



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF NORWAY
GENEVA**

Our Date
14.10.05
Your Date

Our Reference
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20 OCT. 2005

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Reference to your note no./SO 214 (89-5) dated 16.08.05 address to the mandate by the Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/45.

Please find enclosed the Action Plan to combat violence against women from the Norwegian Government. The report has been sent electronic.

Yours sincerely,

Kari Jøraandstad

Action Plan to combat violence against women

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, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. The plan was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Justice and included a wide range of activities to combat domestic violence.

Focus was directed at improving existing measures and expertise among all actors. This included enhancing expertise and networking at the local level between such actors as the police, social services, child welfare services, staff at shelters, etc. Improving research efforts and the routines for registering information was also in focus. Other measures included:

- **Security alarms.** In 1997, a project was launched to equip all women in Norway who have been subject to violence or threats of violence by their ex-husbands, ex-common law husbands or cohabitants with security alarms. While the first alarms could only be used in the home, the alarms currently in use are part of a mobile system based on a universal positioning system of great accuracy (GPS). The alarms give immediate access to the police in an emergency. The alarm project, which was administered by the police authorities, became a permanent measure in 1999, and is fully financed by the state.
- **Police co-ordinators.** A new position as family violence co-ordinator was established in every police district in Norway in July 2002 to help the police in their efforts to combat domestic violence. The co-ordinators have undergone special training and a locally adapted handbook has been developed to guide them in their work.
- **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. In accordance with the terms of reference, the report 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 considered questions concerning children who witness violence.

Action Plan to combat domestic violence (2004-2007)

The Norwegian government launched a new action plan for its efforts to combat domestic violence for the period 2004-2007 in June 2004. The plan places emphasis on improving the treatment offered to women subjected to violence and sexual abuse, with a focus on immigrant women, the services available to children growing up in families in which violence occurs, and measures to help men who have problems with violence. While the previous action plan had very little focus on children, the new one has given children a central place. The plan has four main objectives:

Improving co-operation and expertise in the support services

Increasing the visibility of domestic violence and enhancing measures to prevent violence through behavioural change

Providing the necessary assistance and protection for victims of domestic violence

Stopping the spiral of violence through better provision of treatment to perpetrators of violence

Among the measures are :

- The National Centre of Competence on Violence and Traumatic Stress was established on 1 January 2004. It comprises the former Psychosocial Centre for Refugees at the University of Oslo, the Norwegian Resource Centre for Information and Studies on Violence, the Norwegian National Resource Centre on Child Sexual Abuse, and the Trauma Psychiatry Unit at the University of Oslo. In addition, resources from Alternative to Violence and the Institute for Clinical Sexology and Therapy are affiliated with the centre. The purpose of the centre is to develop and disseminate expertise that can reduce the psychological and social impact of violence and traumatic stress and prevent violence and traumatic stress from occurring.
- Funding will be provided for the production of an animated film, *Sinna Mann* (Angry Man). This film will be used in counselling sessions with children and adults in connection with domestic violence. Guidelines for using the film will be prepared.
- The Government will draw up an information strategy designed to break down taboos and increase knowledge about and awareness of domestic violence. With this in view, the Ministry of Justice carried out a survey of domestic violence in 2003, and again in 2005. The project *A Week to Count* registered the number of incidents related to domestic violence reported to several services nationwide during the course of a week. This is the first registration of its kind in the Nordic countries. The purpose of the project is to provide a "snapshot" of domestic violence and to increase public awareness of the problem. It is not intended to identify how many people are affected by domestic violence on an annual basis. The count in 2005 totalled more than a thousand reports made by persons who have been subjected to violence, or have a close relationship to someone who has been, during the week in question. In the same week, some 2000 children were registered as having witnessed or been affected by threats or violence from someone in their household. In about 85 per cent of the cases, the perpetrator was a man.
- A pilot project will be initiated to include in routine questions about violence in pre-natal check-ups. The purpose of the project is to develop methods to uncover violence. The project will include routines and measures for co-ordinated follow-up of any violence that is discovered.

- A project will be initiated to provide women's shelters and local support services with expertise about the needs of immigrant women who are the victims of violence. A training programme will be developed, implemented and evaluated. The intention is to continue the training programme after the conclusion of the project
- A project will be initiated to continue and follow up the survey of the municipal support services available to functionally disabled female victims of violence.
- A survey will be carried out to identify the number of women who are turned away by women's shelters and the reasons for this. The survey will form the basis for an assessment of suitable measures for abused women with special problems, such as a mental illness or drug or alcohol-related problems.
- The health services available at local level to victims of violence and rape will be strengthened.
- Measures will be prepared and implemented with a view to building up the health services' expertise with regard to physical examinations, securing evidence and documentation in rape cases.
- The government will take the initiative vis-à-vis the Director General of Public Prosecutions to prepare a circular clarifying the routines for handling rape cases, particularly in relation to the police and prosecuting authorities' co-operation with other bodies
- Police efforts to combat domestic violence will be strengthened. The family violence co-ordinator scheme is being evaluated by the National Police Directorate. This evaluation will form the basis for the further development of police efforts in this area. The statistical tools used by the police to register domestic violence will be enhanced. Alarms, restraining orders, temporary accommodation and special protection of personal data are some of the forms of police protection that may be used in cases of domestic violence. In extraordinary cases, when other protective measures are deemed to be inadequate, permission may be given to use a fictitious identity.
- The government will increase focus on the treatment of the perpetrators. It will promote the systematic development of support and treatment services for perpetrators of violence and abusers, with a view to preventing violence and ensuring that help is available as close as possible to home or work.

