



***Mme Astri Aas-Hansen***

Secrétaire d'État du ministère de la Justice et de la Police, Norvège

***Ms. Astri Aas-Hansen***

State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and the Police, Norway

Astri Aas-Hansen has a Masters degree in law (*Cand.jur.*) from the University of Oslo. Since 2005, she is a Partner in Advokatfirmaet Elden DA (a Norwegian law firm), where she has been working as a lawyer since 2002. From 1995-2002, she was Political Advisor for the members of the Labour Party's parliamentary group responsible for Energy and Environmental issues, Church, Education and Research issues and Justice issues, respectively.

Her political posts include: Executive Board Member, Commercial Policy Committee, Oslo Labour Party (2005-Present); Member of the Defence and Security Policy Committee of the Norwegian Labour Party (2004-Present); Deputy Leader of the Labour Party's Women's Movement. Member of the National Committee of the Norwegian Labour Party, Deputy Member of the Central Committee (2002); Executive Board Member of the Labour Party's Women's Movement (1998 – 2000); Executive Board Member of the Labour Party in Akershus County (1997 – 1998); and Deputy Member of the Asker Municipal Council, Member of the Asker School Board (1995 – 1999).

***Sra. Astri Aas-Hansen***

Secretaria de Estado del Ministerio de Justicia y de Policía, Noruega

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## ***National Strategy on Domestic Violence***

The aim of this presentation is to give a brief introduction to the efforts made by the Norwegian government to combat violence against woman. The presentation will focus on the main aspects of the Norwegian governments third plan of action to combat domestic violence for the period 2008 –2011.



8e Colloque annuel du CIPC, *Queretaro, Mexique*

ICPC's Eighth Annual Colloquium, *Queretaro, Mexico*

El 8o Coloquio Anual del CIPC, *Queretaro, México*

The plan was launched in December 2007 and introduces measures that will help ensure that the police, educational institutions and support services are better trained, better coordinated and more capable of detecting, preventing and dealing with the many complex issues raised by violence against woman. The plan consists of several different approaches including:

- Strengthen necessary assistance and protection of victims;
- Improved treatment services for offenders;
- Offer the victims arranged conversations with the offender (restorative justice);
- Improve cooperation between the support services;
- Initiate research and development activities;
- And finally public awareness raising.

As the police service is assigned a very central role in the efforts made to combat violence against woman in Norway, I am going to elaborate on how we have organized this work in the police and describe some of the methods in use to protect victims.



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**International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Colloquium – “Women’s safety”. Queretaro, Mexico 12 – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

Thank you Mister Chair, distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Norway welcomes the initiative taken by the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime by dedicating the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Colloquium to women’s safety.

Violence against woman is a violation of human rights, the very nature of which deprives woman of their ability to enjoy fundamental freedoms. No nation, worldwide can prove itself free of violence against woman and girls.

The Norwegian position is clear; **no religion, culture or tradition can ever serve as excuse for violence against women.** Further, violence against woman is not a private matter but should be dealt with by Governments. It must be prevented, combated and alleviated through measures to help and protect the victims and through treatment and prosecution of the perpetrators.

The Colloquium has so far given us valuable insight in how other states deals with the violence against woman and has given us a great opportunity to share lessons and experiences concerning prevention and safety.

Mister chair, distinguished colleges allow me then to draw your attention to the situation in Norway and the Norwegian governments main activity to combat violence against woman.

1. The situation in Norway

The extent of domestic violence against women and children in Norway is not known exactly. This applies to abuse of women, physical abuse of children, children as witnesses to violence and child sexual abuse.



However, a number of studies clearly indicate that such violence is far more widespread than initially assumed and also far more dangerous than initially assumed

Let me give you an example; Among the 32 victims of murder in Norway in 2007, 8 were woman murdered by their *intimate partner*. In the period of 1997 to 2007 the number of woman murdered by their *intimate partners* was 76. This constitutes between 20% and 30% of the murders committed every year in Norway. Many of the perpetrators had been reported to the police one or more times before it happened. We must learn to read the warning signs, to prevent further violence and, in the extreme cases, murders.

A nationwide survey carried out in 2005, showed that approximately nine per cent of women over fifteen years of age in Norway have been victims of severe violence from their current or former partner one or more times in the course of their lives. By severe violence we mean attempted strangulation, use of weapons, or beating head against and object or wall. Barely two percent of the men have experienced a severe violent act.

Many of the women who are victims of violence by a present or past partner have children. The number of children who seek shelter in crisis centres with their mother offers an indication of the number of children who grow up in an environment of domestic violence. Out of a total of 4.200 persons who spent the night at a crisis centre in 2007, 1,900 were children.

## 2. The Norwegian governments actions

Ladies and gentlemen let me draw your attention to the efforts made by the Norwegian government to prevent and combat violence against woman.

Violence against woman takes many forms and includes, among other, intimate partner violence, sexual abuse (rape), trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.



The Norwegian Government has chosen to draw up separate action plans in this field; one to combat human trafficking; one to combat forced marriage; one to combat female genital mutilation and finally one to combat violence in close relationships more generally. These initiatives are mutually supplementary and are intended to ensure a coherent approach to combating violence against woman.

Due to the time limit for my presentation, I will only be able to give you a more detailed presentation of one of the action plans; the plan of action to combat violence in close relationships.

The action plan called “Turning point”, was launched in December 2007 and runs for the period 2008 til 2011. Through this action plan, we are introducing measures that will help ensure that the police, educational institutions and support services are better trained, better coordinated and more capable of detecting, preventing and dealing with the many complex issues raised by domestic violence.

Ladies and gentlemen – what are the main aspects of this Action Plan? **Firstly**, - One of the goals is to ensure that services for the victims of domestic violence come higher up on the political agenda of the local authorities.

A special challenge is to strengthen and reinforce local agencies and help ensure that the various services are working towards the same goal. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide appropriate services for their citizens. However, far from all the local authorities and support services have procedures and binding agreements to ensure cooperation on domestic violence cases. The measures in the action plan aim to promote **cooperation at the local level**, to the benefit of users.

We wish to incorporate the good lessons that have been learned from short-term projects into the established services. We will continue to need enthusiasts and development projects, but this work must be incorporated into the ordinary support services to the greatest possible extent so that services do not vanish when projects come to an end.



**Secondly** – domestic violence often causes serious physical and mental harm to victims that may, in extreme cases, lead to a loss of life. We will therefore make a major effort to **strengthen protection for victims**. The police play a central role in this effort, but they are highly dependent on close cooperation with other helpers and services in order to be able to provide good protection for victims. Such cooperation must be based on a common understanding of which situations may trigger a danger of violence and threats for victims.

One important measure in this plan therefore entails studying murder and manslaughter cases in which the perpetrator is the present or former partner of the victim. Only by understanding these connections will we be able to identify the risk factors and develop good protective measures.

**Thirdly - The police force** is assigned a very central role in our efforts to combat domestic violence.

From January 2008, every police district in Norway is instructed to have at least one dedicated domestic violence coordinator in full time position. In addition, the greater districts are instructed to establish domestic violence units.

**The fourth** aspect of our Action Plan is **the perpetrators** of violence. In our opinion successful prevention of domestic violence must include a focus on the person committing the violent act. Our action plan points out that punishment alone is not the right solution for violent men.

