

**United Nations Special Session on Children
May 2002**

Report to the UN on Norway's follow-up

January 2007

Ministry of Children and Equality

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Foreword

The UN Special Session on Children took place from 8 to 10 May 2002. In the outcome document, *A world fit for children*, Member States committed to preparing national plans of action. Norway's plan of action, *Norway's follow-up to the United Nations Special Session on Children*, was sent to the UN in January 2004.

The UN General Assembly has decided to hold a follow-up meeting in 2007, and UNICEF has asked for a report on the results of the efforts made thus far. The following is the Norwegian input to the global report to be prepared by UNICEF in support of the 2007 plenary meeting.

Norway's national plan of action sets out ten main goals and a number of related measures. This report outlines the steps taken to follow up on the plan and focuses on a selection of the measures taken by the authorities.

Several of the measures in the national plan of action have been discussed between the civil society, the Ombudsman for Children and the national authorities.

In the context of the follow up reference is also made to Norway's report of January 2005 in response to the questionnaire from the Independent Expert in the preparation of the United Nations Secretary-General's study on violence against Children and the process initiated in Norway on the follow up of the recommendations of the report.

The following ministries have contributed to this report: the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Children and Equality, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Justice and the Police, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Children and Equality has coordinated the preparation of the report in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Contents

Foreword	2
Contents.....	3
Main Goal No. 1: Strengthen the participation and influence of children and young people in society	4
Main Goal No. 2: Combat bullying and other antisocial behaviour	5
Main Goal No. 3: Combat child and youth crime	6
Main Goal No. 4: Promote the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities	7
Main Goal No. 5: Strengthen services for children and young people with mental health problems	8
Main Goal No. 6: Prevent substance abuse among children and young people, and improve the treatment and rehabilitation of young substance abusers	9
Main Goal No. 7: Strengthen preventive child welfare measures targeting children and families, and promote the participation of and communication between children and young people and support services.....	10
Main Goal No. 8: Strengthen educational programmes for children and young people from minority backgrounds.....	11
Main Goal No. 9: Protect, rehabilitate and integrate children who have experienced war and conflict, and refugee children who come to Norway as unaccompanied minors.....	12
Main Goal No. 10: Intensify development cooperation efforts to strengthen children's rights to health, education and protection, and to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic.....	14

Main Goal No. 1: Strengthen the participation and influence of children and young people in society

References:

Final Document “A World Fit for Children”: paragraph 7 (9) of the Declaration:

“Listen to children and ensure their participation. Children and adolescents are resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. We must respect their right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.”

See also paragraphs 32 (1-10) of the Plan of Action

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

To strengthen the participation and influence of children and young people, to ensure an increase in the number of municipalities with frameworks for the systematic participation of children and young people, and to give children and young people greater opportunity to influence municipal policy developments and plans that concern them.

Follow-up measures

- *Improved contacts between children, young people and politicians.* In 2006, the Ministry of Children and Equality issued a circular on the participation and influence of children and young people (Q-27/2006). It contains information and guidance for municipalities, encouraging them to increase their efforts in many areas, and go beyond the establishment of a youth council.
- The Ministry of Children and Equality has published a manual on youth councils (2006) which contains tips and advice to make the work of the councils more effective and strengthen their contact with the municipality, politicians and various groups of children and young people.
- *More participation by young people in official councils and committees.* The Local Government Act gives young people the right to attend and speak at municipal and county council meetings. Young people may also be elected as representatives, with full rights to sit on boards, councils and committees.
- *Information and the exchange of experience.* In 2003, an ideas brochure containing examples from a number of municipalities and counties was published. The Ministry of Children and Equality has arranged an annual children’s and young people’s conference for the municipal sector since 2003. The participation of children and young people is a permanent agenda item at this event. A third of the attendees are young people, and the conference offers them an opportunity to exchange experience, particularly through events like the special workshop on youth councils held in 2006. The conference also features the announcement of the children’s and young people’s municipality of the year. The real participation of children and young people is one of the main eligibility criteria for the award.
- *Support for local research and development efforts/youth networks and databases.* The Ministry of Children and Equality has given support to a conference for county-level bodies through which children and young people can exert an influence, and to a website (www.ung-makt.no) for the exchange of experience and ideas between municipal youth councils and youth county councils. The website includes a database with information on youth councils and similar bodies in Norway’s municipalities.

