measures and achieving enhanced competence among all actors. This included competence-enhancement and improved networking at the local level between all responsible actors such as police, social welfare services, childcare services, staff from shelters, etc. Improved research and routines for registration of information were also in focus. Other measures and recent legal amendments are:

- Security alarms

In 1997, a project was launched to equip all women in Norway who have been violently treated or threatened by their ex-husbands or ex-common law husbands or live-in boyfriends, with security alarms. While the first alarms could only be used in the home, alarms currently in use are part of a mobile system based on a universal positioning system of great accuracy. The alarms give immediate access to the police in an emergency. The alarm project, issued through the police authorities, became permanent in 1999, and is fully financed by the State.

- Police coordinators

To help police in their efforts to combat domestic violence, a position as family violence coordinator was established in every police district in Norway in July 2002. The coordinators have undergone special training and a locally-adapted handbook has been developed to guide their work.

- Competence Centre for Aid to Victims of Violence

A competence centre with government funding was established in 1996. Its mandate was to disseminate information on violence among professionals and to provide education and strengthen competence in the field. Since 2004, the centre has permanently become a part of a

new National Centre of Competence on Violence and Traumatic Stress, established in January 2004.

- Ban on visits

On 10 January 2003, changes in the rules regulating ban on visits took effect. The changes are meant *inter alia* to provide better protection for persons exposed to violence from others in their own household. Section 222 of the Norwegian Criminal Procedure Act provides clear legal authority for prohibiting a person subject to such a ban from staying in his own home.

- Victims of gender-based persecution Victims of gender-based persecution are given protection in Norway according to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Guidelines on refugee criteria from the Ministry of Justice dated 13 January 1998, state that gender-based persecution may constitute persecution in the context of the Geneva Convention.

- Further legal amendments

The Norwegian government submitted a proposal to Parliament in April 2004 as part of endeavours to combat crime, as well as motivation by a wish to protect women. "The Government proposes that foreigners holding work or resident permits may be deported from the country for certain punishable offences carrying a maximum penalty of six months or more. The minimum penalty may vary according to the cause of the breach of law and to whether the offender has been granted a permanent residence permit." If adopted, the new regulation will benefit women who experience violence and abuse from a foreigner who has not been granted a permanent residence permit.

- Commission on Violence against Women

In August 2001, the Norwegian government established a Commission on Violence against Women. The commission submitted its final report in December 2003. According to its terms of reference, the final report from the commission contains an overview of issues relating to violence against women, proposals concerning the legal system, social services, women's shelters and health care. In addition, the commission has discussed questions concerning children as witnesses to violence.

The commission defines men's violence against women in intimate relationships as a serious societal problem. It represents a substantial hindrance towards gender equality and an extensive problem for the criminal justice system. Domestic violence has a clear gender dimension, in that women, as a main rule, are the victims whereas the perpetrators are mainly men. Men's violence against women and children in intimate relationships is a public concern and should not be allowed to be defined as a private issue. The commission also emphasises that it is necessary to direct attention towards holding the perpetrators accountable for their violence. Focus must be placed on carrying out systematic work towards changing offenders' behaviour so that they will stop their use of violence. Furthermore, the commission suggests concrete measures for improvement of the protection of women and children subjected to men's violence and to improve and increase the services that are already in place.

Norway has no statistics relating directly to domestic violence, as such. Domestic violence is not a specific offence. Only a few police districts have been registering the offender or the victim's sex, age and where the crime was committed. In 1997, the Oslo police district carried out a one-year project documenting where reported violence took place, the seriousness of the violence and

who were the involved persons. They discovered that very many incidents happened in people's homes and were caused by a person closely related to the abused person. Domestic violence constituted 624 (or 29 percent) of the 2,172 incidents researched. The project also revealed that domestic violence is a very serious matter and that it still takes a considerable amount of time before women seek help, and that many children witness their fathers assaulting their mothers. A mapping carried out in 2003 by the Ministry of Justice confirmed the seriousness of the problem. The project "A Week to Count" counted the number of referrals related to domestic violence to several services nationwide. The project showed that domestic violence is still a great problem and challenge in Norway.

In the capital and also in some of the other major cities, women with a minority background are in a majority among the users of shelters for battered women. There is an unfortunate tendency for "ethnification" when explaining domestic violence perpetrated on women with ethnic minority backgrounds, as if it were a phenomenon specific to some ethnic cultures.

The Plan of Action to Combat Domestic Violence (2004-2007)

To continue the work against domestic violence, the Norwegian government will launch a new action plan for the period 2004-2007. The plan will place emphasis on reinforcing the forms of treatment offered to women exposed to violence and sexual abuse, focus on immigrant women, on the services offered to children growing up in families in which violence is practised, and on reinforcing measures available to men with problems of violence. While the previous action plan all but lacked a children's perspective, the new one has given children a main focus.

There will also be a strong focus on measures aimed at enhancing competence on issues related to violence and the victims of violence, as well as increasing cooperation between police, health care services, shelters, child welfare, social welfare and other public services responsible for assisting women and children exposed to violence as well as the perpetrators of such violence.

The plan will have four main goals:

- reinforcing the interactive competence and knowledge of assistance services;
- increasing the visibility of violence in intimate relationships and improving the prevention of violence through behavioural change;
- securing victims of violence in intimate relationships the necessary help, protection and assistance;
- breaking down the spiral of violence by reinforcing forms of treatment available to perpetrators of violence

The Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Women

In February 2003, the government launched "Norway's Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children". The purpose of the Plan is to deal with ethical, social and legal problems connected with trafficking in human beings. As it is mainly women and children who are exploited, trafficking constitutes a serious form of sexualised violence that is incompatible with the principle of gender equality, and it represents a grave violation of human rights.

The action plan contains measures designed to prevent, detect and prosecute crimes linked to trafficking in women and children, and to protect and assist those who have been and are victims

of such crimes. Measures will be implemented on the basis of obligations under international law as well as human rights and gender equality principles. The special needs of children will be taken into account in all measures. In keeping with international goals, the Norwegian government will fight poverty and strengthen the rights of women and children through its development cooperation.

The Action Plan has been drawn up by a committee comprised of State Secretaries from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The work has been led by the State Secretary from the Ministry of Justice.

During the first year, it was clearly shown that there was a further need for mapping to acquire increased knowledge of needs and of the extent of the problems in the field. Cooperation between the ministries, immigration authorities, police and judicial system, the health and social services and NGOs has proved both challenging and fruitful when trying to achieve a common understanding of the problems related to trafficking.

As a follow-up to one of the measures in the action plan, a reflection period has been implemented during which deportation orders relating to victims of trafficking may be suspended for a minimum of 45 days with an opportunity to provide assistance and counselling to the individuals concerned.

From 4 July 2003, the Norwegian Penal Code was amended to include a revised provision on human trafficking. This provision was formulated in accordance with Article 3 cf. 5 of the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime.

As a result of globalization, factors such as economical factors, fewer border controls, new technology, etc. - are seen as an enormous challenge in the fight against organised crime, as is the work to improve living conditions in the countries of origin.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment has widespread negative consequences for the individual, as well as for the entire working or educational environment in which such harassment is taking place. The Norwegian government aims at combating this problem. A new provision on sexual harassment was therefore added to the Gender Equality Act in 2002. The provision contains a general prohibition against sexual harassment, stating that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination on the basis of gender. The prohibition shall pertain to all areas of society and be enforced by the courts.

In addition to a general prohibition against sexual harassment, employers, organisations and educational institutions are charged with the responsibility to prevent and bring sexual harassment to an end. This obligation is enforced by the Gender Equality Ombud and the Gender Equality Board of Appeals. The provision will supplement existing regulations in the act relating to workers' protection and working environment.