Male inmates who are perpetrators of violence will be offered treatment by the ordinary health services and various programmes run by the Correctional Services with the aim of changing their behaviour. These programmes include group therapy based on the methods developed by the Norwegian foundation Alternative to Violence, stress management groups and anger management groups.

**Finally** I would like to draw your attention to the use of **technical aids** in the fight against violence against woman.



On January first 2004 (1 January) the police initiated a nation-wide system of mobile violence alarms. Used in combination with other measures, such as a ban on visits/restraining orders, mobile violence alarms are intended to give persons under threat of violence greater freedom of movement and help prevent violence and threats.

The alarm system is based on two geographical positioning systems (GPS and GSM) to ensure that the police can locate the person under threat as accurately as possible.

When the alarm is triggered, the person concerned can communicate directly with the police operations centre.

Special guidelines for the provision of mobile violence alarms have been drawn up by the National Police Directorate. In addition an information brochure and instruction manual for the person under threat, has also been prepared.

As of October 2008, a total of approximately 1,500 alarms were in operation.

As a tool to improve the situation for victims of violence by limiting the action of the offender, the government has decided to introduce a pilot project on the use of electronic monitoring of persons who have breached a ban on visits. The project is based on work on electronic tagging done in other countries. We want to make the offender responsible by putting a larger part of the burden on the perpetrators instead of the victims.

We are now in a process where we are to decide which type of electronic monitoring that should be used in the project. Parallel, we work on a bill that will give us the legal basis for electronic tagging.

The pilot project is planned to begin in January 2009.



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To summarise the actions taken by the Norwegian government to prevent violence against women, we emphasise that this sort of violence is a public responsibility rather than a private problem. In our action plan we focus on local cooperation, protection of the victims, dedicated police, treatment for the perpetrators and the use of technical aids for protection.

Mr Chair

In conclusion I would like to repeat my hope for a successful outcome of this colloquium whereby we both develop and share views on successful practices. I believe that knowledge and awareness rising, as we work on here in Querétaro these days, is essential in preventing violence against women.

Thank you for your attention !

**Action Plan against Domestic Violence 2008-2011**

**“Turning Point”**

## Foreword

All violence is unacceptable, including violence that takes place in the private sphere. Helping to prevent violence in all population groups is a public responsibility. Through the Soria Moria Declaration, the Norwegian Government has committed itself to intensifying efforts to combat domestic violence.

We must take action. It is our responsibility to safeguard the right of both women and men to a life free of violence and threats of violence, and to ensure that children can grow up without suffering abuse or fear. Through improved prevention, more detection, more rapid reaction and better rehabilitation, we will promote a safer, fairer society.

Domestic violence strongly affects and has serious consequences for the victims. It entails at least three types of violation. Firstly, the physical and mental violence that is perpetrated is often rough and brutal. Secondly, domestic violence entails a breach of trust because it is perpetrated by a person with whom the victim initially has a close relationship. Thirdly, it often takes place in a location where the victim should be able to feel safe, i.e. in his or her own home. The abuse of the victim is therefore even greater. Domestic violence is a serious crime; it can cause serious damage to health and it is a breach of fundamental human rights.

Domestic violence includes everything from individual events to extensive, long-term maltreatment. It affects children, women and men of all ages, and it is perpetrated by both women and men. Nevertheless, women are exposed to a greater degree than men to the most serious kind of violence, namely persistent mental and physical violence that is part of a more comprehensive, long-term regime of power and control. It is therefore especially important to focus on men's violence against women.

We have gradually acquired a great deal of knowledge about the harmful effects of domestic violence on children. Norway has adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is committed to protecting children from all forms of violence. High priority must be given to efforts to protect children from violence and abuse.

Many women and children spend long periods of time in a life situation in which their human dignity is exposed to the most serious abuse. By ignoring domestic violence, we contribute to its continuation. The most extreme consequence of our inaction may be a loss of human life.

As a society and as human beings, we are all responsible for taking action. Violence is unacceptable, it is prohibited by law and it violates fundamental human rights. This applies regardless of motive, and regardless of whether it is perpetrated by present or former partners, other family members or others. We must recognise the fact that domestic violence is a widespread social problem from the perspectives of criminality, health, gender equality and the environment in which children grow up.

The Government must make it clear that domestic violence is a public responsibility. We are concerned to pursue a good, coherent policy in this area in order to reduce the suffering and problems experienced by many victims of violence. We wish to implement measures to improve the ability of all the parties concerned to give victims the respect and care to which they are entitled. We also wish to improve the ability of the police to intervene against the offender and, if necessary, initiate criminal proceedings.

Through this Action Plan, the Government is introducing measures that will help ensure that the police, educational institutions and support services are better trained, better coordinated and more capable of detecting, preventing and dealing with the many complex issues raised by domestic violence. The measures contained in this Action Plan will be implemented in the period 2008-2011. The ministries concerned have allocated funds for implementation in their 2008 budgets. The implementation of other measures will be adapted to the annual budget proposals and the budget process in the Storting. The Action Plan was drawn up in cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Children and Equality, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Justice and the Police and the Ministry of Education. State Secretary Astri Aas-Hansen from the Ministry of Justice and the Police has headed the process.

Sylvia Brustad  
Minister of Health and Care Services

Bjarne Håkon Hansen  
Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion

Manuela Ramin Osmundsen  
Minister of Children and Equality

Bård Vegar Solhjell  
Minister of Education

Knut Storberget  
Minister of Justice and the Police

Tora Aasland  
Minister of Research and Higher Education

## Introduction

Domestic violence is a serious social problem. Recent research shows that this type of violence is a complex phenomenon that ranges from individual incidents to extensive, long-term abuse. Domestic violence does not appear to be socially blind. While no social stratum is free of violence, the problem appears to be more prevalent in families with a generally poor standard of living. Both men and women commit acts of violence and both women and men are victims of domestic violence. Nevertheless, the repeated violence and abuse to which some men subject women and children is especially serious. In this Action Plan, we are particularly concerned with the latter type of violence.

*“We know what Dodo means when she says, ‘You can hear it in the footsteps can’t you, the way he walks, if it’s going to be that kind of evening’. We recognise the bargains we attempt to negotiate: ‘Not the face’, ‘Not in front of the children’, the promises: ‘He said he would never do it again’, and the assurances: ‘But he loves me, I am the great love of his life’ ”.*

This excerpt from the novel *Kongemordet* (Murder of a King) by Hanne-Vibeke Holst illustrates the thoughts of many women who are victims of violent abuse from the man they live with, the man who is father to their children, the man they once chose, who chose them – and the man they still choose to live with, despite the violence and threats of violence. And this is precisely what makes women doubly vulnerable. They are abused both physically and mentally, in their own home, by the man they are supposed to trust, with their children as silent witnesses.

In the novel, it is the former finance minister who seriously abuses his wife and almost kills her. To the outside world they appear to be a successful couple. But there are signs that everything is not as it should be. Bruises, excessive drinking, cautious cries for help that no-one saw or heard, that no-one wanted to see or hear. It couldn’t be true could it? Can that wonderful man, that respected citizen, really be a wife-beater?