Extent of domestic violence in Norway

The exact extent of domestic violence against women and children in Norway is not known. This applies to the abuse of women, the physical and sexual abuse of children and the number of children who witness violence. However, a number of studies clearly indicate that such violence is far more widespread than was initially assumed.

In May 2005, the results of a nationwide survey on domestic violence were published by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research. It was carried out as a mail survey, and the response rate was 59.4 per cent. The nationwide representative sample constituted 4 618 respondents, made up of men and women aged 20-54 years. The results showed that 580 out of 2 143 women who had ever had a partner (27.1 per cent) reported that they had experienced violence or threats of violence during their current or a former relationship. The percentage of women who reported severe partner violence (attempted strangulation, use of weapons, beating head against an object or wall) was 9.3 per cent.

As domestic violence is not a specific offence in Norway, we do not have any statistical information on the number of cases filed, the number of prosecutions initiated or the number of convictions.

Legal framework

Domestic violence is not a specific offence in Norway. Violent attacks in the private sphere come under the general provisions of the Penal Code relating to assault, bodily harm, rape, etc.

It has been recognised that a woman who has lived in an abusive relationship will often have been exposed to many types of abuse, including both punishable offences and offences that are not punishable but must still be regarded as maltreatment. The question has thus been raised as to whether the current penal provisions cover the complexity of cases of domestic violence against women and children, including the mental and emotional strain of prolonged abuse. For a woman who is the victim of repeated violence, it is not the individual incidents as such, but the sum of the maltreatment – the fact that she has lived under the threat of violence for a long time – that constitutes the offence. The government has therefore assessed the need for new penal provisions to cover the complexity of cases of domestic violence, and a proposal will be considered by the Storting in 2005.

In 1988, unconditional prosecution was introduced in cases of domestic violence. A criminal case may thus be brought before a court even if the woman withdraws the formal charge.

According to section 94 of the Criminal Procedure Act, victims of sexual offences and domestic violence are entitled to the assistance of a lawyer. The lawyer shall be remunerated by the state, and is responsible for ensuring that the interests of the victim are safeguarded during the investigation and the main hearing of the case.

Assaulted and sexually abused women are entitled to protection against repeated violence. In the amendment of 1 January 1995 to the Criminal Procedure Act section 222a, the prosecuting authority may ban a person from being present at a specific place, or from following, visiting or in any other way contacting another person if, because of special circumstances, there is considered to be a risk that the person

who is to be subject to the ban would otherwise commit an offence against or otherwise disturb the peace of the other person. Police districts have reported that denying persons who have been sentenced for violence against family members access to the victims has been an effective means of combating violence against women. If a ban pursuant to section 222a of the Criminal Procedure Act is not complied with, the person violating the ban may, if certain conditions are met, be arrested and remanded in custody. Section 222 of the Criminal Procedure Act, which deals with bans on visits, etc, was revised in 2002 and 2003. On 10 January 2003, the amendments to the provisions governing bans on visits took effect. The amendments are intended to ensure better protection for persons subject to violence from members of 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 or her own home.

On 4 July 2003, the Norwegian Penal Code was amended to include a provision on forced marriage. The penalty for forcing a person to marry against their will is imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years.

Shelters for battered woman

There are more than 50 publicly supported shelters for battered women and their children in Norway. The local authority pays 20 per cent of the total budget and the central government pays the remaining 80 per cent through the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs. Shelters provide a safe place of refuge for battered women. Women who have experienced physical and/or psychological abuse may seek support and refuge at a shelter. Women seeking help may decide themselves whether they wish to stay for a night or two, or for a longer period. They may also choose to just visit and speak to a shelter worker for a few hours, or seek counselling over the telephone. Shelters work on the principle of help to self-help.

REFORM

The Norwegian government has funded a resource centre for men, REFORM, since 2001. The aim is to mobilise men's resources and to assist individual men in tackling issues relating to masculinity, fatherhood, stress in the workplace, divorce, sexuality, anger, violence, etc. REFORM offers confidential support and advice by telephone, personal sessions with a professional male counsellor, men's groups, legal advice, seminars, projects on men's issues and information, e.g. on websites.