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# Review of the organisation of the Gender Equality (GE) work in the International Programme Department, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

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Oslo, May 2010

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The International Programme Department (IPD) of the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has commissioned a review of the organisation of the gender equality work in the department. The purpose of the review is to give recommendations as to how the work of gender equality may be better organised in the department in the head office (HO) of NPA, to meet the need of the NPA's international long-term development programmes; and make this gender equality work both more effective and more visible.

The work has been done with reference to the main NPA strategic documents such as: Norwegian People's Aid – International Strategy, 2008 – 2011 (NPA 2008a), Norwegian People's Aid Partnership Policy (NPA 2009a), the NPA Strategy for Women, Gender Equality and Development (NPA 1998), and NPA policy with operational framework for ending violence against women (VAW) (NPA 2007a).

The work has also made use of the 2005 mid-term review of the Norwegian Peoples' Aid programme "*Women's Rights and Gender Equality*" 2002 – 2006 (Williams and Sørvald 2005), and the Organisational Performance Review of NPA, done by Norad in 2007 (Norad 2007a, b, c), as well as other recent documents (i) the internal survey of NPA's efforts to end VAW in 2007 (NPA 2007e), and (ii) the NPA partnership and organizational development survey in 2009 (NPA 2010a).

## 1.2 Methods and data

The review is based on interviews with key informants and review of existing documents, policies reports, and evaluations. A number of people in the head quarter have been interviewed, and telephone (Skype) interviews have been done with three staff/regional programme directors in the country (external) offices (Eos). The documents that have proven of special relevance are:

- NPA policies and activity plans
- Reports from staff/country office meetings
- Evaluation of NPA programmes
- Reports to Norad for the Framework agreement 2008-2011

NPA, as many other NGOs, does not have a culture of documenting and analysing their work in detail. Much of the relevant and good work done on women empowerment and gender equality is therefore not recorded and documented.

### 1.3 Scope of work: Institutionalisation or priority setting

This review is commissioned by the International Programme Department (IPD) of the NPA and is limited to the work and responsibilities of this department in the head office (HO) in Oslo. The review has been based on an analysis of how the work of the thematic advisors, including the gender advisor, is organised and communicated and what procedures, routines and guidelines that guide thematic work in NPA. The review has not dealt in detail with the reporting, monitoring and evaluation; but will discuss the role of this in improving gender equality work in IPD.

This review recognises that institutionalisation of gender equality work is important and necessary. However, it also believe that institutionalisation is not enough, and that it has to be complemented with another process in the organisation whereby priorities are made to give attention to specific women empowerment and gender equality issues that relate to core area of concern of the organisation. Mainstreaming women empowerment and gender equality remains the main challenge in gender related work in development cooperation, also among NGOs. To analyse gender mainstreaming one need to do an institutional analysis of the organisation and look at how improved women empowerment and gender equality work relate to core priority and high-profile areas of NPA.

The review also address how to make priorities, and the value added of the gender equality work for the organisation. It focuses on how to strengthen the political advocacy work, specifically on women's rights, and also on how working on women's rights and gender equality may improve overall NPA work on political advocacy and rights, and in what areas work on women's rights and gender equality should be prioritised.

This report focuses on where NPA may need to do changes in their gender equality work, but also where they need to strengthen already well functioning work. Ability to document results and communicate these results will be important.

The ToR also asks for a SWOP analysis. This is presented in chapter three, before conclusions and recommendations.

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## 2 NPA organisation and the International Programme Department

### 2.1 Organisational structure

NPA is a Norwegian non-governmental organisation. It is formally an association with collective memberships through trade unions and individual membership where members take part in 136 local NPA groups. NPA has a broad range of activities in Norway, which encompass (i) the help and rescue work, (ii) asylum reception centres, and (iii) advocacy and campaigning. Its international work is divided between the Mine Action Department and the International Programme Department, both reporting directly to the General Secretary. There are a common Communication Department, a Human Resources & Administration Department and a Finance and Accounting Department serving the whole organisation. The heads of the departments together with the General Secretary and a special advisor form the management team of the organisation. There is also a Board of Directors, where both trade unions and individual members through the local NPA-branches are represented. The Board of Directors is elected by the General Assembly which meets every 4<sup>th</sup> year.