Women and armed conflict

Women's participation in peace processes

The implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) is an important element of Norwegian support for peace and reconstruction in conflict areas. Norway works through multilateral institutions to promote the participation of women in peace processes and development, particularly with the UN, but also in peace processes conducted outside of the UN.

In the role as impartial facilitator for the peace process between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Norway supports an innovative initiative for the participation of women. In 2003, GOSL and LTTE, with the support of Norway, established a sub-committee of ten women on gender issues. The purpose of the sub-committee is to help ensure a central role for women, in addition to an adequate focus on gender and women's issues, in the peace process. The sub-committee will provide input and make proposals to the main table for the peace negotiations, as well as elaborate gender sensitive guidelines for the peace process and the reconstruction for the war-affected areas. Norway has encouraged the GOSL and LTTE to continue the work on the sub-committee. The parties have indicated interest in asking the sub-committee to resume its work once peace negotiations resume.

Norway also acts as impartial facilitator for the peace process between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Their delegations to the peace talks consist of over 30 percent women. In the process of political dialogue in Haiti, which Norway supports, 4 of 12 participants in the meetings held in Norway have been women. In the dialogue between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in Oslo, 5 of 12 Haitian representatives and 4 of 12 Dominican representatives were women.

The Norwegian government is following up SR 1325 at a national level and has established a forum that will meet regularly to discuss this issue. This forum consists of representatives from the relevant ministries and members of civil society. There is a need to strengthen the effort to develop practical tools for ensuring the inclusion of women in peace processes. Implementation continues to be the most challenging part of the work, as women are only rarely allowed to be part of the decision-making processes in urgent situations. It is a widely-held view that peace processes ignoring women are inherently unstable and predestined to fail.

From a donor perspective, Norway will continue to support activities that take due account of gender balance in peace negotiations, in reconciliation teams and in constitutional, legal and electoral commissions. Norway also supports the inclusion of gender units in peacekeeping operations and training on codes of conduct, gender sensitivity and awareness.

Women and conscription

Currently, compulsory military service in Norway applies to men only, and it has been queried whether such a system might be regarded as discrimination on grounds of gender. The government holds that the rule is not discriminatory towards women as long as it relates to the absence of a duty. Women have the same rights as men in the armed forces and can perform their national service on a voluntary basis, as well as seek military careers. The Gender Equality Ombud has, however, criticised this opinion and holds that a duty restricted to men is discriminatory on grounds of gender.

The Norwegian government aims to stimulate an increase in the proportion of women in the armed forces. A series of information campaigns and other special events intended for women have been organised to display the types of career opportunities the armed forces have to offer. Introducing a system of compulsory appearance for women before the conscription board has also been considered in an effort to reach potential female personnel, both officers and the enlisted. Furthermore, several measures are currently in preparation to enable men and women to combine a military career with family life.

Women and the economy

Gendersegregation in the labour market

Many measures have been introduced to encourage more women to enter the labour force. This has been successful, giving Norway a large number of women in the paid workforce. Gender segregation in the labour market is, however, a cause for concern. Despite numerous efforts and measures directed at promoting de-segregation of the labour market, gender segregation remains a serious problem, like the gender pay gap and over-representation of men in senior posts and management positions in all parts of the economy. (Measures to change vertical gender segregation are described in the next chapters).

Part-time work

Part-time work still continues to be relatively widespread among women, although the discrepancy in working hours between women and men has diminished in recent years. Part-time work affects women's wage and career opportunities. The Norwegian government has placed special focus on the matter of involuntary part-time work, appointing a government committee with the mandate to investigate and assess the reasons behind part-time work, chart the scope of involuntary part-time work and, if necessary, put forward proposals for measures aimed at reducing the prevalence of involuntary part-time work.

Persisting pay gap

Norway is experiencing positive trends towards gender equality in the labour market and the economy. At the same time, however, a high level of education or workforce participation is not automatically followed by equal pay. The overall wage gap has been relatively stable, with a difference of approximately 16 percent in hourly pay between women and men during the last 10 years. Structural changes in the labour market and gender segregation seem to neutralise the positive effects of the rising education level among women. A substantial portion of the wage differential can be traced back to male or female domination of an occupation. Occupations dominated by women are systematically lower paid than male-dominated occupations. In turn, this results *inter alia* in women generally having lower pensions than men.

Statutory regulations and wage negotiations

In Norway, wages are fixed by means of free negotiations between the employers' and employees' associations. As a result, the equal pay provisions of the Gender Equality Act have limited impact in the context of efforts to achieve equal pay, something that is further corroborated by the fact that the Gender Equality Ombud receives few complaints on infringements of equal pay provisions. The major wage differences between genders are

attributable to the fact that occupations dominated by women are more poorly remunerated and less highly valued by comparison to male-dominated occupations. Hence, it is very much dependent on the employers' and employees' associations to break this pattern through their wage bargaining. Neither the authorities nor these associations wish to replace free collective bargaining rights with new regulations. Equal pay has also become the topic of several wage settlements, and pay increases for low-income groups have, to a large extent, contributed to narrowing the wage gap between women and men.

The Centre for Gender Equality managed the project *Towards a Closing of the Gender Pay Gap* which ran from 2001-2003. The project was funded by the European Commission's Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) and the national authorities of Norway. Six partner countries were involved. The project examined the gender pay gap from a broad perspective, against the backdrop of wage formation and pay systems, and aimed to identify an efficient mix of tools to close the gender pay gap in the context of each partner country. See <http://www.genderpaygap.no>.

Regulations on equal pay in the same workplace

According to the Gender Equality Act, women and men in the same workplace have the right to equal pay for work of equal value. By clarifying the concept "equal pay for work of equal value", the Norwegian government seeks to contribute to levelling out the wage differences that still exist between women and men working for the same employer or enterprise. New regulations from 2002 strengthen the right to equal pay by allowing comparisons across occupational boundaries and collective wage agreements. This implies that access to comparable pay across professional or vocational boundaries or wage agreements clearly comes to the forefront in the act. The amendment also includes central features salient to the determination of which types of work are of equal value and points to the use of work evaluation. In conjunction with the regulations on the burden of proof as well as the provision on objective determination of liability, these changes mean a sharpening of the prohibition against gender-based wage differences.

A public commission in 1997 suggested general guidelines for gender-neutral comparisons of work, and the Government initiated a pilot project on work evaluation in 2002. The project is developing a gender-neutral system in close cooperation with various enterprises, and the results of the job evaluation will also be related to local wage negotiations. The Gender Equality Ombud will, in her enforcement of the new regulations of the Gender Equality Act, make use of the new gender-sensitive job evaluation system.

Duty to promote gender equality

The Gender Equality Act requires that public authorities should make active, targeted and systematic efforts to promote gender equality in all sectors of society. With the new regulations from 2002, all employers and all workers' and employers' organisations are also directed to promote gender equality actively in their areas of responsibility.

The duty to work towards gender equality implies a demand not simply to avoid discrimination but to actively implement concrete steps to promote gender equality within the enterprise. Employee and employer organisations have a corresponding duty to make such efforts within

their spheres of activity. Enterprises that are subject to a statutory duty to prepare an annual report shall, in said report, give an account of the actual state of affairs regarding gender equality in the enterprise. Public authorities and public enterprises that are not obliged to prepare an annual report shall give a corresponding account in their annual budget.