Perhaps the excerpt is true, perhaps we pretend that domestic violence does not exist. The Government does not intend to overlook it anyway. We cannot permit a large number of women to be exposed to domestic violence every year. And we cannot tolerate children being brought up in a situation where they are exposed to serious stress and deprived of a normal childhood.

A nationwide survey carried out 2005 showed that approximately nine per cent of women over fifteen years of age in Norway have been victims of serious violence from their current or former partner one or more times in the course of their lives (Haaland, Clausen and Schei, 2005). But women are not the only victims of domestic violence. A significant number of children see their mother being abused. They see, hear and experience violence against their main carer. They are also victims. Every year, 1,500 children spend one or more nights in women’s shelters in Norway. A survey carried out among pupils in upper secondary schools shows that seven per cent have experienced partner violence against their mother and two per cent have experienced partner violence against their father. Two per cent have experienced gross partner violence against their mother (Norwegian Social Research (NOVA), 2007).

In extreme cases, violence leads to loss of human life, and we know that between twenty and thirty per cent of all killings in the past ten years were committed by present or former lovers, spouses or partners (National Bureau of Crime Investigation (KRIPOS)).

Domestic violence can also be perpetrated by persons other than the partner. Honour-related violence often occurs in close relationships, and is in most cases the result of a desire to control girls' and women's sexuality. It is defined as a family or family group that collectively sanctions violence against a family member, or against another person who has brought dishonour on the family. Honour-related violence may consist of strong mental pressure, threats or physical violence and, in the most extreme cases, murder. This means that there may be several offenders of both sexes, and that the victims may be girls, boys, women or men. To be able to implement appropriate measures to provide good assistance for victims, and to act correctly in emergency situations or during the investigation and prosecution process, it is important to be aware of the special characteristics of honour-related violence.

Domestic violence also affects elderly people. In many cases the abuser is a child or grandchild of the victim, but violence is also perpetrated by partners. Relatively small, local studies indicate that between three and five per cent of persons over 60 years of age are abused, and in most cases the offender is a person known to the victim (Storberget (ed.) et al, 2007).

Domestic violence also occurs in homosexual and lesbian relationships. In this case, however, no surveys have been carried out in Norway to indicate how many people are affected. Swedish studies (e.g. Holmberg and Stjernqvist (2005)) show that homosexuals and lesbians are less likely than heterosexuals to seek help after being subjected to violence from a partner. Similarly, they are far less likely to report such abuse to the police.

The extent of domestic violence requires action. Through the measures outlined in this Action Plan, the Government intends to increase its efforts. If we are to combat domestic violence effectively, it is not enough to improve services for victims after the violence has taken place. We wish to prevent and combat all forms of domestic violence by applying several different approaches:

- A. Victims of domestic violence will be ensured necessary assistance and protection.
- B. The spiral of violence will be halted by improving treatment services for offenders.
- C. Victims of domestic violence will be offered arranged conversations with the offender (restorative justice).
- D. Cooperation between and competence in the support services will be improved.
- E. Research and development activities will be initiated and continued.
- F. There will be stronger focus on raising public awareness of domestic violence.
- G. Domestic violence will be prevented by changing attitudes.

### **Action plans and measures in associated areas**

This Action Plan is an element of general efforts to combat domestic violence, which include the action plans and strategies that have been initiated to combat sexual and physical abuse of children, sexual abuse (rape), forced marriage and female genital mutilation. These initiatives are mutually supplementary and are intended to ensure a coherent approach to combating violence.

Measures to combat sexual and physical abuse of children are laid down in the *Strategy to Combat Sexual and Physical Abuse of Children (2005-2009)*. The focus is on prevention, detection of abuse, assistance, treatment, human resource development and research. These measures are supervised by the Ministry of Children and Equality, other ministries responsible for specific measures and their subordinate agencies.

Forced marriage and female genital mutilation can be regarded as different forms of honour-related violence. The Government has chosen to draw up separate action plans to combat forced marriage and female genital mutilation respectively.

A new *Action Plan against Forced Marriage* for the period 2008-2011 was presented on 29 June 2007. It provides an overall presentation of how the Government intends to reinforce and further develop efforts to combat forced marriage. The plan contains both preventive measures and measures to assist victims.

The Government will present an *Action Plan against Female Genital Mutilation* to apply in the period 2008-2011. This plan will contain measures aimed at improving and coordinating the efforts of the public authorities to prevent female genital mutilation from taking place.

The connection between substance abuse and violence is well documented. A restrictive alcohol and drugs policy and improved treatment services will therefore be important means of combating criminality. A Plan for Intensified Efforts to Combat Substance Abuse was presented to the Norwegian Parliament as part of Proposition No. 1 to the Storting (2007-2008) for the Ministry of Health and Care Services. The plan will apply until 2010.

Sexual abuse is especially degrading for the victim. The Government has therefore established a committee to study the situation of rape victims (the Rape Committee). The Committee's mandate includes considering preventive measures and measures to help ensure that victims are treated in a better and more coordinated manner by official agencies. The Committee will present its report on 24 January 2008. The report will be distributed for consultation and the Committee's proposals for measures will be followed up by the Ministry of Justice and the Police in cooperation with other relevant ministries.

#### **A. Victims of domestic violence will be ensured necessary assistance and protection**

*"Shame is our common denominator. Because we are familiar with our own self-deception, we can see through other people's excuses. "He is a star psychopath!" we say about other people's husbands, while defending our own. If it weren't for the children, the silent witnesses, we could perhaps have got away with embellishing the truth. But every time a child wakes up screaming from a nightmare or a little hand creeps into our own, we are confronted by it; by the fact that the children are the main victims in the war against terror that we are on the brink of losing. Because we pretend that it does not exist."*

(Excerpt from the novel *Kongemordet* (Murder of a King))

Everyone has the right to live in safety and security. A person who is exposed to violence and threats of violence is entitled to assistance and protection. Services must be of good quality, adapted to the needs of the individual, and available to everyone who needs them. The victims

and the children who experience domestic violence must receive help and support from society to live a normal, free life based on their own resources and needs.

We must, to a greater extent than before, make the offender responsible – it is the freedom of action of the offender that must be limited. For too long, it has been the victim who has had to bear the consequences of violence. We will implement both practical and legal measures to improve the situation of victims of violence.

Many measures have been implemented as a result of previous action plans. Legislation has been amended, the police's efforts to combat domestic violence have been intensified, the women's shelters have been strengthened, and more attention has been paid to children who experience domestic violence. But we must intensify our efforts even further.

One of the goals of this Action Plan is to ensure that services for the victims of domestic violence come higher up on the municipal political agenda. A special challenge in the coming four-year period will be to strengthen and reinforce local agencies and help ensure that the various services are working towards the same goal. Municipalities have a statutory duty to provide appropriate services for their citizens. However, far from all municipalities and support services have procedures and binding agreements to ensure cooperation on domestic violence cases. We wish to promote cooperation at the local level, to the benefit of users.

In this Action Plan, we wish to take further steps towards ensuring permanent services for victims. We wish to incorporate the good lessons that have been learned from short-term projects into the established services. We will continue to need enthusiasts and development projects, but this work must be incorporated into the ordinary support services to the greatest possible extent so that services do not vanish when projects come to an end. The establishment of special reception centres for victims of violence at inter-municipal emergency clinics and improvements in financial and professional support for such clinics is an important step in the right direction.

