

A stylized illustration of a balance scale, rendered in a light green color, positioned on the left side of the page. The scale is tilted slightly to the right.

## Evaluation of the “Strategy for Women and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation (1997–2005)”

Summary

## Summary

This report is an evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy for Women and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation (the Strategy), and is an analysis of how the development cooperation system, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Norad and the embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Zambia have organised their Women and Gender Equality (W&GE) efforts, and how this system interacts with and collaborates with external partners. This evaluation focuses on bilateral aid, primarily the institutional aspects, including organisation, resources, communication and decision-making. The argument for focusing on bilateral aid is that recently other studies and reports have been produced on W&GE in multilateral organisations.

The Strategy was approved in 1997, after five years of preparations. The main message of the Strategy was that W&GE should be integrated into all development cooperation efforts; in addition efforts should be made to targeting women directly.

The following priority areas were identified in the Strategy:

- Rights
- Participation in decision-making processes
- Economic participation
- Education
- Health
- Management of natural resources and the environment

Norwegian development cooperation has placed strong emphasis on women and gender equality (W&GE) for many decades. There is still strong support for W&GE in Norwegian development cooperation, and W&GE has a prominent place in all major policy documents and in most strategies. The main challenge is to move from policies and goals to translating W&GE into country level dialogue, programming and operations.

The administration has been receptive to gender mainstreaming in policy goals and in mentioning gender as a cross cutting issue in important programme and country documents. The administration has been much less receptive to institutionalising this concern, and the balance between mainstreaming and targeting has not been systematically addressed.

Political commitment expressed in goals and objectives needs to be translated into a commitment to making W&GE an active and visible part of country dialogue, programming and reporting.

### **Institutional resources**

#### ***Staffing and organisation***

Human resources are inadequate for the implementation of the Strategy and support for W&GE efforts in Norway's development cooperation. In the MFA, there is one gender advisor in the Department of Global Affairs, strengthened last year with the addition of a temporary junior desk officer; and a part time advisor in the Department for Development Policy. These resources are not adequate today when bilateral state-to-state cooperation, including dialogue with the embassies on development policies, has been moved to the MFA.

Norad abolished its full time position as gender advisor in 2001, and has since then had only part-time gender advisors.

### *Recommendations*

- It is recommended that MFA create a unit for W&GE work that also has the capacity to address W&GE in bilateral development cooperation, and to work on synergies between bilateral and multilateral aid at the country level. It is also recommended that MFA reconsider in which department this unit should be placed.
- It is recommended that Norad create a full-time gender advisor position with a mandate that includes an active role in mainstreaming. The gender advisor should be better positioned, perhaps reporting directly to the relevant director in Norad. Gender advisor capacity in Norad needs to be strengthened in macroeconomics and gender, and in the poverty analysis and poverty reduction strategies (PRS), as well as in mainstreaming in new aid modalities in general. Capacity in targeting women's support should also be enhanced.
- Organisational arrangements need to be improved. It is recommended that MFA and Norad consider establishing a thematic network on W&GE in the MFA/Norad. It is also recommended that embassies appoint gender focal point persons, and that regular and relevant W&GE information be shared within the system, including the embassies.

### *Handbook, tools and training*

A Handbook on Gender and Empowerment Assessment was published in 2000, and systematic training sessions took place in 1999-2000. No other tools and methods have been developed, and little analytical work has been carried out in MFA or Norad on how to mainstream gender concerns and work on W&GE in the new aid structure and new aid modalities; or to operationalise gender as a cross-cutting issue.

There is generally limited use of both the Strategy and the handbook in Norad, the MFA and the embassies. Knowledge that the Strategy exists seems to improve the awareness of the topic, and the handbook may be of assistance to new people joining the MFA/Norad. Norad's Department for Quality Assurance (AMOR) has been requested by summer 2006 to develop and update handbooks and other methods and tools, to complement the Development Cooperation Manual.

### *Recommendation*

It is recommended that MFA and Norad assess the scope and format for a W&GE training programme, as part of the work with the revision of the Strategy. Experiences so far point to developing of W&GE modules into other training programs as the most effective approach. The new W&GE training also needs to address W&GE in macro economic policy issues and the new aid modalities. Mainstreaming of W&GE in joint donor training should be encouraged, especially at the country level.