Legal guidance

Free Judicial Help for Women, a voluntary organisation, reports that they are frequently consulted by women in need of help and information concerning economic rights. Often, the husband handles issues related to the family economy and the wife may be unaware of joint economic assets and liabilities. This situation may cause problems in the case of divorce. Debts and the earning of pension points are among the recurring problems. The question of a possible sharing of pension points earned by both parties during the marriage has been raised by the Pension Committee, but is still without conclusion.

Reconciling work and family responsibilities

Reforms in family policies have gone hand in hand with the increased participation of mothers in the labour market, with emphasis on the need to reconcile working life with family responsibilities for both parents. The parental benefit scheme in Norway started as a benefit scheme for mothers during the weeks before and after confinement and has since developed into a longer period of paid parental leave which may be utilised by both the mother and father. This development represents a shift of focus from the biological role of women to the caring role of parents. The reforms that have been implemented have largely been motivated by the child's need for care and by family and gender equality policy considerations. Emphasis has been given to the value and advantages of the parents being at home with their children while they are small and there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the father's role in the care of his children.

Increased Protection during Pregnancy and Maternity Leave

Some of the cases brought before the Gender Equality Ombud regarding recruitment or promotion in working life concern pregnant women or women who are about to take maternity leave. In principle, it is a breach of the act to reject an application from a woman on the grounds that she is pregnant, especially if the vacancy is a permanent job. This issue is considered to be typical of where women may be discriminated against.

There is a need to strengthen men's position in relation to employers who have little understanding of a father's wish to make use of his legal right to paternal leave. Employers' lack of understanding is highlighted as a problem when men wish to make use of their leave. Men's need for protection in these situations is to be the same as that provided for women. Stronger protection for men will promote a more even distribution of responsibility for childcare, which may contribute to the reinforcement of the position of women in the workforce.

The amended Gender Equality Act (2002) provides increased protection against differential treatment in relation to pregnancy, childbirth and maternity leave. The act, *inter alia*, prohibits differential treatment that places women in a worse position than that, in which, she otherwise would have been in, as a result of pregnancy or childbirth. It also prohibits treatment that places

a woman, or a man, in a worse position than he/she would have been in, as a result of exercising his or her right to take leave of absence, which is reserved for one of the sexes.

Employment among immigrant and indigenous women

The proportion of employees among women with immigrant background is still somewhat lower than for women in the population at large, with 53 versus 67 percent. Women with a background from non-Western countries work, to a larger extent than other women, in labour-intensive industries such as hotels and restaurants and industrial cleaning.

Non-Western immigrant women displayed, as their male counterparts, a considerably higher unemployment rate than the total population. Their unemployment rate, however, is somewhat lower than that of immigrant men. Unemployment figures, especially for non-Western women, hide the fact that many immigrant women do not register as unemployed. The percentage outside the labour force is therefore actually higher than it appears at first sight.

In the Norwegian system, the number of years of residence decides the minimum pension received. Immigrants who have moved to Norway as mature adults have not achieved full pension rights. The level of pension is also influenced by income from gainful employment. An important consequence of lower rates of employment and lower income is that women of immigrant origin often have a low level of pension, i.e. disability pension or old-age pension.

There are no statistics showing employment and unemployment among the Sámi population. Reindeer husbandry, an important industry among the indigenous population, is heavily male-dominated. This situation is partly due to the general requirement that reindeer flocks, just as other small enterprises, can only be registered to one owner. The result is that most flocks, just as smaller farms, most often are registered to the husband only. The Ministry of Agriculture has set up a working group with a mandate to look into the position of women within reindeer husbandry. The aim is to facilitate the increased participation and influence of women in this industry. The working group, which will conclude its work by November 2004, is comprised of members from the Ministry, the public administration for reindeer husbandry, and the reindeer husbandry industry. Specific funds (NOK1,000,000) targeting women are allocated by the Reindeer Husbandry Development Fund for 2003-2004.

Women in power and decision-making

Few women among the elites

In 1998, a scientific committee was appointed by the government with the mandate to study power and democracy in Norway. In one of their reports from 2003, they examine people in leading positions in all public and private sectors. The study reveals some new and quite discouraging figures. The number of women and men among people in power positions has been counted and shows that men constitute 84 percent of all Norwegians in power positions. Positions of power are still, to an overwhelming degree, held by men.

There are, however, substantial differences between the sectors of Norwegian society. At the top of the list is the armed forces, with 100 percent men in power positions (this has now changed, as there is currently a female Minister of Defence). The next on the list is industry, with 96 percent

men in power. Next is the church, with 93 percent men in power, police with 93 and media on average with 84 percent men. The best result, seen from a female perspective, is within the sphere of politics, with 63 percent men in power positions.

Results by quotas

Women's participation and female resources are essential for growth and development in the economy and society, as a whole. As stated previously, Norway is experiencing positive trends towards gender equality in the labour market and the economy. At the same time, however, a high level of education or workforce participation is not automatically followed by more women in decision-making positions.

In order to address this problem, the Norwegian government considers legislation on quotas as an important tool. In dealing with appointed or elected positions on company boards and public committees, it has proven constructive to combine formal equal treatment with the use of affirmative action. The special contributions of women in male-dominated fields have been stressed, with a shift from discrimination to the benefits of including women.

Women in politics

Although Norway has, for a long time, had more than 40 percent women in government, female representation in other elected bodies (Parliament and municipal councils) appears to have stagnated. Female representation exceeded 30 percent for the first time in Parliament in 1985 and in municipal councils in 1990. The proportion of women is still to reach 40 percent in these two elected bodies, and an even representation of around 50 percent might seem a somewhat distant prospect. This development has given rise to debate in political circles about possible affirmative action in these two important representative bodies. Norway does not have any legal provisions for gender balance in political parties or directly in elected bodies. Nor does the government wish to take the initiative to impose a statutory obligation of even gender representation in elected bodies.

A system of voluntary and self-imposed quotas was introduced in the 1970s and early 1980s by the political parties. This use of quotas was highly controversial but proved, at the time, to be an effective means of achieving a more equal distribution of women and men in political bodies. Today, the majority of the political parties applies a gender quota system in nominations to elections and in the composition of governing bodies of the parties at all levels.

For several years, the Norwegian government has financed electoral campaigns intended to increase the number of women nominees and the number of women in political positions. The campaigns have primarily been held prior to local elections and are aimed at all political parties. The first campaign was launched by various women's organisations and the latest one, in 2003, was organised jointly by the Centre of Gender Equality, women's organisations, the political parties and the employers' and employees' associations.

In 1967, the proportion of women municipal council members rose from 6 to 9.5 percent. The effect of the quotas and campaigns were first felt in the 1971 elections, when the proportion of women in municipal councils rose to 15 percent. In the 2003 election, the level of women's representation rose from 34.3 to 35.3 percent and 14 percent of the mayors were female.

The Sámi Parliament is the popularly-elected body for the Sámi in Norway. Today there are only 7 women from a total of 39 elected representatives in the Sámi Parliament (i.e. 82 percent men). With financial support from the Norwegian government, the Sámi Parliament started a campaign with the objective to increase female representation in the Sámi Parliament from the elections in 2005. The administration of the Sámi Parliament is, however, led by a woman, as are the Reindeer Husbandry Administration and several Sámi academic institutions.

In 1993, the Local Government Act, which also regulates local management systems, was amended so as to require no less than 40 percent female representation in all municipal committees. This provision corresponds to the requirement set out in the Gender Equality Act that all public committees, boards, councils and commissions are to have even gender representation.

The Election Act was amended prior to the 2003 election, in order to strengthen voter influence on the election process. The Norwegian government has financed two studies with the aim of measuring the effect of this change, and also how the act has influenced the representation of women in local councils. The results of these studies will be published in the autumn of 2004.