Until 2008 the Mine Action Department and the International Programme Department formed the International Department of the NPA under a joint leadership of an International Director. In 2008 these two sections were reorganised to departments, both reporting directly to the General Secretary (GS).

The International Programme Department has 17 staff members including the director and deputy director. There are six thematic advisors (including result reporting and monitoring) and nine geographical advisors. The Department serves 14 external (country/regional) offices (EOs). Half of the staff in IPD reports to the director and the others to the deputy director. The gender advisor and the monitoring and evaluation advisor report to deputy director. Eleven of the CDs report to the director.

The International Programme Department (IPD) coordinates long-term international development programmes; it serves the external offices (EOs), and is responsible for reporting to donors, such as Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The IPD also serves the GS and the Communication Department with information and knowledge generated from the international long-term development programmes that may be used in external communication and political advocacy work. Likewise, the IPD cooperate closely with other departments in HO on common issues.

In order to analyse the organisation of the gender equality work, we need to analyse the International Programme Department's role and function in relation both to the EOs and to the overall NPA management and organisation. It is not the IPD that exercise the political advocacy work in Norway, but the organisation NPA. But the political advocacy work is linked to and relates to programme activities and conflicts and actions on the ground taken by partners, and the IPD has an important role in summarizing and communicating the results from the EOs and partner organisations.

## 2.2 Country (external) offices and programming

The external (country) offices (EOs) are important elements in the NPA's organisation as they are the ones that interact with partners, discuss issues and summarise and communicate the results, dilemmas and political action to IPD/head office (HO). IPD has a relative strong decentralisation of authority and responsibility to the external offices. The country director has much power, and can enter new partnerships. There seems to be few written rules and procedures guiding the management of the international programmes and the communication between HO's country advisors and EOs, but it also seems that the EOs have a frequent and open dialogue with country advisors in HO. However, most staff interviewed stated that there was a need for more guidance and guidelines for communicating with HO on programming in countries.

This situation was also discussed in the organisational performance review of NPA in 2007 (Norad 2007a), where it was said that NPA had almost anarchistic tendencies with large variations in practices between country offices. Although recognising the strength of flexibility, the organisational performance review recommended stronger internal systems of rules and guidelines, and also making more explicit the role of the NPA organisation at country level. Many of the recommendations from 2007 (Norad 2007a:59) are still valid and should be revisited.

Any analytical work and policy development in the IPD need to be done in close collaboration with the EOs, and based on the experience of partners that work on the ground. The partners in the countries are however not part of the NPA organisation. This dilemma is common for all Northern NGOs (NNGOs) when they work through and with partners, as most NNGOs do now.

The guiding principle for IDPs work is flexibility, and that all work should be embedded in partners' work and priorities, and in country level context. These are highly relevant principles for working in partnerships with social movements in the South. However, such principles also need to be balanced with a clear vision of the role of the NPA country/regional external offices (EOs). How far should they go in allowing partner organisations to set the objectives and goals, and what are the duties of the EOs to ensure that programming is in line with values and guidelines from the HO? Today there is an uncertainty in the organisation about such questions, which seems to make EOs reluctant to engage in sensitive dialogues with partner organisations and their programmes.

The organisational performance review of NPA from 2007 had two case studies; Mozambique (Norad 2007b), and Central/Latin America (Norad 2007c). In both

cases it was documented that although gender was included in the EO's programming as one of three cross-cutting issues, it was less evident how gender equality was integrated into partners' organisational development, capacity building, political struggles and activities. For many partner organisations women empowerment and gender equality was second to political and social struggle for rights, as in Latin America where the indigenous people's movements' main struggle is seen as just access and control of natural resources.

The organisational review was done at a time when NPA worked more on right-based approach than they do today. The review quotes an internal self-evaluation of the Latin America regional programme from February 2007 stating: "In NPA our priority is not the excluded people, we support oppressed groups that struggle for changes in the relations of power. The thing is not to suppress the reference to rights, but not to place rights at the centre of the approach" (Norad 2007c:19). The case study also notes that "it seems to be quite difficult for NPA to work with gender issues, not least violence against women, in Ecuador.... it seems also quite clear ...that the major indigenous people's organisations ... do not see equity issues as a priority". The reviewers also note that even if the EOs is aware of this situation, they have no plan of how to improve the work on women empowerment and gender equality at that time (Norad 2007c).