Main Goal No. 2: Combat bullying and other antisocial behaviour

References:

Final document “A World Fit for Children”, paragraph 44(3) of The Plan of Action:

“Adopt special measures to eliminate discrimination against children on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion ... ”

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

The *Manifesto against Bullying* was signed by the Government, the Ombudsman for Children in Norway, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, the Union of Education Norway and the National Parents’ Committee for Primary and Lower Secondary Education in September 2002. The parties to the Manifesto committed themselves to promoting zero tolerance of bullying, and to promoting commitment and motivation in respect of anti-bullying efforts in day-care centres, schools, homes and in connection with organised leisure activities. The current Government has adopted a renewed Manifesto against Bullying for the period 2006–2008.

Follow-up measures

- Changes to section 9a of the Education Act (relating to pupils’ school environment) and section 11-5a (relating to school environment committees) have increased pupil participation and given pupils greater opportunities to be involved in developing a good school environment.
- Information and information materials on *Det store oppdraget* (The Big Assignment) programme were sent out to pupil councils in 2003.
- The *Manifesto against Bullying* (2002–2004) has been evaluated by Rogaland Research (now the International Research Institute of Stavanger). The researchers’ report (Tikkanen, T. and Junge, A.: *Realisering av en visjon om et mobbefritt oppvekstmiljø for barn og unge* (Realising a vision of a bullying-free development environment for children and young people), Rogaland Research, 2004) highlighted the following:
 - The Manifesto’s greatest success has been to increase awareness of bullying.
 - Almost 800 schools have begun using either the *Olweus* programme, which focuses on bullying and anti-social behaviour at school, or the *Zero* programme on bullying from the University of Stavanger’s Centre for Behavioural Research. Evaluations have shown that the programmes have an effect, reducing the incidence of bullying at schools that implement them systematically.
 - The *Manifesto against Bullying* appears to be most well-known at primary school level, where most of the activities carried out during the manifesto period took place.
 - Parents have become more involved in local cooperation and in developing a better social environment for children and young people in general.
 - The anti-bullying effort has been formalised by the new section 9a of the Education Act relating to pupils’ physical and psychosocial school environment. The section obliges schools to make systematic efforts to ensure a bullying-free environment.
- Voluntary children’s and young people’s organisations and youth clubs also play a central role in anti-bullying efforts and efforts to ensure a good development environment for children and young people. A manual for the heads of voluntary

children's and young people's organisations and youth clubs was developed and distributed in 2006.

- Progress in the effort to eliminate bullying and anti-social behaviour is assessed by means of the annual pupil and apprentice survey. This net-based questionnaire asks pupils at upper primary and lower secondary level, and pupils and apprentices at upper secondary level, to assess various aspects of the education environment.
- Experience shows that anti-bullying efforts have to be included in efforts to create a healthy and secure development and learning environment. Day-care centres play an important role in preventing discrimination and bullying at an early stage. Parents and guardians, children and young people all have to participate actively in efforts to eliminate bullying.

Main Goal No. 3: Combat child and youth crime

References:

Final document "A World Fit for Children", paragraph 44(7) of The Plan of Action:

"Promote the establishment of prevention, support and caring services as well as justice systems specifically applicable to children ..."

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

1. To strengthen cooperation between the police and local support systems, with a view to preventing child and youth from offending as well as protecting society against crimes committed by juveniles;
2. To reduce the use of prison sentences for offenders aged under 18.

Follow-up measures

- In 2005, six ministries joined forces to develop national measures to strengthen the effort against juvenile crime. The plan of action *Sammen mot barne- og ungdomskriminalitet* ("Together against child and youth crime") (2005–2008) focuses on the individual juvenile offender, and contains measures to secure predictable and coordinated individual follow-up. The main foci of the action plan are rehabilitation of the individual and thus prevention of their reoffending. Restorative justice is important in this work. The intention is to break trends that could lead to criminal careers. The plan aims to put in place a commitment to cooperate between the law enforcement authorities, support systems, parents and the young people in question.
- Statistics for 2003 show that fewer young people were charged with crimes than in 2002, and that the number of under-18s charged was at its lowest level since 1998. Four local follow-up teams were established as a project early 2006 for 3 years. The teams will focus on structured, binding and predictable cooperation between the law enforcement authorities, support systems and the young people's own networks in individual cases of young offenders.
- In order to reduce the use of prison for offenders aged under 18, the Government is setting up a commission which shall put forward alternative sanctions for this group. The mandate and time frame for the commission's work will be decided during the spring of 2007. The commission will cooperate closely with the relevant authorities.
- Norway has carried out a project of youth contracts as an alternative sanction for young offenders. A young person entering into a contract committing him- or herself to completing certain activities, in return for which the authorities refrain from taking

further legal action. As a result of the evaluation of the project, it was concluded that youth contracts should continue to be used.

- Six subsidiary projects have been carried out. These have adopted different approaches, but have all involved the development of formalised placement of responsibility, goal-orientated cooperation between the administrative authorities and continuity in the follow-up of young offenders before and after imprisonment or sentencing. The evaluation of five of the projects will be completed by the middle of 2007, and will form the basis of further follow-up.
- Cooperation between the police and municipal authorities has been a priority area since the early nineties. Today more than 160 municipalities have established a binding, cooperation between the police and other public bodies on the coordination of local crime prevention measures. The primary target group of this cooperation is children and young people. The Government is working to strengthen local cooperation further through municipal police councils.

Main Goal No. 4: Promote the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities

References:

Final document “A World Fit for Children”, paragraph 37(17) of The Plan of Action:

“Ensure effective access by children with disabilities and children with special needs to integrated services, including rehabilitation and health care ...”

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

Pupils should experience inclusive, adapted schools, where everyone has the chance to succeed in accordance with his or her abilities, skills and interests. Pupils with disabilities should be given carefully planned help and guidance during the transition between lower secondary school and upper secondary school, and in the subsequent transition to higher education or employment.

Follow-up measures

- *The Action Plan for Increased Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities* (2004) envisages universal design in important areas of society. Measures include the improvement and adaptation of school buildings.
- The public authorities give significant financial support to the development of adapted teaching materials for children and young people with special learning needs. Digital teaching resources are key in the effort to compensate for reduced physical ability. Efforts are being made to persuade private publishers to ensure that standard teaching materials are made accessible to all. Special public bodies work on making standard textbooks accessible to certain smaller groups of pupils, such as the deaf and the blind.
- Public bodies provide information and guidance on the education of children and young people with physical disabilities. Various user forums have been established, including the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training’s council for inclusive education and its user forum for equivalent education. Interest groups for the disabled are consulted before significant measures are implemented. In 2006, the Queen Sonja annual school prize was set up. It is awarded to a school that has made outstanding efforts to promote inclusion and equality.
- The *Adapted education and special education* project was completed in the autumn of 2006. Its purpose was to offer pupils a high-quality education within the ordinary

school framework while reducing the amount of special education given on an individual basis. The evaluation will chart the experience and knowledge gained, and will help to improve adapted teaching in schools generally. The evaluation report will be completed by the spring of 2007.

- The evaluation of the *Separate Counselling Services* project (Buland and Havn, 2003), showed that separating the career guidance and student welfare services in schools was beneficial to both. The Storting has therefore recommended that these services be divided in upper secondary education, and that division be considered locally at lower secondary level. (Recommendation S. No. 268 (2003–2004).)
- Norway has carried out several evaluations and investigations of the state of the Norwegian primary education sector since 2003. These have revealed a number of challenges related to the education offered to children and young people with reduced physical abilities. In 2007, a special national inspection will take place to establish whether school owners have in place satisfactory systems for ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Education Act on adapted education and special education. Work is continuing on developing indicators for and statistics on how children and young people with reduced physical abilities are catered for in schools.

Main Goal No. 5: Strengthen services for children and young people with mental health problems

References:

Final document “A World Fit for Children”, paragraph 37(18) of The Plan of Action:

“Provide special help to children suffering from mental illnesses or psychological disorders.”

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

The Norwegian Government’s policy platform has made strengthening the support given to children and young people with mental health problems a priority. Efforts in this respect include the National Programme for Mental Health (1999–2008) and the strategic plan for children and young people’s mental health (2003). The strategic plan, whose 100 measures have largely been implemented already, is being continued by the current Government. The remaining measures will be implemented by 2008.

Follow-up measures

- The Government will seek to secure a reduction in waiting times for children and young people in the specialised mental health services for children and adolescents by introducing a maximum waiting time guarantee. A working group has reported on the possible form this guarantee could take, and how it could be introduced. The report has been circulated for comment and is now being followed up.
- In 2006, Norway’s regional health authorities were informed that services for children and young people with mental health problems and young substance abusers have special priority. Municipalities are expected to use at least 20 per cent of earmarked funds to expand the services offered to children and young people.
- Various steps have been taken to implement the promise in the Government’s policy platform that the children of parents with psychological or substance abuse problems will be given help and followed up.
- The Government will give special priority to the recruitment of psychologists to strengthen municipalities’ work with children and young people. Cross-sector cooperation is to be given greater emphasis.

- In 2007, a multi-discipline further education programme in psychosocial work with children and young people will be offered at university colleges across Norway. The programme is primarily intended for municipal employees such as teachers, child welfare officers, workers in the culture and leisure sector, and health clinic and school health service personnel.
- Low-threshold services that focus on preventive psychosocial efforts are to be established to enable the early detection of problems and the early treatment, follow-up and rehabilitation/habilitation of children and young people with mental health and psychosocial problems. A guide to municipal mental health care for children and young people is to be published in 2007.
- Evaluation of the *Family centre* project has shown that family centres have provided more accessible services for children who are at risk of developing psychosocial problems. The 2007 government budget recognises the family centre model as a practical way of organising different services at municipal level.
- From 2007, lower and upper secondary schools will be offered competence-enhancing programmes on psychological health in school.
- The Norwegian Center for Studies on Violence and Traumatic Stress was established in 2004. Children and young people are one of the Center's main priority areas. Five regional resource centres will be established by the end of 2007.

Main Goal No. 6: Prevent substance abuse among children and young people, and improve the treatment and rehabilitation of young substance abusers

References:

Final document "A World Fit for Children", paragraph 37 (20) of The Plan of Action:

"Develop and implement policies and programmes for children, including adolescents, aimed at preventing the use of narcotic drugs ..."

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

To reduce substantially the harmful social and health effects of alcohol and drug use, to promote preventive measures among children and young people, and to provide better advice, help and treatment for people with substance abuse problems and their families.

Follow-up measures

- *Pilot project on substance abuse prevention.* The pilot project on the coordination of local substance abuse prevention measures was allocated NOK 8 million in 2003, and concluded in September 2006. The project is currently being evaluated, and the results will be available in the spring of 2007.
- *Awareness-raising campaign.* In 2004, NOK 15 million was allocated for the purpose of implementing awareness-raising campaigns on alcohol, and the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs ran campaigns in both 2004 and 2005. Education and information measures are to be designed and implemented based on the experience gained from the campaigns.
- *The national drug helpline* has been evaluated, and the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs will continue to operate the service, with some adjustments, in cooperation with the City of Oslo's Agency for Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.
- *Early intervention to prevent drug and alcohol problems.* A national early intervention strategy is to be completed in 2006. NOK 10 million was allocated to the prevention

of drug and alcohol problems, including through early intervention measures, in 2006. A guide on the municipal drug and alcohol action plan has been developed. In the light of the experience gained from these projects, an effort is to be made to strengthen competence-building at municipal level. An allocation of NOK 2 million has been proposed for this purpose for 2007.

- *Budgetary improvements.* Various programmes to prevent drug and alcohol problems have been significantly strengthened since the publication of Norway's action plan in December 2003. NOK 20 million was allocated to voluntary organisations' substance abuse prevention efforts in 2005, in addition to the allocations mentioned above.
- *Measures to check on progress.* The Directorate for Health and Social Affairs is responsible for following up on these measures. Its annual reports to the Ministry of Health and Care Services form part of the basis for annual status reports on the drug and alcohol situation in Norway. These reports include information on the progress made on, and the current status of, the various measures.
- *Cooperation with children and young people.* Grants are made to various voluntary organisations, including organisations run by young people, such as *Ungdom mot Narkotika* (Young People against Drugs) and *Juvente*. In 2006, funds were allocated to *Alkokutt* to support its *Rolig nå* (Easy now) campaign, which was designed and run by young people. Youth organisations have also participated in brainstorming sessions on the development of a strategic plan for tackling drug and alcohol abuse.

Main Goal No. 7: Strengthen preventive child welfare measures targeting children and families, and promote the participation of and communication between children and young people and support services

References:

Final document "A World Fit for Children", paragraph 37 (10) of The Plan of Action:

"Strengthen early childhood development by providing appropriate services and support to parents, including parents with disabilities, families, legal guardians and caregivers ... so as to ensure children's physical psychological, social, spiritual and cognitive development."

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

The efforts of the child welfare services are to be reoriented towards more preventive family efforts with greater emphasis on cooperation with children and families. Early, integrated assistance is to be provided to children and families to prevent anti-social behaviour, abuse and neglect.

Follow-up measures

- *Amendments to the Children Act.* Section 31 of the Act has been amended to highlight the right of children to express their views, as set out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The age limit for exercising this right was lowered to seven years as of April 2004. (See the corresponding amendments to the Act relating to Child Welfare Services and the Act relating to adoption (2003).) Brochures have been produced on the right of children to express their views in connection with the separation of their parents.
- *Strengthening preventive measures.* Municipalities' gross spending on welfare measures for children living with their parents increased from NOK 652 million to

NOK 824 million in the 2002–2005 period. The number of cases where assistance is provided in the home increased from 18 850 to 21 250 in the same period. The Ministry of Children and Equality has continued to support measures aimed at families with children, such as family group conferences.

- The question of how parents can be helped to improve their care-giving abilities has been expanded upon in the Ministry’s circular on the child welfare system and preventive efforts targeted at children, young people and their families (2005).
- In order to strengthen its specialist child welfare efforts, the Ministry has initiated a study to identify the current status of knowledge about child welfare in-home measures (Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) – report 2006:7), and has commissioned a research report on in-home assistance provided by municipalities (FAFO report 545-2006).
- *Measures for children with serious behavioural problems.* The Ministry of Children and Equality has taken steps to enable extended use of Parent Management Training (PMT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST).
- *Reorganisation of the child welfare services.* County authorities’ child welfare responsibilities were transferred to the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs in 2004. These include operating child welfare institutions, running foster home and other family-based child welfare services, and providing specialist support for municipalities in difficult child-welfare cases and out-of-family placements.
- *Measures to check on progress.* In addition to the annual child welfare statistics that are prepared by Statistics Norway, the Ministry of Children and Equality receives half-yearly reports from municipalities and county governors on municipalities’ provision of assistance in the home and in the local community.

Main Goal No. 8: Strengthen educational programmes for children and young people from minority backgrounds

References:

Final document “A World Fit for Children”, paragraph 40 (5) of The Plan of Action:

“Ensure that indigenous children and children belonging to minorities have access to quality education on the same basis as other children ... ”

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

To improve language comprehension among minority language children of pre-school age, to improve the educational achievements of minority language pupils, and to increase the percentage of minority language pupils who begin and complete upper secondary education. A further aim is to increase the percentage of minority language students in higher education, and to improve the Norwegian language skills of minority language adults.

