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The Government's initiative against genital mutilation in 2002



BARNE- OG FAMILIEDEPARTEMENTET

THE GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE AGAINST GENITAL MUTILATION IN 2002

The Government regards the genital mutilation of girls as a crime against children. Genital mutilation conflicts with fundamental human rights. In 1995 the Norwegian parliament passed a special law against female genital mutilation.

The action plan against genital mutilation was put forward in December 2000. The plan includes many measures, and the responsibility for these falls mainly to a special national project: Project CK – care and knowledge against female circumcision (prosjekt OK in Norwegian). In its proposal for the revised national budget the Government has suggested increasing the contribution to work against forced marriage and genital mutila-

tion in 2002 by 13 million Norwegian Crowns.

The national project against genital mutilation started in autumn 2001 and will continue until autumn 2004. To ensure that all interests are taken care of, the project has a resource group of ca. 50 representatives from immigrant organisations, affected ethnic groups, relevant public offices and individuals. The resource group shall function as a think tank and in an advisory and information gathering capacity.

Summer is the time of the year when many young people go on holiday with their parents to the parental home country. Experience shows that the danger of genital mutilation or forced marriage is highest during this period. An information campaign in schools about forced marriage and genital mutilation will be carried out before the 2002 summer holidays with many pupils from ethnic minorities. As far as young girls are concerned, it is important to discuss the problem with their parents, either individually or in small groups. Employees in public services must be well prepared for encounters with

children from groups that are in the danger zone. It is here that health stations, nursery schools, school health services and schools can play a key role.

Those already circumcised must receive information about where they can get help and, where possible, treatment. This is done through the dissemination of information as a follow up to the Norwegian Board of Health's «Guidelines for health service personnel in Norway regarding female circumcision».

A change in the attitude of the ethnic groups concerned, such that this practice ends, is decisive. In this work, it is important not to forget that genital mutilation is a deeply ingrained tradition in some cultures and is carried out in order to ensure daughters the best possible lives. It is therefore necessary to ensure that those who practise this custom are informed about the physical and psychological consequences that go with it. It is also important to discuss with the relevant ethnic groups the underlying reasons for the tradition. People from affected groups will have greater influence and potential to prevent the practice than representatives from the larger community. The Government will therefore place considerable emphasis on the participation of relevant minority groups.

Those minorities that practise genital mutilation often come from lands that have an oral tradition for the dissemination of knowledge. This means that the message must be put across in many different ways via visual and auditory media such as film, television, radio, theatre, music etc., in addition to written material.

Parallel with the Government's national initiative, Norway will support corresponding processes internationally. It is of great importance to make people realise that this topic is also on the agenda in many other lands and is, not least, the subject of concrete measures in many of the homelands of the relevant ethnic minorities. It will be particularly important to make links with individuals and groups who lead the way for changes in these homelands. The Government will take the initiative for the exchange of knowledge and people that can contribute to the work of changing attitudes in Norway.

MEASURES

Measure 1

The Government will suggest that in The Act Forbidding Genital Mutilation of 1995 there be set in a new provision concerning the duty to prevent violation of the law for relevant professions such as teachers, employees of the social and child-welfare services, health service personnel and leaders of religious communities.

Responsible: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice

Measure 2

The Government will ensure that those who come to live in Norway, including refugees, asylum seekers and those who come to be reunited with their families, receive information about forced marriage and genital mutilation. Reception of such information shall be obligatory and recipients shall sign a declaration that they have received and understood the information. They will also be asked whether any girls in their families have been circumcised.

Responsible: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Measure 3

The Government will carry out an information campaign in the larger cities, in schools that have many pupils with ethnic minority backgrounds.

Responsible: Project CK in co-operation with Kadra and Saynab

Measure 4

The Government will carry out an information campaign on genital mutilation and forced marriage at Oslo Airport, Gardermoen, for four weeks from the beginning of June 2002.

Responsible: Saynab in co-operation with the organisation Fadime

Measure 5

Establishment of a net site with information in English, Somali and Norwegian about the practice of genital mutilation, laws and measures, summary of lands where genital mutilation is practised and the organisations that are working against genital mutilation in these lands. Expected finished in spring 2002 and continually updated thereafter.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 6

The net site will have links to other relevant sites, such as The Directorate of Health and Social Affairs' net site «Klara Klok», where young people can ask questions concerning sex, health and related matters. Expected to be ready in spring 2002.

Responsible: Project CK in co-operation with the Directorate for Social and Health Affairs

Measure 7

Relevant Norwegian embassies will give out information on genital mutilation and Norwegian law to immigrants who apply for visas to Norway. Start: Spring 2002.

Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Measure 8

Relevant government ministers shall write to services such as the social and child-welfare services, the health services, nursery schools, schools and the police, and advise them to take the problem seriously and ensure that girls in danger of being genitally mutilated or who have already been so, receive immediate help.

Responsible: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in co-operation with other relevant ministries

Measure 9

Adapt the Danish film on genital mutilation «Let's talk together» («La oss tale sammen») to the situation in Norway. Expected completed: Autumn 2002. Target group: Immigrant communities.