From documents read and interviews it seems that NPA has become more bold in engaging with partners in dialogue on sensitive issues, but the challenge will remain with the programming model NPA uses, and the question of dialogue on sensitive issues should be a recurrent theme for regional meetings and the IPod's internal work.

### 2.3 NPA policy and strategy documents guiding their WRGE work

In order to address the question of how women empowerment and gender equality (WEGE) is understood in the work of the International Programme Department (IPD), we need to understand how NPA and IPD think about programming and partnership.

The NPA – International Strategy 2008-2011 identifies three priority areas for the programmes:

- Help to strengthen civil society as the key pillar for nation-building, democracy and development.
- Help to safeguard the population by protecting them against exposure to life-threatening hazards such as landmines.
- NPA also carries out relief work by channelling help according to a given set of criteria.

NPA is not a humanitarian actor, but can involve in emergency and humanitarian programmes if NPA or local partners are present in the area and can make a difference.

The priority area of strengthening civil society in the International Strategy identifies two focus areas:

- Supporting organised civil society in strategic areas.
- Access to, and control over, natural resources such as land, water, minerals and petroleum resources.

In many ways these two priority areas are two sides of the same coin, NPA has a strategic focus to strengthen democracy and just redistribution and access to resources, and the main approach for this is to strengthen partners in civil society that work in these areas.

The international strategy 2008-2011 follows the Norad framework agreement period, and it is expected that a new strategy will be in place for the next Norad framework agreement period, probably 2012-2015. NPA had a number of policy papers before 2008 that more or less have been made redundant and integrated into the International Strategy 2008-2011. NPA has a partner policy paper, and is in the process of develop policy papers on organisation and participation, land rights and access to natural resources, and possibly a new revised gender policy. It is an open question as to the need and desirability to develop position papers that state how these policy areas are to be addressed in political advocacy work in Norway, and possible need for guidance on how to communicate these issues in the dialogue with partners.

There seem to be some ambivalence within both in the IPD and EOs as to what the need for policy and positions papers are in the organisation. Many seem to be content with the presence of the International Strategy and the partnership policy, and see the country strategies and country position papers as sufficient instrument for programming, planning and communication within the organisation. Many of these papers are however not shared with the public or with partners. There is a need for NPA to decide on what document they need both for communication to the public and with partners.

Today there is a trend in international development cooperation that it is the partners in the south that develop strategies, while donors and Northern NGOs (NNGOs) have position papers, policies, and possibly action plan for support to the partner organisation's own programmes and strategies.

NPA has Gender Strategy 1998-2002 dating back to 1999, and a position paper on Women against Violence, a remnant from the former Norad framework agreement period when NPA had "Ending Violence against Women" as one of five thematic areas of priority for the international programme development. In 2008 NPA changed from programming from thematic area priorities set at head quarter to programming based on partnership with a strong focus on peoples' participation and mobilisation and on just access to resources. In this process no new WEGE document was produced to set out in more detail what is said about gender equality in the International Strategy 2008-2011. What then still is missing is a paper that operationalises the WEGE in "NPA language" within the political and thematic areas where NPA work. This need to be done, but the work should not be rushed. A good start could be to use the three working groups established in IPD on three political work areas.

## 2.4 Staffing, gender equality advisor and other thematic advisors

The current gender advisor has worked in NPA since 1993, first as a programme coordinator on gender and violence in the Balkans (1993-96). She has had the position as gender advisor in NPA since the position was established 1997<sup>1</sup>. In the period 2003-2007 (the former Norad framework period) the position was changed to an advisor position on the Violence against Women (VAW) programme, but in 2008 the position once again returned to a full time gender advisor position. However, from 2008 the gender position now only serves within the IPD.

At the same time (2008) it was decided that NPA/IPD would no longer work on thematic programmes, but would have partnership and organisational development for social movements and NGOs who support people's struggles for just access to resources as their core principle for programming. The thematic advisors, including the gender advisor, were not to work directly with selected programmes or countries, but primarily work through country programme advisors in HO.

The role, functions and expectations to the position as gender advisor given the new strategy and the restructuring of the international department does not seem to have been given sufficient attention. There simply is not a good fit between the international strategy, the new focus in the IPD's long term development programmes, and the role of thematic advisors, including the gender advisor.

Until today (May 2010) there is no formal work description in place for advisors in IPD, neither for the country programme advisors nor thematic advisors. These work descriptions are in draft versions, and should be concluded as part of the re-staffing exercise expected to take place in 2010.

There are many arguments for having full-time thematic advisors. Thematic advisor positions were developed in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s as a response to increasing degree of thematic programming. Thematic programming developed partly as a response to demands and requirements from donors, and usually not from the ground and bottom up. However, there was usually also some internal pressure from within the organisations among gender sensitive staff that wanted to see more systematic work within their own organisations.

The usual reasons for having full time thematic advisors in NGOs is to give the thematic advisors enough time for ensuring institutionalisation of the theme; in-depth analytical work, drawing on the experience across the organisation; having the time for being a trainer and a facilitator and for inspiration; and requesting accountability from senior management on fulfilling the organisation's policies. Many also argue that having administrative programme management responsibilities in addition to thematic responsibilities risk that the immediate concerns linked to this

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<sup>1</sup> The gender advisor has worked in NPA since 2003, first as a programme coordinator for the programme "Women – the hidden victims of war"; mainly psychosocial support to women and their children exposed to violence during the war in former Yugoslavia (1993-1996), In 1996-97 she was programme coordinator for Tanzania and Rwanda. She has worked as the gender advisor in IPD, since 1997, with the exception of one year 1999-2000 when she has worked as a programme coordinator for NPA based in Albania and Kosovo.

administrative work will take priority, and that not enough time will be allocated to thematic and analytic work.

However, there are organisations that have a flat structure where all staff are programme managers, and also at the same time are given thematic work responsibilities and functions. Their argument is that new knowledge is deeply engrained in the practices being exercised in the field and among partners' actions on the ground, and that being a country programme advisor give you closer access to this knowledge.

Moving towards a new way of organising thematic work at IPD with consequences for the staff work descriptions should be based on an analysis of what kind of thematic and analytic work that needs to be done in the next 5-10 years. The type of work expected to be done and the type of staff organisation selected should fit together. Also the level of uncertainty may play a role. The higher the uncertainty, the more flexible and robust organisation one need that can respond rapidly to new events.

The ground work for women empowerment and gender equality has been done through a 15-20 year period. The partners and country offices also have access to gender equality competence in the countries or the region, which has been built up for more than 20 years by donor funding, and who will have more context specific gender competence than gender advisors in HO/NNGOs. One therefore needs to review what kind of support HO should and can give EOs and partners given this situation. No systematic analysis has been made in this review, but the interviews with the EOs points to the following areas of expectations from EOs to HO:

- Gather experience from the various countries and partners and share this knowledge. There is interest in getting more advice on how to programme for youth and young women.
- It can be difficult to get a good overview of funding opportunities from the EOs. HO could support with knowledge about funding opportunities in general, and on women empowerment and gender equality more specifically.
- Information on training opportunities, where EOs do not find relevant training facilities.
- Generally the EOs needed to have a contact point for gender equality in HO, to discuss relevant issues.

There are two main models for organising the staffing/work of the gender advisor functions. In both cases the focus should be on gender mainstreaming; i.e. on women empowerment and gender quality in mainstreamed programmes and partners.

One model is to continue as today with full time thematic advisors, including the gender advisor; but then to identify better the role and function of the advisor position and to make more strategic and better use of work plans based on the department's overall priorities and targets.

The other model is that NPA reorganise their staff so that all staff members are given country programming management responsibilities, and in addition some/or most of them also given thematic work responsibilities. There might be exceptions to

this such as the organisational development (OD) advisor, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) advisor, since these are thematic areas under development and were extra resources and time need to be concentrated.

There is already a skeleton structure for this new organisation as the political thematic work for 2010 is organised in three thematic working groups, where all three groups need to look into where and how they will integrate women empowerment and gender equality. The strength of such a model is that the thematic work will be closer linked to programming and that more people will have clear responsibilities for working on the thematic areas.

Experience from other organisations shows that there is a threat in form of competition for time of each advisor between programme management and thematic work. This model therefore needs to have a strong leadership behind it, delegate clear responsibilities that are encoded in the joint department's action plan, and in each advisor's annual work plan. There also need for a focal person that is entry point for people from inside and outside the organisation. The focal point positions should be permanent positions, but the people manning them could change over time. There need, however, to be some kind of continuity and stability. One model could be to delegate such focal point responsibility for each Norad framework agreement period. Overall, there might be a value in having more flexibility in deciding staffing patterns related to changes in programming cycles etc.; one alternative could be to revisit staff work description (in specific terms, not generic terms) for each Norad frame agreement period (4-5 years).