Follow-up measures

- A strategic plan, *Equal education in practice – 2004–2009*, has been prepared. Its aim is to ensure better teaching and greater participation by language minorities in day-care centres, schools and the education system in general. This strategy is currently being revised. The revised strategy will apply from 2007 to 2009.
- Section 2-8 of the Education Act and section 3-5 of the Private Education Act were amended on 2 July 2004. The amendments included giving municipalities greater flexibility in shaping their special language teaching programmes.

- A trial of different language teaching models has been started in day-care centres and schools. The National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO) is heading the project, which will identify the best models for teaching multicultural groups and for giving special language tuition in day-care centres, during primary and secondary education, through homework assistance schemes, at summer schools, and through family education programmes.
- A project has been launched with the aim of developing materials for observing, surveying and reporting on the needs of language minorities for special teaching and a competence-building programme is being developed for the educational and psychological counselling service.
- Further education programmes for teachers are being developed in cooperation with universities and university colleges as part of the Knowledge Promotion Reform. Cooperation with these institutions also encompasses recruitment to, and the completion of courses of study by, language minority students in higher education. The grant scheme is being continued. Measures are also being implemented to increase the incorporation of the multicultural perspective into education programmes and study materials.
- Measures have been implemented to improve language teaching for adults. (See the introductory programme and the Introduction Act of 1 September 2004.) Pilot projects have been launched with the aim of identifying how the introduction scheme can be publicised in the business sector, and how employers can make language learning opportunities and jobs available to participants in the introduction scheme.
- National examinations and net-based user surveys (including pupil surveys) are being introduced to check on progress. Statistics Norway registers applications, intake levels and completion rates for upper secondary education. By means of the educational statistics produced, it is possible to track the number of immigrant students at institutional level, their national origin and their distribution among courses of study.
- *Utdanningsspeilet* (The Education Mirror) is the annual publication of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. It summarises relevant research and statistics on the state of primary and secondary education.

Main Goal No. 9: Protect, rehabilitate and integrate children who have experienced war and conflict, and refugee children who come to Norway as unaccompanied minors

References:

Final document “A World Fit for Children”, paragraph 44 (11) of The Plan of Action:

“Adopt and implement policies for the prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration, as appropriate, of children living in disadvantaged social situations and who are at risk, including orphans [and] abandoned children ... and ensure their access to education, health, and social services as appropriate.”

Aims as defined in the national plan of action

Unaccompanied minors must be guaranteed security and care, including individual follow-up and contact with adults, in reception centres.

Follow-up measures

- The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration has developed a survey and action plan for investigating the background and needs of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. The plan is intended to form a basis for individually adapted measures for unaccompanied minors at reception centres, and is the starting point for determining the appropriate living and care arrangements if residence is granted. A training programme has been developed to help reception centre and municipal employees to implement the plan.
- As of 2006, a police certificate has been required for all employees at reception centres, to ensure the safety of the children and young people under their care.
- A 2004 circular from the Ministry of Children and Equality makes it clear that the child welfare services are required to follow up on unaccompanied minors who are in need of measures provided for by the law, even if they live at reception centres.
- The Government, in cooperation with the Storting, decided in the autumn of 2006 to transfer responsibility for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers at reception centres from the immigration authorities to the child welfare services. The transfer of responsibility will take place in two stages, the first of which involves the child welfare services taking responsibility for unaccompanied minors under 15. This will occur in the autumn of 2007.
- In 2004/2005, at the request of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, Norwegian People's Aid prepared a report and 'ideas pack' for use in recruiting provisional guardians for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers.
- The Guardianship Committee published its recommendations on a new act relating to guardians in the autumn of 2004. (NOU 2004:16 Vergemål.) The recommendations include introducing a separate law on representation for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion is following up on the recommendation.
- In 2005, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration published a manual of methods for settling unaccompanied minor asylum seekers with relatives.
- An amendment to the Act relating to Child Welfare Services came into force on 1 January 2006. Under the new section 3-4, municipalities now have a legally binding obligation to undertake an assessment of each unaccompanied minor's needs, and on the basis of the assessment to offer him/her suitable living and care arrangements when settling him/her in the municipality.
- Unaccompanied minors are to be given priority for rapid settlement, preferably within three months of residence being granted. Unaccompanied minors may be settled before residence is granted (direct settlement) if recommended by an individual assessment. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity recommends that municipalities draw on both child welfare and refugee expertise when considering and organising living and care arrangements for the unaccompanied minors they settle.

Main Goal No. 10: Intensify development cooperation efforts to strengthen children’s rights to health, education and protection, and to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic

References:

Final document “A World Fit for Children”, paragraph 47 (8) of The Plan of Action:

“Urge the international community to complement and supplement efforts of developing countries that commit increased national funds to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic through increased development assistance ... ”

Background

Strengthening of children and young persons as a resource in development is central part of Norway’s overall foreign and development policy. The Norwegian policies are guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the MDGs and the outcome document of the 2002 Special Session on Children.

In 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched its *Development Strategy for Children and Young People in the South*. The strategy takes a holistic approach and, in addition to the traditional areas of education and health, also covers protection and participation. It emphasises that girls and boys are independent actors, who must be given the opportunity to participate in the development of society. It acknowledges that poverty not only affects children and adults differently, but also has a clear gender perspective.

The strategy is a guide for Norway’s activities in support of the Millennium Development Goals, to which Norway is deeply committed. It sets out various new initiatives relating to children’s survival (MDG 4), and focuses on the protection of children, particularly from violence and in situations of armed conflict. It also promotes the principle of child participation. The strategy can be found at <http://www.dep.no/filarkiv/247957/young.pdf>.

There follows an overview of the measures Norway has implemented in response to the Special Session on Children. These fall into the four areas described in Norway’s *National Plan of Action* (2003), namely children’s right to health, children’s right to survival (including efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic), children’s right to education and children’s right to protection.

UNICEF works to promote and strengthen children's rights in all of these four areas. Norway’s contribution to UNICEF has increased significantly since 2002, growing to NOK 1 300 million (more than USD 200 million) in 2005. This makes Norway the third-largest contributor to UNICEF in financial terms. Norway has increased its support to UNICEF with a view to strengthening children’s rights and supporting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Civil society organisations that run programmes related to health, education, protection and participation are also major recipients of Norwegian funding.

The statistics on Norway's contributions that are referred to below cover only the period 2002–2005. Allocations to several areas have been increased further in 2006 and in the approved budget for 2007.

Children's right to health

- Norway continues to be one of the largest contributors to the World Health Organization (WHO). Through WHO, Norway supports measures to reduce risk factors, sickness and mortality amongst children and to promote their physical and psychological development. The total Norwegian allocation to WHO has increased from approximately NOK 300 million in 2002 to approximately NOK 400 million in 2005.
- Norway's financial support to UNICEF has focused on children's health and nutrition, including preventive health care technologies like immunisation and micronutrient supplementation. In 2005, Norway provided NOK 45 million to support child survival through UNICEF's water, sanitation and immunisation programme.
- Both UNICEF and WHO play an important role in the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), to which Norway is one of the largest donors. GAVI aims to facilitate the vaccination of 30 million children in the world's poorest countries every year. Norway's contribution to GAVI increased from approximately NOK 200 million to NOK 300 million in 2005 and further increased its commitment to NOK 500 million per year in late 2005.
- Children's health and nutrition are also priority areas for Norway in bilateral cooperation. This is particularly the case in Africa, where Norway supports sector programmes in Mozambique and Malawi.

Children's right to survival

- In 2006, the Norwegian Government decided to expand Norway's commitment to reducing child mortality and achieving MDG 4 by exploring the potential for high-level commitments by a number of governments and heads of state. Partnerships will be developed with a few large countries that have a high mortality rate for children under the age of five.
- A further element of Norway's efforts in relation to MDG 4 is seeking to increase global action. Norway therefore organised a symposium in New York, in collaboration with UNICEF and the medical journal *The Lancet*. The symposium called for the development of a global business plan spelling out ways of accelerating the scale-up needed to achieve MDG 4 by 2015. The plan will be developed within the framework of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. The Government has allocated NOK 300 million to this initiative for 2007, in addition to the support channelled through GAVI.

Combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic

- Norway is a major contributor to UNAIDS, the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to which it has allocated NOK 100 million (USD 15 million) per year. Norway also provides substantial funding for the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), contributing NOK 130 million (USD 19 million) annually. Norway has supported UNICEF's work in preventing new infections and parent-to-child transmission, and its efforts to expand access to care for children with HIV/AIDS.
- Through bilateral development assistance, Norway supports national HIV/AIDS programmes in countries such as Angola, Eritrea, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania, in addition to supporting large regional programmes.

Children's right to education

- Norway is firmly committed to the goal of universal primary education. Norway has contributed substantially to UNICEF's education programme for girls and increased its support from NOK 285 million in 2004 to NOK 455 million in 2005. Norway also supports UNESCO's work in the education sector. Norway has been promoting and contributing substantially to the World Bank's Education for All – Fast-track Initiative (FTI). Education sector support is also being provided in Angola, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Zambia within the framework of bilateral cooperation.
- Norway provides substantial funding for the work of Norwegian NGOs in this sector. A special partnership to promote the education of children affected by armed conflict has been formed with Save the Children for the 2005–2009 period. NOK 100 million has been allocated specifically to this project.

Children's right to protection

- Norway continues to be a strong advocate of the protection of children and child rights through its foreign and international development policy. Norway has continued to support UNICEF's efforts to improve the protection of children from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination, and its work in humanitarian emergencies and situations of armed conflict. Norway actively supported the adoption of a rights-based approach in UNICEF's Medium Term Strategy Plan.
- Norway has been among the key supporters and donors of the UN study on violence against children. It will continue to promote effective follow-up of the report at international, regional and national level, and will provide support for its implementation. Towards this end Norway is also working closely with civil society and child rights organisations. Child participation is also central in this work.
- Norway's first plan of action to combat trafficking in women and children (2003–2005) had a budget of NOK 100 million (USD 14 million). A new action plan for the period 2006–2009 was launched in December 2006. Norway signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2005, and plans to ratify it in 2007.
- The Government is continuing its efforts to combat female genital mutilation by supporting the efforts of international organisations and providing funding for specific programmes.
- Norway continues to support international programmes to eliminate child labour, and has allocated more than NOK 300 million (USD 43 million) to efforts in this area.
- Norway focuses particular attention on the protection of children affected by armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Norway is continuing to promote ratification of the Optional Protocol on the prohibition against participation in armed conflict of children under 18 years of age. Norway is increasing its support for programmes that aim to demobilise, release, rehabilitate and reintegrate children who have been associated with armed forces and armed groups. Norway is promoting a broadening of the international agenda on children affected by armed conflict and working in support of the UN Security Council Resolution 1612 including its monitoring and reporting system. The role of children and young people in peace building, and support for peace processes is another area of importance to Norway. Norway has also contributed financially to the work of DPKO related to the inclusion of child protection officers in UN peacekeeping missions, and has supported the UN inter-agency cooperation on the implementation of the UN Secretary General's zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping contexts. A national plan of action was also launched in 2006 on Norway's implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 with emphasis on mainstreaming of gender and the importance of addressing the special needs of women and girls.

- The rights of children with disabilities were highlighted by Norway in the negotiations on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention has now been adopted, and Norway will start the process of signing and ratifying this new instrument. As part of a large project on migration and development initiated in 2006 Norway is in the process of mapping positive and negative effects of migration on children and young persons. The aim is to develop policies that protect children from the negative consequences of migration.

Support through Norwegian NGOs

- Norway has been supporting projects and measures in the above areas through Norwegian and international NGOs for several years. The primary Norwegian cooperation partners are Save the Children Norway, Plan Norway and SOS Children Villages. Each of these is part of an international organisation, and each plays an important role in supporting and promoting the realisation of child rights. All three organisations have received increasing amounts of funding in the period 2002-2005, and in 2005 they received approximately NOK 236 million in total.