Responsible: Workshop for Primary Medicine, Centre for Gender Equality, Heller Film and Project CK.

Measure 10

Produce films about the psychosocial consequences of genital mutilation. Target groups: Immigrant communities and health workers.

Responsible: Heller Film, Rainbow and Project CK

Measure 11

Production of drama-documentaries about genital mutilation with information from Africa and Norway.

Responsible: Dialog Film as and Project CK.

Measure 12

The well-known Somali author Hassann Sheek Mumin has received a commission to write poetry, song lyrics and plays about genital mutilation in Somali. Start: Spring 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 13

Establish groups for children, for young people and for adults, which address the issue of female genital mutilation in some of those schools that have many pupils from the relevant immigrant communities, with the aim of preventing genital mutilation. Start: Spring 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 14

Health stations and the school health-services will, in connection with standard health controls, give out information about genital mutilation to relevant groups.

Responsible: Ministry of Health

Measure 15

Courses for those from the affected communities who will use information and communication in their own communities in order to prevent genital mutilation. In progress.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 16

Establish local networks, to begin with in 6 counties – Hordaland, Rogaland, Sør-Trøndelag, Oslo, Akershus, Troms. Locally based and shall function as local resource-groups.

Responsible: Project CK in co-operation with County Medical Officers and the members of the resource groups.

Measure 17

Carry out information campaigns to reach immigrant groups via their own media: such as Somali Radio and news in relevant languages on NRK – the state television channel. Start: Spring 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 18

Produce a brochure aimed at preventing circumcision, with a target group of young girls in the danger zone and their parents. Expected ready in spring 2002 in English, Norwegian and Somali. Translated to other languages: Autumn 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 19

Produce a brochure in relevant languages explaining where affected women can receive treatment and other help. Expected finished by spring/summer 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 20

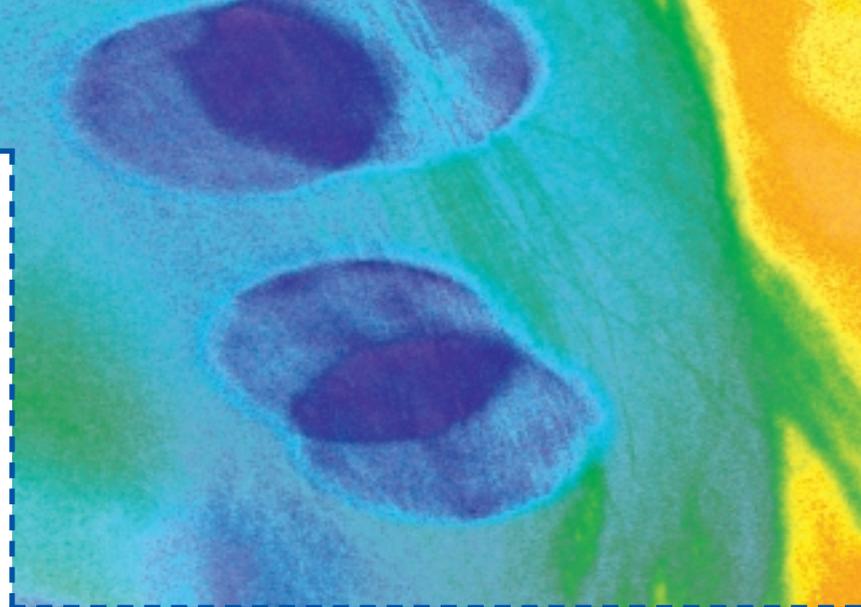
Produce and distribute a brochure for men and boys about female genital mutilation and men's responsibility in the matter. Expected ready by autumn 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 21

Produce a brochure about what Islam says about female genital mutilation. Expected ready by autumn 2002.

Responsible: Project CK



Measure 22

Establish a network of those organisations and government agencies in Oslo that have their own projects directed against genital mutilation, with the aim of promoting competence and the exchange of information. Start: Planned for spring 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 23

Advice and guidance to those, such as health sisters, teachers, parents and young people, who come into contact with problems, related to female circumcision. Start: Spring 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 24

Produce information for public employees and organisations about female genital mutilation. Expected ready by spring/summer 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 25