## 2.5 Activity plans and work plans

The work of the staff in the HO is governed by the activity plan (handlingsplan) for the NPA and the IPD. Individual work plans are developed for each staff members on the basis of the activity plan. The work plans are supposed to be reported on half-yearly and also revised after 6 months.

Use of activity plan and work plans are regular office routines in many organisations, and are useful work tools to prioritise and coordinate efforts to reach the organisation's goals. The activity plan for 2009 and 2010 for the IDP identify gender equality as a core issue for the organisation. However, when it comes to specific areas of interventions gender equality seem to evaporate.

The work plan for the gender advisor also identify core systematic work to be done on gender equality; such as creating focal point network of gender advisors in the EOs, setting up a gender committee in the HO, competence building of the gender advisor, etc. Progress on these more systematic areas seems to have been slow. There also seems to be a lack of systematic work on the recommendations from the earlier evaluations, reviews and regional meetings.

Looking at the gender advisor's work portfolio since 2008 it seems to have been mainly around four areas:

- Participating in planning and implementation of global and regional gender equality seminars and workshops. These seems to be very women focussed, and to a large degree related to Women can do it (WCDI) training.

- Participating in review teams for individual programmes or full country programmes (Rwanda) and pre-programming teams (DRC), and there being in charge of the gender equality dimension.
- Quality assurance of HO's strategies and analytical work (organisational review) and applications and reporting (Norad) concerning gender equality, briefing of staff before country missions etc.
- Networking in Norway and internationally with NGOs and other organisations regarding gender equality.

The work can be characterised as institutionalising practices, but with few systematic guidelines and little systematic work for improving the quality of IDP gender equality work. The mid term review of the women's rights and gender equality programme from 2005 (Williams and Sørvald 2005) identified a number of actions that could be taken to improve gender equality work in NPA. In addition there has then been a number of meetings and workshops on gender equality work (NPA 2007b, 2008b, 2008c) that have identified lessons learned and proposed new recommendations for improved gender equality work. The meeting of all programme managers in 2009 (NPA 2009c) was the first time programme managers met to discuss all major policy and implementation issues, including gender equality, and the report identifies a number of issues related to gender equality work that the IDP/EOs should work with.

It is difficult to see to what extent the department's activity plans do base themselves on a scrutiny of the information from EOs and partners. The reports from the regional meetings highlight the following areas to be worked with:

- women's place, participation and representation in social movements,
- women and access to land,
- working with men on women empowerment and gender equality (WEGE) (Serbia meeting),
- the role of (growing) fundamentalism as an obstacle to work on WEGE (Serbia meeting);
- how to work better with youth, and young women and men, and both improve their right to participation in decision making and in access to resources (Serbia meeting), and
- Gender based violence (GBV)

Reading reports and interviewing staff in HO and EOs, the impression one gets is that women and gender equality still is a separate field where activities take place in a "women centred"-room. The challenge remains to mainstream gender equality into the programming and in partners' organisational development, and in their programming. There is no doubt that staff see this as the purpose of the meetings organised the last few years, but the efforts still take place within the "women-centred" room.

To mainstream gender into programming may require moving from a "women-centred room" to integrate gender equality in regular meetings and plans. NPA has now organised a number of regional training programmes for women. The time may have come for organising these as part of overall organisational development for

partners, where gender equality and women's right to participation and representation is included in the programme in the same manner as other organisational and political issues.

The usual counter-argument given to this type of reasoning is that there still is a need to have separate workshops for women to train and discuss and raise consciousness in women empowerment and gender equality. But the problem with such an argument is that there will never be enough training and capacity building for women. With limited resources there is a need for making priorities for taking mainstreaming into core meetings, and involving men in the work. This said, if continued need for separate meetings is identified as part of the mainstreaming efforts, there might be good reasons to continue to this in addition.

So rather than continue to "institutionalise" the gender equality work along the lines that already is done, it seems that IDP needs to organise and do the work differently. The first issue is to make gender equality work central to the organisation and its goals and not something to be added on. This requires analytical work, and development of a "NPA" language where women empowerment and gender equality is described as relevant to the social struggle for democratic rights and just access to resources.