Domestic violence often causes serious physical and mental harm to victims that may, in extreme cases, lead to a loss of life. We will therefore make a major effort to strengthen protection for victims. The police play a pivotal role in this effort, but they are highly dependent on close cooperation with other helpers and services in order to be able to provide good protection for victims. Such cooperation must be based on a common understanding of which situations may trigger a danger of violence and threats for victims. One important measure in this plan therefore entails studying murder and manslaughter cases in which the perpetrator is the present or former partner of the victim. Only by understanding these connections will we be able to identify the risk factors and develop good protective measures.

We will provide better opportunities for more people to report cases by extending the right to legal counsel in connection with consideration of whether a case should be reported.

The police's general work on domestic violence cases will also be strengthened. The main focus must be on obtaining sufficient evidence to be able bring the case before a court of law. Since the victims often have an acute need for help in many areas, whether they be health, finance or other areas, it is important that individual police officers are well acquainted with and cooperate well with other parts of the support and treatment services.

*“Today was worse than other days...*

*The previous evening, the little girl had been sure that Mummy would be killed by Daddy. She had heard it with her own ears. Everything that had happened the previous evening bounced backwards and forwards inside her like a ball. She could imagine the ball. It was black with green spikes. Every time the ball hit the wall inside her, the words and pictures came out of the ball. She had gone to bed, but couldn't sleep because her heart beat so fast.*

*She knew why.*

*Daddy's eyes told her that a storm or perhaps a hurricane was on the way. His voice was like razor blades and his eyes became smaller and black. When the hurricane built up inside Daddy, she knew it would come.*

*It was impossible to stop it.”*

(Excerpt from Øivind Aschjem: *Hvor mye skal et barn tåle?* (How much does a child have to stand?) in the book *Bjørnen sover* (The Bear Sleeps, 2007))

Children who experience domestic violence are especially vulnerable and have an independent right to help and protection. Many of these children suffer serious stress and/or several types of stress at the same time: they are deprived of a secure childhood and their quality of life may be reduced. These children must be noticed, they must be protected and they must be helped. It is a matter of urgency to ensure that the support services are well qualified and that the police, the child welfare service and the health service have good cooperative procedures so that children receive the help they need.

Children must be cared for properly and responsibly. They must feel safe at home and in their local community. Norway has incorporated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Norwegian law. We are committed to protecting children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation (cf. Article 19). These principles are also enshrined in the Children Act and the Child Welfare Act. Allowing children to see violence committed against a close relative or to be direct victims themselves is incompatible with these commitments. We must therefore continue to give high priority to efforts to protect children from violence and abuse. We intend to implement both measures that directly target children and measures that help to strengthen their carers in their role as parents. Support services for children will be improved, children's houses will be established in all health regions, and child victims of violence will also be given an independent right to compensation. We will also consider the protection of children under criminal law.

To strengthen legal safeguards for small children aged 0 to 3 who die suddenly and unexpectedly, a compulsory death scene investigation will always be carried out by the health service. Such investigations will be carried out by special teams. The main purpose is to determine the cause of death and acquire knowledge that will help to prevent such cases in future. The health personnel who carry out such investigations must take the interests of the child into account. If the investigation shows that the cause of death may be a criminal act, this must be reported to the police without consideration for confidentiality. In order to be able to implement this measure it will be necessary to amend the regulations concerning the

reporting of unnatural death pursuant to section 36 of the Health Personnel Act. Work on the regulations will begin in 2008.

Certain groups of women victims of violence have a special need for assistance and may be more difficult to reach with the support and assistance that is usually provided. Women with impaired abilities need services adapted to their special needs, as do women who speak little Norwegian, have lived for only a short time in Norway, and have weak ties to the labour market. An underdeveloped social network and inadequate knowledge of how the support services function may also be a barrier to seeking help. These women are especially vulnerable if they are victims of domestic violence. The same applies to women who are substance abusers and/or suffer from mental illnesses. The goal is to help all women victims of violence to establish a new, independent life for themselves, regardless of who they are or which background they come from.

### **Women's shelters**

In the past 25 years, women's shelters have been important actors in efforts to combat domestic violence in Norway. Most of them were established in the period 1980-85. Today there are 50 women's shelters all over the country. The women's shelters supplement the official support services and are an important element in the nation's emergency assistance services. The shelters provide a low-threshold service, offering accommodation, conversation and counselling for women victims of violence and their children on the basis of the principle of help for self-help. The women's shelters fulfil another important function in that they enable women victims of violence to meet other women in a similar situation. According to Statistics Norway, approximately 1,900 women were residents in the country's women's shelters in 2006. The proportion of residents in women's shelters with minority backgrounds has risen steadily in recent years. In 2001, 32 per cent of all residents in women's shelters had an ethnic background that was not Norwegian. In 2006 this figure had risen to 56 per cent. One third of these women had been abused by an ethnic Norwegian man. Around 2,300 women used the daytime services offered by women's shelters' in 2006.

In the Soria Moria Declaration, the Government stated its intention to make the women's shelters a statutory service. The Government has begun work on this process. A legislative proposal is expected to be ready for general consultation in 2008.

The main reason for providing a statutory women's shelter service is to ensure that victims of domestic violence receive good quality assistance. An inter-departmental working group coordinated by the Ministry of Children and Equality is considering the introduction of a statutory municipal duty to provide a 24-hour women's shelter service where victims of domestic violence can find safety, support and care in a critical life situation. The staff at the women's shelters must be well qualified to deal with especially vulnerable groups, such as women from ethnic minority backgrounds. They must also be well qualified to deal with the needs of children.

Today, the women's shelters do an important job in helping individual women victims of violence to contact various support agencies. One of the purposes of making this a statutory service is to make it clear that the public authorities are responsible for ensuring that individual users of women's shelters receive coordinated, individual follow-up from other support services. There must be special focus on how users can best gain access to help, such as mental health services and child welfare services.

Many of the measures in this Action Plan will be important in efforts to make this a statutory service. They include measures to strengthen public services for victims of violence at both municipal and regional levels, and measures to strengthen the organisation, content and expertise of the current women's shelters.

Some women are refused access to women's shelters because they have serious substance abuse or mental problems and need a type of assistance than the women's shelters are unable to provide. In such cases it is important to ensure good coordination and cooperation between relevant actors so that women victims of violence with these types of problems receive alternative services whenever necessary.

Due to the lack of alternatives, many women live at women's shelters for a longer period of time than is advisable or necessary. This particularly applies to women with minority backgrounds. Today, pursuant to the Social Services Act, municipalities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation for persons in acute need, and to help find accommodation for persons who cannot take care of their own interests on the housing market. It is important to make efforts to ensure that these women receive an offer of housing after the need for emergency accommodation at a women's shelter has been met.