Balanced gender representation on company boards

Parliament has adopted a law on gender balance to be imposed on public limited companies. Companies will be required to increase the number of women on their corporate boards to 40 percent. An estimated 600 companies would be affected by this regulation. The gender quota will be imposed in all publicly-owned enterprises (state-owned limited liability and public limited companies, state-owned enterprises, companies incorporated by special legislation and inter-municipal companies) and all public limited companies in the private sector.

The rules applying to state-owned companies entered into force 1 January 2004. Today these company board members comprise of more than 40 percent of each sex.

The rules applying to public limited companies will not come into effect if the desired gender representation is achieved voluntarily in the course of 2005. The decision will be based on statistics provided by the Register of Business Enterprises. At the beginning of this year, 8.4 percent of the members of these companies were female.

At the same time, the Norwegian government has taken an initiative for a cooperation agreement with the private sector with the aim of increasing female representation on the boards of **public stock** companies, on a voluntary basis. A website has also been established where women may register for recruitment to leading positions and boards.

No rules have been proposed for privately-owned limited liability companies, as most of these companies in Norway are small family enterprises and the owners are themselves members of the board. Public limited companies normally have a broader spread of shares and less personal involvement in management.

A state-owned company, *Innovation Norway*, which promotes nationwide industrial development, has developed special schemes for women. The “lighthouse project” gives women in business more visibility by promoting successful companies owned and managed by women. These companies are endorsed as good examples for other women who want to establish their own businesses. In order to increase the number of women on company boards, a training programme that serves to qualify potential board representatives has been developed in cooperation with the Norwegian School of Management. The training courses are gender-balanced and those who complete them are added to a “board database”. “Network credit” has been established with the goal to increase entrepreneurship amongst people, mostly women, with small capital needs. These networks also give the participants knowledge on entrepreneurship, closer follow-up and the self-confidence needed to make their business ideas become reality.

Women executives in central and local government

The Norwegian government has set itself the goal to ensure by 2006 that no less than 40 percent of both sexes are represented in executive positions in government administration. 1997 saw the launch of a project entitled, “*Women, quality and competence in government administration*”, aimed at increasing the proportion of women from 22 to 30 percent by the end of 2001. By the close of the project, the proportion of women had reached almost 28 percent. In 2004, the proportion of women had risen to 34 percent, and if developments progress at the same pace, it may be quite possible to reach the objective by 2006. In order to secure this positive trend, several measures have been implemented. The act orders all undertakings to report on their gender equality activities and annual reviews are drawn up of the gender distribution in executive posts in government. Other measures count the establishment of a mentor programme, a network for women mid-level executives and trials involving greater mobility among executives, and special focus has also been placed on how government administration recruits its executives.

Even though women perform most of the services provided by local government, especially in the field of health care and social welfare, the female proportion of executives in local government continues to remain low. Only 12 percent of chief municipal administrative officers are women. A project called “*Breakthrough*” aims to mobilise new female candidates for higher administrative positions and is contributing to new knowledge and increased awareness of gender and senior executives in the municipal sector. This commitment is founded on the overriding objective of reinforcing the development of good chief municipal administration by utilising the experiences and resources of both sexes.

Women in academic life

Women are in a majority among students in universities and other academic institutions, but women are in a minority among academic staff. At top professorial levels, women constitute only 13 percent. Earmarking of positions for women has occasionally given positive results. In 2002, the EFTA Court found the Norwegian State guilty of transgression of the EU Equal Treatment Directive for this practice. Any further use of earmarking of positions has consequently been abolished. Universities are discussing alternative measures to ensure an improvement in the representation of women in higher positions.

Several Sámi academic institutions are led by women. These include the Sámi College, the Sámi Centre at the University of Tromsø and the Nordic Sámi Institute.

Power and representation of minority women

Minority women are virtually invisible in formal power structures, and only a limited number of women have achieved positions where they wield any influence or have an impact on decisions. One woman (the only man or woman with immigrant background) is a Member of Parliament. Minorities are, in general, grossly under-represented within municipal and county councils. 14 of 19 counties have no immigrant representatives. Immigrant women make up only 1.2 percent of all representatives at municipal level, while immigrants altogether represent only 3.8 percent.

A small number of Sámi women have been represented in the media, in political positions in government, in the ministries and in local and county politics. To the best of our knowledge, however, there are no existing statistics on women of national minority origin and how they are represented in politics, higher administrative positions and other channels of political influence.

Human rights of women

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Norwegian government views the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as an important tool for achieving gender equality, both nationally and internationally. Norway ratified the convention on 21 May 1981. The Optional Protocol was ratified on 5 March 2002.

In January 2003, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women examined Norway's 5th and 6th periodic reports and made concluding comments. In order to be able to implement the CEDAW Convention and the Committee's concluding comments, an open dialogue between the authorities and the organisations is of vital importance. The comments have been distributed to several governmental institutions, organisations and NGOs in Norway and are available on the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs' website. A written response from the applicable and affected ministries followed, on the subjects and principal areas of concerns, as suggested by the committee. The concluding comments were also one of the subjects of this year's "Milestone Conference", referred to in the introduction.

In June 2003, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs passed a consultation memorandum on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention into Norwegian legislation. In March 2004, the government concluded that the preferred means of implementation would be to incorporate the convention through the Gender Equality Act. Incorporation of the convention will contribute to the elevation of its status, and will strengthen its position in Norwegian law. When the convention is incorporated, its provisions will be given the same legal status as national laws.

Four human rights conventions have already been incorporated into Norwegian legislation: the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These four conventions have been incorporated through the Human Rights Act. The provisions of these conventions shall take precedence over any other legislative provisions that conflict with them. The incorporation of the

CEDAW Convention through the Gender Equality Act, however, does not give the convention precedence over conflicting legislative provisions.

Even though the incorporation of the CEDAW Convention will play an important part in increasing the visibility and status of the human rights of women, the Norwegian government's decision to incorporate the convention through the Gender Equality Act rather than the Human Rights Act, has received criticism from *inter alia* women's organisations, NGOs and the Gender Equality Ombud.

The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is planning on presenting a proposal to Parliament in 2004 regarding legislative changes in the Gender Equality Act, including the incorporation of the CEDAW Convention. The Norwegian government is planning on looking thoroughly into issues regarding the implementation of human rights conventions in national legislation, in a report to Parliament, that is planned to be submitted during spring 2005.

Common machinery against discrimination

In order to combat discrimination more forcefully, the Norwegian government wishes to establish a joint enforcement mechanism, as of 1 January 2006. A joint mechanism will be proposed in 2004, when the government will present two proposals to Parliament; one proposal to change the Gender Equality Act and the other an act against discrimination on ethnic grounds. The new machinery will enforce the Gender Equality Act and the new act against ethnic discrimination and will also include awareness-raising in its mandate. Separate machineries for different types of discrimination run the risk of becoming small and fragile, compared to joint machinery involving larger group of experts on discrimination and greater competence and ability to act against multiple forms of discrimination.

Furthermore, the Norwegian government has appointed a committee to draw up a report on an act against discrimination on grounds of disability. Additionally, the Working Environment Act will be amended in accordance with the EC Framework Directive on Anti-Discrimination 2000/78/EC (discrimination in the labour market). Enforcing these laws in the planned joint machinery is also under consideration.

Gender-based persecution

Victims of gender-based persecution are given protection in Norway according to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Guidelines on refugee criteria from the Ministry of Justice (13 January 1998) state that gender-based persecution may constitute persecution in the context of the Geneva Convention. The Norwegian government established a law committee in December 2001 and commissioned it to propose one or more new immigration acts. The gender balance will be taken into account in this work.

Female inmates

A countrywide survey entitled "*Living conditions of inmates*", carried out in 2004, indicates that female inmates in Norwegian prisons represent, in many respects, an even more marginalised group than male inmates. A larger proportion of female inmates had been working prior to their imprisonment than was the case for male prisoners. Female inmates reported even more serious illegal drug problems, more mental illnesses and infectious diseases than their male counterparts.

The survey also revealed a higher number of female inmates reporting cases of sexual abuse than men.

The proportion of women in Norwegian prisons is approximately 5 percent of the total, and the equivalent figure for **all persons** on probation is nearly 10 percent. An important goal is to ensure that women and men serve their prison sentences under equal conditions. To the extent possible, women should be offered training, work, programmes, treatment, etc. that are geared to their needs for help, occupation and development. Prison and probation services are working actively to devise measures for women exposed to violence, so as to help them out of their victimisation roles. Since women represent only a small proportion of all inmates, an important challenge is to provide them with facilities that are equal to those of men during their prison term.

Sámi and other indigenous peoples

The Norwegian government wishes to focus on the challenges facing the Sámi and other indigenous peoples as a vital element of the human rights issue. The Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has a particular responsibility to collect and distribute information about indigenous peoples. This will include indigenous women's rights.

UN-Habitat and HCHR

Norway supports *inter alia* cooperation between the UN Habitat Programme and the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) on the rights-based approach to housing and women's housing rights. The governing councils of both organisations have adopted several resolutions and declarations on women's rights.

Trafficking; ref. to Violence against Women

Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriages, ref. to Girl Child

Among the remaining gaps and challenges partly taken up by the CEDAW Committee and also by the Gender Equality Ombud and some of the NGOs (in their comments to this draft report and also raised at the Milestone Conference) are:

- lack of incorporation of CEDAW in human rights law;
- the fact that the Gender Equality Act does not apply to the internal affairs of religious communities;
- A joint machinery (rather than a separate mechanism) for the implementation of the Gender Equality Act and the act against discrimination on ethnic grounds;
- awareness-raising and educational work on women's rights should be given high priority in order to promote implementation of *de facto* equality;
- women's incomes are in certain cases too high to qualify for free legal advice, but, as women earn less than men, this gives women a less favourable position in terms of their access to the courts;
- improved conditions for women prisoners to increased possibilities for visiting arrangements for their children;
- since women constitute a minority among prison inmates, the aim should be to provide women with facilities that are equal to those of men during their prison term.

Women and the media

Women's access to media

There have been different types of courses to encourage women to participate and use their gender as an asset rather than a hindrance in decision-making processes in the media. Comprehensive courses on women, development and leadership have, for several years, been organised by the Norwegian Media Business Association and the Norwegian Institute of Journalism. The government has contributed financially through the Council for Applied Media Research.

The concrete consequences of these measures are difficult to measure. Nevertheless, the gender distribution in media unions gives an indication of the status of women in expression and decision-making in and through the media. The proportion of female members in the Norwegian Union of Journalists has increased every year, from 34.2 percent in 1995 to 39.8 percent in 2003. Figures from the Norwegian Union of Editors show that there are relatively few female editors compared to journalists, but this number is increasing. From 1995 to 2003 there was a rise 11.1% to 19%, in female editors.

A number of studies have been undertaken demonstrating how men dominate in the media. The Norwegian Broadcasting Company produces reports on "Who Speaks in Broadcasting?" These reports show men's and women's access to the media. The reports from the 1990s indicate that approximately 30 percent of those interviewed were women and 70 percent were men.

Women and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)

The potential for sexual exploitation via the Internet is probably greater for girls than for boys. Special websites have been set up for young girls to expose their pictures on the net. Some girls seem to have little knowledge of the dangers involved. As part of the efforts to ensure the safe use of the Internet by children and young people, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs presented a plan of measures called "*Children, Young People and the Internet*" in August 2001. One of the objectives of the plan was to protect children and adolescents from being exploited by child pornography and prevent the sale of sex of minors through electronic channels.

Another cause for concern has been that the proportion of women and girls among ICT students has been low, and this figure declines with the length of the programme of studies. This implies that one of the key areas of education shaping future society is almost totally lacking in women.

In 1997, a recruiting project entitled "*Girls and ICT*" (Jenter & Data) was set up, involving campaigns, information, networking, different types of support and activities for interested female students and, not least, special quotas for girls. There was a special focus on showing girls what ICT is all about, and its importance in shaping all areas of society. During the following years, women made up one-third of the students.

Today, however, there are signs of a *new negative trend*. Although the ICT sector is still a fast growing sector, with a continuous need for "manpower", the female proportion of students has again dropped, as an effect of the recent ICT crisis.

Stereotyped portrayal of women in advertising

Since 1978, the Norwegian Marketing Control Act has contained a provision directed at preventing advertising from being in conflict with the inherent equality of the sexes. Advertising portraying women as inferior to men, especially when using the female body as an “eye-catcher”, was seen as an obstacle to a society built on gender equality, as advertising contributes to forming the views of the public in such matters. The aim of the provision was to make advertising depict women more realistically, not merely as sexual objects, and to stop the use of a stereotyped portrayal of women to increase sales.

Article 5a of the CEDAW Convention states that, “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures ... to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.” The fact that the CEDAW Convention will be incorporated into Norwegian legislation means that the provisions of the convention, including Article 5, will be given a higher legal status than is the case today.

The Centre for Gender Equality conducts an annual advertisement competition where the best and worst advertisement from a gender equality perspective is chosen. This is then presented at a press conference, usually, on 8 March each year. Students from an advertising school constitute the jury.

In the early nineties, especially large advertising campaigns for women’s underwear showed that the rules were not strict enough to stop advertising that many people thought indecent and degrading to women in particular. An amendment to the Marketing Control Act was initiated and entered into force in 1997.

The Marketing Control Act Section 1, paragraph 2 now reads as follows:

“The advertiser and any person who creates advertising shall ensure that the advertisement is not in conflict with the inherent equality of the sexes and that it does not exploit the body of either sex or imply any offensive or derogatory judgement of man or woman.”

As a result of this amendment, the prohibition set out in the Marketing Control Act is more extensive, as it now includes advertising that, on a general level, is contrary to the female or male sense of honour or decency. The provision does not regulate the decency of a commercial practice itself, but whether it expresses attitudes that are consistent with the criteria for equality, respect and non-exploitation of the male and female body that the law is based upon. In other words, an advertisement for female underwear is not prohibited as long as the focus is on the underwear and not on the body of the woman wearing it.

The media tends to refer to violence against women when women with ethnic minority backgrounds are involved as a result of practice within those specific cultures, while violence against women when ethnic Norwegian women are concerned is often presented as family tragedies or crimes of passion.

The “pornofication” of public space, especially through the media and advertisements, is a great challenge. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has made efforts to address this concern.

Women in the film industry

The Norwegian film industry is distinguished by a skewed gender balance. Women are strongly under-represented in all areas of the filmmaking process, both in terms of those receiving grants to make films, creating/directing films, writing scripts, training new filmmakers and in the films themselves. In 2003, only 3 out of a total of 18 premiere films had been directed by women, two of which were children's films. 14 films had men in the leading role, one portrayed a group consisting of both sexes and the three remaining films had female leading roles who were all children.

To investigate the cause of this imbalance, the film industry itself has appointed a steering group "*Gender in motion*", chaired by the director of the Norwegian Film Institute. The group proposes to review the entire filmmaking process to find an explanation for this gender skew. The aim is to ensure that the Norwegian film industry has no less than 40 percent female representation in all areas and that Norwegian film reflects the scope and diversity of society, in terms of age and gender.

Women and the environment

Regional and local planning

County planning is a collective system of public planning at the county level, constituting an important instrument for meeting regional challenges and implementing national and local policies in the region. Regional and municipal planning fall within the sphere of responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment. Several counties are currently following up on the gender perspective in their county planning work.

In the county of Nord-Trøndelag, the administration has chosen to make special mention of women in their Regional Development Programme for 2004. Women are highlighted as a separate concern and target group, and the gender perspective is also taken into account horizontally, in all fields of activity. Nordland county administration supports the setting up of a regional gender equality centre with the task of motivating and promoting efforts to achieve gender equality between the sexes and integrating a gender perspective in regional development. These endeavours will impact the prioritisation of women in particular, but will also effect business development in general. Additionally, Finnmark County is following up the county plan in terms of women and business development in their Regional Development Programme.

By way of example of the integration of a gender perspective in municipal planning, it is also worth mentioning the 3-year project in Rogaland entitled "Municipal planning in a gender perspective – developing a guide" backed *inter alia* by the Ministry of the Environment. It was the County Governor of Rogaland who gave the impetus to this project, involving the participation of Gjesdal and Eigersund municipalities, whereas the Northern Feminist University (NFU) attended to its practical implementation. A guide was developed for the integration of the gender perspective in the municipal planning process. In this connection, a checklist was formulated which proved to be a useful tool in the work to integrate the gender perspective in municipal planning. A lesson learned from this project was the importance of focusing on the gender perspective in all phases of the planning process – in background material (gender-

segregated statistics), in participation (equal representation of both sexes) and in impact assessments, along the way.

The Norwegian Parliament has decided that county planning should be reinforced and the government is considering integrating the gender and equality perspective. When approving county plans, the gender perspective could be included as a checkpoint, expressed in the form of an expectation on the part of the central government.

International environmental cooperation and aid

The Norwegian chairmanship of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will focus on water, sanitation and settlement issues. Many of these topics are of key importance from a women's perspective. The settlement debate concerns *inter alia* the right for women to own or rent dwellings, and issues related to water in developing countries clearly incorporate a female perspective. In many developing countries, the females are responsible for fetching water, and the long distances to water sources may make it impossible from a practical point of view for girls to go to school. An overall improvement of the water situation will also lead to an improved situation for women.

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) finances a number of projects combining natural resource management and the empowerment of women

The girl child

Elimination of negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls

An act prohibiting *female genital mutilation (FGM)* entered into force in 1996. This act prohibits any operation on female genitals that damages or permanently changes the genitals. The act also prohibits the reconstruction of a genital mutilation, for example after childbirth. A breach of the law is punishable with up to 3 years imprisonment. If death or severe damage occurs as a result of genital mutilation, the punishment may be up to 8 years imprisonment. Aiding and abetting is punished equally. Consent from the woman or girl does not absolve the perpetrators from punishment.

An action plan to combat female genital mutilation was presented in December 2000 and runs through 2004. Most of the measures in the plan have been organised in the form of projects and are being followed up through the project "*OK - Care and Knowledge in Combating Female Genital Mutilation*". The Norwegian government has also presented a programme entitled "*Government's Efforts to Combat Female Genital Mutilation 2002*". This programme is comprised of 33 measures to put the action plan into practice. Many of the activities are related to education, information and communication measures. The OK Project consists of a national and a local component. The latter targets the Somali population in Oslo, and has a general approach based on improving living standards, in which the prevention of female genital mutilation is included. Measures are to be developed in close cooperation with the target group.

Parliament has approved a proposal to amend the act on female genital mutilation [Ministry of Health – Proposal to the Odelsting-Ot.prp.nr.21 (2003-2004)]. By virtue of this amendment, professionals and employees in early childhood education and care/kindergarten (ECEC), child

welfare services, health care and social welfare services, schools, after-school supervisory schemes and religious communities will have an obligation to prevent genital mutilation. This obligation applies to those who fail, by means of formal complaint or otherwise, to prevent genital mutilation, irrespective of any duty of confidentiality.

In 2003, the government launched a plan for Norway's international efforts against the genital mutilation of girls. Furthermore, NORAD provides support to several international organisations working with this issue on the African continent.

Through its Action Plan to Combat *Forced Marriages* (1998-2001), the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs coordinated the efforts of the Norwegian government to prevent forced marriages and to assist young people who are under threat of or subjected to such marriages. Informational material was distributed, targeting young people, parents and civil servants. The government's measures attach importance to promoting communication and mediation between children and parents, providing assistance in the form of emergency housing in particularly acute situations, and fostering dialogue and cooperation with various ethnic groups. An updated programme entailing 30 new measures was presented by the government in spring 2002. The principal measures are: offering help to young people in crisis, changing regulations to prevent forced marriages and "underage marriages", and training welfare service officers in their work against forced marriages. Forced marriages is an issue that requires continued efforts.

As part of the action plan, several legal changes have been undertaken. From July 2003, the Norwegian Penal Code was amended to include a provision on forced marriages. The penalty for initiating a forced marriage is imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years. From December 2003, the Children's Act was amended to "underscore that parents or others are not permitted to enter into binding marriage agreements on behalf of their children". In line with amendments of the Marriage Act, County Governors have been empowered, as of March 2004, to instigate legal proceedings to determine whether a marriage is valid or not, so as to be able to react with legal means in cases of possible forced marriages. Furthermore, the National Register will, from the autumn of 2004, undertake reviews of conditions for a valid marriage. The goal of such a system of compulsory public review of marriage conditions is to gain better control and achieve a more homogeneous processing of such cases. Consequently, weddings performed in Norway without prior review by the National Register will be deemed invalid.

Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life

High priority is given to reaching the goal of full access for all children to early childhood education and care/kindergarten (ECEC). In 2002, 66 percent of all children (1-5 years) attended early childhood education and care (ECEC) compared with 51 percent in 1995 (0-6 years). As parental leave is almost one year, there are very few infants in ECEC. The goal of full access for all children – which is assumed to be 80 percent - is to be reached within 2006. At the same time, the Ministry has issued regulations placing a cap on the amount of parental fees in order to reduce the level of cost for parents. When the goal of full access is obtained, there will be a further reduction in parental fees.

In 2002, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs started work on an action plan for gender equality in day care centres and initiated a study of the promotion of gender equality, in such facilities. The plan has been distributed to public and private childcare education institutions, municipalities, counties, colleges and organisations. It is expected that all parties will contribute to concrete results for the fulfilment of the action plan.

Youth clubs are important arenas of integration for young people with minority backgrounds. Today, boys participate more frequently than girls in these clubs. Information is needed about the preferences of young girls with minority backgrounds and why they seem to participate less in these activities. The Centre for Gender Equality will examine these matters in cooperation with the National Youth and Leisure Association. A course will also be developed to increase gender awareness in youth clubs.

Sexual harassment may occur in arenas frequented by young people, such as youth clubs and children's/youth organisations. There is reason to believe that young girls are the more vulnerable. In spring 2002, the Norwegian Parliament adopted amendments to the Gender Equality Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2003. One important change is that all sexual harassment is now prohibited. Various information measures have been planned to make the leaders of all activities for children and young people aware of their responsibility for preventing and intervening in all types of sexual harassment.

The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has financed a project called "Trygg" (Safe), initiated by the Norwegian Youth Council, in order to fight sexual harassment and assault within the organisations. Its aim is to create safer and more confident children and adults. A pamphlet entitled "Skapende samtaler" (Creative conversations) provides tools/forums for discussing social interaction, young people and sex, where to set the limit, etc. A guide has also been developed containing concrete advice if the organisation is worried about the occurrence of sexual assaults, or if they suspect one of the adult leaders of sexual harassment.

The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs also administers a grant scheme entitled "*Urban Youth Projects*" aimed at improving the conditions in which adolescents live and grow up in large cities (ten cities in 2003). A total of NOK19.7 million was allocated to this scheme in 2003. The allocation was used for measures and projects targeting young people with special needs and youth groups and circles at risk. Emphasis was placed *inter alia* on promoting the participation of groups of young people who make little use of existing cultural and recreational facilities and promoting equality and equal opportunities for girls and boys.

In 2003, an initiative was taken to examine the gender profile of the urban youth projects (Report 6 – 2003, Fredrikkes Hage). The report pointed out that even though a large part of the activities were directed at both boys and girls, many of them were dominated by boys. There is also a slight tendency to give greater priority and funding to projects aimed at boys. There is a *challenge*, therefore, to promote girls' needs to a larger extent and to raise gender awareness among youth workers.

Eradicate violence against the girl child

Studies indicate that 3-5 percent of children are subjected to long-term, serious abuse by older persons before they reach the age of 18. These figures, however, are uncertain. Sexual abuse or incest was the criterion for intervening in the case of 96 children in 1999 and 99 children in 2000. There are challenges to be addressed in terms of uncovering sexual abuse, dealing with cases where sexual abuse is suspected, and assisting the children who are the victims of such abuse. Chapter 19 of the General Civil Penal Code, which relates to sexual offences, was revised in 2000. The purpose of the revision was in part to simplify and modernise the provisions, and partly to better protect children and women against sexual abuse. Since 2000, the National Resource Centre for Sexually Abused Children has been a key component of a project aimed at raising the level of expertise and strengthening the range of measures available in the various regions of Norway regarding sexual abuse of children and, to some extent, other types of child abuse as well.

In connection with the amendments to the provisions of the Penal Code regarding sexual offences, amendments were also adopted to strengthen the protection of children against sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The purchase of sexual services from persons under 18 years of age has been made a criminal offence. A breach of this provision is also punishable when it has been committed abroad by Norwegian nationals and residents. It is a criminal act to give pornography to persons under 18 years of age. The Penal Code sets penalties for all types of involvement in child pornography, the maximum penalty being up to 3 years imprisonment. If the criminal acts take place as part of the activities of a criminal organisation, the maximum penalty may be twice as long. In relation to child pornography, children are defined as persons who are or appear to be under 18 years of age. Child pornography is defined as moving or non-moving pictures of a sexual nature involving the use of children. Fictitious presentations are also covered by the prohibition. Aiding and abetting such crimes, as well as inducing any person under 18 years of age to allow pictures of him or herself to be taken as part of a commercial presentation of moving or non-moving pictures of a sexual nature is prohibited. It is also prohibited to produce such presentations depicting any person under 18 years of age. Parliament has asked the Norwegian government to consider separating child pornography from the general provision on pornography. The Ministry of Justice will consider a separate provision on child pornography in 2004.

Young girls are most vulnerable to sexual harassment and rape, and the criminal justice system does not as yet seem to be able to respond adequately. A number of young girls and women who have been subject to sexual assault and rape do not report their experiences to the police. This could mean a lack of trust and confidence on their part in the criminal justice system. The Children's Ombud and the Centre for Gender Equality undertook a study of 248 judgements on

cases of sexual assault during the period 1995 – 2000. The study focused on the attitudes of judges and the courts in these cases. In order to perform this study, the grounds for the judgements were studied. The results show that in cases where the children were 14 years or over, the courts seemed to place importance in the clothes they were wearing, their behaviour, and in their earlier relationships. In other words, they placed some of the responsibility for having been raped on the children. A recent study indicates that these attitudes are gradually changing.

Part Three: Institutional Development

Gender mainstreaming

In Norway, government follow-up of the Platform for Action and the recommendations resulting from the GA special session in 2000 “Beijing +5” have been linked to the structures and processes for implementing gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming was a core message that came out of Beijing. Successful gender mainstreaming demands that all ministries, public authorities and agencies at various levels are involved. Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2000 recommendations likewise demand an integrated and inter-sector approach.

In concrete terms, the mechanisms and processes applied in the follow-up focus on political commitment, adequate government machinery and administrative routines and organisation, and NGO/Civil Society involvement and dialogue.

Political commitment :

A government decision was made in 1996, basing a specific responsibility for gender issues across all sectors of Norwegian government with the State Secretaries. A conference targeting the junior ministers was organised that explained and linked the two processes.

Since 1997, striving to strengthen the gender mainstreaming approach, each new government has set up a committee of junior ministers on gender equality. The committee provides a forum for the State Secretaries on the exercising of their responsibility to ensure gender equality is an integrated part of each policy area. The goal is to ensure that gender equality is firmly placed on the government agenda and to provide a clear message to the government administration that gender issues are important and should be incorporated into all relevant government policy. Follow-up of the Beijing process is among the specific issues addressed by the committee.

Despite these efforts, it is a challenge to ensure that gender concerns are given priority in situations of conflicting priorities, especially if financial interests are at stake.

National machinery:

Gender mainstreaming demands a high level of political commitment and relevant organisational structures. Since the late 1970s, Norway has in place national machinery for the promotion of gender equality including one government department/unit, the Gender Equality Ombud enforcing the Gender Equality Act, and a promotional body, the Gender Equality Centre. The Ombud and the Centre are both politically independent but are government funded and must report to the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, which coordinates government policy on gender equality.

The Norwegian government has recently decided to reorganise the equality machinery. Parallel to the strengthening of anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of ethnic background, a joint machinery will be set up that combines the elements of law enforcement and promotional activities in the fields of gender and ethnicity. The new machinery will come into action no later than 1 January 2006, according to the current plan. Further axes of discrimination, such as disability, may be added to the new anti-discrimination machinery later. The aim of this

reorganisation is to ensure authority by joining forces, to extract added value from combining experiences and best practices from the two fields of anti-discrimination, and to enhance the handling of multiple grounds of discrimination (inter-sectionality).

Since the late 1980s, Norway has implemented action programmes to support the incorporation of gender equality as an integral element of all government policy areas (gender mainstreaming). All ministries have a gender focal point/contact person, although the level of activity varies between the sectors. The most active sectors have a gender desk/secretariat and a network of contacts in all departments of their ministry. The inter-ministerial network of gender focal points is, at intervals, invited to capacity-raising activities, seminars, training sessions and exchange of experiences and best practices.

Gender budgeting

In recent years, focus has shifted to the budget process. Since the turn of the millennium (2000/2001), a gender perspective has been gradually incorporated in the preparation of the budget of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and more recently this process has involved a majority of the ministries. In October 2003, the government budget proposal (2003-2004) that was presented to the National Parliament included a separate annex setting out examples of the on-going efforts in the ministries to link gender and budget considerations. It was the second time that Norway was able to present this type of report, and the number of ministries contributing increased from initially 8 to nearly all 17 ministries. The gender budget initiative is coordinated by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, in a joint effort involving both the department/unit for gender equality and the administration/budget department. This cooperation is at the heart of the Norwegian approach.

Norway has received very positive and encouraging feed-back from Parliament on this process. Civil society has also taken an interest, following an open seminar that Norway organised in January 2003 that attracted a large audience, including NGOs, Parliament, the research community and the media. By inviting a dialogue with civil society and promoting the gender budget report, Norway's intention is that gender budgeting will contribute to transparency and accountability in the government budget process. These elements are also at the core of a Joint Nordic Council of Ministers project on gender budgeting launched early 2004. Norway also contributes to on-going activities organised by the Council of Europe on gender budgeting, as well as relevant discourse within the EU cooperation on gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming at the local and regional level

Gender mainstreaming attracts increasing interest at the local and regional levels. Projects have focused on mainstreaming a gender perspective in local and regional planning as well as gender-based assessment as a tool for better targeting and user-friendliness in service production and delivery. Guidelines and brochures have been issued and action plans have been adopted that include concrete goals and measures for action. Regional resource centres for gender equality provide expertise for gender-based assessments.

