



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

Action Plan

Freedom, empowerment and opportunities

Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and
Development Policy 2016-2020



Foreword

The Sustainable Development Goals put gender equality at the heart of the international agenda. The realisation of women's human rights is a goal in itself; it is also a driver of democracy, sustainable development, poverty eradication, stability and sustainable peace. Norway is a pioneer for gender equality. Our legitimacy as a champion of women's rights enables us to take a leading role in the efforts to promote global gender equality.

Discrimination against women prevents girls and women from living a good life and hampers economic development. Issues relating to women's rights are often a factor in political conflicts and form a part of the backdrop to terrorism and extremism. In fragile states and situations where people are fleeing their homes, women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and abuse.

We intend to change this. We cannot allow religion or culture to be used as an excuse for the discrimination of women. The fundamental principle of human rights is that they are universal. We will work to reverse the setbacks in the area of women's rights that we have seen in certain countries. Norway will use its political capital, its experience and its knowledge, as well as its economic tools, to enhance the rights of girls and women. We will also mobilise men in the efforts to promote gender equality. This Action Plan gives priority to education for girls, women's political and economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. Progress in all these areas is crucial if girls and women are to be empowered and have the freedom and opportunities to shape their own lives.

This new Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality applies to the whole Foreign Service. I will make sure that it is translated into action by the Ministry, the missions abroad, Norad and other public bodies that administer Norwegian funds and implement Norwegian foreign policy and development cooperation. I expect managers to take particular responsibility for achieving results and coordinating efforts to implement the Government's strategic documents for this area, including the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

We are aiming high. We will keep our promise to work tirelessly to promote gender equality for all women and girls.



Børge Brende
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Women's rights in a changing world – policy and priorities

The fundamental aim of Norway's gender equality efforts is to increase the opportunities available to women and girls, promote their right to self-determination, and further their empowerment. This is crucial if girls, boys, women and men are to have equal rights and equal opportunities. Norway will help to ensure that women gain a stronger position in the family, in the community and in the international arena. Boys and men can be agents of change for gender equality, and will also benefit from gender equality. Our work on women's rights is based on international human rights obligations, in particular the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

This Action Plan focuses on five thematic priority areas. These have been chosen because they are recognised as crucial for improving the situation of women, and because they are relevant for both foreign and development policy. These are also areas where Norway has particular strengths and can make a difference. The Action Plan brings together and builds on the measures set out in chapter 7 of the white paper on gender equality (Meld. St. 7, 2015-2016 – in Norwegian only), the white papers Education for Development (Meld. St. 25, 2013-2014), Opportunities for All: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation (Meld. St. 10, 2014-2015) and Working together: Private sector development in Norwegian development cooperation (Meld. St. 35, 2014-2015). It also reaffirms the long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality in Norwegian foreign policy.

Norway will help to ensure that women gain a stronger position in the family, in the community and in the international arena

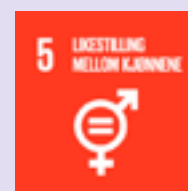
Norway will work to promote:

- inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys.
- women's equal participation in political life.
- full economic rights for women and equal opportunities for women to participate in the labour market.
- the elimination of violence and harmful practices against girls and women.
- sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women.

The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all UN member states in 2015 form the backdrop for the Action Plan. Gender equality is a key component of the 2030 Agenda. The overarching aim is to ensure that no one is left behind, to reach the most marginalised, and to ensure that everyone can benefit from development. This means that we need to focus more on inclusion and non-discrimination of women in fragile situations, as well as marginalised groups of women such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

The Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda)

World leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the UN's 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York in autumn 2015. The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted in 2000, and will guide global development cooperation in the period up to 2030. The SDGs were developed following broad consultations with the world's states, and with significant input from civil society.



The 2030 Agenda builds on international human rights obligations, champions human rights for all, and promotes gender equality. SDG 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", tackles structural obstacles to gender equality. In addition, gender equality is included in targets under several other SDGs.¹ The need to mainstream a gender perspective systematically in the implementation of the Agenda is clearly stated.

¹ Including targets on poverty, decent work, agriculture, water and sanitation, climate, education, health and human settlements.

Cooperation aimed at achieving gender equality

Norway cooperates with many partners in the field of gender equality. Efforts to develop global rules and policies in this area are mainly carried out in the UN system: by the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Commission on Population and Development, the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. It is the member states themselves that are responsible for the implementation of these rules and policies with support from UN funds and programmes, the multilateral development banks and other partners. UN Women is an important partner that supports inter-governmental bodies, member states and coordinates the UN system's work on gender equality. Norway also contributes to international gender equality efforts through its membership of the Council of Europe, and through EU/EEA cooperation, bilateral cooperation and the Nordic gender equality cooperation.