#### **Measures 1-16:**

1. In the course of 2008, children's houses will be established in all regions in order to make this a nationwide service. The purpose of children's houses is to provide a better service for child victims of abuse by combining services such as medical examination, judicial examination and treatment. The Regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTSSs) have a special responsibility for developing expertise in this area and passing it on to the support services.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

2. A 24-hour, free hotline will be established for children and young people who are victims of various types of violence, abuse or neglect. The aim is for children to be able to call one telephone number to talk about their situation and concerns, and that their case can thereafter be passed on to the relevant municipal agency for follow-up. Adults who are concerned about children will also be able to call the hotline. The hotline will be established as a two-year pilot project in the period 2008-2009.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

3. The compensation scheme for victims of violence will be amended to include children who witness violence against a close relative/carer. The proposal will be submitted in Proposition No. 10 to the Odelsting (2007-2008), which is awaiting processing by the Storting, and is expected to be adopted this year and to enter into force on 1 January 2008.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

4. The Government will consider whether it is necessary to strengthen protection under criminal law for children who are exposed to domestic violence.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

5. In cases covered by the legal counsel scheme for aggrieved parties, which includes victims of domestic violence, the victim will be entitled to one free meeting with a lawyer before reporting the case.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

6. A survey of living standards among inmates in Norwegian prisons showed that many women inmates have been victims of violence and abuse. To give these women an opportunity to deal with their experiences, a project will be carried out in cooperation between the women's shelter in Oslo and Bredtveit Prison. In addition to the direct service that will be provided for women, which includes conversations and group-based activities, methods will be developed to reach this group and disseminate knowledge of domestic violence in the Norwegian Correctional Services.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

7. To strengthen legal safeguards for small children aged 0 to 3 who die suddenly and unexpectedly, a compulsory death scene investigation will be carried out by the health service. The main purpose is to determine the cause of death and acquire knowledge that will help to prevent such cases in future. If the death may have been caused by a criminal act, this must be reported to the police. In order to be able to implement this measure it will be necessary to amend the regulations concerning the reporting of unnatural death. Work on the regulations will begin in 2008.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2010

8. Efforts will be made to make the women's shelters accessible and adapted to the needs of all relevant user groups, including women with impaired abilities. The host municipalities for women's shelters will be urged to carry out such changes, among other things by utilising the loan schemes offered by the Norwegian State Housing Bank and the expertise relating to universal design that is currently available.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Higher Education and Research

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

9. The police districts will be required to have a domestic violence coordinator function equivalent to at least a full-time post. Special teams will be established in the largest police districts. The team model will be nationwide, in the sense that expertise and assistance will be seconded to districts that do not have their own teams whenever necessary. The goal is to ensure that victims of domestic violence are treated with respect, knowledge and understanding when they apply to the police, and to ensure good quality investigation and prosecution procedures.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: Permanent

10. A pilot project will be carried out on the use of electronic tagging of offenders (the opposite of violence alarms). It will be possible to use electronic tagging as an instrument in cases where a restraining order has been breached. The goal is to increase security for the victim and place the responsibility for violence with the offender.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

11. The Police Academy has prepared a report entitled *Å leve på sperret adresse* (Living at an unlisted address). The measures in the report will be reviewed and evaluated with a view to improving conditions for women who are forced to live at an unlisted address (Code 6/7). It is especially important to shed light on the needs of children living with a parent at an unlisted address. The procedures of public agencies will be reviewed and improved in order to ensure that information about persons living at unlisted addresses is not divulged.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

12. Video and sound recordings of police interviews have many advantages and must be used more frequently cf. the Guidelines of 24 April 2007 issued by the Director General of Public Prosecutions. Among other things, recorded interviews ensure that everything that is said is included and that difficult interviews can be carried out more quickly. Another important advantage is that other people can form a better impression of the circumstances in which interviews take place, for example how a victim of violence or rape looked and behaved at the time when the crime was reported.

All police districts must therefore have the necessary technical equipment to make sound and video recordings of police interviews.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police  
Start-up: 2008  
Implementation: Permanent

13. For many victims and witnesses, giving evidence in court entails significant strain and in some cases they have to give evidence several times. If evidence given in the court of first instance were recorded in sound and video and permission were granted for it to be used in the appeal process, it could be sufficient for a victim to give evidence in court only once, without forfeiting the right to appeal the decision of the court of first instance. This type of arrangement raises more far-reaching questions about the appeal process and will be studied in more detail.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police  
Start-up: 2008  
Implementation: 2008-2009

14. A brochure on legal aid and the Norwegian legal system will be prepared in several languages. The brochure will be made available at all police stations in the country.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police  
Start-up: 2008  
Implementation: 2008

15. A process will be initiated to ensure that more women who come to Norway through family reunification participate in Norwegian language courses, as they have a right and duty to do. Women with poor Norwegian language skills and little knowledge of their rights in Norwegian society are especially vulnerable if they experience domestic violence.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion  
Start-up: 2008  
Implementation: 2008-2009

16. A free hotline for victims of crime will be established as a pilot project. This service will be especially useful for victims of domestic violence.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police  
Start-up: 2008  
Implementation: 2008

**B. The spiral of violence will be halted by improving treatment services for offenders**

*“Even before he has begun, he stacks up excuses like sugar lumps on a check tablecloth. It is her own fault, she drives him to it, she has caused it herself. And as he takes off his jacket, loosens his tie, rolls up his shirt sleeves and feels how the liberated adrenalin stimulates his nervous system, his pulse rate quickens and his blood pressure rises, he is already transforming himself into someone quite different.*”

*Into the monster, the killing machine, the wife-beater, who he refuses to recognise. He is outside himself and far away, and he experiences what happens as if it were in a film”.*

(Excerpt from the novel *Kongemordet* (Murder of a King))

Patterns of violence can be changed. Through close supervision, treatment and assistance, we can help the offender to take responsibility for his/her behaviour and refrain from future violence. A service adapted to the needs of each individual can help to stop violence and teach the offender how to deal with his or her aggressive behaviour. This service must include a broad range of measures, from conversation groups to professional therapy. Offenders who want to step away from a pattern of violence will receive necessary and targeted help.

As a first stage in efforts to fulfil the Government’s goal of developing a nationwide service for violent offenders, the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) has carried out a survey of assistance and treatment services for persons with violent and aggressive behavioural problems. The survey shows that most assistance and treatment services for violent adults are provided under the auspices of the Norwegian Correctional Services and that few services are open to persons who are not also clients of the Norwegian Correctional Services, the mental health service or the service for substance abusers. The open services are largely located in southern and south-eastern Norway. There are only two open services in the three northernmost counties.

Through the measures outlined in this Action Plan, steps will be taken to provide more and better services for violent offenders. An implementation plan will be developed in order to establish a nationwide service for violent offenders that is adapted to the situation and needs of the individual. The proportion of open services will be increased, and steps will be taken to strengthen assistance and treatment services in the family counselling service, the mental health service and services that are already established that have treatment of violent offenders as their main area of activity.

To ensure that these services are of a high professional standard, research into violent offenders and into the content and quality of treatment will be intensified.