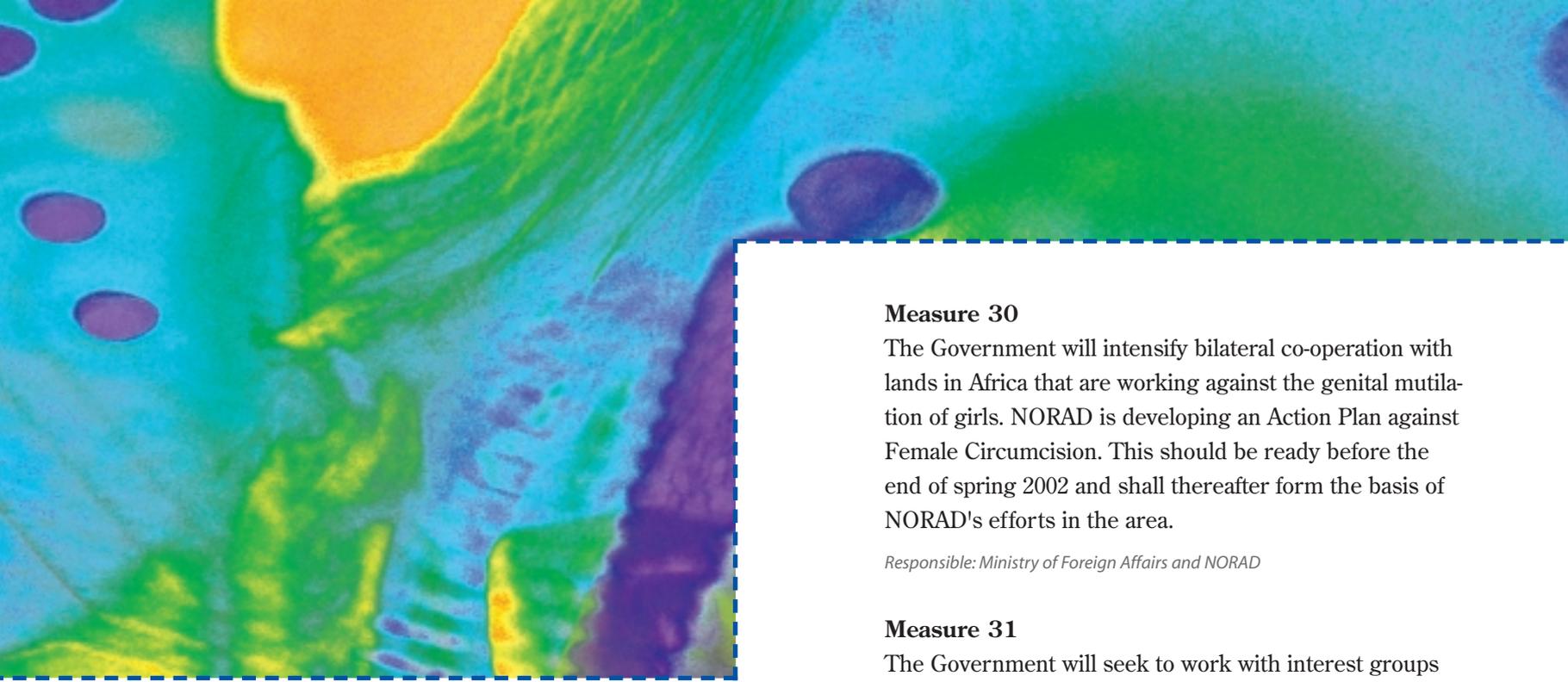
Aid counties and municipalities with information on how they should tackle the issue. Start: Spring 2002.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 26

Course material for those in the child-welfare services, schools etc. Expected ready: Autumn 2002.

Responsible: Project CK



Measure 30

The Government will intensify bilateral co-operation with lands in Africa that are working against the genital mutilation of girls. NORAD is developing an Action Plan against Female Circumcision. This should be ready before the end of spring 2002 and shall thereafter form the basis of NORAD's efforts in the area.

Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORAD

Measure 31

The Government will seek to work with interest groups in relevant countries to support their work against genital mutilation in those countries. As a step in this direction, NORAD has taken the initiative to establish a network of voluntary organisations in Norway against female genital mutilation. The network is co-ordinated and administrated by Kirkens Nødhjelp (Norwegian Church Aid). The main aims are to ensure the exchange of information, sharpen the focus on the problem and strengthen the incorporation of the work against genital mutilation into development work. In addition, the network shall act as a forum for debate and discussion about genital mutilation, including issues related to strategies and measures in the work against genital mutilation.

Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORAD

Measure 32

The Government will support girls who seek help because they have been taken out of the country to be circumcised. It is the intention, amongst other things, to improve the co-ordination of the relevant Norwegian Embassies' and Consulates' efforts for these girls.

Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Measure 33

Genital mutilation will be the theme of a workshop at the International Metropolis Conference in Oslo on 9– 13 September 2002. The conference will be a forum for researchers, politicians and the voluntary sector.

Responsible for workshop: Project CK and The University of Oslo

Measure 27

Implementation of the Norwegian Board of Health's «Guidelines for health service personnel in Norway regarding female circumcision» will be intensified.

Responsible: Ministry of Health

Measure 28

Lectures and in-service training for personnel in those agencies (school, child-welfare services, police, youth measures) and organisations that meet with the problem of genital mutilation in the course of their work.

Responsible: Project CK

Measure 29

The Government will maintain a high profile in multi-lateral forums where the human rights of women, including genital mutilation of women and girls, are on the agenda. This will mean, amongst other things, helping to ensure that the issue is kept on the agenda of the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations' General Assembly. We will work to sharpen these bodies' focus on genital mutilation; a grievous attack against women and girls that is at variance with their human rights – their right to physical integrity, life, health and non-discrimination.

Responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs