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## “Not a Priority Issue”

A Review of the Work of Swedish Municipalities  
to Combat Men’s Violence against Women

March 7, 2005



**amnesty**

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# Introduction

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all human beings, without distinction of any kind, such as sex, race, religion, social status or sexual orientation, are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the right to life, liberty and security of person, the right to equality within the family, the right to health, and the right not to be subjected to torture or to any other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Violence against women is defined by the UN as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."<sup>1</sup>

Gender-based violence constitutes serious violations that infringe upon or completely nullify women's fundamental human rights. Men's violence is directed at women of all ages and social classes and represents one of the major threats against the lives and health of women.

Amnesty International believes that the causes of gender-related violence have certain common roots, regardless of where it takes place and what form it takes. Men's violence against women does not emerge from a vacuum but gains sustenance from societal structures, perceptions, values and attitudes, as well as explicitly or implicitly discriminatory forms of behaviour that lead to the subordination of women and the superiority of men in society.

International law is clear as to the responsibility of states to take all the necessary steps to combat violence against women. It is incumbent upon all states to respect, protect and enable women to assert their human rights and to prevent violence against women. The state also has a responsibility to investigate all allegations of violence against women, put the perpetrators on trial and punish them for their crimes. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the state to support abused women and provide them with adequate protection. Men's violence against women is a very serious social and human rights problem, also in Sweden, and large-scale efforts are needed to realize the right of all women to a life without violence.

Amnesty International published the report *Men's violence against women in intimate relationships - An account of the situation in Sweden* in April 2004. To follow up this report, Amnesty International has asked Swedish municipalities about their work to combat men's violence against women and what support and protection they offer women who are threatened by or subjected to violence from men with whom they are in a close relationship. The results of this follow-up were presented in a new report, entitled "Not a priority issue" – A review of the work of Swedish municipalities to combat violence against women, first published in November 2004. Replies from the municipalities continued to be submitted also after the results of the review were published. Municipalities that had not previously responded to the Amnesty International questionnaire were contacted again and invited to reply. The present report is thus an updated version, based on replies to the questionnaire from 214 of a total of 290 municipalities in Sweden.

Amnesty International's investigation among municipalities has been limited to a summary review of mainly seven different areas: the political dialogue in the municipalities about men's violence against women, the work with developing municipal action plans, cooperation and coordination, the role of the non-profit women's shelters, access to information, measures for women with special needs, and the work of the municipalities to raise the awareness of men's violence against women in the local community.

It is interesting to note that many of the municipalities that replied to the questionnaire during the period December 2004 – February 2005 report that the work with women's integrity was highly topical during the autumn of 2004. A local government commissioner in a municipality in the south of Sweden writes the following: "We have received your questionnaire about violence against women. Before I reply to your questions I would like to point out that the discussion that you have initiated has made a valuable contribution to the debate about violence against women. The effect of this in our municipality is that the issue of violence against women must be given a more prominent place on the political agenda."

Considerable attention was given to men's violence against women in the public debate and the media during the autumn of 2004. The municipalities' support for women subjected to violence became the focus of the debate, partly because of the "Piteå Men," who rallied against men's violence against women and initiated, among other things, a fund-raising collection for the local women's shelter. This initiative has resulted in the development of several other similar networks, initiated by men in a number of municipalities around the country.

Amnesty International published the results of the review of the municipalities' work for the protection of women's integrity on the International day for the elimination of violence against women. In connection with this, Minister of Justice, Mr. Thomas Bodström, appealed to the electorate in a statement to the media to make men's violence against women an

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<sup>1</sup> UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Art. 1

election issue and to call on the political parties to describe in detail how they intend to work with this issue during the campaign leading up to the general election in 2006.

The Swedish Green Party (Miljöpartiet) initiated a special debate in the Swedish Parliament about men's violence against women on November 26, 2004, and followed this up by demanding increased state and municipal contributions to the women's shelters.

At a meeting in November with the Minister for Gender Equality, Mr. Jens Orback, and the Minister for Public Health and Social Services, Mr. Morgan Johansson, Amnesty International addressed the need for stricter legislation regarding the responsibility of the municipalities to offer relevant support and adequate protection for abused women. Since then, the Minister for Health and Social Services has stated on several occasions that the government will consider whether these stricter demands on the municipalities are a matter of legislation or whether other measures should be taken.

In his reply to a question from MP Carina Olsson on the responsibility of the municipalities for providing support for abused women and children, Morgan Johansson emphasized that greater public responsibility is an absolute prerequisite and that the protection of these women and children "must be a natural part of the welfare state." The Minister also replied that he "would be prepared to consider a review" of the Social Security Act, with the aim to tighten up the legislation regulating the municipal responsibility on this issue. In his reply, dated February 1, 2005, Morgan Johansson stated that directives for an inquiry into this issue are being formulated and will be presented shortly.<sup>2</sup>

The specially appointed commission of inquiry on the work to protect women's integrity published its report, "Empty gestures – A Report on Authorities, Men's Violence and Power," in December 2004. Like Amnesty International, the report recommends a tightening up of the Social Services Act, Chapter 5, Section 11, which regulates the responsibility of the municipalities for crime victims and abused women in particular.

The work to combat and prevent men's violence against women must be intensified and carried out continuously at all levels of society to be effective and efficient. The municipalities must give serious priority to the support and protection of women subjected to violence and their children. Amnesty International hopes and believes that his report will support and help the municipalities in their work for the protection of women's integrity.

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<sup>2</sup> Swedish Parliament: Preliminary report of proceedings, 2004/05:67, 8 §. Reply to question 2004/05:263 about the responsibility of the municipalities for supporting women and children subjected to violence.

# Amnesty International's review

## Contacts with the municipalities

During the spring and autumn of 2004, the Swedish section of Amnesty International contacted all 290 municipalities in Sweden.<sup>3</sup> This was handled, in most cases, by the local Amnesty groups who wrote to their own or adjacent municipalities and enclosed a questionnaire with 14 questions (see Annex 1). The letters or e-mail messages were generally sent to the chairperson of the municipal executive board and to other board members. In many cases, the questions were also sent to the social welfare committee and the local council.

Some of the Amnesty groups chose to ask the questions in meetings with municipal representatives. Other groups visited "their" municipalities and handed over the questions personally. If replies were submitted late or not at all, the Amnesty groups also sent out reminders to the municipalities. Where Amnesty International is not represented locally or in an adjacent municipality, the central Swedish Amnesty International organization contacted the municipality.

Municipalities that had not replied to the questionnaire in time for the publication of the report in November 2004 were contacted again and asked to reply. Replies from an additional 73 municipalities have been added to this updated version.

## Replies from the municipalities

Of a total of 290 municipalities in Sweden, 215 replied to the questionnaire. This corresponds to a response rate of 74%. A list of the municipalities that have replied to the questionnaire can be found in Annex 2. The reply from one municipality was lost.

The questionnaire contained a relatively small number of questions, to enable the municipalities to respond within a reasonable timeframe. All 14 questions were asked as open questions without a fixed set of response alternatives. Most of the municipalities have replied to all the questions. The number of municipalities that have responded to each individual question is reported for each question.

In many cases, the politicians delegated the task of replying to the questionnaire to local government officers, directors of the Individual and Family Care Unit/Social Services Administration, or individual social workers. In some cases, politicians and local government officers replied jointly to the questionnaire, while in others the chairperson of the municipal executive board or the director of the social welfare committee replied personally. In a number of cases, the respondent is unknown.

The replies received from the municipalities vary in character. Some of the municipalities have submitted very short replies and, where possible, have only indicated "yes" or "no." Other municipalities have provided much more detailed and exact replies. As the questionnaire contained questions on politically adopted action plans to combat men's violence against women, many municipalities have also enclosed material detailing such plans. Information material directed to women who are threatened by or subjected to violence has also been enclosed.

This means that we have very scant information on the 75 municipalities that did not respond to the questionnaire. One or a few municipalities have announced that they will not give priority to Amnesty International's questionnaire. Lack of time may be one of the reasons why a municipality has declined to participate in the investigation. Another possible reason is that the issue of women's integrity is given low priority in the municipality.

The results and the conclusions drawn in the present report are limited to including the municipalities that have replied to Amnesty International's questions.

## The statutory responsibility of the municipalities

The right not to be subjected to gender-based violence is ultimately a question of democracy, gender equality, equal opportunities, welfare and fundamental human rights – i.e., values and objectives that should permeate and be the guiding principles for Swedish municipalities.

In connection with the adoption of the Government Bill on the Protection of Women's Integrity in 1998, the responsibilities of the municipalities were clarified through the introduction of a new provision in the Social Services Act. The provision states that: "The Social Welfare Committees should strive to ensure that women who are or have been the victims of violence or other acts of aggression in the home receive help and support to change their situation."

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<sup>3</sup> A few municipalities were probably not contacted for various reasons by the Amnesty group assigned with this task. However, all municipalities that had not responded to the questionnaire were contacted by the central Amnesty International organization in Sweden in December 2004.

The law was amended in 2001 and the provision now reads as follows: "The Social Welfare Committees should strive to ensure that victims of crime are given help and support and that his or her family members also receive help and support. In so doing, the Social Welfare Committee should take into account that women who are or have been abused or subjected to other forms of aggression in their homes may need help and support to change their situation" (Social Services Act, Chapter 5, Section 11).

Hence, it is the municipalities that are ultimately responsible for providing help, support and protection for abused women. The point of departure is that society must take its responsibility and that the municipalities cannot rely on the work for abused women carried out by voluntary organizations, primarily the women's shelters but also shelters for crime victims.

## Men's violence against women in the local political dialogue

Amnesty International asked the municipalities whether the presence of men's violence against women in their own municipalities had been debated in the local council, the municipal executive board and/or the social welfare committee, and when this issue was last discussed in any of these political bodies.

The results show that men's violence against women had been the subject of political debate in two thirds, or 145, of the 214 responding municipalities. In many cases, it is not possible to trace the date of the discussion but the information has nevertheless been included. Replies that refer to discussions taking place more than two years ago have been excluded.

The presence of men's violence against women is primarily discussed in the social welfare committee or corresponding specialized committees, dealing with child care, care for the elderly, individual and family care, help and support to citizens with special needs and committees dealing with so-called "soft" issues. As many as 90 municipalities report that the issue of men's violence against women has been discussed in the social welfare committee or a corresponding committee.

The issue has been discussed by the local council in 44 municipalities, mainly in connection with proposals submitted and questions asked by members. Fourteen municipalities report that motions have been submitted and/or questions asked concerning the issue of men's violence against women. Finally, 18 municipalities report that the issue has been dealt with by the municipal executive board; for example, in connection with budget discussions, motions/questions and adoption of action programmes. In a few municipalities, the issue has been debated in more than one decision-making body. Twenty-four municipalities report that political discussions have taken place, but not in which forum.

In several municipalities, the issue of men's violence against women has been discussed in the local Council for Crime Prevention, which often includes the chairperson or another member of the municipal executive board.

Less than 20% of the municipalities (43 out of 214) report no political debate on the issue in the municipality. Twenty-two replies have been excluded, as the question has not been answered at all or with the alternative "don't know," or because the issue has only been discussed on the basis of individual cases.

It is not always possible, on the basis of the replies to the questionnaire, to determine the context in which the issue was addressed or, even less so, to identify what the discussion resulted in. Men's violence against women has been debated, for example, in connection with adopting action programmes for the work to protect women's integrity. However, it is interesting to note that several municipalities respond that the issue has been debated in the context of the budget discussions. This indicates that men's violence against women was not necessarily brought up as an issue in its own right, but that the subject under debate was activity grants to the women's shelter (and, in some cases, the men's advice bureau).