#### **Measures 17-20:**

17. On the basis of the survey by the National Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) of assistance and treatment services for persons with violent and aggressive behavioural problems, a plan will be prepared to extend these services to cover the whole country. The Alternative to Violence Foundation (ATV) will play a pivotal role in the establishment of new treatment services, and a further two services will be established under the auspices of the Foundation in the course of 2008. These will come in addition to the existing services in Oslo, Drammen, Langesund, Tønsberg and Asker and Bærum.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

18. The anger management programme developed by the Regional Security Department and Competence Centre Brøset will be disseminated to other areas. The programme will teach violent offenders alternative ways of managing their violence and aggression problems. The programme is used by various services and actors who are in contact with violent offenders. The Regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTSSs) will help ensure that the model is disseminated systematically and adopted by the support services in the respective regions, and that all relevant services and employees receive training.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Health and Care Services, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

19. The Alternative to Violence Foundation's (ATV) assistance and treatment services for violent offenders will be evaluated. The purpose is to document the effect of treatment with a view to systematic dissemination of methods. On the basis of ATV client data from 1992 to 2004, the NKVTS has carried out two studies of violent men. The studies showed that two thirds of clients had themselves been victims of domestic violence, and that approximately two thirds had completed the course of treatment. The NKVTS will now carry out a prospective study of the effect of the ATV treatment programme.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Health and Care Services, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2010

20. A national conference will be arranged on the experience gained from assistance and treatment of perpetrators of domestic violence.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

**C. Victims of domestic violence will be offered arranged conversations with the offender (restorative justice).**

*"I am shaken by their stories, as they are shaken by mine. 'How could you accept it?' we ask each other disbelievingly as we stand side by side in the kitchen chopping onions or sit together in the evenings, smoking and drinking coffee. The question does not require an answer, because it is really addressed to us. How could I accept it? Why didn't I report it? The relief at having become one of them makes explanations superfluous. We know why we did not report it. Because we couldn't. Because we accepted it the first time. Because our mothers did the same thing.*

*Because we wanted it to be a mistake. A unique event. An exception. Even one that we had deserved.”*

(Excerpt from *Kongemordet* (Murder of a King))

The victims of domestic violence are not a uniform group. For each individual, the experience of violence, the processing of what has happened and the way out of a violent relationship varies significantly. However, one similarity is that the victim is usually a woman and she needs to place the responsibility for the violence where it belongs – with the abuser.

The allocation of responsibility usually takes place by determining the question of guilt in a court of law where the abuser is sentenced and punished for the abuse that has been committed. However, the long road through the legal system is difficult and some victims regard it as being undesirable and/or inadequate. Getting the offender sentenced does not mean that the violence and abuse are forgotten and life can go on. Recognition by society that a serious injustice has taken place is important, but is it enough? What happens after an offender has served his sentence? Is the road forward easier the longer the sentence the offender has to serve? There are many indications that this is not always the case. The perception of the “healing” effect of the judicial system, especially in cases where there is a close relationship between victim and offender, must probably be modified. Consequently, in addition to the legal process in connection with the criminal act, we wish to seek new ways to help the victim.

Violence that is committed within the home is in many cases so serious that if it had happened in a public place it would probably have resulted in a demand for significantly stricter penalties that we have today. Finding other ways, establishing a “civil track”, does not mean that we will de-criminalise domestic violence. But we need to establish a service in addition to the criminal justice system, a place where the outcome may be healing, rehabilitation and, in some cases, reconciliation.

Studies carried out in the past ten to fifteen years show that only a small proportion of all women victims of violence wish to report the abuse. On the basis of Statistics Norway’s surveys of living conditions, we estimate that only around 10-15 per cent of all violence is reported and that even fewer cases of domestic violence are reported. The women’s shelters in Norway report that only around one quarter of all women living in the shelters wish to report the abuser to the police, despite the fact that many of them have been victims of serious violence.

Nor do many of them wish to move away from the abuser, for a variety of reasons. Even if the woman moves away, she will still often be in contact with man in future on matters concerning their common children. To ensure that, in such cases, women receive the help and support they need, regardless of whether they choose to use the traditional judicial system, it is necessary to consider alternatives.

It has long been maintained that, due to the imbalance in the power relationship between the man and the woman, arranged conversations (restorative justice) are inappropriate for victims of domestic violence. Fear that the victim maybe subjected to pressure to meet her abuser, and that being offered an arranged conversation may be regarded as a new instance of abuse, are powerful counter-arguments.

However, recent research and experience gained by people working in the field show that some victims have both wanted and benefited from this kind of process. Experience indicates that women who choose to attend an arranged meeting with their abuser may be able to discard the role of victim and regain control over their own lives more quickly. The prerequisite is that the meeting between the parties is voluntary, is thoroughly prepared and takes place on the woman's premises, in the sense that she must not be pressured to participate. It is also important that there are no expectations of forgiveness and reconciliation between the parties. For some women, choosing confrontation may be an important factor in a rehabilitation process and may help to strengthen their self respect and dignity. The goal is for the woman to find the inner strength to take care of herself and her future.

Measures 21-23:

21. A two-year pilot project will be initiated under the auspices of the Mediation and Reconciliation Service in Sør-Trøndelag County. The project will test the voluntary use of arranged conversations and/or meetings with adults and children who are affected by domestic violence. The goal is to improve the care of victims, methods of dealing with breach of trust and damaged relationships, and the mobilisation of private and public networks for constructive cooperation in future, in cases where this is desirable or necessary.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

22. During the period covered by this Action Plan, a project will be initiated where one police district, in close cooperation with the Mediation and Reconciliation Service, will test the use of arranged conversations in cases where a restraining order has been handed down. The goal is for the parties concerned to be offered an opportunity to discuss the practical consequences of the restraining order within a secure framework.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2009

Implementation: 2009-2011

23. During the period covered by this Action Plan a project will be initiated to test arranged conversations under the auspices of the Mediation and Reconciliation Service in cases concerning domestic violence at a suitable point in the criminal process. This will be a voluntary service. The purpose is to create an arena for dialogue on the emotional consequences of criminal acts, responsibility, breach of trust, possible future relationships, common children, etc.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2009

Implementation: 2009-2011

**D. Cooperation between and competence in the support services will be improved**

Both public and private actors come into contact with victims of domestic violence. Improving cooperation between the authorities and other actors who encounter victims is essential if we are to provide necessary help and support. Such cooperation must take place with knowledge of and respect for the responsibilities and competence of each authority. Arrangements must be made to ensure that regulations and procedures in individual agencies are not an obstacle to good cooperation.

Cooperation and coordination between different ministries, professions and local welfare services can be achieved by improving their organisation and establishing more permanent cooperative structures at all levels; nationally, regionally and locally. This plan is intended to help develop coherent, accessible and high quality services for victims of violence, children who are exposed to violence and violent offenders.

In the two previous action plans, the main emphasis was on building and strengthening the expertise of persons and agencies that deal with victims of violence, but there has also been focus on institutionalising assistance for victims of domestic violence. Good examples are the establishment of the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) and the establishment of five regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTSSs).

Municipal and inter-municipal action plans are voluntary measures that can help to give victims of domestic violence an appropriate, coherent service. It is an advantage if such action plans can be integrated into municipalities' ordinary planning and management systems. They help to put a priority area on the agenda and they coordinate and clarify the contributions and responsibilities of the various agencies. Last but not least, such action plans help to improve knowledge in an area where it is deficient by establishing cooperation between sectors, professional groups and administrative levels. On the whole, such plans have been successful. However, it has proved to be vitally important to ensure that everyone who is affected by the plan is given ownership of the process, and to establish a coordinating function which has the main responsibility for driving the process forward.