The second issue is to avoid making a separate gender action plan in IPD, but rather integrate such an action plan into the overall action plan of the department. Only then may one develop a more specified and operational gender work plan with targets. The gender advisor(s) should not work in isolation, but always together with other staff members. This is already the principle in NPA gender work. However, to do this in praxis, an action plan and staff annual work plans should state clearly who the gender advisor should work with on the specific targets.

The third issue is to make proper priorities. This requires open discussions and analytical work where thematic advisors should work with country programme advisors. One cannot deal with all issues at the same time, and to reach conclusions and move on, priorities have to be set, sufficient resources allocated, and targets met.

Doing things differently is not as easily done as said. But the IPD has a good starting point. The Department has annual work plans and department level, as well as individual work plans, where practical and pragmatic implementation of organisational changes may be institutionalised in new activities and procedures. A timetable for implementing changes may help. IPD might also benefit from going beyond annual activity plans to three-year rolling plans, as many tasks take more than one year to plan and implement. An alternative time horizon is to make 4-5 year plans following the programming of the Norad framework agreement. The benefit of making three-year rolling plans independently of the Norad framework agreement, is that the plan may to a larger extent take into account all NPA/IPD work, create a stronger IPD core planning culture, where the Norad framework agreement is still the main funder, but where analytical work and tasks to be performed are more grounded in the NPA/IPD organisation as such. It is important that a three-year rolling plan be adaptive and responsive to changes from the ground. IPD could also benefit from identifying "projects" within the three-year rolling plans, and make more use of project oriented planning and development in the department.

### 3 SWOT analysis

The Terms of Reference asks for a SWOT (strength/weaknesses – opportunities/threats) analysis: “Undertake a SWOP analysis of the implementation of the GE perspective at NPA, International Programme Department. *What are the potentials and where are the bottlenecks especially with regard to our way of working at the head office and to our way of organising this work?* This includes our way of working and organising political advocacy work, external and internal communication and information flows, and support to external offices as well as existing staff competence. *What are the areas of improvement and how can we improve?*”

<p><b>Strength</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong NPA identity.</li> <li>• Common understanding in the organisation about core goals.</li> <li>• Clear International strategy.</li> <li>• Well developed partnership policy.</li> <li>• Well embedded women empowerment and gender equality understanding in the organisation.</li> <li>• Many partners working on women and gender.</li> <li>• Good women and gender practice on the ground.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of systematic gender development work.</li> <li>• Weak ability to make priorities.</li> <li>• Women and gender not well integrated into the political thematic areas, not reflecting practice on the ground?</li> <li>• Low visibility of good work done.</li> <li>• Ideas for work identified (such as young women) not followed up.</li> <li>• Ability to choose relevant partners?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong focus on women empowerment and gender equality internationally.</li> <li>• Strong interest among NPA funders.</li> <li>• More home-grown interest in women and gender among partner organisations and in countries where NPA is working.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving from activities on the ground (popularising land laws) to high level politics (DFI in natural resources exploitation) may make women and gender issues more marginal?</li> <li>• High work pressure and high ambitions gets in the way of setting priorities and working strategically.</li> <li>• NPA inability to take decisive steps to improve systematic work and make priorities.</li> </ul>

The **strength** of IPD’s work is that there is a strong NPA identity throughout the organisation. Staff and leaders see NPA as unique, and there is a strong loyalty to the

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organisation. There seem to be common understanding in the organisation of core goals. The International Strategy from 2008 has clear language and priorities, and is still valid, and no major changes are expected in the new strategy to come. The International Strategy main focus is to build partnership with relevant organisations in their struggles for democracy and just access to resources. As a consequence the Strategy has been complemented by a Partnership Policy, and the first steps to more analytical work have been done through the partnership survey (NPA 2010a).

There seem to be a high level of support to working on women empowerment and gender equality in IPD, and in the EOs, and NPA have many partners working on this. There is much good and relevant women and gender practices on the ground. Women empowerment and gender equality are core values and goals in the organisations, and need to be even more firmly presented as such in statements, policies and programmes. There is also some uncertainty on how to dialogue with partners and country offices on women empowerment and gender equality. But on the overall level women and gender equality is well embedded in the whole organisation, which gives the IPD a good starting point for improving their gender work.

The **weaknesses** of IPD's work are the lack of continuous gender development work. This reflects more the general weaknesses of the NPA/IPDs planning and implementation of analytical work than the gender work per se. There is overall a weak ability to make clear priorities and to use activity plans and work plans as good tools for coordination and priority setting.

Women empowerment and gender equality is still not well integrated into the political thematic areas, and not reflecting well enough the gender practice work on the ground? Therefore there is still too low visibility of good and relevant work done. There is also a tendency for good ideas identified at regional meetings, such as work on young women, to not be followed up in HO's work. This review has not gone into the discussion on selecting partners, but there seems to be reasons to ask if NPA should work more on criteria when selecting relevant partners?

The **opportunities** for the IPD work are a strong focus on women empowerment and gender equality internationally. This renewed interest for women and gender work is also reflected in funding opportunities from NPA funders. There is also more home-grown interest on women and gender among partner organisations and in countries where NPA is working. It is therefore a supportive framework for working more analytical and strategically on women empowerment and gender equality within the NPA's own and unique framework, and with partner organisations.

Also NPA's international strategy with its emphasis on partnerships and context specific programming, and supporting redistribution, democratic development and peoples' struggle for just access to resources, are much in line with current development thinking. NPA is here in the forefront of important developments within development cooperation at large, and within support to civil society especially.

There seems to be few **threats** to IPD's work on gender equality. There seems to be few external threats targeting gender equality specifically. Rather than threats there

seem to be some challenges that IPD need to address. First, gender equality work need to compete with other competing issues. Working more on placing gender equality clearly as a mainstreamed issues and objective in programme work may be necessary. Second, changing programming over time may pose new challenges. An example is that it is easier to address women empowerment and gender equality when working on implementing activities and effectuating change on the ground, such as with popularising land laws where gender issues are a central concern; than when one is dealing with high level politics and advocacy a national and global level, such as direct foreign investment (DFI) in natural resources exploitation, where the messages on women and gender issues may be more obscure and marginal. New gender sensitive “ language” to capture this situation may be generated. Third, high work pressure and high ambitions may get in the way of setting priorities and working strategically, although the opposite should be ideal. When there is high work pressure and high ambitions it is even more important to be able to work strategically and to set priorities. The IPD’s ability to respond to changing environment in partner countries and within partner organisations will be vital for good performance in gender equality work.

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## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

Women empowerment and gender equality is to some extent institutionalised into the IPD's work. Generally IPD has not a strong focus on head quarter institutionalisation of rules, guidelines and procedures, but instead rely on a decentralised approach where the country offices/regional programmes are given high level of autonomy to do programming and select partners according to local context and local situation analysis. This is the overriding "credo" of NPA, and the organisation is consistent in not enforcing ideas from above and outside into country programmes and on partners. At the same time there is a dialogue, although not formalised between HO and EOs and between EOs/HO and local partners. This dialogue, which is seen as a "ledsager" (friendly supporter) role, opens up opportunities for raising critical issues and voice NPA "positions". There are however some ambivalence as to what extent NPA has "positions", or if the organisation should only stick to the main goals on the general level as they are presented in the international strategy and the partnership policy. This observation of ambivalence is also valid for the women and gender work.

The Gender Strategy from 1997-2002 has never been updated, and there seems to be little demand for such an updated strategy from the partners or from the EOs. All programmes and staff seems to be aware of the need to deal with women and gender equality, but the capacity to do so and the willingness to bring this topic forward in programming is not strong and consistent. NPA/IPD therefore needs to do its gender equality better. A core issue is if it needs to do more of the same or do things differently.

This review recommends that things are done differently, but that does not mean that there is no need to institutionalise and routinize also gender equality issues in the organisation:

- Make women empowerment and gender equality a central concern in the new international strategy 2012-2016.
- To prepare for this make position papers on organisational development, on democracy and participation, and on access to land and resources, that place women and youth squarely in the centre of the topics.
- Work more consistently on young women's and men's rights to participation and to resources.

Country offices and programmes seem all to have a substantial element of gender programmes or programmes with a clear woman and gender result orientation. This

is not said to indicate that it cannot be improved, but the basic foundation for good and relevant woman and gender work has been laid during the last 20 years of NPA work. To some extent and for some partners gender work still seem to be “noise” in the more general social and political struggle. This is a common phenomenon, and has to be addressed both in programming, in analysis and in dialogue.

NPA could benefit from having a stronger focus on women and men taking part in the social movements and organisations, and identifying what barriers there is to active political participation by women. But gender work also challenge existing practices within the social movement and the community at large, and there is an element of necessary “disruptive” effect of gender work, that has to be pursued, even when it create “uneasiness”, such as work on “honour killings” in Middle East, and work on masculinity in Latin America.

How this work can best be carried out need to be decided by the EOs/regional programmes as they are close to the partners and to activities on the ground. There is therefore some resistance from EOs for too much involvement from HO in how they work on thematic areas, this might also lead to underreporting on important activities that EOs undertake, such as gender audit (ongoing) of the Sudan programme office, and the work on customary rights and gender in Sudan, gender and land in the Southern Africa programme, and women’s leadership in indigenous people’s organisations in the regional Latin America programme.

It is not entirely clear as to what position women empowerment and gender equality have in the NPA goal hierarchy, and there is some confusion about this among staff members. Rather than seeing women empowerment and gender equality as a secondary goal, and “side-effect”, NPA needs to integrate the women and gender goal within the other goals; democratisation and participation imply that also women engage in political participation and decision making. Just access to natural resources and fair redistribution of resources imply that also women have access to and take part in the fair redistribution of resources.

## 4.2 Recommendations - work methods

- IPD needs to integrate women empowerment and gender equality into its core thematic and political areas. The three working groups on political thematic work should all integrate women and gender where and when relevant. The work in the three groups should feed into the work on women and gender in IPD.
- IPD should consider develop a policy or position paper on women and gender that link women’s rights, empowerment and gender equality to the NPA areas of political work, and thematic areas in the programming. IPD should also consider what language to use. Such a paper should draw heavily on experience on the ground, and on the work done in the three working groups on political advocacy in Norway.
- This should to be done in parallel to and integrated into the wider analytical work at NPA/IPD. One example is the need for working more on the relationship between democratisation, civil society, elections and (local)

government, where the women and gender dimensions need to be well integrated.

- IPD should develop a good planning and communication tool between HO and EOs that create the preconditions for priority setting and thematic analytical development work. This may also force the EOs to set priorities for their work, and be more clear on what they may expect from the HO and what role the HO may play for the EOs beyond just regular programme (administrative and financial) management. This should form the basis for setting priorities for analytical and programmatic work on women and gender.
- IPD is recommended to move to three-year rolling plans, as many tasks take more than one year to do. Annual more detailed work plans should be developed as is today, but then based on the three-year rolling plans. Alternatively 4-5 years plan could be developed following the Norad framework agreement.
- IPD should consider using the “project development format” to organise thematic development work, also on women empowerment and gender equality. IPD should not try to organise too many “projects” at the same time, but learn from successes and mistakes in working methods.
- IPD should avoid making separate gender action plans. Women empowerment and gender equality should be integrated into the three year rolling plan, and the annual work plan for the department. Individual staff work plans complement the other plans for coordinating and setting priority during the year.

### 4.3 Organisation

- NPA/IPD should consider reorganising the responsibility of the advisors, so that all advisors are country programme advisors with some of their time earmarked for thematic work depending on the annual action plan of the department. All thematic areas should have at least three advisors working on the thematic area, to ensure that the practical experience on the ground and partner’s work is well represented into the thematic work. There might be good reasons to keep the full time positions for the advisor for result reporting and monitoring, and the advisor for organisational development and participation and political work.
- There still need to be a gender focal point in the International Programme Department, as there will be a need for focal persons for other thematic areas. This should be a permanent part-time position, but might not be a permanent person, although there also need to be continuity. One proposal could be that thematic focal points are identified for each Norad framework agreement period (4 years).

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## Annex: List of people interviewed

Petter Eide, General secretary, NPA  
Orrvar Dahlby, Director IPD  
Sveinung Torgersen, Deputy director IPD  
Beate Thoresen, Organisational development and politics advisor  
Liv Bremer, Gender advisor, IPD  
Kjersti Berre, Monitoring and evaluation advisor, former country director Ethiopia  
Svein Olsen, Land rights advisor, former country director Tanzania  
Eva Haaland, Country advisor, Southern Africa  
David Bergan, Country advisor, Middle East  
Martin Holter, Country advisor, Middle East  
Anne-Cath de Silva, Director Southern Africa Regional Programme  
Per Ranestad, Director Latin America Regional Programme  
Nina Pedersen, Sudan, Civil society programme manager