Very few municipal executive boards appear to have dealt with men's violence against women in the municipality as a separate issue. A possible interpretation is that many leading local politicians fail to realize that men's violence against women is included in their responsibilities. Men's violence against women is rather dealt with as a health and care issue, to be handled by the social welfare committee through the efforts of the social services. The reply from the chairperson of the municipal executive board in a Stockholm county municipality may serve to illustrate this problem:

"To begin with, I would like to inform you that, according to the Social Services Act and by direction of the municipal executive, the social welfare committee has the responsibility to provide support and help for women who are or have been subjected to violence... (applicable law quoted)... The tasks of the social welfare committee include, among other things, responsibility for child care and care for the elderly, service, information, advice, support, health and medical care, financial support and other assistance to families and individuals who need such help... (applicable law quoted)... Through this assistance the individual should be ensured a reasonable standard of living. The assistance should seek to strengthen the individual's possibilities of leading an independent life. The social welfare committee also cooperates with other bodies in the community, as well as with organizations and associations. The fight against crime is handled by the police and the courts."

In some cases, the issue of men's violence against women has been addressed in connection with information and/or educational activities where other actors, such as the police, the women's shelter, the local Council for Crime Prevention or the Association for Crime Victim Support have been invited to meetings of the municipal executive board, the local council or the social welfare committee.

A group of politicians in a municipality in the Västra Götaland region stated the following at an informal meeting with the local Amnesty group: "The issue has not been debated in the local council for the past two years. The municipal executive board and the social welfare committee have addressed it on several occasions in recent years, in connection with meetings when the police have informed us on the current situation in the municipality. Other issues, for example, car and boat theft, have been given greater priority than violence against women. This may be due to the composition of the municipal executive board: ten men and one woman."

Some municipalities report that the issue of men's violence against women is addressed annually, in connection with the adoption of the budget when activity grants are allocated. A number of municipalities underline that the issue is being discussed "continuously," or has been discussed "on several occasions," "often," "constantly," and in different political bodies at local level.

### **Amnesty International's recommendations**

It is positive to note that many of Sweden's municipalities have placed the issue of men's violence against women on the political agenda. Men's violence against women is primarily discussed in the social welfare committee and corresponding committees and appears to be addressed by the municipal executive board and the local council primarily as a budget issue or in response to motions/questions from individual politicians.

Men's violence against women is a widespread problem that is ultimately a matter of fundamental issues, such as democracy, gender equality and equal opportunities, welfare, health and fundamental human rights. Amnesty International believes that this is a serious social problem that should be combated on a wide front through a number of measures and initiatives, both nationally and locally. The work to combat men's violence against women is thus a political issue that is relevant to and should be discussed in all political, decision-making bodies in the municipalities. Amnesty International believes that political control and politically adopted actions plans are needed to combat men's violence against women.

# Action plans to combat men's violence against women

The work for the protection of women's integrity is a political priority at national level, which should also be reflected at local/municipal level. The county administrative boards are responsible for ensuring that national objectives penetrate down to county level while considering regional conditions. One of the tasks of the county administrative boards is to supervise the social services in the municipalities. The 21 county administrative boards in Sweden have also been given the specific task of monitoring and focusing on issues concerning men's violence against women.

Following a review of research carried out by Carin Holmberg and Christine Bender<sup>4</sup> and the available county administrative board reports on the work at municipal level for the protection of women's integrity, Amnesty International concluded in its report "Men's violence against women in intimate relationships – An account of the situation in Sweden", that the issue of men's violence against women is generally given low priority at political level in most municipalities in Sweden.

Only a few of Sweden's municipalities have adopted politically formulated action plans and objectives to combat men's violence against women and to ensure women who are subjected to violence the right to adequate support, help and protection. The work to develop guidelines and routines for the handling of individual cases by the social services appears to have progressed somewhat further, but is still lacking in a majority of municipalities. However, many of the reports are several years old and very few of the county administrative boards have surveyed the situation more recently.

## Guidelines or action plans?

Amnesty International asked the municipalities whether they have a politically adopted action plan to combat men's violence against women. The municipalities were also asked to describe the objectives laid down in the action plan. If no action plan had been adopted, the municipality was asked why this was the case.

The question was interpreted in different ways by different municipalities. The majority of the responding municipalities report that they have adopted an action plan to combat men's violence against women. After studying the action plans, which were often enclosed with the questionnaires by the municipalities, Amnesty International finds that, in almost all cases, the objectives are limited to clarifying the responsibilities of the social services, describing the responsibilities of other authorities and/or consist of guidelines/routines for how the social services should handle and provide support for women subjected to violence and their children in individual cases. Only three municipalities; Malmö, Falkenberg and Eskilstuna, have adopted the type of overall municipal, strategic action plan to combat men's violence against women that Amnesty International had in mind when asking the question.

Some municipalities respond that they have no action plan to combat men's violence against women, but that programmes of measures and guidelines are in place at operational level, primarily for the social services. Guidelines/handling routines for the social services may have been adopted by a few more of the municipalities that have no specific action plan to combat men's violence against women; however, these have not been reported as the municipalities have interpreted the question as referring to a more comprehensive type of action plan.

The guidelines and programmes referred to by the municipalities in the review have often been formulated by the Social Services Administration, sometimes together with other cooperation partners. In most cases, they have later been adopted by the social welfare committee. The form and scope of the guidelines vary considerably but generally contain one or several of the following central elements:

- A brief reference to the relevant UN documents;
- The Protection of Women's Integrity Bill and the responsibility of the social welfare committee, as stated in the Social Services Act;
- A description of violence against women, its causes, consequences and extent;
- The importance of ensuring abused women rapid access to a case officer who will handle the case;
- The importance of ensuring abused women good and professional treatment;

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<sup>4</sup> Bender, Christine, and Holmberg, Carin: "When everybody minds their own business... What kind of support and help is offered to women in municipalities without women's shelters?" The Sköndal Institute Report Series, no. 21, The Sköndal Institute, 2001; Holmberg, Carin, and Bender, Christine: "There is something special about this question" - On the local political dialogue on men's violence against women, 2003. Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority.

- Concrete advice; for example, on how to ask questions and listen, to not question the woman's story and to adopt the role of "doer;"
- The importance of paying attention to and investigating the children's situation;
- The distribution of responsibilities between different case officers and coordination between the different units within the social services;
- The importance of skilled and competent staff, education and training;
- The importance of cooperation with other actors;
- Emergency action;
- Information on which other actors may support the woman and with what;
- The importance of producing information material;
- Telephone and address lists.

Some of these action programmes have the character of policy documents. Many of the programmes were adopted several years ago and the objectives remain the same from one year to the next. Only a few municipalities, Alingsås being one of them, adopt an annual action plan and lay down the objectives for their work for one year at a time.

Some of the action programmes also address the importance of paying greater attention to abused women with special needs, such as young, mentally ill, disabled, elderly and homosexual women, as well as women of foreign origin and women with drug and/or alcohol problems. Support for violent men, with the aim of changing their behaviour, is also included in some municipal action programmes. However, the discussion is very rarely followed up by any concrete measures and instructions on how these objectives could be achieved.

In the cases where special guidelines/routines have been formulated for the handling of cases by the social services they tend to consist of more or less exhaustive checklists detailing concrete measures to be taken by the case officer in emergency situations. The importance of a long-term perspective is often emphasized but rarely followed up by any concrete proposals.

Programmes/routines of the kind described above are in place in 110 of the 214 municipalities that replied to the questionnaire. As many as 88 municipalities have no programmes or guidelines/routines. Of these, 27 municipalities state that they are in the process of developing action programmes or that they will adopt draft programmes within the near future.

A few of the replies (13) were excluded from the summary, as the question of whether an action plan had been adopted was answered in the affirmative but without any indication of the form or scope of the objectives or without the document being enclosed. This also includes four municipalities that did not answer the question and two municipalities that reply that they do not know whether an action plan has been adopted.

Number of municipalities that:	have adopted	have not adopted
Handling routines/programmes	110	88
Lost to summary	13	
Overall municipal action plan	3	

Amnesty International welcomes the fact that a majority of the responding municipalities have formulated and adopted programmes for the social services and/or guidelines for those working in the social services. Clear routines for measures to be taken when dealing with abused women and their children are essential in order to provide active and adequate support. Men's violence against women is a highly complex problem requiring extensive knowledge among professionals dealing with the issue, in order to detect the presence of violence at an early stage and to treat abused women in an adequate and professional manner. It is crucial to ensure continuous improvement of these efforts and support, especially since various studies have shown that the greatest dissatisfaction with the help provided is to be found among those abused women who have turned to the social services or the social emergency service.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lundgren, Eva; Heimer, Gun; Westerstrand, Jenny; and Kalliokoski, Anne-Marie: Slagen Dam. Mäns våld mot kvinnor i jämställda Sverige - en omfattningsundersökning. ("Captured Queen: Men's Violence against Women in "Equal Sweden" - A prevalence study.") Translated by Julia Mikaelsson and Geoffry French (Published 2001).

Although more than six years have passed since the responsibilities of the municipalities were clarified through the Protection of Women's Integrity Reform in 1998, a remarkably large number of municipalities still appear to lack guidelines/routines for the work of the social services with women who are subjected to violence and their children. Amnesty International urgently requests municipalities that have not yet formulated and adopted such guidelines and programmes for social services personnel to initiate this work immediately. Such guidelines could facilitate for the municipalities to change and improve their methods and efforts to respond to the individual needs of women surviving violence and to pay greater attention to the situation of the children involved.

### **An overall responsibility for society**

While it is of the utmost importance that abused women and children are given active and professional help and support on the basis of their individual needs, Amnesty International believes that the responsibility of the municipalities goes further than solely addressing the problems of those abused women (and their close relatives) who turn to the social services. Guidelines and programmes of measures for the handling by the social services of individual cases are therefore not sufficient in themselves, but should be seen as an important part of more comprehensive efforts to prevent and combat men's violence against women and provide adequate protection for abused women. The problem complex of men's violence against women is not only a question of care, support and help, but is directly linked to questions of gender equality, democracy, welfare and human rights.

Municipal political action plans that define and detail the overall responsibility of society for combating men's violence against women, identify shortcomings and suggest concrete measures and areas for development are lacking in almost all municipalities. Only three of the politically adopted programmes that Amnesty International has studied are of the character of overall municipal, strategic and, at the same time, concrete actions plans. Some of the programmes already in place in certain municipalities could, however, be used as a basis for such overall municipal action plans.

Amnesty International believes that municipal action plans should be of a character that allows them to be used as efficient and effective tools in the municipal work to combat men's violence against women. It is not meaningful to develop plans or programmes that are not relevant to or useful for the concrete measures to be carried out. In addition to support for and protection of abused women, a good action plan should contain cooperation strategies and concrete measures and activities with fixed deadlines or schedules. It is important to identify the shortcomings of the current work carried out by different actors and in the cooperation between them. Only then is it possible to identify the measures needed to develop and improve the work. New development areas should also be identified during the course of this work.

Efforts to combat and prevent crime are largely a task of the police, the public prosecution authorities and the correctional services. However, the preventive work is not limited to the law enforcement authorities and the courts. The municipalities have an important role to play in the long-term, preventive work to disseminate knowledge and information and to change those attitudes that are a source of nourishment for gender-based violence.

Clarity in terms of who is responsible for implementing the action plan is important. Regular follow-up and evaluation of the work is essential to ensure that the combined efforts in the municipality lead to positive change, both in terms of the extent of violence against women and the support for abused women and their children.

### **Good examples**

Malmö

The Malmö municipality action plan was adopted in 1999. It is the most exhaustive of all the adopted plans, and includes measures directed both at abused women and their children and at men who use violence.

In the work with developing the action plan, men's violence against women was studied and analysed from different approaches and questionnaire studies were carried out among the social services, the health and medical services and the police, to get a picture of how abused women are being dealt with, what measures are taken and what resources are available. The staff was also asked to put forward ideas for change. The basic view was that the problem cannot be solved by one, single authority, but that cooperation between different authorities and organizations is needed.

The action plan contains background information, an identification of the problem, a description of society's responsibility and excerpts from applicable law. It then goes on to describing the actors and currently available resources, as well as the shortcomings of the work carried out in Malmö municipality on this issue. Objectives, necessary measures and additional resources required to attain the objectives are identified. This section also deals with the development of methods, information and educational measures, research and knowledge development, cooperation, strategies to prevent violence and the implementation of the action plan. The starting point was that the municipal action plan for the protection of women's integrity should be a development project and the importance of documentation, follow-up and evaluation is emphasized to make it possible to monitor the development of the project and measure the effects of the work done.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Action programme for measures related to violence against women in Malmö, 1999.  
<http://www.malmo.se/see/work/17561/Väld%20mot%20kvinnor.PDF>

A special implementation and cooperation body was formed and a coordinator appointed to develop and implement the action plan and describe the current work and the need for change. Approximately 70 staff members from the services involved participated in a number of working groups that dealt with different aspects of the problem or the special needs of different groups.

The concrete measures in the action plan include, among other things, a crisis centre for women and children, a crisis centre for men, a manual for all the different professional categories involved, brochures and information to the public, educational activities, methodological development and cooperation. Financial resources were allocated, and the Crisis Centre for Women and Children, with services including an open clinic/consultancy service, sheltered accommodation, crisis treatment and group activities for women and children, as well as a 24-hour emergency telephone service, was opened in the year 2000. Thirteen different languages are spoken among the staff at the center. The Crisis Centre for Men was opened two years later. Since 1995, the correctional services are running the "Fredman" ("Peaceful man") programme to influence attitudes and behaviour among men who have been convicted of acts of violence in intimate relationships. For the last couple of years, the Fredman programme also receives non-convicted men.

The municipality has also documented the implementation of the action plan and the effects seen of the pan-municipal work for the protection of women's integrity. Among the positive effects that have been mentioned is a marked increase in the number of abused women who receive help, and improved handling, treatment and protection of and support for these women. More children who have witnessed or been subjected to domestic violence also receive help.<sup>7</sup>

The Malmö Police District established a family violence unit within the police authority already in 1999, with a number of specially trained police officers. Specialisation and cooperation with other authorities and actors have led to an increase in the number of reports filed as well as the number of cases that lead to prosecution. The number of prosecuted cases has almost doubled since 1996.<sup>8</sup>

#### Falkenberg

With its 39,000 inhabitants, Falkenberg municipality is much smaller than Malmö. The local council adopted the municipal action programme, the "Protection of Women's Integrity Plan," in December 2002.<sup>9</sup> An initial evaluation is being carried out at present and will be completed in mid-March, 2005. The evaluation will be presented to the municipal executive board in April. The intention to follow up, evaluate and, if needed, revise the action plan annually has thus not been fulfilled.

The action plan describes the local resources and actors working in this field. It also identifies shortcomings and problems in the different authorities/activities and measures to correct these. Concrete measures are proposed in the following areas:

- A programme has been adopted for measures to be taken by the police in cases of violence against women. Compliance should be ensured with the existing programme that is based on cooperation between the police, the social services and the correctional services (the non-custodial services); for example, through established routines for the transfer of information in cases concerning violence against women.
- The "Women battering" action programme for the primary care services should be updated and the implementation in the organization improved;
- The Individual and Family Care Unit within the social services should work on the basis of its recently developed internal action plan for women subjected to violence and their families;
- A cooperation group should be formed and meet regularly to work on the basis of the objectives laid down;
- A common comprehensive approach should be developed, through continuous joint competence development and guidance;
- All actors should record and document information on the extent of the violence. Such statistics will make it possible to monitor the incidence of men's violence against women;
- Preventive work should be carried out in youth clubs, recreation centres, schools, pre-schools and nursery schools on the basis of concrete proposals for activities;
- Knowledge among staff in the child care services, schools, the social services and primary care should be improved;
- Self-help groups for abused women should be set up, as a complement to "traditional care and treatment."

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<sup>7</sup> Protection of Women's Integrity Programme in Malmö: to initiate and run; to implement; to uphold.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Protection of Women's Integrity Plan. Falkenberg municipality, 2002.

<http://www.falkenberg.se/download/18.1f6d2e3100cb36f4e2800091/kvinnofridsplan%20.pdf>

The action plan states that the cooperation group should follow up, evaluate and, if needed, revise the plan on an annual basis, and identify future areas for development. Special measures for children and violent men are given as examples of areas that need to be developed.