Statistical data and indicators

Gender dis-aggregated statistics, relevant analysis and presentation of data is needed to assess gender effects and ensure that women and men have equal access to public policies and services

delivery. It is also necessary to measure progress in gender equality. The most important tool produced to date is a gender equality barometer.

The gender equality barometer measures achievements in gender representation and access to resources over a broad spectre of society and also identifies good examples. The sectors that are thus rated are:

- politics and state administration
- municipalities
- enterprises/the private sector
- research and education
- working life

The gender equality barometer is presented annually by the Gender Equality Centre. The Centre also produces a useful leaflet presenting core gender statistics called, “Minifacts”.

The National Statistical Office has an extensive record for producing gender relevant and disaggregated data. One important element has been the regular production of time-use surveys since 1970. The National Statistical Office also produces a Gender Equality Index that rates the municipalities according to their achievements in terms of gender equality. The indicators applied are:

- availability of childcare
- demographical distribution
- education
- labour market participation
- income
- political representation

Additionally, the National Statistical Office has published comprehensive gender statistics and set up a website to facilitate access to gender disaggregated statistics and relevant data.

There is still room for improvement. Gender relevant statistics have been treated in a somewhat ad-hoc manner. Norway sees a need for more consistent placing of responsibility for gender-relevant statistics and data with the National Statistical Office. The Ministry therefore contributes to a part-time position of coordinator for gender relevant statistics at the National Statistical Office. The goal is to support improvements in the presentation of relevant statistics and cooperation within this office with a view to mainstreaming gender equality more systematically in all activities. This would contribute to a more systematic approach and ensure that all relevant statistics are gender-disaggregated, analysed by gender and easily accessible.

Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them

Norwegian women are in relatively advantageous position, especially compared to their sisters in many other countries. Norway performs well in terms of workforce and political participation. The welfare system ensures that poverty is a relatively marginal phenomenon and single parents, mostly women, are ensured necessary public support. This does not mean, however, that there are no gender gaps and challenges to gender equality. The most important ones are related to the sphere of the economy, to gender-based violence and to the **inter-sectionality** of gender and other axes of discrimination, such as ethnic background, disability and sexual orientation.

Major challenges in the labour market are related to the gender-segregated labour market and the high prevalence of part-time work among women, both voluntary and involuntary. The gender gap in time use in paid and unpaid work is an important factor to explain the gender pay gap and the gap in pensions between women and men. The Norwegian government sees the need to focus on gender equality within the family. There is a need to give the father possibilities to spend more time with his children, and to strengthen the mother's possibilities to participate on equal terms in the labour market. Discrimination of pregnant women in the labour market is another major challenge. Despite a high level of education and workforce participation, few women are in positions of power. Although there is a relatively high representation of women in political elected or appointed bodies, a report from 2003 indicates that men constitute 84 percent of all Norwegians in power positions. If one were to look into the figures of women in conjunction with ethnic background or disability it would likely be found that the gaps are even more pronounced. The rights of women and the gender socialisation of children in some religious communities are other causes of concern and a challenge not readily tackled.

Gender-based violence only came onto the political agenda in the late 1970s and 1980s. Despite a strong political commitment and concerted efforts aimed at its elimination (see Part II), recent surveys indicate that violence against women is a complex and wide-spread phenomenon. Among the challenges that yet remain to be undertaken are improved services and targeted assistance for disabled women, women with a minority ethnic background and women trapped in prostitution or victims of trafficking across borders. There is a need for more precise knowledge and information on prevalence and the causes of gender-based violence. Competence needs to be improved at all levels of services dealing with the victims of violence, the effects on children growing up in abusive families, prevention, and treatment of offenders. Abusive relationships frequently are complex and involve a range of violations of the victim's physical and psychological integrity, some recognised as a criminal offence, others involving harassment and deprivation that, in sum, add up to an intolerable and abusive life situation. The legal system needs to be better able to tackle the complexity of abusive relationships in a holistic approach.

Men and boys in the promotion of gender equality

The achievement of gender equality is not possible without the cooperation of men. To ensure this cooperation, men must acknowledge their own social, gendered history and to see the benefits for both sexes of a more gender-equal society. There is a need to develop more knowledge and critical understanding of men and their lives as a gendered experience. Research will be of great importance in this matter.

About half of all mothers work part-time, and only one out of ten fathers takes more than the four-week paternal leave. Thus, mothers assume the vast bulk of family responsibilities, defining themselves as both housewives and breadwinners at the same time, while the fathers remain the main breadwinner.

Through the experience of caring for children, men have the opportunity to expand their repertoire of roles and develop new ways of being a man, both inside and outside of the family. This, in turn, will hopefully prepare the ground for new and more equal gender roles for girls and boys of the young generation. Care and education remain a woman's sphere and the occupations dominated by females. Men constitute only 7 percent of the staff in preschool activities. A plan of action for gender equality in childcare was launched early in 2004. By the year 2007, a goal has been set to increase the number of men working with children below age six to 20 percent. More emphasis on gender sensitivity in childcare pedagogy is another element of this plan of action. Education and socialisation of children needs to be more gender sensitive. Boys and girls should be given the right to experience both women and men as role models in early childhood education and care. The role and impact of violence and gender stereotypes in the entertainment industry need further investigation, not least with regard to boys' interpretation of maleness and masculinity and of violence as a means to solve problems. The situation is compounded by many boys' lack of language to explain their feelings, express empathy and to cooperate with others. To gain gender equality, male violence against women and children in family life has to be recognized. The matter has to be introduced in the public arena and made a topic in political discussions. It is important to make men accept responsibility for their own violent behaviour and to raise political awareness of the impact on society of this aspect of the male gender role and prevalent understandings of masculinity.

A paralysing consensus on gender equality?

A scientific committee appointed by the Norwegian government with the mandate to study power and democracy (1998-2003), raised a critical view of the gender equality policy. One of its main reports gave an extensive analysis of changes in gendered power, structural male dominance, attitudes to gender equality and developments in Norwegian policies on gender equality during the last 30-years.¹ The report identifies the challenge of duplicity of the Norwegian gender equality policies, as it both advanced and invisible, at the same time. The stated consensus makes it 'unseen', and it thus becomes politics that lack systematic priority. What the report identified as the yielding duty of gender equality appears when encountering the freedom of religion, the freedom of negotiation, and the freedom of organisation. Additionally, the report questioned the so-called profitability argument, the framing of gender equality as a question of what women can contribute and profitability. It holds that this argumentation may undermine a perspective of rights, justice and equality at its own value. As such, it may add to the construction of a ostensible consensus on gender equality, while hiding the fact that equality is often a matter of concrete clashes of interests and rights. The study characterises the situation of today as a problem of benevolent non-committal.

The conclusions of the report point to paradoxes and challenges facing gender policies in Norwegian society characterised by a relatively high standard of gender equality and where

¹ Skjeie, Hege and Mari Teigen (2003) Menn imellom. Mannsdominans og likestillingspolitikk.

gender discrimination frequently interlinks with other axes of discrimination. The decision to establish a joint mechanism for law enforcement and promotion of anti-discrimination and equality, disregarding of gender and ethnic origin, expresses the Norwegian government's commitment to strengthening equality policies.