### *Reporting*

Responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming at headquarters is currently weak. This is a situation that Norway shares with other donors. No proper accountability systems are in place, and the W&GE reports in Norad have had little strategic value and do not function as watchdog reports.

### *Recommendation*

- It is recommended that MFA and Norad revisit and revise the current reporting format for the W&GE reports, to make them more strategic, and establish a system for follow up to take action on issues of concern identified in the reports.

### *Funding for analytic and innovative work*

There is no earmarked funding for analytical, proactive W&GE efforts. Non-earmarked resources are available in general budget lines for more proactive support for targeting and mainstreaming W&GE, but this funding opportunity does not seem to translate into activities.

### *Recommendations*

- It is recommended that MFA and Norad consider the option of establishing a separate time-

- limited fund for analytical work and catalytic activities for mainstreaming and innovative efforts on W&GE. This should not be a fund for women's projects, but for strengthening W&GE in overall development cooperation, with an emphasis on innovative practices and with a special focus on new aid modalities. A carefully organised and managed gender fund could improve the mainstreaming of gender into planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of projects and programmes, including budget support. However, the Evaluation Team also recognises powerful arguments against a separate gender fund.
- It is also recommended that Norad do a stocktaking on to what extent and how W&GE issues are addressed in current programs for research and higher education, with a view to how this contribute to skills and capacity building both in partner countries and in Norway.

### ***Partner dialogue in Norway***

W&GE is not an explicit issue on the dialogue between MFA and Norad with Norwegian partners, whether it is NGOs, public sector institutions, private sector or research. There seems to be ample scope for increasing the scope for W&GE in partner dialogue, both to promote W&GE and as an instrument to achieve other goals, through improved synergy.

Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS), the umbrella organisation for NGOs working with gender issues, has not been transformed into a competent knowledge partner for Norad.

When the policy on the mobilisation and use of Norwegian institutions in development cooperation (the Norway Axis) was developed in the 1990s, no or little effort was put into identifying Norwegian partners in W&GE work.

### ***Recommendations***

- It is recommended that MFA and Norad consider how W&GE may be an active part of dialogue with partners in Norway, both to promote W&GE as an end in itself and as an instrument to achieve other goals, through improved synergy.
- There should be a potential for a greater role for FOKUS as a watchdog, but also a knowledge partner on W&GE for MFA and Norad.
- It is recommended that work be done on identifying knowledge partners on W&GE from public and private agencies, including research and NGOs.

## **Country level W&GE efforts**

### ***Country dialogue***

Currently, the most important country dialogue seems to be held on macro economic issues, budget support and public expenditure reviews. W&GE issues seem to be conspicuously absent from this dialogue.

The country case studies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Zambia document that Norway has a long tradition for support to W&GE. Partners in the South conveyed a strong message that Norway should continue to have a high profile on W&GE; that Norway should be courageous and active in their support; and that there were missed opportunities where Norway could have been more active.

### ***Recommendation***

- W&GE needs to be more visible in Norway's dialogue with countries, and specifically in the dialogue on macro economic issues. Norway should continue to express strong support for W&GE in country programming, including Joint Country Assistance Strategies. It is recommended that MFA and Norad consider the mechanisms whereby they may improve the visibility and voice of W&GE, including the option of (joint donor) gender auditing of country programmes.

### ***Mainstreaming and targeting***

It is difficult to document good practices of mainstreaming, except in sectors where W&GE issues are well integrated, such as support to the education sector. There is no evidence that Norway is at the forefront of mainstreaming and integration of gender in its programmes and projects. It is

remarkable that W&GE is not mainstreamed into the programme support in Afghanistan, where the situation of women was one of the primary reasons for support to the country.

Norway has been an active partner in supporting gender secretariats and women's NGOs in several countries. This support has moved well beyond financial support, and it has developed into partnership relations that support the active use of institutional structures and policies and has assisted in solving organisational problems and in setting up functional units. The embassies have struggled with the challenge of setting up appropriate financial management systems to numerous NGOs, and many have opted for creating umbrella organisations, that channel funding to their member organisations. Umbrella organisations are efficient financial management mechanisms, but may hamper the development of individual member organisations.

#### *Recommendations*

- It is recommended that MFA and Norad do a stocktaking of their experiences with support to gender secretariats and women's NGOs. Embassies should be more systematic in their support to gender mainstreaming in national planning, sector support and women's NGOs so as to make local/national gender strategies operational.
- Support to women's NGOs offers a unique opportunity for access to information and knowledge about national and local social and economic development. Attempts to form umbrella organisations in the South should be reconsidered. Alternative options in the form of gender funds might be considered. A call for concentration and new aid modalities should not crowd out such partnership efforts on W&GE.

#### *Development partner groups on gender*

The embassies in our three case countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Zambia, as well as many other embassies, are active members in Development Partner Groups on W&GE. However, these W&GE groups seem to lack a strategic focus in several countries, and they seem to have problems addressing mainstreaming and working with other thematic donor groups.

#### *Recommendation*

- The embassies should actively contribute to making the Development Partner Groups work more effectively on gender.

### **Harmonisation and new aid modalities**

#### *Changing aid modalities*

Harmonisation has not been sufficiently reflected in gender policy work, and gender issues have been little reflected in harmonisation efforts. Work does not seem to have been initiated on this important topic, neither in Norad nor the MFA.

The implementation of the gender strategy has not been adapted to the context of changing aid modalities. Hardly any analytical work has been done on this, and W&GE was almost totally absent from the new policy development in Norad in 1999-2003.

New aid modalities, such as sector concentration and harmonisation, restrict the number of policy issues to be presented. A harmonised donor dialogue focussing on macro economic questions and related to general budget support (GBS) may easily become overloaded, and both partner countries and donors are concerned about this. W&GE may easily suffer from this and be left out of the policy dialogue. At the same time, the new aid modalities also offer the possibility of addressing W&GE at a higher national policy level. Little use is made of this opportunity today, and little analytical efforts are invested into addressing how W&GE is interlinked with other goals, and can be instrumental in promoting these goals.

### *Recommendation*

- It is recommended that specific work be done on how to open up the possibilities for addressing W&GE in new aid modalities and joint country level dialogue. It is also recommended that MFA and Norad invest in analytic work and research to improve the knowledge, and ability to develop indicators and monitoring systems that account for the synergies between complimentary goals. Approaches to this as well as tools and methods, need to be developed in cooperation with other donors and key partners whenever possible.

### ***Gendering PRSP and MDGs***

Much work does exist globally on the gendering of the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Less work seems to have been done on sector and budget support. Norway supports many of these efforts internationally, through funding of UN agencies and International Financial Institutions, but it does not seem to bring the lessons learned back to its own organisation and work. Norway is not a leader in these efforts, and few Norwegian resources, either in the administration itself or the external resource base, are allocated to such activities.

W&GE efforts, imperative for reaching the MDGs, require analytical work on gendering the MDGs. Much work in this area is already being performed on a global scale, and Norway needs to catch up. Norway should continue to step up its support to gendering of the PRSPs.

### *Recommendation*

- A joint donor fund for innovative efforts in mainstreaming W&GE to reach the MDGs is being discussed in MFA. The Evaluation Team supports such an idea, which will go beyond the efforts that Norway supports in the individual development banks. In particular, such a fund should cover joint donors' initiatives at the country level.

### **Input to the revision of the W&GE strategy**

The W&GE Strategy is to be revised in 2006. The status of a new strategy for W&GE should be made clear. There are grounds to argue that the strategy for W&GE should be given a higher status than many other strategies. There is also a need to analyse the implication of W&GE as an overarching issue versus a cross-cutting issue.

The new strategy itself needs to be embedded firmly in the organisation and at all management levels. This requires that the revision of the Strategy be carried out in a manner that includes a broad spectre of the development cooperation administration.

The ambitions of the revised strategy should be adapted to a situation of new aid modalities, harmonisation and partnerships. It should be formulated in a language identifying ambitions and targets that the system can operationalise and report on to the Norwegian National Assembly.

A revised strategy needs to be accompanied by the development of tools and methods for its implementation and for training purposes. Much work is being performed internationally on this. As much as possible, MFA and Norad should work in cooperation with other donors on this. The reestablishment of a Nordic network for gender advisors could serve as a focal point for this. The MFA and Norad should also make active use of the OECD/DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) in these efforts. The embassies should be actively involved in these efforts to ensure that tools and methods are relevant to their activities in the partner countries.

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