Evaluation and monitoring of the measures that are implemented are an important part of quality assurance and knowledge development. Through the project *Barn som lever med vold i familien* (Children living with domestic violence) under the auspices of Alternative to Violence in Oslo and Telemark and the Centre for Crisis Psychology in Bergen, knowledge is being developed of effective measures and methods of treatment. The NKVTS is also developing treatment methodologies and knowledge relating to children and young people who either experience domestic violence or are victims of physical or sexual abuse.

The inter-municipal reception centres for victims and the regional resources centres (RVTSSs) will be evaluated during the period of this Action Plan. The Police Academy evaluated the pilot projects relating to mobile violence alarms and the use of unlisted addresses as protective measures in 2006 and 2007 respectively. With the exception of these two, no coherent evaluations have been carried out of how the police deal with domestic violence. A coherent evaluation may help to improve the knowledge base and also provide a valuable basis for making decisions about how the police's work on domestic violence should be organised. To ensure as broad an approach as possible, the evaluation must also include an analysis of user satisfaction with the way the police deals with domestic violence cases.

### **Measures 24-33:**

24. In cooperation with the Regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTSSs), the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) will draw up a standard for municipal/inter-municipal action plans against domestic violence. The RVTSSs will assist municipalities that wish to develop local action plans for this area.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

25. A development project on domestic violence will be implemented in the family counselling service. The project will be based on the lessons learned from the project *Barn som lever med vold i familien* (Children living with domestic violence).

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

26. Efforts to protect and help child victims of domestic violence will be reinforced by continuing the project *Barn som lever med vold i familien* (Children living with domestic violence). One of the main elements of this project is to provide guidance and to develop competence and methods in the child welfare service. The project is also intended to improve knowledge relating to domestic violence in health clinics, schools and day care institutions. Domestic violence against children will be a topic at nine national conferences for municipalities and child welfare services in 2008.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality

Start-up: 2007

Implementation: 2007-2009

27. Guidance materials on following up children at women's shelters will be produced on the basis of the results of a pilot project in the Drammen region and experienced gained from the project *Barn som lever med vold i familien* (Children living with domestic violence). This material will provide a basis for regional courses for women's shelters.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

28. It is necessary to improve the ability of teachers, pre-school teachers and other relevant personnel to detect violence against children and support child victims of violence, and to improve knowledge about which agencies can help when cases of violence are detected, cf. NKVTS No. 2/2007 *Undervisning om vold ved universiteter og høyskoler* (Teaching about violence at universities and colleges). In cooperation with training institutions for teachers and pre-school teachers, consideration must be given to how these institutions can improve teacher training in this area and help to

meet a specific need for competence. The Ministry of Education will support conferences to promote human resource development in this area for personnel working at teacher training institutions. Consideration will also be given to reinforcing this area of competence in teacher training curricula in connection with the Ministry of Education's follow-up to the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education's (NOKUT) evaluation of pre-school teacher training and the work being done on general teacher training.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Education

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2010

29. The reception centres for abuse victims at emergency clinics will be strengthened. An evaluation of the reception centres for abuse victims will also be carried out as a basis for further development of services with respect to both capacity and competence.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

30. The NKVTS has been commissioned to identify the need for and availability of competence at the women's shelters and to present proposals for appropriate training for staff working at women's shelters. On the basis of this effort, a human resource development programme will be arranged for women's shelters. Among other things, it will identify the needs of abused women from minority backgrounds and abused women with impaired abilities.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

31. The RVTs will develop procedures for how the women's shelters are to deal with abused women with serious substance abuse or mental problems. Procedures will also be developed to improve interaction and cooperation between relevant actors so that abused women with these types of problems are offered alternative services where appropriate.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality and Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

32. Regional meetings will be arranged for domestic violence coordinators in police districts. The goal is to facilitate the exchange of experience relating to professional content, procedures and inter-agency cooperation. There will be special emphasis on drawing attention to the good results that have been achieved in some police districts.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

33. A guide on how to deal with domestic violence will be prepared for use by police districts.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

**E. Research and development activities will be initiated and continued**

*“Many children are loyal to their parents, so they don’t want to talk about their situation at home. But you have to have help or you will be totally destroyed. Someone must come and help, adults must intervene.”*

(Excerpt from Ellen Rømming’s interview with rap duo Tonna Brix in the book *Bjørnen sover* (The Bear Sleeps, 2007))

Knowledge about the scope, nature and consequences of domestic violence is a fundamental prerequisite for targeted prevention of such violence. Knowledge relating to domestic violence will be improved through research and development. The competence of authorities and organisations that come into contact with victims of violence will be developed through education and training.

**Measures 34-40:**

34. In almost half of the cases where women die a violent death, the offender is the current or former partner. Murder and manslaughter cases where the offender is the current or former partner of the victim will be studied with the aim of identifying risk factors and developing preventive measures.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services, Ministry of Education

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

35. In many ways, living at an unlisted address conflicts with the authorities’ efforts to promote an inclusive community for its citizens. Children are particularly affected by a life where all ordinary situations have to be kept secret. Necessary knowledge will be acquired in this area as a basis for further development of measures.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

36. The NKVTS will be commissioned to carry out the following research projects during the period of this Action Plan:

- a. On the basis of existing research and reports, collate knowledge about violence against and abuse of women with impaired abilities and their need for help, and prepare proposals for measures to improve assistance for this group.
- b. Carry out a survey of domestic violence against and abuse of men and their need for help. The results of this survey will provide a basis for further development of methods and measures.
- c. Carry out a survey of the causes of changes in the composition of user groups at women's shelters, linked to the need of various user groups for information, help and follow-up.
- d. Identify the situation of and challenges for various groups of children and young people at women's shelters, and their need for information, help and follow-up, cf. item c.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

37. The administrative position of the RVTs will be evaluated after three years of operation. The evaluation will provide a basis for the future administrative position and activities of the centres, including work on human resource development relating to domestic violence in the various regions.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services

Start-up: 2008/2009

Implementation: 2010

38. The police's work on domestic violence will be evaluated. The evaluation will provide a basis for further methods and measures. To ensure the broadest possible approach, the evaluation will include an analysis of user satisfaction with the way the police has dealt with specific cases.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

39. The practical application of section 9, second paragraph, of the Immigration Act, adopted in February 2006, will be evaluated. Pursuant to this provision, an applicant who does not have children from his or her relationship with the sponsor and has not lived together with the sponsor in an established relationship in another country or in Norway, may be refused a residence permit if it is most likely that the applicant or his or her children from a previous relationship will be mistreated or grossly abused. The same applies to children from a previous relationship who apply for family reunification with a parent who has been granted a residence permit without having

had children with the sponsor or having lived together in an established relationship with the sponsor in another country or in Norway.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2009-2010

40. Surveys of the incidence of domestic violence against children and adults will be carried out, starting in 2009.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services, Ministry of Education

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

**F. There will be stronger focus on raising public awareness of domestic violence**

*“I have told you a lot now,” she says, “about something it is not easy to talk about. But publicity is important, so that people are not left alone. And it is important to show that you can recover again. That is why I am telling my story.”*

(Excerpt from Beret Bråten’s interview with Guri Ingebrigtsen in the book *Bjørnen sover* (the Bear Sleeps, 2007))

Domestic violence is still a taboo subject and it is necessary to implement measures to bring it to light. By being more open about this issue, we will make it socially acceptable to discuss violence against women and children as a serious social problem. More openness and knowledge about where it is possible to obtain assistance will also help to ensure that more victims of violence seek help from the support services. Furthermore, drawing attention to the problem will help to protect the weakest parties in such cases, i.e. the children who are directly or indirectly affected. The recent book *Bjørnen sover* (The Bear Sleeps) is an example of openness. In it, both women and children who have experienced violence and violent offenders talk about their experiences.

