

Anne Hatløy and Tone Sommerfelt

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**Efforts to ensure girls’  
rights and gender equality  
in Norwegian development  
policies**

An analysis of Norwegian policies  
from 2011 to 2017

**Fafo-report**  
2018:06



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# Preface

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Gender inequality is a global challenge that deprives girls of their most fundamental rights and opportunities all over the world. Girls and women are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to access to education, health-care, decent work, and social life – particularly in the world’s poorest countries. When a girl can grow up safe, happy, and healthy with full enjoyment of all her rights, she can thrive and reach her full potential. This is why Plan International is committed to supporting vulnerable girls and boys in their struggle for equal access to services as well as political and economic participation.

The international community has repeatedly promised to make gender equality a reality. The Sustainable Development Goals set out an ambitious roadmap for governments and other stakeholders with a shared commitment to address common global challenges such as poverty and inequality. The Global Goals build on a collective effort by all countries including donor countries, low- and middle-income countries, the UN, the private sector, and civil society. Achieving gender equality is not only a stand-alone goal. Gender equality also cuts across the entire framework as a principle, as well as several targets specifically, recognizing that girls and women’s equality and empowerment are preconditions to achieve the goals.

Norway is one of the most gender-equal countries in the world. Internationally, Norway has a strong standing as a global champion spearheading women’s rights and gender equality. As the UN Secretary General has pointed out, achieving gender equality and empowerment of girls and women in line with the Global Goals will take substantial efforts by all stakeholders. The purpose of this study is therefore to examine Norway’s efforts to advance gender equality, and girls’ rights in particular, in Norwegian development cooperation and foreign policy. To what extent is Norway’s development cooperation and policy coherent with the principle of gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals? Moreover, does the Norwegian effort to

advance children's and women's human rights recognize girls' particular needs and vulnerabilities and adopt an age-responsive approach?

By undertaking this research, we hope to increase knowledge among Norwegian policymakers and inform Norwegian development policy in the interest of the continued advancement of girls' rights and gender equality globally in an effort to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of three distinct, stylized parts that appear to be 'Kjell', 'Erik', and 'Øie'.

Kjell Erik Øie  
National Director  
Plan International Norway



## Summary

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This study is inspired by the increasing attention devoted to the rights of girls in the global development agenda. Sustainable Development Goal 5 is to *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Gender equality and girls' empowerment is defined in the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, as a means to, and a goal of, sustainable development.

The report asks:

1. To what extent and how do the specific concerns and rights of girls and young women figure in Norwegian development cooperation?
2. How do Norwegian authorities' efforts to ensure gender equality, and specifically girls' rights, cohere with the aims defined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the Agenda 2030?
3. To what extent are the Norwegian Government's stated aims and commitments followed up in policies and budgetary priorities?

Gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting concern in Norwegian development aid – meaning that gender equality should be raised as an issue in all projects and funding. White Paper 24 presents an integrated view of the government's development policies. Our document analysis is therefore organised according to the four main thematic priorities relevant to girls' rights listed in this white paper. We omit, however, the thematic priority area of *climate, renewable energy and the environment*, because although the issue of gender equality and opportunities for women is mentioned, the ensuring of girls' rights is not emphasised in any particular way. In addition to the four relevant topics from White Paper 24, we include a separate section on efforts to eliminate violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women, including female genital mutilation and child, early, and forced marriage, as reflected in the Action Plan for Women's Rights and Equality in Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy 2016–2020.

With regard to efforts to ensure the equality and rights of girls and adolescent women, the sectors of education, global health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in particular, including in humanitarian settings, stand out. The government's engagement clearly conveys that ensuring girls' rights to quality education is a strategic priority. Education is emphasised as a catalyst for development, poverty reduction, improvements in health and nutrition, and democratisation. In this context, it should be pointed out, however, that none of the white papers or strategy plans presents a broader gender analysis of educational trends, or addresses the common perception of mono-causality – especially with respect to gender – that surfaces in many assessments of education in developing countries.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights remain a main priority in Norwegian development cooperation related to girls' rights, and the Government has promised to increase support for easy access to contraception and sexual and reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion. UN organisations and the Global Financing Facility for women's, children's, and adolescents' health form the main channels for this assistance.

Efforts to prevent gender-based and sexual violence in conflict settings is stressed in the description of the Government's humanitarian aid priorities. The elimination of violence and harmful practices against women and girls (child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), female genital mutilation (FGM), and other forms of gender-based violence) is also defined as a strategic priority area, although the prevention of CEFM currently seems to be an expected positive outcome of the increased investment in education, without specifically directed activities. Initiatives specifically aimed at combatting child labour, and its gender-specific forms, do not figure prominently in the Norwegian government's stated priorities.

The transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represented a new approach to how inequalities are formed and, by extension, opened the door to a life cycle view of the concerns of women and girls. The Norwegian government's focus on education and health, as well as the ways that these foci are carried into the humanitarian space, reflects these concerns. However, the stated aim of improving girls' education (access and quality, including in vocational training) is not included the priority area on private sector development and job creation. The latter strategic area would benefit from the formulation of clear goals aimed at making the most of investments in the education sector, fa-

cilitating the transition of adolescents of both genders into local job markets.

An analysis of Norwegian overseas development aid (ODA) shows that funding of projects that can be identified as ‘girl-related’ in public records are channelled largely to the target area of education – primarily through Norwegian NGOs, and mainly to projects on the African continent. This same overall pattern applies to projects marked with the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker. The education portfolio is large and reflects the emphasis placed on this topic in strategic documents.

Based on findings in the analysis of official documents and ODA disbursements, and interviews with civil servants and NGO representatives, this report focuses on some of the challenges that arise in work to ensure girls’ rights and gender equality. To summarise, five challenges should be highlighted:

1. ***Girls’ rights – Mainstreaming of gender equality as a tool:*** An underlying notion in efforts to mainstream gender equality in reporting mechanisms on development activities and cooperation is that doing so will produce both consciousness about the gendered effects of project activities (‘Do no harm’) *and* interventions tailored to gendered needs. However, mainstreaming the gender perspective does not necessarily produce interventions tailored to girls’ needs. Therefore, projects specifically targeting gender – and specifically the gendered concerns of children and youth in SRHR, education, child labour, sexualised violence, gendered threats in conflict and during emergencies, and so forth – are needed to complement the general gender mainstreaming goal. Specifically targeted gender projects and mainstreaming gender are two complimentary strategies for securing girls’ rights.
2. ***The SDGs, youth, and gender – Girls and boys in development:*** An explicit aim of the transformative 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is to address the processes that produce inequalities. In line with the SDGs, the current emphasis on the rights of girls must not overshadow the specifically gendered needs of boys. Moreover, the life cycle perspective must encompass a gender dimension that includes the specific challenges of boys as well as girls. Given the signature status of gender equality in Norwegian policies, this perspective should

be promoted as a stated goal in Norwegian development policies.

3. ***SRHR for girls aged 10 to 14 – A particularly sensitive issue:***  
Girls in the age group 10 to 14 are in a particularly vulnerable situation. Within the health area of family planning and sexuality education, attention to the concerns of adolescents – including the age group 10 to 14 – should be intensified. Norway, along with like-minded donors, has pushed for giving more attention to children younger than 15 in SRHR, but these issues are sensitive and controversial. This is partly related to the so-called Mexico City policy, a United States government policy that blocks US federal funding for non-governmental organizations that provide abortion counselling or referrals or advocate to decriminalize abortion or expand abortion services. NGOs have a potential role to play in this context, as they do not have to weigh their input against the need to reach consensus in UN bodies to the same extent as governments do. Even though NGOs must navigate in relation to the ‘gag rule’ in order to obtain US funding, they still have more leverage than multilateral organisations. The diversification of channels for influencing the SRHR field for young adolescents should be recognised by NGOs and government institutions alike.
4. ***Youth, gender, and the life cycle – From education to employment:*** The Norwegian government’s global education priorities include a vocational training component. However, our document analysis shows that the potential benefit of prioritising girls’ education and vocational training is not included in the presentations of the strategic area of private sector development and job creation in any clear manner. Moreover, the transition from girls’ and women’s vocational training and education to economic empowerment is not made into an explicit concern. A more elaborate policy on this area should be developed to provide a link between education and women and girls’ potential for realising their full economic and political rights.
5. ***Child labour and child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM):*** The prevention of CEFM and of child labour are stated as explicit goals of Norwegian development policies. However, these aims are not embedded in the organisational structure of Norwegian development aid administration. The lack of coordina-

tion may well be a consequence of the fact that the government has set other priorities. However, it also seems to be an expression of common mono-causal assumptions in the global education agenda, namely that harmful practices are caused by a lack of educational opportunities and thus will cease to exist if such opportunities improve. Though improvements in educational access do have a positive effect when it comes to preventing CEFM and child labour, 'leaving no-one behind' should include specifically targeted policies to reach children with complex vulnerabilities, those who combine labour and education (also domestic labour), or those who drop out of school to get married, partly as a result of bad educational quality or mismatches between education and local job markets.

# Abbreviations

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|          |                                                                   |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CEFM     | child, early, and forced marriage                                 |
| DR Congo | Democratic Republic of Congo                                      |
| FGM      | female genital mutilation                                         |
| GFF      | Global Financing Facility (in support of Every Woman Every Child) |
| GPE      | Global Partnership for Education                                  |
| LGBTI    | lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersexed    |
| MDG      | Millennium Development Goals                                      |
| NCA      | Norwegian Church Aid                                              |
| n.d.     | no date (with reference to date of publication)                   |
| NGO      | non-governmental organization                                     |
| NMCE     | Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality                       |
| NMFA     | Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs                             |
| NMJPS    | Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security                 |
| Norad    | The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation                  |
| ODA      | overseas development aid                                          |
| SDG      | Sustainable Development Goals                                     |
| SRHR     | sexual and reproductive health and rights                         |
| UN       | United Nations                                                    |
| UNAIDS   | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS                    |
| UNESCO   | United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA    | United Nations Population Fund                                    |
| UNGEI    | United Nations Girls' Education Initiative                        |
| UNICEF   | United Nations Children's Fund                                    |
| US       | United States of America                                          |
| WHO      | World Health Organization                                         |

# Introduction

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This study is inspired by the increasing attention devoted to the rights of girls in the global development agenda. Sustainable Development Goal 5 is to ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’. Gender equality and girls’ empowerment is defined, in the transformative 2030 Agenda, as a means to, and an goal of, sustainable development.

More specifically, this report sets out to map and analyse Norwegian development policies relating to efforts to ensure gender equality, and more specifically girls’ rights. The report asks, to what extent and how do the specific concerns and rights of girls and young women figure in Norwegian development cooperation? How do Norwegian authorities’ efforts to ensure gender equality, and specifically girls’ rights, cohere with the aims defined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Agenda 2030? To what extent are the Norwegian government’s stated aims and commitments followed up in policies and overseas development aid priorities?

## **Girls’ rights in the international development agenda**

With the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that came into effect after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the focus on gender equality in international development has become far more comprehensive. The MDGs promoted a specific gender goal, MGD3 (Promote gender equality and empower women), which targeted the elimination of gender disparity in education (in primary and secondary education by 2005, and in ‘all levels of education no later than 2015’). MDG5 (Improve maternal health) also concerned women’s equality directly, and MDG1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) made particular mention of women and young women in the context of providing productive employment and decent work for all. MDG2 (Achieve universal primary education) targeted girls specifically (in primary education) and young women (aiming to close the literacy gap between women and men aged 15–24).

Stuart and Woodroffe (2016) sum up the criticism of the MDGs with respect to gender equality:

*The MDGs were too modest in their ambition, covered too few areas within the gender goal, and failed to mainstream gender across the framework. The absence of violence against women and girls as a target under MDG 3 was widely seen as a major oversight. The indicators under the targets were also seen as too narrow, failing to focus on the structural barriers that prevented progress on gender equality (2016:71).*

The targets of the new stand-alone gender goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), now address a far broader range of gender equality issues, including violence and discrimination, and take a human rights perspective to gender equality (cf. Stuart & Woodroffe 2016). In addition to SDG5, a range of targets under the other 17 SDGs address girls and young women. We include a more comprehensive overview of SDGs that explicitly address the rights of women and girls, and their most relevant targets (see annex 1).

In spite of gender equality being a stand-alone goal in the SDGs, gender is mainstreamed in the goal on education (SDG4), and the rights of girls and women are also explicitly addressed in goals 1, 2, 3, and 8 (see annex 1). The rights of children are also addressed in SDG16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions), though not in the language of gender.

At the same time, a main emphasis in the SDGs (as compared with the MDGs) is the ‘leave no one behind’ principle, which directs attention not only to those who are the most easily reached, but also to the most marginalised. Aiming to reach the most marginalised entails addressing intersecting inequalities (Kabeer 2010), recognizing that ‘gender discrimination interacts with other factors such as poverty, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality’ (Stuart & Woodroffe 2016:76). This relates to the *transformative* nature of the SDGs, requiring not only identification of 20 inequalities and marginalisation, but also of how they are produced. SDG17 is key in this context, as target 17.18<sup>1</sup> articulates the need for states to develop data aggregated on gender

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<sup>1</sup> Target 17.18: “By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts”



and other inequalities. This knowledge agenda thus aims to fill blank spots in data on women's and girls' needs.

Particularly relevant to the current context, the transformative agenda on the SDGs – how marginalisation and inequalities are produced – opens the door to a life-cycle approach to gender equality, which enables a focus on specific gendered needs, rights, and barriers to full participation throughout the life span – from conception, through infancy and childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. This makes the SDGs a potential framework for how governments can contribute to securing the rights of girls through their development policies.

## Methodology

We have examined the focus on gender-specific concerns of children and adolescents in Norwegian development efforts by combining analyses of:

- a. relevant Norwegian policy documents;
- b. Norwegian allocation of aid (ODA) to projects and initiatives aimed at gender-specific targets among children and adolescents; and
- c. interviews with relevant civil servants and Norwegian civil society/NGO representatives.

The Norwegian policy documents analysed include white papers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant ministries, as well as strategy papers and action plans. Relevant documents were identified in cooperation with Plan International Norway, which commissioned the study; the study also includes references to documents that appeared to be particularly relevant during the course of the work.

The study used Norwegian Aid Statistics,<sup>2</sup> which is Norad's project database, as a basis for the examination of Norwegian development assistance disbursements from 2011 to 2016. The specific methodology of the ODA analysis is described in the section devoted to this topic.

Finally, a list of potential informants and discussion partners was identified, consisting of representatives from the Norwegian devel-

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.norad.no/en/front/toolspublications/norwegian-aid-statistics/access-to-microdata/>,

opment sector, including public administration (Norad and NMFA) and several Norwegian NGOs. The aim of the interviews and discussion groups/group interviews that ensued was to identify particularly relevant areas for follow-up and to obtain information on issues that do not appear in official documents regarding the different ongoing activities and initiatives within relevant policy areas. Another aim was to obtain more detailed information on issues of reporting and data production relating to the analysis of ODA.

Two versions of an interview guide were developed, one for NGO representatives and another for public officials in Norad and NMFA. Each interview/group discussion followed the respective guide, but at the same time, discussions were open-ended and allowed for adjustments according to the particular competence and activities of the interviewees. In six separate sessions, we interviewed 15 public officials from Norad (from the sections on education; global health; human rights, governance and fragility; and civil society) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) (from the section for human rights, democracy, and gender equality). In addition, we interviewed eight representatives from six different NGOs (Save the Children Norway, Plan International Norway, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council, Care, and FOKUS). In total, 23 persons were interviewed in 12 individual or group interviews. Most of the interviews were carried out with both researchers present, which allowed for the comparison of notes following each session. Our analysis of the interview notes is not presented in a separate section of this report; it is incorporated into the document analysis and the discussion of disbursements to overseas development, and has shaped our concluding discussion.

# Girls' rights and gender equality in Norwegian development policy

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Our review of Norwegian official documents – namely white papers, strategy papers and action plans – shows that securing the rights of girls, in particular in the areas of education and health, is defined as a strategic goal of Norwegian development policies, a strategic priority that also spills into the humanitarian sector. White Paper 24 2016–2017, entitled *Common Responsibility for a Common Future: The Sustainable Development Goals and Norway's Development Policy* (NMFA 2017),<sup>3</sup> is an overarching document that provides an integrated view of the government's development policies, which had been presented in more thematically specific white papers.<sup>4</sup> The paper outlines (in chapter 3.4) the government's five main thematic priorities in development efforts: (1) education; (2) health; (3) private sector development and job creation; (4) climate, renewable energy, and the environment; and (5) humanitarian aid.

It further lists four cross-cutting aims or themes of Norwegian development aid: (1) human rights, (2) women's rights and gender equality, (3) climate change and environment, and (4) anti-corruption.

The four latter themes are cross-cutting in the sense that they constitute concerns to be included at a minimum in the risk management of all projects (NMFA 2017: 29). Women's rights and equality

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/217f38f99edf45c498befc04b7ef1f7e/engb/pdfs/stm201620170024000engpdfs.pdf>. The English version provided in this link is a summary of the Norwegian language version. We refer to the full Norwegian version in our references to the paper in this report, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>4</sup> Of particular relevance here are the following: White Paper 10, 2014–2015, *Opportunities for all: Human rights in Norway's foreign policy and development cooperation* (NMFA 2014a); White Paper 25, 2013–2014, *Education for development* (NMFA 2014b), and White Paper 35, 2014–2015, *Working together: Private sector development in Norwegian development cooperation* (NMFA 2015), and; White Paper 7, 2015–2016, *Likestilling i praksis – like muligheter for kvinner og menn* [Gender equality in practice – Equal opportunities for women and men] (NMCE 2015).

are thus defined as mainstream concerns of Norway's sustainable development and poverty reduction programmes, and 'main-streaming'<sup>5</sup> implies that efforts on women's rights and gender equality should be a concern within all five thematic priorities.

Gender equality is also discussed as an overarching aim of all Norwegian development aid (chapter 3.5), with girls' education seen as a way of securing women's empowerment in family and social life. The white paper also points out efforts through the UN system to improve legislation to ensure equal rights and prevent gender-based violence (see e.g. 3.5.5/p. 50).

In the parliamentary proceedings on White Paper 24 (Stortinget 2017), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence commented that policies to promote gender equality are a Norwegian signature (Stortinget 2017: 5). It thus underlined that gender equality is not only a mainstreaming issue but also a particular priority area. The committee's proceedings refer to the action plan on women's rights in this context (NMFA 2016).

In September 2016, Foreign Minister Børge Brende presented the government's action plan for gender equality in development, "Freedom, empowerment and opportunities: Action plan for women's rights and equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy 2016-2020" (NMFA 2016). The plan builds on priorities outlined in several of the white papers discussed here (with the exception of the overarching White Paper 24, which was published after this action plan). The action plan outlines five main objectives (associated with respective thematic priority areas): (1) to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all girls and boys; (2) to ensure the equal participation of women and men in political life, which encompasses work to safeguard that women's and girls' rights are properly addressed in non-discriminatory legislation; (3) to ensure that women have full economic rights and equal opportunities in the job market; (4) to eliminate violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women,

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<sup>5</sup> 'Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality' (ECOSOC Agreed Conclusion 1997/2 -

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF>)

and; (5) to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women. The translation of the government's policies into an action plan reflects the importance of health and education when it comes to efforts to ensure the rights and equality of girls.

As noted, White paper 24 presents an integrated view of the government's development policies. Consequently, we organise the following document analysis according to the four main thematic priorities relevant to girls' rights listed in the white paper (NMFA 2017). We omit, however, the thematic priority area of *Climate, renewable energy and the environment*, as the issue of gender equality and opportunities for women, while mentioned, is not emphasised in any particular way. In addition to the four relevant topics from White Paper 24, we include a separate section on efforts to eliminate violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), as reflected in the Action Plan for Women's Rights and Equality in Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy 2016–2020 (NMFA 2016).

Our five-part analysis aims to uncover how girls' concerns and rights figure in strategic aims of gender equality in Norwegian development policy, and how and in which sectors girls' rights are defined as a strategic priority. We further ask whether there can be said to be a coherent approach to aims and initiatives on gender equality, and specifically girls' rights, across strategies (strategy and policy documents). If such an approach exists, how does it cohere with SDG5 on gender equality, and with the targets on girls' rights specifically?

## Education

In spite of the emphasis on the cross-cutting aim of gender equality in Norwegian development aid, outlined in White Paper 24, the aim of ensuring the rights of girls is given a particular weight in the government's presentation of its thematic priority on education (NMFA 2017: 3.4.2, p. 30–32, and throughout the paper). The target group of educational efforts is children and youth, specifically girls and young women. Increasing the number of girls who complete secondary and higher education is also stated as an explicit goal (2017: 5.4.1).

The importance attributed to global education in White Paper 24 echoes the policies articulated in the thematically specific White Paper 25 (2013–2014), *Education for Development* (NMFA 2014b). Of all the white papers on development policies issued during the Solberg government, *Education for Development* contains the most compre-

hensive policy on girls' rights. It provides the reasons for the government's intensified efforts in global education and draws up its main priorities. The strengthening of girls' rights to an education is an explicit goal (NMFA 2014b: 7, English version). The paper outlines the gender gap in primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary education in broad strokes and points out – with reference to 2013 figures – that 'nearly one fourth of the young women aged 15 to 24 in developing countries have not completed primary school and lack the fundamental skills needed to get a job' (NMFA 2014b: 11). A large proportion of the 65 million girls (2013 figures) who are not in primary or lower secondary school are to be found in South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa (p. 13). Poverty (including mothers' lack of education), poor sanitation facilities, lack of female teachers, sexual harassment, and violence against girls in and on the way to school are listed as the reasons for this gender gap (2014b: 13-14, 20-21). Education is emphasised as a catalyst for development, poverty reduction, improvements in health and nutrition, and democratisation (p. 14ff.). The education of girls is specifically mentioned as an effective means of hindering early pregnancy and child marriage, and the value of educational programs for ending female genital mutilation is highlighted (2014b: 16f.).

As part of the intensification of Norway's efforts in global education, the specific goals outlined in the white paper that are of particular relevance here include the following:

- 'reverse the trend of reducing the share of Norway's international development budget that is allocated to education. The goal for this Government is to reach the 2005 level once more. Particular priority will be given to education for girls and for vulnerable groups of children, such as children with disabilities and children in crisis and conflict situations' (p. 19)
- 'promote the development of a separate goal on education that is rights-based, has an integrated gender perspective, and takes marginalised groups into particular consideration' (p. 20)
- 'ensure that girls start and complete secondary education' (p. 21)
- 'ensure that girls in sub-Saharan Africa start and complete secondary education. The goal should be gender balance among those who complete secondary education' (p. 21)

- ‘help to develop innovative measures and incentives to encourage parents to send girls to school’ (p. 21)

The white paper further commits the government to promoting the equal right to education of poor children, children with disabilities, and indigenous and minority children (p. 21 ff.), and emphasises the importance of education during conflict and other humanitarian emergencies (p. 24ff.).

The paper stresses the need to improve educational quality in developing countries, where as many as 250 out of 650 million children leave ‘primary school without basic literacy and numeracy skills’ (p. 12). As part of this focus, the government commits to improving teacher skills and national systems to improve learning outcomes (p. 33). The white paper includes commitments to improve vocational training and higher education, as well as literacy and basic skills among youth and adults that who have dropped out from, or not participated in, schooling, the latter among whom women make up a large proportion (p. 39–40). In effect, the government commits to

1. ‘help to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to complete relevant, good-quality secondary education’;
2. ‘promote a stronger focus in the international community’s education efforts on combating illiteracy among adults, particularly women, including the use of technology to develop reading skills’; and
3. ‘help to ensure that young people who have missed out on schooling as a result of crises or conflicts have a new chance to receive an education on their own terms.’<sup>6</sup>

In another white paper (no. 10, 2014–2015), *Opportunities for all: Human rights in Norway’s foreign policy and development cooperation* (NMFA 2014a), children’s and youth’s education is described as a basic human right (p. 24). The paper outlines human rights and equality with an ‘emphasis on the rights of women and children’ (p. 10). It explicitly promotes girls’ equal right to education (see 3.2.6).

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<sup>6</sup> The methodology for reaching these goals is outlined in chapter 4 of this document. Measurement and evaluation of results is a main issue in this context, committing the government to improving educational statistics by improving data collection and research competences in the South, contributing to the improvement of internet access in remote areas, and promoting results-based financing, in cooperation with the World Bank (2014b: 43–44).



The insistence on protecting girls' equal rights in the human rights context echoes the government's commitment to education in development policies (cf. NMFA 2017; NMFA 2014b). Similarly, in a white paper specifically outlining the Government's policy on gender equality (No. 7, 2015-2016, *Gender equality in practice: Equal opportunities for women and men*, NMCE 2015), one chapter focusing on Norway's international promotion of gender equality (chapter 7) presents five issues related to girls' rights, one of which is to give priority to international efforts to ensure that girls have the same access to education as boys (see also below on health for an elaboration on this white paper).

In the action plan for women's rights and equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy (2016–2020, *Freedom, empowerment and opportunities*, NMFA 2016), ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys is one of five priorities. Two outcomes are listed in this regard:

1. All girls should complete primary and secondary education, which includes vocational training; and
2. All girls and boys have access to quality education that promotes gender equality.

In order to reach the overall objective, the plan commits the government to

- supporting 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;
- strengthening 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;
- supporting efforts to make parents more aware of the importance of sending girls to school and to provide incentives for them to do so;
- providing particular support for efforts to increase access to education for girls with disabilities and girls from ethnic minorities;
- promoting equal opportunities for vocational training and higher education through channels that receive Norwegian funding, for example through university cooperation;



- working to increase financing for education (in line with the report of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunities);
- actively promoting 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;
- supporting teacher training efforts and seeking to ensure that the issue of gender equality is included in teacher training;
- promoting the right of girls to education in crisis and conflict situations; and
- supporting comprehensive sexuality education through UNESCO, UNFPA, and UNICEF (NMFA 2016: 13–14).

It is further stated that contributions will be targeted towards the priority countries for Norwegian education efforts: Malawi, Ethiopia, Nepal, Niger, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Haiti (2016: 13).

## Health

Health is another area in Norwegian development assistance that is central to the promotion of the particular needs and rights of girls. White Paper 24 (NMFA 2017) lists the improvement of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as a priority (NMFA 2017: 32, 67) and announces increased support for the easy access to contraception and sexual and reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion. Efforts to prevent gender-based and sexual violence in conflict settings is also stressed in the description of the government's priority of humanitarian aid (see below, section on 'Humanitarian assistance'). UN organisations and the Global Financing Facility for women's, children's, and adolescents' health form the main channels for this assistance (NMFA 2017: 67); more than 50 per cent of the disbursements to health were channelled through multilateral institutions in 2016 (see ODA analysis).

In the parliamentary proceedings on this white paper (Stortinget 2017), opposition parties in Parliament took note of the government's stated intent to increase support to sexual and reproductive health and rights, but noted that support to organisations that work in this field (International Planned Parenthood Federation and UNFPA) had been cut in earlier budgets in the parliamentary period, and hence, that the increase served only to compensate for earlier cuts (2017: 5).

In the white paper entitled *Opportunities for all: Human rights in Norway's foreign policy and development cooperation* (NMFA 2014a), women's and adolescents' SRHR (including the right to abortion) are described in terms of human rights (NMFA 2014a: 10). This document also brings to the fore Norway's support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) rights by promoting protection of rights in legislation and practice and contributing to awareness-raising efforts, particularly in the education and media sectors (2014a: section 3.4.5). Child health, food security, and nutrition also make up a topic in this white paper, but the presentation of child health is not specifically gendered. However, and deriving from the focus on LGBTI rights, adolescent health is mentioned in the context of human rights work in the UN system, specifically in the context of the UNFPA's work to promote rights to comprehensive sexuality education and gender-sensitive services to ensure sexual and reproductive health (2014a: 69). The white paper *Gender equality in practice: Equal opportunities for women and men* (No 7, 2015-2016, NMCE 2015, our translation of the Norwegian title), outlines that the government will maintain a strong engagement in combatting maternal mortality and improving health services and reproductive rights for women and girls, including adolescents, through its international efforts on gender equality. Building international acceptance of sexual rights and the right to abortion is another stated aim (NMCE 2015: Chapter 7). The SRHR of men is not given explicit attention.

In the action plan for women's rights and gender equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy (*Freedom, empowerment and opportunities*, NMFA 2016), the government highlights its work to promote SRHR for girls and women, emphasising the fight against female genital mutilation and efforts to provide safe abortion and ensure the protection of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women. The plan outlines three desired outcomes:

1. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights: improve maternal health as well as the health of women, girls, and adolescents; improve access to contraception and sexuality education; ensure pregnant women's 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 abortions are carried out safely

2. International acceptance for sexual rights and right to abortion, including ensuring the protection of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women and supporting work to ensure legal and safe abortion
3. Elimination of female genital mutilation within a generation (NMFA 2016: 28-29)

As noted above, support for comprehensive sexuality education through UNESCO, UNFPA, and UNICEF was also highlighted (NMFA 2016: 13-14).

In a 2015 written reply to the Norwegian Parliament to a question about government efforts on SRHR, Foreign Minister Børge Brende emphasised the considerable funding channelled through UNFPA, UNAIDS, WHO, and several NGOs (OPM 2015). Brende further highlighted Norwegian contributions to SRHR of other sorts and referred to activities in collaboration with the UN Secretary General's office, through which Norway has been working to put in place a revised global strategy for women's, children's and adolescents' health for the period 2016–2030. The strategy states, among other things, that access to contraception and sexual education are key tools to ensure survival and the opportunity to live good and productive lives. Brende further underlined the support of the implementation of the strategy at country-level, referring to Norway's role in the Global Financing Facility (GFF) in support of women's, children's and adolescents' health, namely its contribution of NOK 600 million annually (until 2020) to enable countries to provide better and sustainable health services for women, children, and adolescents, including access to contraception (OPM 2015).

## **Eliminating violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women**

Harmful practices are a violation of human rights that put women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health at risk (OHCHR n.d.; NM 2014). Two UN resolutions from Dec 2016 state that both female genital mutilation (FGM)<sup>7</sup> and child, early, and forced marriage

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<sup>7</sup> UN Resolution A/RES/71/168, adopted 19 Dec 2016:  
[http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/858574/files/A\\_RES\\_71\\_168-EN.pdf](http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/858574/files/A_RES_71_168-EN.pdf)

(CEFM)<sup>8</sup> are to be considered as ‘harmful practices’. Under this heading, we also assess the officially stated commitments to eliminate other forms of violence and harmful practices against girls, in particular those involving child marriage and child labour.

Two white papers relevant to development policies (in non-conflict settings) touch on harmful practices and violence against girls: White Paper 10 (2014–2015) entitled *Opportunities for all: Human rights in Norway’s foreign policy and development cooperation* (NMFA 2014a) and number 7 (2015–2016) – *Gender equality in practice: Equal opportunities for women and men* (NMCE 2015). White Paper 10 stresses the government’s commitments to support work against violence towards women – specifically female genital mutilation (cf. NMFA 2014a: 3.4.1) and child marriage (3.4.2) – and work to protect the rights of children with disabilities, girls with disabilities being at particular risk of discrimination and violence (2014a: 3.4.3). One chapter of White Paper 7 (2015–16) focuses on Norway’s international promotion of gender equality (NMCE 2015: chapter 7). Out of the seven points the Government wants to focus on, two are relevant to the present context as the white paper states that the government intends to

- reinforce international initiatives to combat female genital mutilation; and
- continue to combat child and forced labour through multi-lateral and bilateral channels.

Two official action plans and one strategy paper further outline the government’s policies on harmful practices. In the overarching action plan for women’s rights and gender equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy 2016–2020 (*Freedom, empowerment and opportunities*, NMFA 2016), eliminating violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women is included among five thematic priority areas of the action plan. The fight against all forms of gender-based violence is emphasised. Gender-based violence is described as encompassing

*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;*

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<sup>8</sup> UN Resolution A/RES/71/175, adopted 16 Dec 2016:  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/175&referer=http://www.un.org/en/ga/resolutions.shtml&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/175&referer=http://www.un.org/en/ga/resolutions.shtml&Lang=E)

*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* (NMFA 2016: 22).

The action plan commits the government to work towards two outcomes in this area:

- Violence against all girls and women is prevented: The government seeks to do so by committing to strengthen international normative efforts to combat violence against women; supporting civil society efforts to combat violence against women, and; initiating new measures to involve men in efforts to combat violence against women.
- Child and forced marriage is eliminated within a generation: Supporting 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 (NMFA 2016: 24).

Involving men in efforts to combat violence against women has been added as an emphasis in recent years in the policy documents.

At a request from Parliament, the Norwegian government launched a national action plan (2017 to 2020) to combat negative ‘social control, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation’ (NMJPS 2017). The action plan has been signed by nine Norwegian ministers and is summed up in five priority areas, primarily relating to the domestic setting, though the plan also states as a priority strength-ening research and increasing knowledge sharing, to be followed up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministry of Justice. One of the identified measures (measure 28) of the plan is relevant to this report, and commits the government ‘to develop an international strategy to combat child and forced marriage’. This is the only measure under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The concrete articulations of this measure are

- support to multilateral actors to reduce child and forced marriage; and
- education for teenage girls as a means to combat violence against women.

With respect to FGM, in 2014, the government released its ‘Strategy for intensifying international efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation for the period 2014–2017’ (NM 2014). The ambition behind the strategy was to work to ensure that no girls are subjected to FGM, and that those who already have experienced FGM are given the best possible care. Moreover, the work to prevent FGM is specified as a priority in the government’s political platform, and it is held as crucial that FGM be included in the post-2015 agenda. In the strategy document, it is pointed out that Norway is one of the main contributors to efforts to eliminate FGM. The strategy states that the government will intensify Norway’s efforts in the FGM area by providing political, technical, and financial support. In concrete terms, the strategy states that Norway will

- double its allocations to civil society (including diaspora organisations) and international organisations working to eliminate FGM from NOK 25 million to NOK 50 million as of 2015;
- continue to support the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM with an annual allocation of NOK 20 million;
- work to strengthen WHO’s efforts to eliminate FGM, including efforts to combat the increasing trend of trained medical personnel carrying out FGM;
- support competence-building measures for health workers in prevention of FGM and treatment of medical complications resulting from FGM.

The strategy further states that Norway will intensify its efforts to combat FGM by making more active use of global arenas for exerting influence through political leadership (in speeches, in talks with senior officials and at a political level). It is also underlined that Norway will play an active role in a range of UN organisations – mobilising ‘in the UN Commission on Population and Development, the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the World Health Assembly with a view to intensifying efforts to eliminate FGM’ (NM 2014). The strategy also commits Norway to cooperating ‘closely with UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and WHO in their efforts to combat FGM, and [seeking] to cooperate with the African Union to promote follow-up of the UN resolution on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations (2012) and of other relevant international instruments’ (NM 2014). Ethiopia (through cooperation with NCA and Save



the Children) and Somalia are identified as pilot countries for bilateral cooperation on efforts to eliminate FGM. Both countries have a high prevalence of the practice, but in the Somali diasporic community in Norway the rates of FGM have fallen considerably (NM 2014).

## **Humanitarian assistance**

An exhaustive examination of the strategies on humanitarian policies is beyond the scope of the present study, but given that humanitarian assistance is one of the stated priority areas of the current government we provide a brief outline of that assistance's focus on the rights of girls. Particularly relevant are education, health (including SRHR), and violence against women and girls.

Within the theme of humanitarian assistance, the *education* of girls is listed as a particular concern within the area of support for education in emergency situations (2017: 44, 65–66). Norway was among the initiators of a global fund for education in emergencies – the Education Cannot Wait initiative (NMFA 2017: 44) – aimed at mobilising funding and facilitating the transition from humanitarian assistance to longer-term development. In the action plan for women's rights and equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy 2016–2020 (*Freedom, empowerment and opportunities*, NMFA 2016), girls' right to an education is a main topic – though emergency education is not addressed specifically. Even so, given that several of the focus countries for Norwegian development cooperation on education are emergency settings (e.g. Afghanistan, South Sudan, and to a certain extent Niger and Haiti), we can say that ensuring girls' right to an education is a concrete element in the government's humanitarian policies.

With respect to *health*, *SRHR*, and the *prevention of violence* against women in humanitarian crises and conflict and post-conflict settings, the latest Norwegian action plan (2015–2018) on women, peace and security should be mentioned (NM 2017). The action plan is the latest follow-up of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (S/RES/1325, adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000).<sup>9</sup> In the period since Resolution 1325 was first adopted, seven additional UN resolutions on women, peace, and security have ensued, of which four include sexualised violence and give recommendations on how vio-

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<sup>9</sup> Norway followed up the UN Resolution 1325 with a first action plan in March 2006. Two further action plans have followed: a strategic plan for the period 2011–13, and again a new action plan on women, peace, and security for 2015–18.

lence can be prevented and combatted in conflict and humanitarian settings. The current action plan (2015–2018) focuses on the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions. Efforts to prevent gender-based and sexual violence in conflict settings are also stressed in the description of the government's priority of humanitarian aid in White Paper 24 (NMFA 2017, chapter 3.4.5, p. 45 and p. 58). It is explicitly stated that sexual and reproductive health is a neglected area in humanitarian contexts and that the government seeks to step up support to improve services in these areas (chapters 5.4.2 and 5.6.2, as well as p. 58 in chapter 4.5). A similar emphasis appears in the action plan for women's rights and gender equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy 2016–2020 (*Freedom, empowerment and opportunities*, NMFA 2016). As part of the fourth priority area, which is to eliminate violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women, outcome 4.2 specifies the aim of addressing and preventing sexual violence in conflict. With this as a specific reference, the plan commits Norway to implementing the government's national action plan on women, peace and security (in line with UN Resolution 1325), in which the fight against sexual violence is a key element, and to support humanitarian organisations that recognise the need to prevent, and protect women against, sexual violence (NMFA 2016: 24). Note that efforts to combat the sexual abuse of boys are not specifically highlighted.

## **Private sector development and job creation**

As noted in the introduction, the white paper that presents an integrated perspective on Norway's development policies (White Paper 24, NMFA 2017) lists *private sector development and job creation* as a main thematic priority area. In this context, gender equality and opportunities for women are a main concern but there is no particular emphasis on ensuring girls' and young women' rights. In the earlier white paper devoted to 'private sector development in Norwegian development cooperation' (White paper 35, 2014-15, with the main title *Working together*, NMFA 2015), the government sets out its intention to provide strengthened and strategically targeted support for private sector development in developing countries (2015: 6, English version). One of the 18 points addressed in this paper is greater emphasis on women's rights and gender equality. The paper asserts that when women obtain jobs it leads to better living conditions, economic growth, higher productivity, and social integration. Gender equality



also contributes to developing skills and strengthening the position of women, and works as a stabilising factor in society (2015: 11, Norwegian version). However, this document (NMFA 2015) does not have any particular focus on young or adolescent girls, or on children generally, though the commitment to enforcing the prohibition of child labour, forced labour and discrimination is stressed (2015: 83, Norwegian version). A similar reference to the continuing commitment to combatting child and forced labour through multilateral and bilateral channels is mentioned in the white paper entitled *Gender equality in practice* (NMCE 2015: Chapter 7).

It is worth pointing out, then, that the holistic, life-cycle approach to development promoted in the SDGs is not mirrored in the Government's efforts in private sector development and job creation, even though education is Norway's number one priority. Norfund's responsibility in securing girls' introduction to the labour market remains unclear.

In the action plan for women's rights and gender equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy 2016–2020 (*Freedom, empowerment and opportunities*, NMFA 2016), one of five main objectives is ensuring that women have full economic rights and equal opportunities to participate in the labour market. Desired outcomes of this third main objective are, more specifically, that

- women, including women from marginalised groups, are able to take part in business activities and the labour market; and
- women and men have equal rights to economic resources, such as ownership and control of land, inheritance and access to financial services (NMFA: 2016: 20).

It should also be noted that the government presents its work to ensure women's equal economic opportunities as an issue of human rights (cf. NMFA 2014a: 33–34).

It is striking that – although there is an emphasis on vocational training in the government's priorities on global education – the potential benefit of prioritising girls' education and vocational training is not included in the presentations of the strategic area of private sector development and job creation in any clear manner. This comes across as a missed opportunity at the strategic level in Norwegian development policies, which would benefit from an integrated approach to girls' and adolescent women's transition from education and vocational training to the job market and the private sector. A more elabo-

rate policy in this area could help women realise their full economic and political rights. Moreover, the gender focus within the priority area of private sector development and job creation remains coloured by an adult focus.

### **Summing up: An analysis of Norwegian official policies**

Gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting concern in Norwegian development aid. However, as regards efforts to ensure the equality and rights of girls and adolescents, the sectors of education and health, SRHR in particular, also in humanitarian settings, stand out.

An analyses of the government's engagement clearly conveys that ensuring girls' rights to a quality education is a strategic priority. In this context, it should be pointed out, however, that none of the white papers or strategy plans outlined address the common perceptions of mono-causality – especially with respect to gender – that surface in many assessments of education in developing countries. This applies even to the main white paper on global education (NMFA 2014b). As Kielland et al. (2017) point out with respect to West African countries, different factors interact in ways that affect participation in schooling of both boys and girls, analyses of which would expose dynamics that remain hidden in national educational statistics. CEFM, for instance, may be a response to poor educational quality, school related gender based violence as well as a cause of drop-out. Similarly, lack of coherence between the content of education and job opportunities also seems to drive drop-out rates in rural areas. Increasing urbanisation, new patterns of child mobility, tendencies of religious revival in Muslim as well as Christian societies throughout the world, affect children's educational opportunities, but the details of how this affects children, and the ways in which these effects are gendered, remain poorly understood.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to mention the lack of a broader gender analysis of educational trends in the white paper on global education (NMFA 2014b). In spite of pointing out that “we must not overlook the situation for boys when there are particular reasons for giving priority to them” (p. 21), stressing the risk of child recruitment to militant groups and prostitution in crises (p. 24), the white paper does not mention the particular protection needs of boys in conflict zones, or how education could play a role in boys' protection.

A final issue on education should be emphasised, relating the “leave no-one behind”-principle of the SDGs. As noted earlier, reach-

ing the most vulnerable entails addressing intersecting inequalities, e.g. how gender works alongside other factors, such as disability, ethnicity, caste, poverty and locally defined categories of inclusion and exclusion, in particular ways. As Jennings has recently pointed out, “disability inclusion is not (yet) an integral and necessary component of the global education agenda, as evidenced by the fact that disability inclusion is not mainstreamed at the programmatic, sectoral, or strategic levels in Norway, partner countries, or implementing agencies” (2017: 4). Jennings also points out the lack of data on the access to education among children with disabilities in developing countries.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (including efforts to combat FGM) remains a main priority in Norwegian development cooperation of relevance to the rights of girls, and the Government has promised increased support for the easy access to contraception and sexual and reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion (NMFA 2017). UN organisations and the Global Financing Facility for women’s children’s and adolescent health form the main channel for this assistance (NMFA 2017: 67). Efforts to prevent gender based and sexual violence in conflict settings is also stressed in the description of the Government’s priority of humanitarian aid.

The elimination of violence and harmful practices against women and girls (CEFM, FGM, and other forms of gender-based violence) is also defined as a strategic priority area, albeit the prevention of CEFM currently seems as an expected positive outcome of the increased input to education, without specifically directed activities. We return to this issue in the analysis of disbursements of ODA and with reference to the organisation of work relating to CEFM in Norwegian public administration, which is divided between several different sections/departments in the NMFA and Norad.

Initiatives specifically aimed at combating child labour do not figure prominently in the Norwegian government’s stated priorities. Child labour is a rare reference in other contexts than in the educational sector, in which education is described and means to combat child labour but without further elaboration (NMFA 2014b: 21). The brief mentions to child labour in the chapter devoted to international efforts in White Paper 7 (NMCE 2015) and in the white paper on private sector development (NMFA 2015: 83) are exceptions. The lack of attention to child labour is problematic in view of the fact that household labour needs in many developing are covered by the domestic labour of girls. The latter point is addressed in one of the tar-

gets of SDG 5, which directs attention to women's unpaid domestic labour.

As we pointed out in the introductory pages, the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs encouraged a focus on how inequalities are formed, and by extension, opened the door to a life cycle view of the concerns of women and girls. The Norwegian government's focus on education and health, and the ways that these foci are carried into the humanitarian space, reflect these concerns. However, the stated aims of improving girls' education (access and quality, including in vocational training) are not included in the priority area on private sector development and job creation. The latter strategic area would benefit from the formulation of clear goals aimed at making the most of investments in the educational sector, facilitating the transition of adolescents of all genders into local job markets.

# The use of Norwegian overseas development assistance (ODA) 2011–2016

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The aim of the analysis of Norwegian ODA is to map the resources granted, de facto. We see this as a more appropriate intake than proposed grants in state budgets. While the state budget sets priorities, analysis of ODA shows how the resources have been used. In this chapter, we first say a few words about the method used and some of the methodological challenges of analysing the allocation of Norwegian ODA. Then we provide an overview of the overall disbursement of ODA. This is followed first by an analysis of projects within gender equality and then of projects with a special focus on girls and young women. Finally, we offer a summary of the focus of the assistance.

## **A note on the method used for the survey of Norwegian ODA**

All Norwegian development assistance is tracked with OECD-DAC codes and is publically available online.<sup>10</sup> All projects can be categorized within a main sector, sub-sector, and target area. In addition they are also marked with the following policy markers: environment; gender equality; good governance and human rights; biodiversity; desertification; trade development; climate change mitigation; climate change adaptation; reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health; and education.<sup>11</sup>

In this analysis, we pay particular attention to support of gender equality and women's rights using the gender policy marker. This is a tool to record aid activities that target gender equality as a policy ob-

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.norad.no/en/front/toolspublications/norwegian-aid-statistics/access-to-microdata/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/BMZ%202014%20The%20Policy%20Marker%20System.%20DACBMZ%20Markers.%20Guidelines.%20EN.pdf>

jective.<sup>12</sup> The gender equality policy marker is based on a three-point scoring system:

- Principal (marked 2) means that gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental in its design of an expected result. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this objective.
- Significant (marked 1) means that gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/programme.
- Not targeted (marked 0) means that the project/programme has been screened against the gender marker but has not been found to target gender equality.

There are no direct measures within the system for analysing allocations to projects focusing on girls and young women. The OECD-DAC does not have a particular code for this. We therefore had to complement the gender policy marker by doing a targeted search using key words. The basis for the search was project titles and summaries. The key search words are listed in Table 1.

Note that there is a DAC code for 'Children', which is not a policy marker but an indicator for 'Focus area'. However, this code is not publically available online in the Norad database, and is therefore not included in our analysis of ODA. Interestingly, neither the public servants nor representatives of Norwegian NGOs mentioned this code during our interviews.

For the analysis of ODA, we first analyse overall how assistance has been disbursed over target areas and agreement partners. Further we explore how ODA has been spent on gender equality overall, by sector and by agreement partners. In turn, we focus on the projects targeting girls in the same respects.

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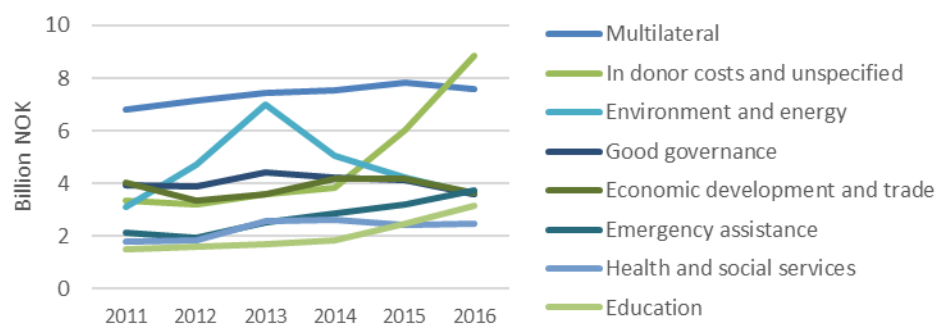
<sup>12</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm>

**Table 1 Keywords used to identify projects in the ODA database**

| Category                       | Key words                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Girl                           | girl(s), young women                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Education                      | girls, girls' education, education for girls, girls' access to school                                                                                                                                                                  |
| FGM                            | FGM, female genital mutilation                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Reproductive health and rights | girls + SRHR, sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights, adolescent sexual and reproductive health/ASRH, youth sexual and reproductive health/YSRH, women's rights, girls' rights |
| Violence                       | girls + gender based violence/GBV, sexual violence, SGBV, violence and girls                                                                                                                                                           |
| Economic development and trade | young women and vocational training, women + employment                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Child marriage                 | child, early and forced marriage, CEFM, child marriage/early marriage                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Harmful practices              | harmful practices, harmful traditional practices                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Other                          | Abortion, Rape, contraception                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## Disbursement of ODA 2011–2016: An overview

The overall Norwegian ODA increased from NOK 27 billion in 2011 to NOK 37 billion in 2016, an increase of 37 per cent. All ODA disbursements are divided into eight target areas. The largest target area is 'Multilateral' (Figure 1). However, while the disbursements tend to be pretty stable across the target areas from one year to the next, there are some exceptions: in 2013, the disbursement 'Environment and energy' increased by more than NOK 2 billion from the previous year. Of a total of NOK 7 billion, 5 billion was channelled to projects within the Climate and Forest Initiative. The second exception is the target area 'In donor costs and unspecified' - in 2015 and 2016 the expenses to this area increased from around NOK 3 billion/year from 2011 to 2014 to close to NOK 9 billion in 2016. This increase can be explained by 'special operating expenses' to 'refugees in donor countries' – that is to say funding for activities in Norway in connection with the influx of refugees (the so-called refugee crisis).



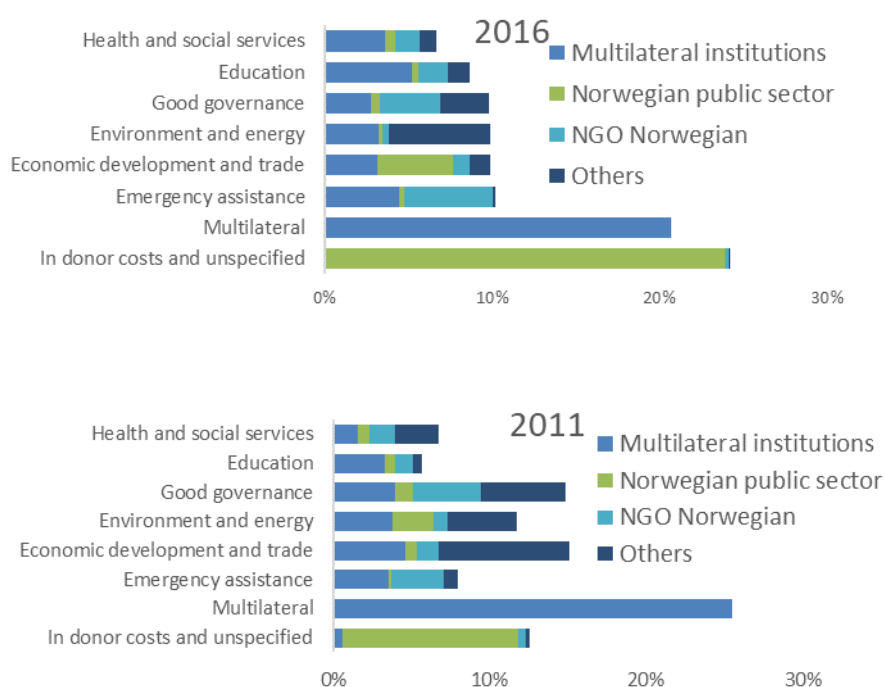
**Figure 1 Disbursement of Norwegian ODA by target area, 2011–2016**

The share of the ODA to the target area ‘Health and social services’ has been stable at 7–8 per cent of all ODA, while the share for ‘Education’ has increased from 6 to 9 per cent in the same period.

Most of the ODA (around 80 per cent) is channelled through three groups of agreement partners: the *multilateral sector* (nearly 50 per cent), the *Norwegian public sector* (20–30 per cent) and *Norwegian NGOs* (13–14 per cent). The remaining 20 per cent is distributed to the *public sector in developing countries* (1–4 per cent, with an exception in 2013 with 13 per cent), *international NGOs* (4–6 per cent), *local NGOs* (2–3 per cent), and smaller amounts to the *public sector in other donor countries*; *other countries’ private sector*; the *Norwegian private sector*; *public-private partnerships*; and *consultants* (all with <1 per cent/year). Most of ODA channelled through the Norwegian public sector falls in the category of *in donor costs and unspecified*, and the high share in 2016 is linked to the costs of refugees in Norway (see figure 2). The funds through multilateral sector is distributed differently – around 50 per cent are allocated to specific target areas, while the remaining 50 per cent go to core funding of UN organisations and other multilateral actors (figure 2). Note that much support channelled through the health and education sections in Norad thus consist of core funding to UN organisations whose main objectives are improving health (SRHR included) and access to and quality of education.

The largest recipients among multilateral actors within the target area of education are UNICEF and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) – receiving 60 and 25 per cent, respectively, of assistance in this category – with UNESCO in the third position with 6–7 per cent.





**Figure 2 Disbursement of Norwegian ODA by target area and agreement partner in 2011 and 2016**

Even though the overall allocation to the target area of education has doubled from NOK 1.5 to 3.2 billion from 2011 to 2016, the share allocated to UNICEF, GPE, and UNESCO has remained stable.

For the target area of health, the situation is different. From 2011 to 2013 the allocation to health increased from NOK 1.8 to 2.5 billion. Between 2013 and 2016 it remained stable at NOK 2.5 billion. While in 2011, 25 per cent of the target area of health was channelled through multilateral organisations, this share increased to more than 50 per cent in 2016. In 2011 and 2012, UNICEF and WHO were the main recipients among multilateral organisations, whereas in 2013, IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), UNFPA and UNICEF received the most assistance. In 2014 and 2015, IBRD, UNFPA, and GAVI that were the largest recipients, while in 2016 the World Bank received the largest share with an allocation of NOK 600 million to the GFF (Global Financing Facility).

The main target areas for disbursement through Norwegian NGOs are *emergency assistance* and *good governance*, with an increased focus on the former. There has been an increase in the share of funding

used on *education* from 9 to 13 per cent. The share used to fund *health and social services* has varied between 10 and 15 per cent in the period from 2011 to 2016, without any clear trend. Thus, the increased commitment to education visible in the channelling of funds to Norwegian NGOs does not seem to be at the expense of health-related support in any concerted way. More striking than the relative weight of education and health funding channelled through Norwegian NGOs is the increase in funding for emergency assistance (figure 2). Disbursements to good governance also outweigh support for the health and education portfolios of Norwegian NGOs.

This general overview provides a background for the discussion of ODA distributed to gender and girl-related projects and activities, in terms of target areas and partners through which the resources are channelled.

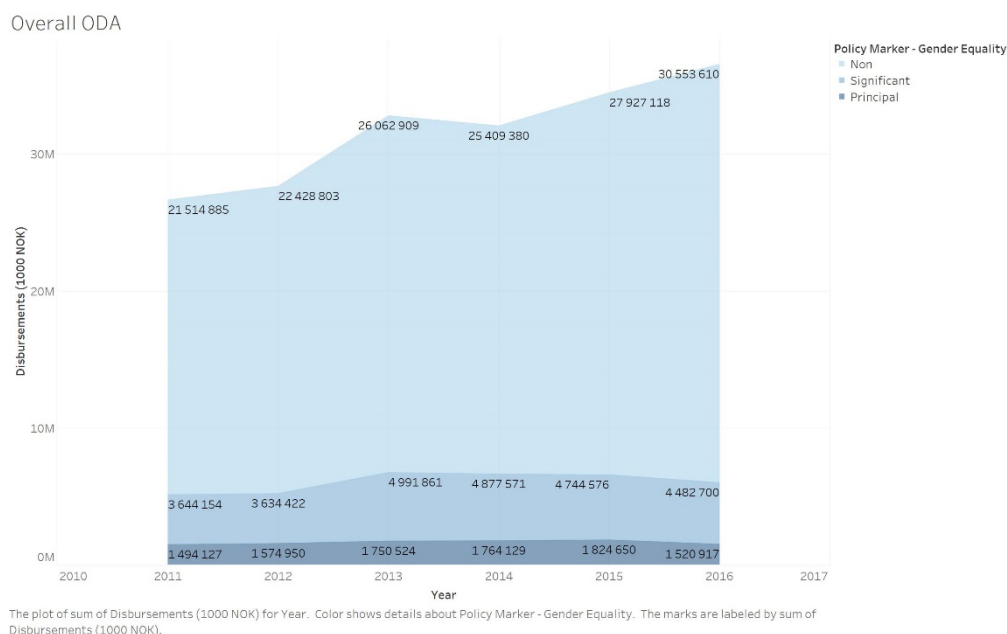
## ODA spent on gender equality

All projects that receive Norwegian ODA must report on the policy marker *gender equality*. In the following we analyse how gender equality funding is distributed across sectors, agreement partners, target areas, and recipient regions.

**Table 2 Norwegian overseas development aid from 2011 to 2016 with policy marker *gender equality* (in per cent)**

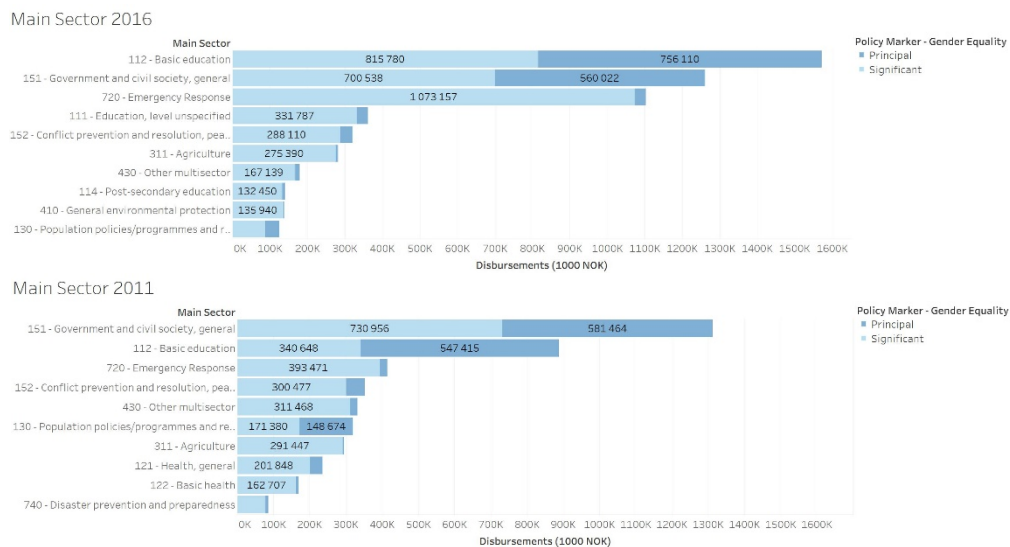
| <b>Policy marker<br/><i>gender equality</i></b> | <b>2011</b> | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Non                                             | 81%         | 81%         | 79%         | 79%         | 81%         | 84%         |
| Significant                                     | 14%         | 13%         | 15%         | 15%         | 14%         | 12%         |
| Principal                                       | 6%          | 6%          | 5%          | 6%          | 5%          | 4%          |

From 2011 to 2016 ODA with the gender equality policy marker increased from NOK 5 to 6 billion, an increase of 17 per cent. As shown in table 2 and figure 3, ODA with *gender equality* as the *principal* policy marker has remained more or less the same in absolute numbers, around NOK 1.5 billion, but with a relative decrease from 6 per cent of total ODA to 4 per cent. Funding with *gender equality* marked as *significant*, has increased from NOK 3.6 to 4.5 billion, however the relative share has decreased from 14 to 12 per cent.



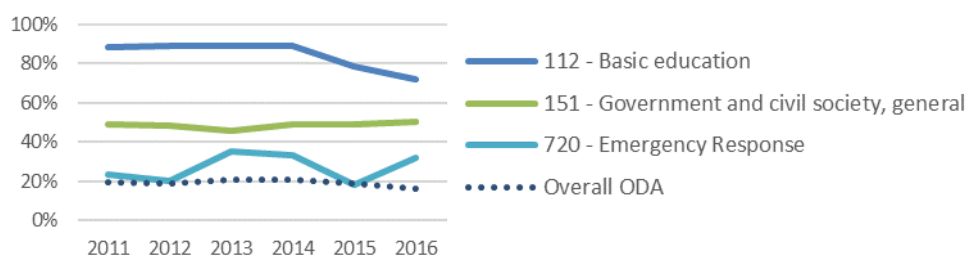
**Figure 3 Norwegian overseas development aid from 2011 to 2016 with policy marker gender equality (in NOK 1000)**

**Main sector and gender equality:** Projects with Gender Equality as a priority area fall mainly within two sectors: *basic education* and *general government and civil society*. From 2011 to 2016, *basic education* moved up to become the main sector for gender equality. This is in line with the focus on education in official Norwegian policy documents, where the education priority has a special focus on girls (NMFA 2017; NMFA 2014b). In addition, the *emergency response* sector has a high number of projects with gender equality as a significant concern. Indeed, this sector had the highest increase in gender equality projects with from 2011 to 2016 (Figure 4)



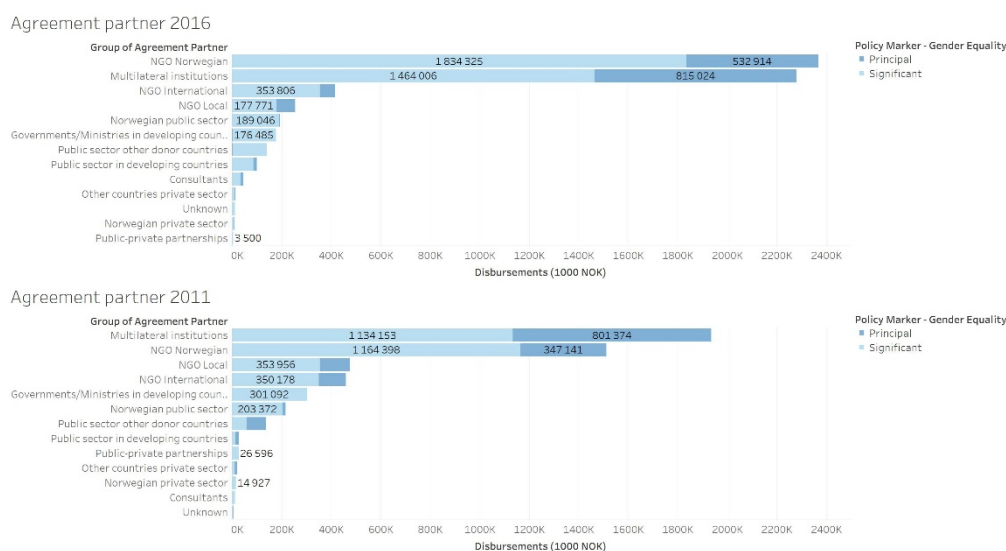
**Figure 4 Main sector (10 most important) and gender equality in 2011 and 2016 (1000 NOK)**

For these three sectors, there is a large variation in the amount of total funding to the particular sector that contains a gender equality policy marker (either as principal or significant). Sector 112 – *Basic education* – has the highest share of funding to gender equality. However, there has been a decrease in gender equality project funding within this sector from 2011 to 2016, from 89 per cent to 72 per cent (figure 5). For main sector 151 – *Government and civil society, general* – around 50 per cent of funding is used on gender equality projects. This share is unchanged from 2011 to 2016. For the projects concerning 720 – *Emergency response*, only 20 to 30 per cent have a marker on *gender equality*.



**Figure 5 Share of sectors' budget marked as gender equality (principal or significant)**

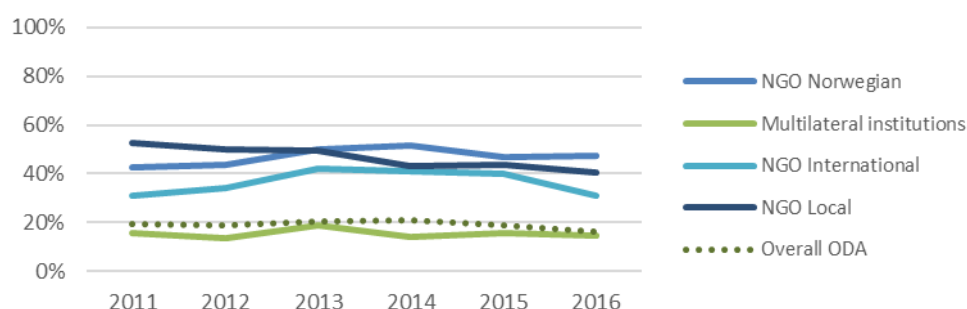
**Agreement partners and gender equality:** The main agreement partners that have projects within *gender equality* are NGOs and multilateral institutions (figure 6), with Norwegian NGOs being the main agreement partners on such projects in 2016.



**Figure 6 Agreement partners and gender equality in 2011 and 2016 (1000 NOK)**

The multilateral organisations spend less than 20 per cent of the funding on projects with gender equality as a principle or significant policy marker. However, as shown in figure 2, half of the funding to multilateral organisations is core funding. None of the core funding is marked for gender equality. For other targeted areas, 30–40 per cent of the funding through multilateral organisations has a gender equality mark. For Norwegian and local NGOs, this share was 40–50 per cent, while for international NGOs it was around 30 per cent. For all the agreement partners the share has been relatively stable over the period from 2011 to 2016.

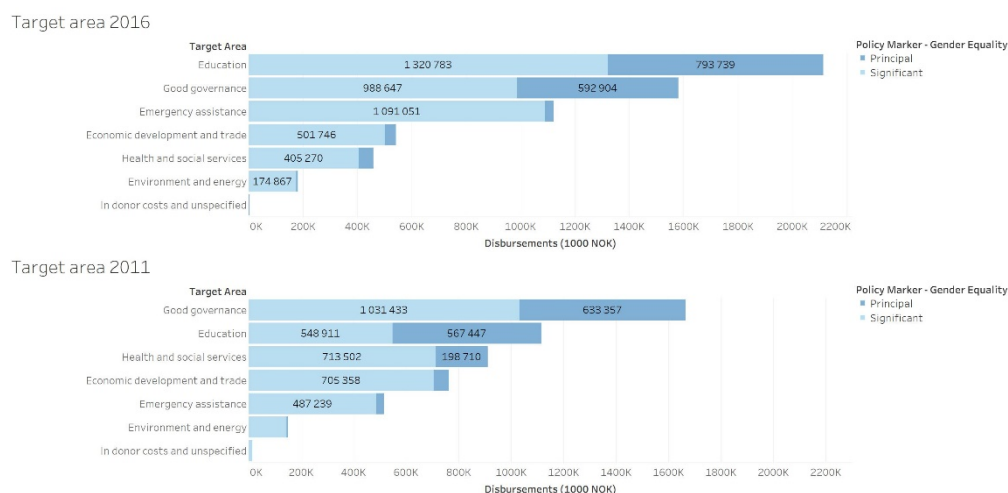
It is worthwhile to ask whether the significantly higher proportion of Norwegian NGOs reporting on the gender equality marker is the result of political consciousness in Norway, as much as a reflection of a de facto difference in project activity.



**Figure 7 Share of agreement partners' budget marked as *gender equality***

**Target area and gender equality:** All projects are marked according to a main target area. As shown in figure 8, projects with the *gender equality* policy marker are mainly found in the target areas *Education* and *Good governance*. In 2011, projects relating to *Health and social services* that were marked for gender equality received more than NOK 900 million, while this was reduced to NOK 400 million in 2016.

Moreover, in 2016, educational projects predominated among projects with a gender equality profile. It is striking that only projects categorised under *Education* and *Good governance* are marked with gender equality at *principal* level.



**Figure 8 Target areas and *gender equality* in 2011 and 2016 (1000 NOK)**

The *gender equality* marker as it is used in the OECD-DAC reporting mechanism is a highly generalised indicator, which does not necessarily capture the extent to which gender is reflected in projects that involve or are relevant to children and youth. The use of the gender

marker also seems to be arbitrary, and the marking practice differs from country to country and within different ministries. For instance, the overall figure for projects marked for gender equality in Swedish ODA is approximately 80 per cent, whereas the corresponding figure in Norway is less than 30 per cent. During one of our interviews, an employee in public administration in Norway was of the opinion that such differences partly reflect the way in which the responsibility for registering such data is distributed (as an example, the respondent mentioned that at one point, just one person was responsible for registering all projects in Iceland). Moreover, this discussion shows that differences may be related to registering practices in the OECD-DAC mechanism as much as to the relevance of gender equality in the projects. However, although many of the respondents in public administration commented on the potential weaknesses in the reporting system, none of them wanted to impose a more comprehensive reporting system.

### **Projects with a special focus on girls and young women**

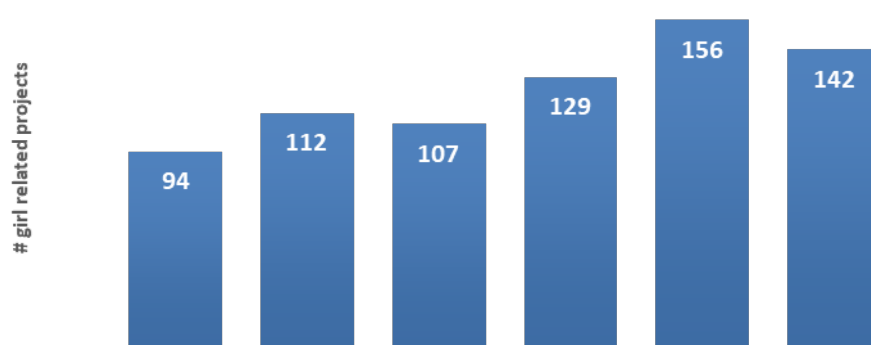
There are no standard OECD-DAC codes for either age or gender in the current ODA reporting mechanism. To look into the projects with a special focus on girls, we have searched the project titles and project descriptions for a number of keywords, and by combining these keywords tried to identify Norwegian efforts in this field from 2011 to 2016. By using this approach, we found that 740 projects were directed specifically towards girls in that period. Thematically, more than 200 projects mentioned girls and education, and slightly fewer than 200 projects mentioned female genital mutilation. Global health, violence, economic development, and child marriage all had fewer than 100 projects each aimed at girls (see table 3).

**Table 3 Number of projects receiving Norwegian ODA (2011–2016) containing keywords in their title or description**

| Category                        | Total #projects | #Projects related to «girls» | Description                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Girl                            | 535             | 535                          | <i>Any girl or young women in title or project description</i>                       |
| Education                       | 3825            | 234                          | <i>Any school/education + girl</i>                                                   |
| Female genital mutilation (FGM) | 194             | 194                          | <i>Any female genital mutilation or FGM</i>                                          |
| Reproductive health and rights  | 402             | 66                           | <i>Any sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights, women's right + girl</i> |
| Violence (including GBV)        | 1117            | 74                           | <i>Any violence, GBV + girl</i>                                                      |
| Economic development            | 3895            | 81                           | <i>Any work, employment, vocational training + girl</i>                              |
| Child marriage                  | 62              | 62                           | <i>Any child, early, or forced marriage</i>                                          |
| Any girl-related project*       |                 | 740                          |                                                                                      |

\* 'Any girl-related project' are projects that include at least one of the keywords listed in table 1 in the title and/or the project description. A project can be listed in more than one category.

There seems to have been an increase in the number of girl-related projects from 2011 to 2016, with approximately 100 projects a year in 2011–2012 to around 150 projects a year in 2015 and 2016 (Figure 9).



**Figure 9 Number of girl-related projects annually 2011-2016**

Not only the total number of girl-related projects has increased in the period from 2011 to 2016, but also the overall budget for such projects. In 2011–2012, approximately NOK 200 million were allocated to

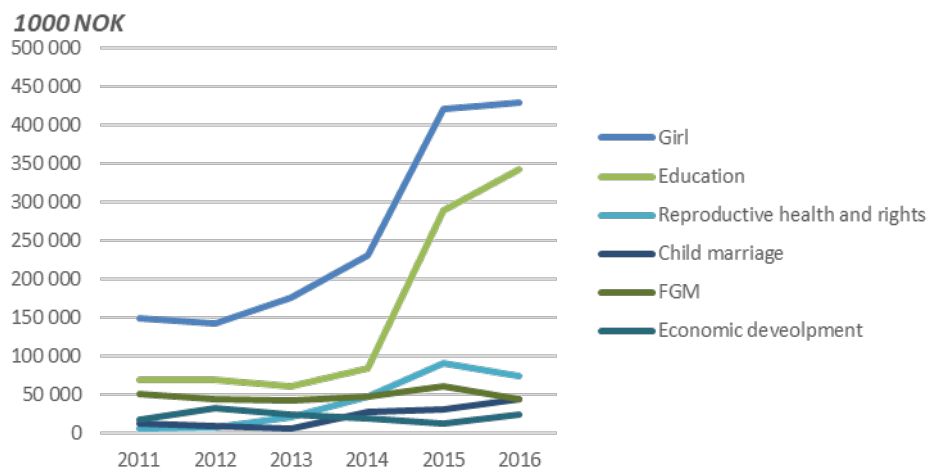


girl-related projects, while in 2015–2016 this was more than doubled to close to NOK 490 million (table 4). The increase is not only in absolute terms, but also in relative terms – the share of ODA to projects aimed at girls has increased from 0.7 per cent of ODA to 1.4 per cent of ODA (figure 10). There is one sector, however, that accounts for most of the increase in allocations to girl-related projects: education. The budget for girl-related educational projects was nearly five times higher in 2016 than in 2011 (an increase from NOK 70 million to NOK 343 million). This increase reflects the strategic priority of girls' education, as forecasted in Norwegian government white papers and strategic documents.

**Table 4 ODA spent on projects aimed at girls from 2011 to 2016 (in 1000 NOK)**

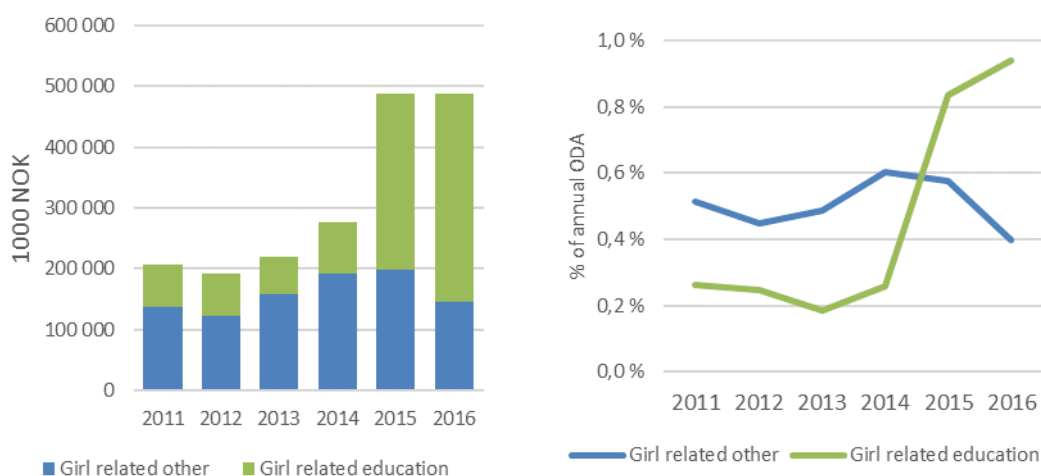
|                                         | 2011           | 2012           | 2013           | 2014           | 2015           | 2016           |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Girl                                    | 149 063        | 142 135        | 176 199        | 231 310        | 421 482        | 429 315        |
| Education                               | 69 657         | 68 582         | 60 232         | 83 321         | 288 582        | 343 472        |
| FGM                                     | 50 511         | 44 389         | 42 686         | 46 587         | 60 693         | 43 332         |
| Reproductive health and rights          | 4 838          | 7 087          | 20 383         | 47 742         | 91 251         | 74 098         |
| Violence (incl GBV)                     | 9 971          | 18 378         | 25 564         | 50 730         | 44 092         | 23 062         |
| Economic development                    | 17 640         | 31 754         | 24 596         | 19 656         | 12 240         | 23 372         |
| Child marriage                          | 11 556         | 8 719          | 5 377          | 26 931         | 30 289         | 44 413         |
| <b><i>Any girl-related project*</i></b> | <b>207 033</b> | <b>192 080</b> | <b>220 064</b> | <b>276 757</b> | <b>487 574</b> | <b>489 003</b> |

\* 'Any girl-related project' are projects that include at least one of the keywords listed in table 1 in the title and/or project description. A project can be listed in more than one category.



**Figure 10 ODA spent on girl-related projects by category**

Even though funding for girl-related projects more than doubled, it should be noted that this increase has been channelled mainly to the education sector. As shown in figure 11, as the funding to girl-related projects within education has increased, especially in 2015 and 2016, the absolute funding to other girl-related projects has remained more or less unchanged in the same period.

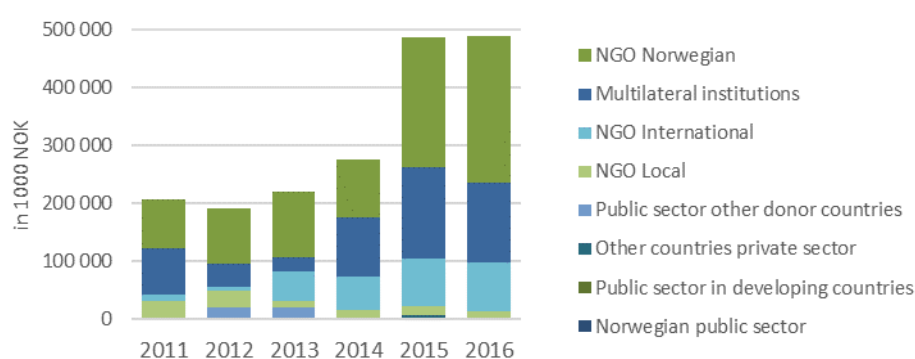


**Figure 11 ODA spent overall on any girl-related projects in absolute numbers and relative to annual ODA**

As noted previously, however, most of the funding for health-related activity is channelled through multilateral organisations, partly as

core funding that is neither marked for gender equality (cf. figure 2), nor traceable in terms of project keywords that would expose a relevance for girls.

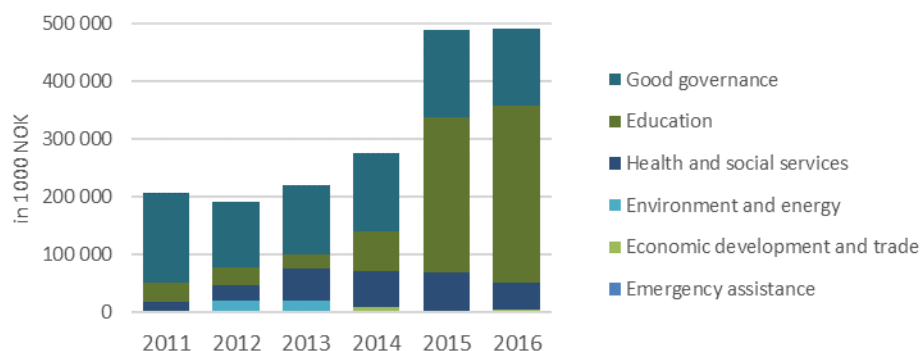
**Agreement partner and girl-related projects:** While the main share of the Norwegian ODA is distributed through multilateral institutions, aid to girl-related projects is mainly channelled through three partners, with Norwegian NGOs being the most important, followed by multilateral institutions and international NGOs (figures 12). The Norwegian NGOs are responsible for approximately 50 percent of all these projects. International NGOs have entered this field after 2012.



**Figure 12 Agreement partner and girl-related projects in Norwegian ODA: 2011-16, in 1000 NOK**

As the figure above shows, Norwegian NGOs received the most funding for girl-related projects in 2015 and 2016. The share of international NGOs receiving funding from Norway for girl-related projects is on the rise. However, it should also be noted that funding through multilateral institutions is only partly reflected in this figure, as their core funding is not traceable in these terms.

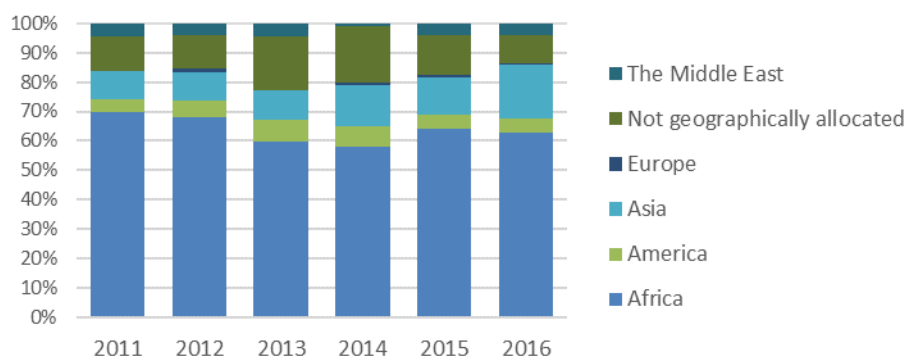
**Target area and girl-related projects:** The target areas for girl-related projects have changed from projects classified under *good governance* to projects classified under *education* (figure 13).



**Figure 13 Target areas and girl-related projects in Norwegian ODA: 2011-16, in 1000 NOK**

Figure 13 again displays the dominance of the educational sector among girl-related projects, as well as the increase in funding to education in recent years. Projects within the target area *health and social services* are also represented. The target area of *good governance partly* corresponds with the aim of participation and inclusion that is referred to in strategic documents in terms of women's empowerment, political and economic participation, and rights (see for instance the 2016 action plan, NMFA 2016). *Environment and energy*; *economic development and trade*; and *emergency assistance* do not figure among recent projects in this respect.

**Geographical area and girl-related projects:** Most of overall ODA is not geographically allocated. This is not the case with the girl-related projects, 60–70 per cent of funding for which is allocated to Africa (figure 14).



**Figure 14 Geographic distribution of ODA to girl related projects**

Malawi receives the most funds for girl-related projects by far, followed by Niger, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Uganda, and Mali. These seven countries received 50 per cent of all funding to girl-related projects in the period 2011–2016.

A further analysis of girl-related projects, shows that four out of five projects on *reproductive health and rights*, *child marriage*, and *violence* are located in Africa (tables 5 and 6). On the other hand, only one of three girl-related projects on *economic development* are located in Africa. The small amount of girl-related funding for *economic development* to Africa echoes the earlier observation that there is room for improvement where additional benefits of the considerable funding to *education* is concerned: investments in education do not seem to be included in the strategic priority of private sector development and job creation (cf. NMFA 2015) in a manner that could facilitate girls' transition from education to a productive working life.

**Table 5 Girl-related projects in Africa by category in mill NOK**

|                                     | 2011       | 2012       | 2013       | 2014       | 2015       | 2016       | 2011-16      |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Education                           | 42         | 39         | 42         | 63         | 202        | 226        | 614          |
| FGM                                 | 28         | 23         | 22         | 26         | 32         | 27         | 158          |
| Reproductive Health and rights      | 5          | 7          | 5          | 35         | 79         | 66         | 197          |
| Violence                            | 9          | 17         | 16         | 36         | 37         | 16         | 131          |
| Economic development                | 8          | 17         | 1          | 1          | 5          | 16         | 48           |
| CEFM                                | 3          | 2          | 2          | 26         | 28         | 38         | 99           |
| <b>Any girl related<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>144</b> | <b>131</b> | <b>132</b> | <b>161</b> | <b>312</b> | <b>307</b> | <b>1 186</b> |

<sup>1</sup>'Any girl-related' is NOT the sum of the above, as some projects only have the keyword 'girl' while others might have several of the above-mentioned keywords

**Table 6 Girl-related projects in Africa by category as percentage of total in category**

|                                     | 2011       | 2012       | 2013       | 2014       | 2015       | 2016       | 2011-16    |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Education                           | 61%        | 57%        | 69%        | 76%        | 70%        | 66%        | 67%        |
| FGM                                 | 55%        | 52%        | 52%        | 56%        | 52%        | 62%        | 55%        |
| Reproductive Health and rights      | 100%       | 99%        | 26%        | 74%        | 86%        | 89%        | 80%        |
| Violence                            | 93%        | 92%        | 64%        | 71%        | 85%        | 68%        | 76%        |
| Economic development                | 44%        | 53%        | 5%         | 5%         | 43%        | 67%        | 37%        |
| CEFM                                | 22%        | 26%        | 40%        | 96%        | 92%        | 85%        | 77%        |
| <b>Any girl related<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>70%</b> | <b>68%</b> | <b>60%</b> | <b>58%</b> | <b>64%</b> | <b>63%</b> | <b>63%</b> |

<sup>1</sup>'Any girl-related' is NOT the sum of the above, as some projects only have the keyword 'girl' while others might have several of the above-mentioned keywords

## Summing up: ODA, target areas, and agreement partners

An analysis of ODA, as provided above, shows that funding of projects that can be identified as 'girl-related' in public records is channelled largely to education. Funding is primarily channelled through Norwegian NGOs, and mainly to projects on the African continent. This same overall pattern applies to projects marked with the gender equality marker. The educational portfolio is large and reflects the emphasis placed on this topic in strategic documents.

The above figures also indicate that health-related projects make up a significant portion of the girl-related projects. At the same time, the ODA analysis here is not necessarily an accurate tool for properly portraying the weight accorded to women and girls in Norwegian contribution to global health. This was made clear, for instance, in Foreign Minister Børge Brende's 2015 written reply to the Norwegian Parliament to a question about the efforts of the government on SRHR. Brende emphasised that no separate posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's yearly budget proposition are devoted exclusively to SRHR, nor does SRHR comprise a separate category for statistical purposes (OPM 2015). Brende consequently stressed that it is challenging to provide exact figures for the considerable contributions channelled to SRHR. He referred to 2015 figures for disbursements to the UNFPA (post 170.71, NOK 401 million) and UNAIDS (post 170.77, NOK 175 million) as examples of the Norwegian funding of activities

related to SRHR. Other budgetary posts, like those on global health (post 169.70), on women's rights and equality (post 168.70), and on support for the cooperative program agreement with the WHO (post 170.76), were also examples of funding for activities directed at SRHR, and support for NGOs working on SRHR and LGBTI rights and equality. Country-level support of efforts to implement the global strategy for women's, children's and adolescents' health for the period 2016–2030 was also emphasised (OPM 2015, see also NMFA 2016: 56).

Related to the visibility of Norwegian efforts with respect to girls in the global health arena, civil servants we spoke with stressed that efforts cannot simply be measured in financial figures detectable in ODA analyses. They stressed that Norway is a major donor and participant in UN organisations, including in the Every Woman Every Child Initiative and the GFF. They emphasised that Norway seeks to influence strategies to broaden the scope of women's concerns to include a perspective on girls (in family planning policies, for instance). Similar considerations can be made with respect to the education sector, in which Norway participates actively in UNICEF, GPE, and the World Bank (cf. MNFA 2016: 58) and has been a driving force for improving UNICEF's reporting mechanisms.

Returning to the above ODA analysis, however, and concentrating on efforts relating to the prevention of CEFM, figures show that in 2016, NOK 44 million were disbursed to projects relating to preventing CEFM. Although this represents an increase, CEFM remains among the least funded areas of relevance to girls and adolescent women. This is not in line with the emphasis placed on harmful practices and violence against women in the government action plan on gender equality in Norwegian development cooperation (NMFA 2016), which cites the fight against CEFM as a goal. Interviews with Norwegian civil servants also showed that the responsibility to follow up on this topic is unclear –it is currently divided between Norad's health section, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Section for Human Rights, Democracy and Gender Equality). Again, there may be considerable efforts put into work to prevent CEFM in multilateral organisations but the follow-up in Norwegian public administration does not reflect that this is a coordinated area.

Moreover, it is not possible to quantify exactly how much of these funds are used on ensuring girls' rights. With the measures currently available, and based on an analysis of ODA, we estimate that about one per cent of all ODA is allocated to girl-related projects. From 2011 to 2014 the share was slightly lower, while the share in 2015 and 2016

increased to 1.3–1.4 percent. The increase can be explained by the increased allocation to education.



# Analysis of the challenges to ensuring the rights of girls and gender equality

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This section points out some key issues deriving from the analyses of official documents and ODA disbursements, as well as issues that arose in interviews with civil servants and NGO representatives. We do not reiterate in detail the findings of the interviews or repeat the main patterns summarised in earlier sections, but instead focus on some of the challenges that arise in work to ensure the rights of girls and gender equality. Five issues are highlighted:

- Girls' rights: Mainstreaming of gender equality as a tool
- The SDGs, youth, and gender: Girls and boys in development
- SRHR for girls aged 10 to 14: A particularly sensitive issue
- Youth, gender, and the life cycle: From education to employment
- Child labour and CEFM (Child, early, and forced marriage): An implementation gap

**Girls' rights: Mainstreaming of gender equality as a tool:** An underlying notion in efforts to mainstream gender equality in reporting mechanisms on development activities and cooperation is that doing so will produce both consciousness about the gendered effects of project activities ('Do no harm') *and* produce interventions tailored according to gendered needs.

During interviews with Norwegian NGO representatives, the do-no-harm principle was described by many as a disappointingly minimalist and unambitious outcome of mainstreaming concerns. Representatives from public administration, on the other hand, along with some NGO employees, argued that the do-no-harm principle represented a step in the right direction, especially on the larger grants. The point raised was that little effort had been made to investigate the potential

negative impact on gender relations and equality and human rights. As the do-no-harm principle entails the establishment of mitigating measures and ameliorating efforts, it will require new routines and considerable input in analysis of facts and dynamics on the ground. Whether the gap in gender analysis pointed out earlier, in connection with both the inclusion of boys and the life cycle perspective on girls' and women's opportunities, it remains to be seen whether the new routines connected with the do-no-harm principle will result in a change of practice.

Some of the civil servants in Norad have raised concerns about current mechanisms for reporting on gender mainstreaming. When a project is marked "0" (zero) on gender equality in the OECD-DAC system, it is not clear whether the project in question does not have a gender dimension, or whether the gender marker is being ignored. It was therefore stated that the aim of the reporting mechanism should be to force project managers to think through the gender dimension and impact. This problem could be solved by inferring a distinction between 'No answer', 'Not targeting gender equality', and finally, 'No negative impact on gender' in the reporting mechanism. This would enable the visualisation of projects that still ignore the gender dimension, as well as the impact of various activities.

Aggregate figures on gender are a stated goal in the targets and indicators of the SDGs. General Assembly Resolution 68/261 further states that data should be disaggregated by age and other characteristics 'where relevant'.<sup>13</sup> Age is a far more challenging indicator to measure than gender. Ideally, both age and gender should be taken into account. However, even data disaggregation on gender has still not been achieved and must be carried out before the age criterion is mainstreamed. Note that several of the indicators in the SDGs (e.g. under SDG1 on the eradication of poverty, on SDG3 on health, and SDG4 on education) require age disaggregation.

Mainstreaming of the gender perspective does not produce interventions targeting girls' needs. Therefore, projects specifically targeting gender, and specifically the gendered concerns of children and youth – in SRHR, education, child labour, sexualised violence, gendered threats in conflict and during emergencies, etc. – are needed to complement the general gender mainstreaming goal. Specifically tar-

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<sup>13</sup> [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/egm-data-dissaggregation/PPT3-UNSD\\_Hooper.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/egm-data-dissaggregation/PPT3-UNSD_Hooper.pdf)

geted gender projects and mainstreaming of gender are two complementary strategies to secure girls' rights (UN women 2014).

**The SDGs, youth, and gender: Girls and boys in development:** An explicit aim of the transformative 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is to address the processes that produce inequalities. This directs attention to gender and the life cycle. In line with the SDGs, the current emphasis on the rights of girls – singled out in SDG5 – must not overshadow the specifically gendered needs of boys. The SDGs specifically seek to combat the use of children in war (c.f. SDG8.7 on child soldiering), which affects boys and girls in different ways. We also know that child labour put heavy burdens on children, and in many settings qualitatively differently in the case of boys and girls. The SRHR of boys and men does not receive sufficient attention. The extent of sexual abuse of boys must also be specifically addressed if the aim is to prevent gendered threats against children and youth. Moreover, the life cycle perspective must encompass a gender dimension that includes the specific challenges of boys as well as girls. Recent trends of ensuring boys' and men's participation in work to ensure gender equality – for example, in sexual education, prevention of adolescent pregnancies, and in discourses on respect, sexual abuse, and gender stereotypes – should be encouraged and elaborated. However, projects specifically targeting the needs of boys are small in scale in Norwegian overseas development assistance (see annex 2). Given the signature status of gender equality in Norwegian policies, boys' rights should be promoted as a stated goal in Norwegian development policies.

**SRHR for girls aged 10 to 14: A particularly sensitive issue:** Girls in the age group 10 to 14 are in a particularly vulnerable situation. Interviewees in Norwegian public administration emphasised that efforts within SRHR work have predominately targeted girls older than 15 years, but in recent years has become increasingly recognized that both marriage and pregnancy occur before this age. Whereas UNFPA has lifted the issue of SRHR for adolescents below the age of 15, this has not been the case for UNICEF. Within the health area, prevention and adolescent sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education, attention to the concerns of *adolescents* – including the age group 10 to 14 – needs to be intensified. Reproductive health data is only collected for girls/women aged 15 to 49 years of age – leaving girls 10–14 invisible in the global health statistics. Norway, along with like-minded donors, has pushed

for an intensification of attention to those younger than 15 in SRHR, but it is a sensitive and controversial issue. This is partly related to the so-called Mexico City policy, a United States government policy in effect on and off since 1984. This anti-abortion policy, that has been imposed under conservative presidential administrations, has caused serious disruptions to US overseas family planning efforts (Starrs 2017). It blocks US federal funding for non-governmental organizations that provide abortion counselling or referrals, or that advocate to decriminalize abortion or expand abortion services. The policy prohibits private overseas grantees of US family planning funding and technical assistance from using their own non-US funds to provide legal abortions (except in the case of rape, incest, or life-threatening conditions), to counsel on abortions (with the same exceptions), and to promote less restrictive laws pertaining to abortion in their own countries (Cincotta and Craine 2001). In January 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order that imposed 'the global gag rule' (Starrs 2017), reinstating the Mexico City policy.

Norway's efforts in promoting the SRHR of young adolescents is thus fraught with sensitive issues. NGOs have a potential role to play in this context, as they do not have to weigh their input against the needs to reach consensus in UN bodies to the same extent as governments do. Even though NGOs must navigate in relation to the 'gag rule' to obtain US funding, they still have leverage when compared to multilateral organisations. The diversification of channels for influencing the SRHR field for young adolescents should be recognised.

**Youth, gender, and the life cycle: From education to employment:** The Norwegian government's priorities on global education include a vocational training component. However, the potential benefit of prioritising girls' education and vocational training is not included the presentations of the strategic area of private sector development and job creation in any clear manner, in spite of the fact that the Sustainable Development Goals encourage paying attention to the entire life span. Along with Norwegian NGO representatives that we spoke with, we wish to raise the question of whether this is partly related to the categorisation and understanding of girls as a 'vulnerable group', rather than as future active agents of change and development. One interviewee from the NGO sector emphasised that, 'intersectional thinking is lacking. GAVI and GFE should be applauded, but women's lives are not seen in a holistic perspective, from the cradle to the grave'. Many current development projects that include voca-

tional training are not sustainable in the longer term (focusing on skills training in connection with the production of services and products with limited market opportunities). Alternatively, the focus in Norwegian development policy on job creation and private sector development is linked to Norwegian business actors. Moreover, the transition from girls' and women's vocational training and education to economic empowerment is not made into an explicit concern. A more elaborate policy in this area should be developed in order to provide a link between education and women's potential for realising their full economic and political rights.

**Child labour and CEFM:** The prevention of CEFM and of child labour are stated as goals of Norwegian development policies. However, these aims are not embedded in the organisational structure of Norwegian development aid administration. The responsibility to prevent child labour partly lies with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the human rights section), which oversees issues relating to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the level of Norad, however, child labour prevention appears as a cross-sectional issue, but is not coordinated in further detail. Similarly, the prevention of child marriage appears to be a concern in Norad's health section, but this concern is not accompanied by a specific project portfolio. In the educational sector, CEFM comes across as a positive side effect of improvements in girls' education. Again, however, there is no specific coordination of efforts to address this issue.

This lack of coordination may well be a consequence of the fact that the government has made other priorities. However, it also seems to be an expression of common mono-causal assumptions in the global education agenda (cf. Kielland et al 2017), namely that harmful practices are caused by the lack of educational opportunities, and thus will cease to exist if educational opportunities improve. Though improvements in educational access do have positive effects in terms of preventing CEFM and child labour, 'leaving no one behind' should include specifically targeted policies to reach children with complex vulnerabilities, those who combine labour and education (also domestic labour), or those who drop out of school to get married, partly as a result of poor educational quality or mismatches between education and local job markets.



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# Annex 1: SDGs relevant for gender equality and girls' rights

|                                                                                               | Goal                                                                                                 | Target                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>SDG 1:   | End poverty in all its forms everywhere                                                              | 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.<br>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.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <br>SDG 2:   | End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture         | 2.2: By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <br>SDG 3: | Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages                                      | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <br>SDG 4: | Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all | 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.<br>4.2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education<br>4.3: By 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.<br>4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. |
| <br>SDG 5: | Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls                                              | 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.<br>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.<br>5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.

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.



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

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.

## Annex 2: An overview of official documents

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The following overview of official documents – white papers, strategy papers, and action plans – is the basis for the document analysis presented in the main text of this report. The list includes currently applicable policy and strategy documents that define Norwegian strategic priorities within Norwegian development policies.

### Norwegian white papers

#### ***White Paper 24 (2016–2017) Common Responsibility for Common Future: The Sustainable Development Goals and Norway's Development Policy***

White Paper 24 is described (on p. 11 in the Norwegian version) as the overarching document providing an integrated view of the Government's development policies previously presented in the more thematically specific white papers (of particular relevance here: numbers 10, 2014–2015; 35, 2014–2015; 25, 2013–2014; and 7, 2015–2016). An English summary of the white paper has been published, entitled *Common Responsibility for Common Future: The Sustainable Development Goals and Norway's Development Policy*.

The paper outlines (in chapter 3.4 of the complete Norwegian version) the Government's five main thematic priorities in development efforts:

- Education
- Health
- Private sector development and job creation
- Climate, renewable energy, and the environment
- Humanitarian aid

It further lists (in 3.3) four cross-cutting aims or themes of Norwegian development aid:

- Human rights
- Women's rights and gender equality
- Climate change and environment
- Anti-corruption

The four latter themes are cross-cutting in the sense that they constitute concerns to be included at a minimum in the risk management of all projects (p. 29). Put differently, women's rights and equality is a mainstream concern of Norway's programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction, and "mainstreaming" implies that efforts on women's rights and gender equality should be a concern across all five thematic priorities. Gender equality is also discussed as an overarching aim of all Norwegian development aid (chapter 3.5), with girls' education securing women's empowerment in family and social life. The white paper also discusses efforts through the UN system to improve legislation to ensure equal rights and prevent gender-based violence (see e.g. 3.5.5/p. 50).

Despite the emphasis on the cross-cutting aim of gender equality in Norwegian development aid, efforts to ensure the rights of girls are given a particular position within the description of the Government's thematic priority on education (3.4.2, p. 30–32, and throughout the paper). The target group for educational efforts is children and youth, and girls and young women in particular. Support for girls' education is also a priority within the theme of humanitarian aid, where the education of girls in emergency situations is listed as a particular concern (p. 44). Contributing to increasing the number of girls who complete secondary and higher education is stated as an explicit goal (5.4.1).

The second area that stands out as relevant to efforts to ensure the rights of girls is the description of health efforts. With respect to health, the white paper lists improving sexual and reproductive health as a priority (p. 32, p. 67), to be achieved through support to UN organisations. These efforts relate to family planning and the right to safe abortion, which are relevant to girls' rights to prevent CEFM and drop-out from school (thus redirecting attention back to education). Gender-based violence includes female genital mutilation as well as CEFM, but this white paper does not elaborate on these issues (which are emphasised, however, in the action plan for women's rights and equality, assessed below). Efforts to prevent gender-based

and sexual violence in conflict settings are also stressed in the description of the government's priority of humanitarian aid (chapter 3.4.5, p. 45 and p. 58). It is explicitly stated that sexual and reproductive health is a neglected area in humanitarian contexts and that the government seeks to step up support to improve these services related to these issues (chapters 5.4.2 and 5.6.2, as well as p. 58 in chapter 4.5).

In the two remaining thematic priority areas, *Private sector development and job creation* and *Climate, renewable energy, and the environment*, gender equality and opportunities for women are mentioned but the ensuring of girls' rights is not emphasised in any particular way.

***Parliamentary proceedings on White Paper 24 (Innst. 440 S)***

In the parliamentary proceedings on the white paper, the Committee for Foreign and Defence Policy commented that policies promoting gender equality are a Norwegian signature (S440, 2016-2017, p. 5), and that gender equality is not only a mainstreaming issue but also a particular priority area. The committee's proceedings refer to the Action Plan on Women's Rights in the context (see below). Opposition parties in Parliament took note of the government's intent to increase support to sexual and reproductive health, but noted that as support to organisations that work in this field (Planned Parenthood Federation and UNFPA) had been cut in earlier budgets in the parliamentary period, the increase served only to compensate for earlier cuts (p. 5).

***No. 10 (2014-2015): Opportunities for all: Human rights in Norway's foreign policy and development cooperation***

Fifteen years have passed since parliament was last presented a white paper devoted to human rights. This most recent white paper describes Norway's efforts to promote human rights in its foreign and development policy. Three priority areas are emphasised:

- Democracy: individual freedom and public participation, particularly freedom of expression, assembly, association and religion/belief;
- The rule of law and legal protection, particularly protection of life, private property rights and personal privacy and development of legal systems and fight against corruption;
- Human rights and equality, with an 'emphasis on the rights of women and children, the right to health and food, as well as ef-

forts to combat all forms of discrimination, including discrimination of religious minorities, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and sexual minorities' (p. 10). The white paper also emphasises children's and youth's education as a basic human right (p. 24).

The protection of girls' equal rights in the human rights context echoes the Government's commitment to education in development policy (cf. both *White Paper no. 24, 2016-2017* and *no. 26 2013-2014*), by promoting girls' equal right to education (see 3.2.6). The white paper stresses the Government's support for gender equality, especially through work toward ensuring women's sexual and reproductive rights (including the right to abortion) and equal economic opportunities, and by combatting violence towards women – specifically female genital mutilation (cf. 3.4.1). Finally, the government stresses its commitment to combatting child marriage (3.4.2) and to protecting the rights of children with disabilities, including girls with disabilities, who are at particular risk of discrimination and violence (3.4.3).

The white paper also foregrounds Norway's support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) rights by promoting the protection of rights in legislation and practice and contributing to awareness-raising efforts, particularly in the education and media sectors (3.4.5). Child health, food security, and nutrition are also topics in the white paper, but the presentation of child health is not specifically gendered. However, deriving from the focus on LGBTI rights, adolescent health is mentioned in the context of human rights work in the UN system, more specifically in the context of the UNFPA's work to promote rights to sexual education and gender-sensitive services to ensure sexual and reproductive health (p. 69).

***No. 35 (2014-2015) Working together: Private sector development in Norwegian development cooperation***

In this document, the government sets out its intention to provide strengthened and strategically targeted support for private sector development in developing countries (p. 6 in English version). One of the 18 points in the white paper is greater emphasis on women's rights and gender equality. It is stated that obtaining a job provides women with better living conditions, economic growth, higher productivity and social integration, as well as helping them developing skills and strengthen their social position, and works as a stabilising factor in society (p. 11 in the Norwegian version). This white pa-



per does not focus on girls particularly, or on children generally. However, it is emphasised that the Member States are committed to eliminating child labour, as well as of forced labour and discrimination (p. 83, Norwegian version).

**No. 25 (2013-2014) Education for development**

Of all the white papers on development policy issued during the Solberg government, *Education for Development* contains the most comprehensive policy on girls' rights. It provides the reasons for the government's intensified efforts in global education, and draws up its main priorities.

Strengthening girls' right to an education is an explicit goal of the Government's efforts in global education (p. 7, English version). The paper outlines the gender gap in primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary education in broad strokes and points out, with reference to 2013 figures, that 'nearly one fourth of the young women aged 15 to 24 in developing countries have not completed primary school and lack the fundamental skills needed to get a job' (p. 11). A large proportion of the 65 million girls (2013 figures) who are not in primary or lower secondary school are to be found in South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa (p. 13). Poverty (including mothers' lack of education), poor sanitation facilities, lack of female teachers, sexual harassment, and violence against girls in and on the way to school are listed as the reasons for this gender gap (p. 13-14, 20-21). Education is emphasised as a catalyst for development poverty reduction, improvements in health and nutrition, and democratisation (p. 14ff.). The education of girls is specifically mentioned as an effective means of hindering early pregnancy and child marriage, and the value of educational programs for ending female genital mutilation is highlighted (p. 16f.).

As part of the intensification of Norway's efforts in global education, the specific goals outlined in the white paper, of particular relevance here, include to

- 'reverse the trend of reducing the share of Norway's international development budget that is allocated to education. The goal for this Government is to reach the 2005 level once more. Particular priority will be given to education for girls and for vulnerable groups of children, such as children with disabilities and children in crisis and conflict situations' (p. 19);

- ‘promote the development of a separate goal on education that is rights-based, has an integrated gender perspective, and takes marginalised groups into particular consideration’ (p. 20);
- ‘ensure that girls start and complete secondary education’ (p. 21);
- ‘ensure that girls in sub-Saharan Africa start and complete secondary education. The goal should be gender balance among those who complete secondary education’ (p. 21); and
- ‘help to develop innovative measures and incentives to encourage parents to send girls to school’ (p. 21);

The white paper further commits the government to promoting the equal right to education of poor children, children with disabilities, and indigenous and minority children (p. 21 ff.) and emphasises the importance of education during conflict and other humanitarian emergencies (p. 24ff.).

The paper stresses the need to improve educational quality in developing countries, where as many as 250 out of 650 million children leave ‘primary school without basic literacy and numeracy skills’ (p. 12). As part of this focus, the government commits to improving teacher skills and national systems to improve learning outcomes (p. 33). The white paper includes commitments to improve vocational training and higher education. Finally, the government commits to improving literacy and basic skills among youth and adults that have dropped out from, or not participated in, schooling, the latter among whom women make up a large proportion (p. 39–40). In effect, the government commits to

- ‘help to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to complete relevant, good-quality secondary education’;
- ‘promote a stronger focus in the international community’s education efforts on combating illiteracy among adults, particularly women, including the use of technology to develop reading skills’; and
- ‘help to ensure that young people who have missed out on schooling as a result of crises or conflicts have a new chance to receive an education on their own terms.’

The methodology for reaching these goals is outlined in chapter 4 of this document. Measurement and evaluation of results is a main issue in this context, committing the government to improving educational statistics by improving data collection and research competences in the South, contributing to the improvement of internet access in remote areas (p. 43), by promoting results-based financing in cooperation with the World Bank (p. 453-44).

***No 7 (2015-2016) Gender equality in practice: Equal opportunities for women and men***

In White Paper 7 2015–16, one chapter focuses on Norway's international promotion of gender equality (chapter 7). Out of the seven points the Government wants to focus on, five are related to girls' rights:

- give priority to international efforts to ensure that girls have the same access to education as boys;
- maintain a strong engagement to combat mortality and improve health services and reproductive rights for women and girls, including teenagers;
- reinforce international initiatives to combat female genital mutilation;
- continue to combat child and forced labour through multilateral and bilateral channels;
- seek to build international acceptance of sexual rights and the right to abortion

**Strategy papers and action plans**

***Action Plan for women's rights and equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy 2016-2020 ("Freedom, empowerment and opportunities")***

Foreign Minister Børge Brende presented the Government's action plan in September 2016. The plan builds on priorities outlined in the white papers discussed above (with the exception of the overarching White Paper 24 on development (2016-2017), which was published after this action plan) and outlines five main objectives (each associated with its respective thematic priority areas):

***First, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys.*** Two outcomes are listed:

- All girls should complete primary and secondary education, which includes vocational training; and

- All girls and boys have access to quality education that promotes gender equality.

In order to reach the overall objective, the plan commits the government to

- support education for girls and gender equality through multi-lateral 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;
- 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; and
- support comprehensive sexuality education through UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF (p. 13-14).

It is further stated that contributions will be targeted towards the priority countries for Norwegian education efforts: Malawi, Ethiopia, Nepal, Niger, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Haiti (p. 13).

***Second, ensure the equal participation of women and men in political life***, with the following three outcomes:

- Women are represented, and have real influence, in political processes and bodies on the same footing as men
- Women's and girls' rights are properly addressed in non-discriminatory legislation
- Women are given the protection they need and have the capacity to defend human rights (p. 17)

***Third, ensure that women have full economic rights and equal opportunities to participate in the labour market***: Outcomes of the third main objective are as follows:

- Women, including women from marginalised groups, are able to take part in business activities and the labour market.
- Women and men have equal rights to economic resources, such as ownership and control of land, inheritance and access to financial services (p. 20).

***Fourth, eliminate violence and harmful practices targeting girls and women***, with an emphasis on the fight against all forms of gender-based violence and prevention of early and forced marriage. The following outcomes and commitments are listed:

- The prevention of violence against all girls and women. The government seeks to achieve this by committing to strengthen international normative efforts to combat violence against women; supporting civil society efforts to combat violence against women; and initiating new measures to involve men in efforts to combat violence against women.
- Sexual violence in conflict is addressed and prevented by implementing the government's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NM2017), in which the fight against sexual violence is a key element; supporting humanitarian organisations that recognise the need to prevent, and protect women against, sexual violence.
- Elimination of child and forced marriage within a generation: Supporting multilateral efforts, especially those of UNFPA and UNICEF, to reduce child and forced marriage; supporting efforts at country level to eliminate child and forced marriage (p. 24).

***Finally, promote sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women***, with an emphasis on the fight against female genital mutilation and efforts to provide safe abortion and ensure the protection of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women by working towards the following outcomes:

- Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including improving maternal health as well as women's, girls', and adolescents' health; improving access to contraception and sexuality education; ensuring pregnant women's 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; and working to ensure that abortions are carried out safely.
- International acceptance of sexual rights and the right to abortion, including ensuring the protection of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women and supporting work to ensure legal and safe abortion.
- Elimination of female genital mutilation within a generation (p. 28-29).

Particularly relevant elements in the implementation of the action plan include the "establishment of a gender equality for development program called 'LIKE'...supporting countries in their efforts to achieve gender equality in line with the SDGs....Priority will be given to women's economic and political empowerment" (p. 32). It is further stated that the "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" (p. 32).

Moreover, the action plan echoes that the main area for addressing girls' rights and equality is support to educational efforts.

***Strategy for intensifying international efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation for the period 2014-2017***

The Norwegian ambition behind the strategy is to work to ensure that no girls are subjected to FGM, and that those who already have experienced FGM are given best possible care.

In the government's political platform, the work to prevent FGM is specified as a priority. Norway is one of the main contributors to the

efforts to eliminate FGM. The strategy states that the government will intensify Norway's efforts in the FGM area by providing political, technical, and financial support.

Concretely, the strategy states that Norway will

- double its allocations to civil society (including diaspora organisations) and international organisations working to eliminate FGM from NOK 25 million to NOK 50 million as of 2015;
- continue to support the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM with an annual allocation of NOK 20 million;
- work to strengthen WHO's efforts to eliminate FGM, including its efforts to combat the increasing trend of trained medical personnel carrying out FGM;
- support competence-building measures for health workers in prevention of FGM and treatment of medical complications caused by the practice.

Norway will intensify its efforts to combat FGM by making more active use of relevant arenas in which Norway can exert influence (in speeches, in talks with senior officials, and at the political level). Norway can also play an active role in a range of UN organisations by participating in their boards and in other forums.

Norway sees it as crucial that FGM be included in the post-2015 agenda. The strategy also focuses on the links between efforts to combat FGM in Norway and abroad.

***Action plan 2017–2020 The right to decide about one's own life: Combatting negative social control, forced marriage, and FGM***

At a request from the parliament (Storting), the Norwegian government has launched an action plan (2017–2020) to combat negative social control, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. The action plan was signed by nine ministers and can be summed up in five priority areas and 28 different measures. Priority areas are

- strengthening legal protections for vulnerable people (to be followed up by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (JD) and the Ministry of Children and Equality (BLD));
- strengthening assistance to people who break contact with their family and network (to be followed up by JD, BLD and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (ALD));

- changing attitudes and practices in the relevant communities (to be followed up by JD, BLD and Ministry of Education and Research (KUD), Ministry of Culture (KD), Ministry of Health and Care (HOD));
- enhancing knowledge in the support services (to be followed up by KD, BLD, JD, HOD); and
- strengthening research and increased knowledge sharing (to be followed up by JD and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD)).

Measure 28 – *to develop an international strategy to combat child and forced marriage* – is particularly relevant for this report. This is the only measure under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The concrete measures mentioned are

- support to multilateral actors to reduce child and forced marriage;
- education for teenage girls as a measure to combat violence against women;
- emphasis on the connection between national and international efforts.

***Action plan 2015-2018: Women, peace, and security***

The UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (S/RES/1325) was adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000. In March 2006, Norway followed up with an action plan for the execution of the resolution. This was further followed up with a strategic plan for the period 2011–2013 on women, peace and security, and again with a new action plan on women, peace and security for the period 2015–2018. In the period since Resolution 1325 was adopted, there have been seven additional UN resolutions on women, peace and security, four of which include sexualised violence and give recommendations for how such violence can be prevented and combatted. The current action plan (2015–18) focuses on how to implement the resolutions from UN Security Council.



The action plan focus on four prioritized areas, and by contributing to

- peace processes and peace negotiations,
  - including both men and women, and both women's and men's rights, needs, and priorities;
- international operations,
  - taking into consideration the security, rights, and needs of women and men in all part of the operations;
- Peace-building,
  - increasing the economic and political scope and influence of women; and
- humanitarian crisis relief
  - taking care of the rights, needs, and priorities of women and men.

## Annex 3: Projects aimed at boys

From 2011 to 2016, an analysis of Norwegian ODA shows projects aimed at young boys that are far smaller in scale than those specifically targeting girls. Between NOK 50 and 100 million annually have been spent on projects that mention either ‘boys’ or ‘child soldiers’ in the project title or description. Most of these projects have been located in Afghanistan, DR Congo, Somalia, and Malawi.

**Table 7 ODA spent on projects aimed at boys from 2011 to 2016 by recipient country (in NOK 1000)**

|                       | 2011          | 2012          | 2013          | 2014          | 2015          | 2016          | Share<br>2011–2016 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Afghanistan           | 7 500         | 5 000         | 20 500        | 29 812        | 18 290        | 17 909        | 26%                |
| DR Congo              | 27 628        | 23 014        | 18 800        | 8 579         |               |               | 20%                |
| Somalia               | 44 500        | 3 000         | 5 399         | 3 600         | 3 500         |               | 15%                |
| Malawi                | 6 440         | 17 200        | 8 596         | 8 978         | 4 358         | 3 266         | 13%                |
| Sudan                 |               |               |               | 12 000        | 8 500         | 6 500         | 7%                 |
| Global<br>Unspecified | 1 410         | 600           | 4 000         | 4 064         | 4 000         | 4 000         | 5%                 |
| Burundi               | 7 136         | 8 329         | -10           |               |               |               | 4%                 |
| Niger                 |               |               |               |               |               | 13 117        | 3%                 |
| Kenya                 | 2 248         | 2 148         | 2 237         | 2 189         | 2 312         |               | 3%                 |
| Zimbabwe              |               |               |               |               |               | 6 048         | 2%                 |
| Other countries       | 1 774         | 2 417         | 478           | 3 058         | 494           | 3 018         | 3%                 |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>98 636</b> | <b>61 709</b> | <b>60 000</b> | <b>72 280</b> | <b>41 454</b> | <b>53 857</b> | <b>100%</b>        |



## Efforts to ensure girls' rights and gender equality in Norwegian development policies

This report sets out to map and analyse Norwegian development policies relating to efforts to ensure girls' rights and gender equality. The report asks how the specific concerns and rights of girls and young women figure in Norwegian development cooperation: How do Norwegian authorities' efforts to ensure gender equality and girls' rights, cohere with the aims defined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Agenda 2030? To what extent are the Norwegian government's stated aims and commitments followed up in policies and overseas development aid priorities?

The report describes the Government's increased efforts within the education sector. It highlights that the focus on girls' education and vocational training is not sufficiently integrated into the Government's support to private sector development and job creation. In addition, the prevention of child labour and early marriage are stated as explicit goals of Norwegian development policies, but are not embedded in the organisational structure of Norwegian development aid administration. Within the health area, reproductive health data tends to render invisible girls 10–14 years of age. Attention to the concerns of adolescents – including the age group 10 to 14 – should be intensified in efforts to promote family planning and sexuality education.



Borggata 2B  
Postboks 2947 Tøyen  
N-0608 Oslo  
[www.fafo.no](http://www.fafo.no)

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