Women's organisations and other civil society initiatives are at the forefront of efforts to realise women's rights in Norway, in our partner countries and in international arenas. Civil society plays an important role in setting the agenda and ensuring that authorities are held accountable. Women's organisations and other networks are important arenas for giving a voice to girls' and women's needs and promoting their rights. Norwegian and international civil society organisations working in this area are key partners for Norway, but we will also seek to engage other actors, such as religious leaders and the private sector.

The EU and gender equality

The EU's policy on non-discrimination, democratic participation and social inclusion is based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and other strategic documents on fundamental rights and gender equality. The Charter sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, upholds the principle of gender equality and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, disability, ethnic background, religion or belief, sexual orientation, etc. Norway is not bound by the Charter, but it nevertheless forms part of the framework for our gender equality and non-discrimination efforts in the context of the EU/EEA. Norwegian civil servants and politicians work through the channels and committees that are open to us under the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). In the period 2007-2013, Norway took part in multi-year EU programmes in the areas of employment, social inclusion and protection, working conditions, anti-discrimination and gender equality (PROGRESS) and prevention of violence (DAPHNE). The EU has adopted new multi-year programmes for the period 2014-2020, with a view to, among other things, meeting the objectives of the EU's growth strategy Europa 2020. The new Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme for the period 2014-2020 is continuing parts of the PROGRESS programme. Gender equality and anti-discrimination considerations are to be mainstreamed into all parts of the programme. The new Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020 maintains a special focus on the rights perspective and non-discrimination.

Women's rights: new and old challenges

Considerable progress has been made in improving the situation of girls and women in recent decades, but developments have been uneven, and there have been setbacks in some areas. The situation varies across countries and regions, but some key challenges are clearly identifiable:

- Formal discrimination in national legislation is still widespread, particularly in the area of family law, but also in the areas of inheritance and property law.
- Women are significantly underrepresented at all levels of decision-making processes and in governing bodies. Less than a quarter of all members of parliament are women.
- In many places, control of women is woven into the social fabric and culture through harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Violence against girls and women is widespread. It is estimated that, worldwide, a third of women experience violence during their lives, most often from an intimate partner.
- Armed conflict has major humanitarian consequences and creates huge flows of refugees. Conflict affects women and men in different ways, and puts women at risk of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation.
- Extremism and conservatism are on the rise. These are expressed in different ways, but a common denominator – and an inherent part of extremist ideology – is opposition to women's human rights.
- Attacks on women human rights defenders are increasing in certain countries.
- Many women do not have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights including legal and safe abortion. Many women who would like to use contraception do not have access to it.
- Globally, the gap between women's and men's participation in the labour market has only seen a marginal reduction over the last 20 years. In most countries, women still earn far less than men.
- Climate change is affecting food production, migration levels and the environment, and can have humanitarian consequences that often hit women, particularly women farmers, harder than men.

This list gives a picture of some of the challenges and needs, and forms the basis for Norway's efforts. We cannot solve all these challenges alone, but we will play an active part in the joint effort to achieve global gender equality. The main responsibility, however, lies with the authorities in the countries concerned.

International framework

The international framework for women's rights is based on the principle of universal human rights and enshrined in various instruments. The two main instruments are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is particularly relevant. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has established a number of international labour standards that include women's rights. Two key conventions in this area are the Equal Remuneration Convention (no. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (no. 111).

Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 is a key reference document for efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights. The Beijing Platform For Action commits governments to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes. It also sets out the continued need for special measures to promote gender equality. The Platform of Action identifies 12 critical areas of concern that are to be given priority.

Under the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, UN member states are committed to working to improve access to family planning counselling, modern methods of contraception, treatment of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, antenatal care, safe abortion in countries where abortion is not against the law, and treatment for complications arising from unsafe abortions.

The UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security recognise the disproportionate impact of conflict on women, the need to protect women from violence during conflicts, and the vital importance of women's participation and the protection of women's rights for international peace and security. The adoption of the first of these resolutions, UNSCR 1325, in 2000 was groundbreaking. Since then the Security Council has adopted seven more resolutions on this topic.

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Thematic priority areas

1

The right of girls to education

Education is key to ensuring that girls and women have the knowledge and confidence they need to be able to decide over their own lives, as well as to secure recognition of their right to do so. This is crucial if women are to be able to hold political and economic positions in society on an equal footing with men, and if they are to gain a fair share of social goods.

SDG 4 is to: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Several of the underlying targets – to be achieved by 2030 – are relevant for girls' education and gender equality.

We are making good progress towards the target to eliminate gender disparities in education. Nevertheless, there are still 48 countries² where fewer girls than boys attend primary school. This remains a significant problem in some countries, particularly in West Africa. There is still a large gap in some countries between the number of girls and boys attending lower and upper secondary school. It is particularly the poorest girls in rural communities who are worst affected and most likely to never even start school. Factors such as disability and violent conflict further impede access to education.

The progress that has been achieved in the area of education is primarily due to the fact that many countries have given priority to this sector in their budgets combined with several years of steady economic growth. However, the economic prospects for several of these countries are now uncertain. At the same time, international aid for education has stagnated in recent years. Norway is working to mobilise increased financing for education through an initiative led by former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. In times of economic downturn, priority is often given to boys' education. An increase in global financing for education will therefore also have a positive effect for girls.

Ensuring that just as many girls as boys complete school is not enough to achieve gender equality. There are also major weaknesses in teaching practices, curriculums, textbooks and teachers' attitudes to, and knowledge of, gender equality. This means that many countries still have serious challenges to overcome, as the quality of education is not good enough to promote gender equality and strengthen the position of girls and women in society.

Educated women tend to send their children to school. Children who go to school are less likely to fall victim to human trafficking, child labour, child marriage or

² EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, p. 155. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf> (02.06.2016).



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sexual exploitation. Educated mothers and fathers can break out of the cycle of poverty. The fight against child marriage is also important for keeping girls in school.

Norway supports a broad range of efforts to promote girls' education through various channels and initiatives. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the most important multilateral channel for promoting education for girls. UNICEF is working to ensure that more girls have access to primary and lower secondary education. It is the lead agency and secretariat for the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) – a global partnership for enhancing knowledge about, and promoting, education for girls and gender equality at global, regional and national level. These efforts include helping governments to draw up national guidelines for combating sexual violence in schools. In cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF is also promoting the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education in teacher training, school curriculums and classroom teaching.

One of the goals of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is to ensure that all girls in countries that receive funding from GPE are able to complete primary and lower secondary education in a secure and supportive learning environment, and are able to go on to upper secondary school. Norway is an important donor to GPE.

Norway's efforts will be targeted towards the priority countries for our education efforts: Malawi, Ethiopia, Nepal, Niger, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Haiti.

Objective 1: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys

Outcome 1.1: All girls complete primary and secondary education, which includes vocational training

Norway will:

- Support education for girls and gender equality through multilateral channels such as UNICEF, GPE and UNESCO, and give priority to education for girls and gender equality through board memberships and in various dialogues.
- Strengthen UNGEI's efforts to promote the inclusion of education for girls and

gender equality in national plans and strategies and to prevent violence against children in school.

- Support efforts to make parents more aware of the importance of sending girls to school and to provide incentives for them to do so.
- Provide particular support for efforts to increase access to education for girls with disabilities and girls from ethnic minorities.
- Promote equal opportunities for vocational training and higher education through channels that receive Norwegian funding, for example through university cooperation.
- Work to increase financing for education in line with the report of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunities.

Outcome 1.2: All girls and boys have access to quality education that promotes gender equality

Norway will:

- Actively promote good quality teaching methods and content that incorporate a gender perspective and can prevent gender-based violence and promote gender equality as a value and as a right.
- Support teacher training efforts and seek to ensure that the issue of gender equality is included in teacher training.
- Promote the right of girls to education in crisis and conflict situations.
- Support comprehensive sexuality education through UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF.

Relevant SDG targets

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Target 4.3: By 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

2

Women's political rights and empowerment

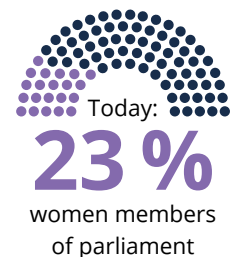
Having a voice to influence decisions enables women to realise their democratic freedoms and rights. The last two years have seen a slight increase in the number of women members of parliament. The figure today is 23 % compared with 12 % in 1995³. Women's representation in political institutions and processes is an important goal in its own right. It is also important to underline that it is men's responsibility just as much as women's to ensure that women's rights are fulfilled to the same extent as men's.

Inequality between men and women is written into the legislation of many countries. The UN and the Council of Europe are two arenas where Norway promotes women's political participation and rights and the development of non-discriminatory legislation, for example through the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review process. Through our development cooperation, we also promote women's participation in free, open and democratic elections, constitution building and the inclusion and protection of women's political and economic rights in legislation generally.

Women's organisations and other civil society organisations are often in the front line in the fight against discrimination and extremism and the fight for freedom of association and freedom of expression. Women human rights defenders are more vulnerable than their male colleagues because they often challenge traditional, cultural or religious norms. A resolution on women human rights defenders sponsored by Norway was adopted by consensus at the UN General Assembly in December 2013. Helping to ensure the protection of women human rights defenders is an important objective in the time ahead.

It is also important to increase awareness of the positive effects of gender equality. There are men all over the world who recognise the benefits of gender equality for men, and for society as a whole. This knowledge and awareness need to be shared, and norms need to be developed, so that communities see that gender equality is not a threat to men, but a means of creating a better life for everyone.

The political participation of women in processes relating to peace and security is crucial for international peace and security. This has been acknowledged by the UN Security Council through a series of resolutions on women, peace and



³ UN (2014). Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly. Report of the Secretary-General E/CN.6/2015/3. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/ecn620153.pdf> (31.05.2016).

security. Violent extremism is a threat not only to women's lives and security, but also to women's rights in general. Norway is working actively to ensure that these resolutions are followed up, with particular focus on the participation of women in peace processes, see Norway's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015-2018).

UN resolutions on women human rights defenders

Norway is the main sponsor of the UN resolutions on human rights defenders, and periodically presents initiatives to improve recognition and protection of this group. It is difficult terrain, both in the UN General Assembly and in the UN Human Rights Council, where there are divergent views on the role of human rights defenders in society.

In the autumn of 2013, Norway – in close consultation with civil society organisations – put forward the first resolution in the UN General Assembly to highlight the protection of women human rights defenders. Resolution (A/RES/68/181) was adopted by consensus in the UN General Assembly. It recognises the important role played by women of all ages in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and by all those who engage in the defence of the rights of women and gender equality. This includes men. The resolution acknowledges the importance of engagement at all levels – local, national, regional and international – in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998.

In this resolution, the international community recognises the urgent need to address all attempts to hinder the work of human rights defenders, including oppressive legislation and measures that are in violation of international law, as well as stigmatisation, gender-based discrimination, violence and murder. It also sets out a number of concrete measures to promote the protection of human rights defenders. The resolution is a groundbreaking instrument for giving women a stronger voice in society and for promoting women's rights and gender equality. Strong political leadership will be needed to ensure compliance and implementation in practice, and Norway will play a leading role globally, both through its participation in the UN and by supporting various initiatives in different parts of the world.

Objective 2: Ensure the equal participation of women and men in political life

Outcome 2.1: Women are represented, and have real influence, in political processes and bodies on the same footing as men

Norway will:

- Actively engage in normative efforts in the UN.
- Support actors who are seeking to increase the representation of women in political processes and bodies at country level.
- Implement its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015-2018), which includes efforts to increase the number of women taking part in peace processes and negotiations.

Outcome 2.2: Women's and girls' rights are properly addressed in non-discriminatory legislation

Norway will:

- Promote the development of non-discriminatory legislation through the UN's normative processes and support at country level.
- Promote compliance with, and implementation of, legislation relating to women's rights.

Outcome 2.3: Women are given the protection they need and have the capacity to defend human rights

Norway will:

- Seek to ensure that UN resolutions on women human rights defenders are followed up at country level.
- Support organisations working to protect and strengthen the capacity of women human rights defenders.
- Promote and protect women human rights defenders through its missions abroad, in line with the Ministry's guidelines in this area.

3

Women's economic rights and empowerment

Improving the economic status of women has its own inherent value, but it is also beneficial to society as a whole as it leads to increased tax revenues, economic growth and poverty reduction. SDG 8 is to: 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'.

Women encounter various obstacles that prevent them from participating in business activities and in the labour market in general, and are overrepresented among those working under unacceptable conditions. There are political, economic, legal, cultural and other structural obstacles to women's participation in the labour market. Women in fragile situations are at particular risk of discrimination and exclusion. Women have less control over the world's resources than men. They also have a greater workload in the family than men, both in developed and developing countries. This means that they compete in the labour market on less advantageous terms than men. In many countries, disparities in economic, political and legal rights, and social and cultural obstacles, are the greatest barriers to women starting up, running and further developing their own businesses. Examples include women's lack of property rights and restrictions on women's access to bank accounts. This means that the transition from the informal to the formal sector is often time-consuming and expensive for women.

Women play an important role in the agricultural sector in most developing countries, not least because they make up more than half the workforce. However, women generally have less access to land, capital and income-generating opportunities than men. Strengthening women's rights and opportunities is therefore important – not only in itself, but also to realise women's potential for economic value creation in this sector and in other primary industries.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is responsible for developing, monitoring and enforcing international labour standards. Among ILO's eight core conventions, there is one on discrimination, and one on equal pay. These are intended to ensure equal treatment of women and men in the workplace.

The multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), are important sources of financing and guidance for borrowing countries, and play a key role

in the development debate. They also have a strong normative influence, due to their financial strength, broad thematic engagement and their cooperation with the ministries of finance in partner countries. The development banks' performance in the area of gender equality is steadily improving, partly as a result of pressure from Norway and other like-minded countries. They also have particular advantages when it comes to promoting women's economic empowerment and cooperation with the private sector. In its gender strategy, which was launched in 2015, the World Bank sets out that the gender lens is to be applied in country-level analysis. This work will be facts-based and will build on improved data, seeking to fill data gaps, so that it is easier to measure results. The strategy also sets out that greater focus is to be given to gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The development banks' performance in the area of gender equality is steadily improving

Norfund is an important tool for Norway's efforts to promote private sector development and job creation. Norfund invests in the establishment and development of profitable enterprises in developing countries. Provisions on non-discrimination are included in all investment agreements. Norfund is developing its own action plan for gender equality. For example, companies that Norfund invests in will be able to apply for funding to enable qualified women employees to take part in the NHO (Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise) Female Future programme in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The EEA and Norway Grants

Since the EEA Agreement came into force in 1994, Norway has provided funding to reduce economic and social disparities in the EU through the EEA and Norway Grants. This scheme supports fundamental European values such as democracy, human rights, non-discrimination and gender equality. The EEA and Norway Grants also foster closer contact and cooperation between Norway and the beneficiary countries in Central and Southern Europe.

On 3 May 2016, the EU, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein signed an agreement on a new funding period for the EEA and Norway Grants (2014-2021). Around EUR 2.8 billion will be made available for the beneficiary countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). The priority sectors for the new funding period largely coincide with the priorities of the EU's growth strategy Europe 2020. One of the targets in the strategy is to increase the employment rate to 75 %. Key elements to achieve this are gender equality, better work-life balance, and the greater involvement of women in the workforce.

Under the EEA and Norway Grants for 2014-2021, support may be provided for projects in the areas of domestic violence and gender equality. Particular focus will be given to women's participation in the labour market. However, the specific areas of support are decided on the basis of negotiations with each beneficiary country and set out in an MoU.

Objective 3: Ensure that women have full economic rights for women and equal opportunities to participate in the labour market

Outcome 3.1: Women, including women from marginalised groups, are able to take part in business activities and the labour market

Norway will:

- Work to ensure that the multilateral development banks integrate gender equality into their core activities and report on job creation and women's economic rights, particularly in fragile situations.
- In its dialogue with the World Bank, promote effective implementation of the Bank's gender equality strategy, with focus on results and closer cooperation with the UN.
- Ensure that women's rights and gender equality are integrated into its work to advance private sector development, for example through Norfund's agreements with the companies it has invested in.
- Support measures that strengthen women's control of productive resources and their own income through the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
- Work through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to strengthen the position of women in primary industries – agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of international norms that promote gender equality in the workplace.

Outcome 3.2: Women and men have equal rights to economic resources, such as ownership and control of land, inheritance and access to financial services

Norway will:

- Support national reform processes, including in the area of family law, that give women the opportunity to take paid work.
- Support efforts to reduce legal obstacles and build competence with a view to improving opportunities for women.
- Actively engage in normative efforts, for example through the UN, to ensure that women and men have equal economic rights.

Relevant SDG targets

Target 8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

4

A life free of violence and harmful practices

Violence against women is often gender-based; in other words it is perpetrated against women because they are women. Violence against women is thus a structural problem that affects individuals. It is related to social norms, practices and attitudes, and to religions and cultures that maintain power structures. Gender-based violence is carried out, tolerated and even justified as a form of protection or legitimate control of women. It prevents women from living full lives, taking part in society, and exercising their human rights on an equal footing with men. At least 119 countries have legislation on domestic violence, 115 have legislation on sexual harassment, and 52 have legislation on rape in marriage⁴. However, even in places where such legislation has been enacted, it is not always implemented in a way that actually helps women.

Violence against girls and women occurs in the family, in the workplace, at school and at university, in the street, in political life and in government institutions. Girls and women from vulnerable groups are often particularly at risk and are less able to assert their right to protection.

What is gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence covers a wide range of harmful acts that cause physical, psychological or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, and coercion or other forms of deprivation of liberty. Violence against girls and women includes: violence, and threats and abuse in the family; sexual abuse; murder by an intimate partner; harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation; trafficking in women, often with a view to sexual exploitation; and rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of violent conflict and humanitarian crises.

Social media have provided an arena for new types of violence, in the form of threats and hate speech. When these are directed against women, they are often in the form of crude, sexual comments and threats aimed at frightening girls and women into silence and deterring them from expressing themselves in the public sphere. In the EU, one in ten women and girls over 15 report that they have

⁴ OECD (2015). Minimum Set of Gender indicators, 2014 (footnote 72) in *The World's Women 2015. Trends and Statistics*, page 160. Available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter6/chapter6.html> (31.05.2016).

experienced harassment via social media⁵. There has been a strong increase in online sexual abuse, and in sexual violence following contact online.

In the home, it is men who are most often violent, usually against their intimate partners or daughters, but women, for example mothers and mothers-in-law, can also use violence to ensure that girls and women comply with social expectations. Violence and rape are sometimes used to punish girls and women who defy traditional gender norms. So-called 'corrective rape' of lesbian women is an example of this. Efforts to eradicate violence must therefore include both measures to help the victims of violence and measures targeted at the perpetrators. Given that men tend to have more power in society, it is of great symbolic value when they take a clear stand against violence, and this can change the way other men behave. It seems that children who grow up in a culture of violence often develop an acceptance of violence that can extend to adulthood. Men who do not use violence in situations where this is expected of them may therefore be penalised and stigmatised by other men as well as by women.

Lawless conditions are often found in fragile and conflict-affected societies, and there tends to be a higher level of violence against both women and men. Nevertheless, it is women and children who are most vulnerable to abuse in such situations. Female migrants and refugees are at high risk of certain types of violence, such as sexual violence and exploitation, when they are in transit and in reception centres and refugee camps.



Globally
26%
of women were married
while they still where
children (before age 18)

Child and forced marriage

Child marriage has serious consequences for both girls and boys. For girls, it often results in poorer health, early pregnancy and difficult childbirth, lower levels of education and a higher risk of gender-based violence and abuse. It also often leads to persistent poverty and severely undermines girls' opportunities to improve their situation and future prospects. There is growing political will to combat child marriage. A global summit on child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) in 2014⁶ helped to mobilise and increase global financing for this work.

The aim of Norway's efforts is to help to eliminate child and forced marriage within a generation. Our efforts span across several thematic areas and are channelled through various organisations. We are mainly engaged in indirect efforts that are integrated into broader programmes on sexual and reproductive health. Our major focus on education, and girls' education in particular, is also of crucial importance for combating child marriage and early pregnancy.

5 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, side 104. Available at: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf (31.05.2016).

6 "Girl Summit" in London 2014, organised by the British government.

Objective 4: Eliminate violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women

Outcome 4.1: Violence against all girls and women is prevented

Norway will:

- Help to strengthen international normative efforts to combat violence against women.
- Support civil society efforts to combat violence against women.
- Initiate new measures to involve men in efforts to combat violence against women.

Outcome 4.2: Sexual violence in conflict is addressed and prevented

Norway will:

- Implement its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, in which the fight against sexual violence is a key element.
- Support humanitarian organisations that recognise the need to prevent, and protect women against, sexual violence.

Outcome 4.3: Child and forced marriage is eliminated within a generation

Norway will:

- Support multilateral efforts, especially those of UNFPA and UNICEF to reduce child and forced marriage.
- Support efforts at country level to eliminate child and forced marriage.

Relevant SDG targets

Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Norway gives high priority to promoting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). We do this systematically in all relevant negotiations in the UN. SRHR is also an important focus area in our development cooperation. Here, the challenge is to ensure that international commitments made by our partner countries are translated into concrete improvements in women's sexual and reproductive health.

The right of women to have control over and make decisions about their sexuality, free of coercion, violence or discrimination, is a crucial factor for ensuring gender equality and enabling women to decide over their lives. This right applies to all women regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Both women and men should be able to decide whether they want to get married, who they want to marry and who they have sexual relations with. These are key aspects of what we consider to be sexual rights, and we are working to reach international agreement on these issues.

Reproductive rights include the right of women to decide whether and when they want to have children, and how many. This means that they must have access to family planning information and methods. Access to health services that ensure safe conditions for pregnancy and childbirth, and to family planning services and modern forms of contraception is crucial for realising these rights for all women.

Norway's work on abortion in the UN Human Rights Council

Norway has presented recommendations to promote legal and safe abortion in the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) more often than any other country. We have raised this issue with the following countries: Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Argentina, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Myanmar, the US, Poland, Malta, Hungary and Ireland. We base our recommendations primarily on the commitments on abortion that the countries themselves have made under global or regional instruments, and we seek to make our recommendations as concrete and specific as possible. In this way, we can highlight failure to fulfil commitments and show how restrictive legislation in this area is in many countries. The country concerned must respond to the recommendations, and the UPR process thus creates an opportunity for civil society in that country to pursue the matter further and raise any concerns with the authorities.

Every single day in 2015
830 women
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to pregnancy and childbirth



It has been documented that restrictive abortion laws do not lead to a reduction in the number of abortions

The figures clearly indicate that this is an important issue. As many as 225 million girls and women have an unmet need for family planning⁷. Social norms, taboos and superstition may make family planning difficult. Every single day in 2015, 830 women died as a result of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth⁸. Most of these deaths were in developing countries and could have been prevented. Unsafe abortions accounted for 13 % of maternal deaths⁹.

The SDGs provide a good platform for continuing and enhancing support for partner countries' efforts to address these challenges. Of particular relevance is the target concerning universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes, as well as the target on universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are crucial to – and at the same time a consequence of – SRHR. This applies not only to good reproductive and sexual health services; but also to legislation on sexuality. In several countries there is impunity for rape in marriage, yet sexual relations outside marriage are punished severely, especially in the case of women.

Access to sexual and reproductive health services and products is vital for preventing unnecessary suffering and death due to sexually transmitted diseases and complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Moreover, sexual and reproductive health services are important for enabling girls and women to plan their pregnancies, get an education and take part in the labour market. These services are thus essential for women's economic and political empowerment. Strengthening the participation of women in society is, in turn, important for fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development.

Access to contraception is crucial for ensuring that pregnancies are wanted and births safe. However, there will always be a need for safe abortion services, and this is therefore also a priority for Norway. In countries that allow abortion, we

7 Every Women Every Child (2015), page 25. Available at: <http://www.who.int/life-course/partners/global-strategy/globalstrategyreport2016-2030-lowres.pdf?ua=1> (31.05.2016).

8 WHO. Maternal and reproductive health. Available at: http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/en/ (13.06.2016)

9 WHO. Unsafe abortion: global and regional estimates of incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality in 2008. Available at: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/unsafe_abortion/magnitude/en/ (13.06.2016)

are supporting the provision of such services; and in countries where abortion is restricted, we are advocating liberalisation of abortion legislation; we are also seeking international acceptance of access to abortion as part of the right to sexual and reproductive health. It has been documented that restrictive abortion laws do not lead to a reduction in the number of abortions.

Norway is working along two tracks in its SRHR efforts. One is our operational work through our major efforts to enhance maternal and child health, combat FGM, and promote young people's sexual and reproductive health. The other is the normative track in the UN, where we promote access to legal and safe abortion as a human right and international acceptance of sexual rights. These are two of the most controversial issues in international negotiations on women's rights. It has not been possible to reach agreement on them in the Cairo Programme of Action (1994), in the Beijing Platform of Action (1995), or since.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

SDG 5 on gender equality commits all countries to eliminate harmful practices such as FGM and child and forced marriage.

Over the last ten years, many countries have seen a reduction in the number of girls and women subjected to FGM. Experience gained from the efforts to eliminate FGM shows that the practice is closely related to the position of girls and women in the community. In order to eliminate FGM, it is necessary to engage in dialogue at the local level with a view to changing social norms. The active support of local and religious leaders, as well as the knowledge-based engagement of health workers, teachers, the judiciary and the media, is also crucial. So too are efforts to develop policy and legislation, and to enhance national coordination in this field.

Norway's aim is to ensure that no girls are subjected to FGM, and that those who already have been cut receive the best possible care. Our Strategy for intensifying international efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation for the period 2014-2017 emphasises the importance of close cooperation with civil society and international organisations, and of competence-building measures for health workers. Our partner countries in this work are Somalia and Ethiopia.

Objective 5: Promote sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women

Outcome 5.1: Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

Norway will:

- Continue to support efforts to improve maternal health as well as women's, girls', and adolescent's health, in line with recommendations in the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030).
- Work to improve access to contraception and sexuality education inter alia through financial contributions to the Global Financing Facility in support of Every Woman Every Child, hosted by the World Bank.
- Be at the forefront of efforts to ensure that all African countries ratify the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women, and that the countries that already have ratified the protocol fulfil their commitments to give pregnant women access to abortion when their life or health is at risk, when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or when the baby would be born with a serious birth defect.
- Work to ensure that legal abortions are carried out safely, and that women who have complications after an illegal abortion receive healthcare and support.

Outcome 5.2 International acceptance for sexual rights and right to abortion

Norway will:

- Take a cross-regional and knowledge-based approach to promoting a common understanding of sexual rights in the broadest possible sense, and the inclusion of these rights as an integral part of human rights.
- Take a cross-regional approach to protecting the human rights of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, and ensuring equal treatment in legislation and in practice.
- Promote legal and safe abortion and encourage countries to abolish legislation that penalises women who have had an illegal abortion.
- Support the advocacy work of civil society organisations in the area of sexual rights and legal and safe abortion.
- Raise issues relating to sexual rights and legal and safe abortion in political dialogues with partner countries.

Outcome 5.3: Female genital mutilation is eliminated within a generation

Norway will:

- Implement its Strategy for intensifying international efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation for the period 2014–2017, which includes providing support to the UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting and to civil society and other actors.

Relevant SDG targets

Target 3.7: By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

Target 5.6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.



Implementation

This Action Plan is to be implemented by the relevant sections of the Ministry, the missions abroad, Norad and other public bodies that administer Norwegian funds and implement Norway's foreign and development policy. We will translate the Plan into action by providing funding for concrete measures and by working to develop policy and normative processes.

It is important to underline that it is each individual country's responsibility to fulfil the international commitments set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the 2030 Agenda (the SDGs). Moreover, it is the local, national and international situation, combined with an expressed interest in Norway's partnership, that will determine what priorities should be made at any given time.

Improving the situation of women is a multifaceted and complex task. It is therefore vital that this Action Plan, the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and other relevant policy documents are implemented in a coherent and coordinated manner. This Action Plan builds to a considerable extent on previous experience and evaluations of Norway's aid in support of gender equality.

Experience shows that mainstreaming the gender perspective is challenging. The approach to this work has not been strategic enough. In addition to the priority areas set out in the Action Plan, the Ministry will identify specific areas for active mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment. In other areas, we will carry out risk assessments of projects to ensure that they do not have any negative consequences for gender equality and women's empowerment. These steps are necessary in order to concentrate our efforts and ensure that they produce results.

Key elements for effective implementation



1. Gender equality for development

Norway is establishing a new gender equality for development programme called 'LIKE' (likestilling for utvikling – gender equality for development). When requested, and subject to capacity, this programme will support countries in their efforts to achieve gender equality in line with the SDGs. It will draw on Norway's experience in the field of gender equality, and combine this with good aid practice. Priority will be given to women's economic and political empowerment, as Norway has gained particularly relevant experience in this area. The programme will include knowledge transfer, awareness raising and cooperation between relevant institutions.

2. Gender equality advocacy group

A gender equality advocacy group will be established to provide expertise that can enhance global gender equality. The political leadership will consult this group once or twice a year on how best to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

3. Arenas for discussion

The aim is to hold an annual seminar for relevant actors to take stock of progress in implementing the Action Plan. An internal work plan will be drawn up and updated annually to adjust efforts, and ensure that they are as relevant as possible to the current situation. Other arenas will be set up to bring together representatives of civil society and the research community, and other actors, to discuss various issues, as needed.

4. Budget

The allocation for women's rights is to be used for efforts in this field. The allocation is intended as a catalyst for achieving our gender equality goals in line with the Action Plan, and for triggering measures that are relevant for gender equality under other budget items. Our goal is to mainstream the gender perspective in our efforts under all relevant budget items. However, until this goal has been achieved, funds may in some cases be earmarked specifically for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

5. Results reporting

The results achieved in the thematic priority areas set out in the Action Plan will be reported on in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' annual budget proposals to the Storting (Prop 1. S.). This reporting will be based on the global SDG indicator framework.

Internal organisation

- 1. A gender equality task force** made up of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad will have day-to-day responsibility for implementing the Action Plan. The task force will interact with other parts of the Foreign Service and coordinate efforts.
- 2. The Action Plan is to be followed in all countries and this work is to be mainstreamed into all the Foreign Service's efforts.** It is to be reflected in internal management tools, such as annual work plans and various reports. In addition, priority is to be given to gender equality and women's empowerment in Norway's focus countries and in other countries where Norwegian cooperation is requested. Training in how to mainstream the gender perspective in the Foreign Service's work is to be strengthened.

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