Knowledge is necessary if taboos are to be broken, attitudes changed and victims offered the best possible services. We intend to break the taboo surrounding domestic violence. The figures still do not reflect the real picture and a considerable amount of violence remains hidden from the police and the support services. Statistics from women’s shelters in Norway also show that the women who seek help at the shelters have lived with violence for a long time. Only seven per cent of women said that they had come to the shelter because of a single incident. Twenty-nine per cent said that they had suffered violence over the past year.

Public attention must be drawn to domestic violence so that the general public is made aware of the extent and consequences of this problem. We will consider possible channels and partners for communicating with the general public. For example, this may be achieved through close cooperation with voluntary organisations and business and industry.

The aim of these efforts will be to persuade more people to report violent abuse of children so that they can be given necessary help and support. This can be done by increasing public awareness of the consequences of violence against children so that such violence is not tolerated and is reported to the authorities. Schools and day care institutions are important arenas for detecting and reporting violence. Awareness can also be raised by increasing knowledge in the first line services in order to improve their ability to detect violence, implement measures to put an end to violence, and give affected children appropriate and necessary assistance.

Measures 41-43:

41. Nationwide awareness-raising measures will be implemented in order to inform the general public about and prevent violence against children. This measure is part of the follow-up to the 2006 UN report on violence against children and is related to projects such as *Barn som lever med vold i familien* (Children living with domestic violence). This measure will be implemented in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and professional groups working in this area.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

42. As part of the effort to draw public attention to domestic violence, a survey of domestic violence will be carried out along the lines of the surveys carried out by the Ministry of Justice and the Police in 2003 and 2005.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

43. Information will be developed and disseminated, targeting the general public, in order to increase knowledge and awareness of domestic violence. This will be done in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, business and industry and other actors.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

## **G. Domestic violence will be prevented by changing attitudes**

*“I believe we need more men at the forefront of demonstrations against rape and violent abuse of women and children. I look forward to being interviewed about domestic violence not only by Henne [Her, a women’s magazine] but by Jakt & Fiske [Hunting & Fishing, a men’s magazine].”*

(Excerpt from Knut Storberget [Minister of Justice and the Police] *“But you can never be safe”* in the book *Bjørnen sover* (The Bear Sleeps, 2007)).

Active and effective prevention has to do with both preventing violence from taking place and stopping violence that is already taking place. Broad-based preventive work targets both women and men, including those who are not directly affected themselves. Efforts aimed at both potential violent offenders and those who have already perpetrated violent acts are a pivotal and important element of prevention. Children and young people are also important target groups in efforts to prevent violence.

Pupils must be enabled to consider the consequences of and take responsibility for their own actions. The Principles for Education in Part II of the General Curriculum emphasise the importance of developing social skills. Work on this topic can be incorporated into subjects such as Social Studies or Christian and Other Religious and Ethical Education. Several programmes are also available to schools that can be used in efforts to prevent problematic behaviour and develop social skills. The Directorate of Education currently supports the PALS, LP Model, Zero and Olweus programmes.

There is a danger that children who grow up with violence will subject others to similar violence, both as children and as adults. Difficulties in social interaction are learned at an early stage and can already be observed in primary school. It is important to prevent aggressive, violent behaviour among children and young people in order to stop or interrupt negative interaction patterns and prevent other young people from being subjected to violence, abuse and bullying by their peers. An effort must therefore be made in schools and other arenas where children and young people congregate.

The Government is now working on a Report to the Storting on men and male roles in relation to gender equality, which will be presented in spring 2008. This white paper will, among other things, focus on men as carers, men in partnerships and boys' and men's development. Male roles may be defined in terms of expectations of men that contribute towards forming men's identity and self-image in our society. These expectations partly have to do with personal qualities, partly with their relations with other people, and partly with position, power and participation in society. In all these areas there are factors that may affect the development of violent patterns of behaviour, but also factors that can counteract such behaviour. Male roles are changing constantly and good preventive measures must take this into account. The white paper will focus on strategies to prevent violent attitudes and behaviour among men.

Measures 44-50:

44. A trial project will be developed for upper secondary schools, with special focus on family relationships, communication and conflict management. The project will be developed in cooperation between family counselling offices and schools and will be offered to upper secondary schools in certain regions through selected family counselling offices. The school health services and counselling services will be useful partners when this project is implemented.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion

Start-up: 2009

Implementation: 2009-2011

45. Efforts to prevent domestic violence that target newly-arrived immigrants will be reinforced. An educational programme on the subject of domestic violence will be developed in connection with the social studies part of the Norwegian language programme. The target group comprises everyone who has been granted a residence permit or a work permit in Norway that provides a basis for permanent settlement. By developing a special guide for teachers working on the Norwegian language programme, the Government aims to promote knowledge-based dialogue on the topic of gender equality and women's and children's rights. This measure will be viewed in conjunction with Measure no. 15 in this Action Plan, Measure no. 11 in the Action Plan against Forced Marriage and similar measures in the Action Plan to Combat Female Genital Mutilation.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2009

46. The subject of gender equality and women's and children's rights will be reinforced in the cultural orientation programme for transfer refugees destined for Norway.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

47. Preventive work to combat domestic violence that targets newly-arrived asylum-seekers will be reinforced at reception centres by developing information materials and parental guidance courses and improving the competence of reception centre staff.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

48. Preventive work in municipalities will be reinforced by offering parental guidance for families with minority backgrounds. With the help of the Parental Guidance Programme, counsellors will be offered courses on the subject of violence and abuse in order to incorporate this subject into parental guidance activities. Training programmes and teaching materials will be developed in cooperation between persons involved in the Parental Guidance Programme, the Children Living with Domestic Violence project and experts in other relevant areas.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008

49. Studies show that social interaction difficulties are learned at an early stage and can already be observed in early childhood. Stopping or interrupting negative interaction patterns can prevent aggressive and violent behaviour among children and youth. A special strategy will be developed to prevent aggressive behaviour, among other things by offering well-documented methods designed for children and youth. The goal is to teach children and young people how to solve conflicts without resorting to violence.

Ministries responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Equality,  
Ministry of Health and Care Services, Ministry of Justice and the Police

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

50. Information will be provided for recruits doing first time military service with a view to raising awareness of domestic violence.

Ministry responsible for implementation: Ministry of Defence

Start-up: 2008

Implementation: 2008-2011

*“Real love is free of violence”*

(Excerpt from an article by Tove Smaadahl: *Challenges for the women’s shelters* in the book *Bjørnen sover* (The Bear Sleeps, 2007))