### **Not a priority issue?**

The reasons for not having adopted an action plan/programme to combat men's violence against women vary among the municipalities. A director at a local government office in Kalmar County suggests that: "this may not primarily be a solely municipal responsibility." This view is shared by the chairperson of a municipal executive board in a municipality in Västmanland, who states the following: "I don't think it is reasonable to expect the municipality to take on the task of adopting such an action plan. We invest in education at family centres and gender equality projects in schools and nursery schools to teach girls to say: "It's enough," (and to teach boys a few other things), and provide relatively generous support to the emergency centre for women and girls."

A municipality in Värmland County reports that: "no priority or time has been allocated to the issue." A municipality in Dalarna County gives the following reason: "The individual and family care services have not yet noticed an increase in the number of women who contact us for this reason." A municipality in Västra Götaland county reports that: "Nobody has brought up the issue," and another municipality in the same county emphasizes that: "No action plan has been adopted, but the administration complies with the guidelines in the legislation!"

The following reasons are given by the head of the individual and family care services in a municipality in Skåne: "It is a matter of resources. We are a very small municipality (6,000 inhabitants) and have very limited resources at official level for making plans. This means that we develop the plans we have to according to the law and develop other plans if politicians and officials feel very strongly about the issue in question."

An official at the Social Services Administration in a Stockholm county municipality states that: "It has been considered more important to work with this issue through concrete efforts, rather than adopt an action plan."

A local council member in Västerbotten County answers the question as to why the municipality has failed to adopt an action plan in the following way: "Probably because this is a sensitive issue and there are many who cannot even handle a discussion on the matter. I personally took the initiative to have the Equal Opportunities Plan revised in 2003. It was adopted in 1998!!! And it was never revised! That speaks for itself."

### **"No information available"**

To investigate the municipalities' knowledge about the extent of men's violence against women, a question was asked about the number of women who are subjected to violence in the municipality each year. The source of the information was also requested.

In only 37 of the 204 municipalities that responded to the question the Social Service Administration keep records of the number of abused women who have contacted them for support and help. One municipality in Skåne County replies as follows: "The individual and family care statistics do not include cases of "violence against women;" i.e., no such statistics are available."

A municipality in Västerbotten County highlights the problems that exist, even if statistics are compiled by the Social Services Administration: "For the year 2003, the social welfare offices have registered twelve cases of domestic violence/women battering. There are, however, more cases, but they have been registered under other reporting causes, for example, "maltreatment of children." The hospital emergency department, adult psychiatry clinic or community health centre keep no records of the number of cases of abused women they come into contact with."

Several municipalities bring up the problem of the large number of unrecorded cases. A municipality in Värmland County replies as follows: "There is no information about the total number of cases. The social services are informed about clients who contact the Individual and Family Care Unit; 4-7 cases annually, on average. In all likelihood, there are many unrecorded cases."

The problems surrounding the attempts to investigate the extent of men's violence against women in small municipalities are described by an official in a municipality in Östergötland: "On average, one case is reported to one of the organizations mentioned every other year. There may be some unrecorded cases, but considering the small size of the municipality and the tight social network, I think this is a fairly reliable estimate. However, the fact that we are so small should be a cause for concern; if the "right person" exercises the domestic violence the community may protect the perpetrator. We must be on the alert the whole time."

A municipality in Dalarna County also brings up the matter of what type of women the social services come into contact with: "Most of the people who turn to the individual and family care services are women who are financially dependent on

their men and who lack their own means to pay the rent, to pay for food, etc. The Individual and Family Care Unit rarely receive people from well-to-do families. That picture is very different from that seen at the women's shelter."

Some municipalities believe that improved knowledge among the staff has resulted in more cases of women battering being revealed and given attention. A municipality in Jämtland County puts it this way: "We have noticed a marked increase in the number of abused women that we come into contact with. This is probably due to the fact that we have run comprehensive educational programmes for our staff."

More than 90 municipalities report that they have no information on the incidence of men's violence against women in their own municipality. Some additional 60 municipalities refer to police statistics on reported crimes, statistics compiled by the National Council for Crime Prevention on crimes reported to the police in the municipalities, information and statistics from the women's shelters or information from other projects through which abused women are given support and protection.

Amnesty International's previous report emphasizes the importance of surveying the extent of men's violence against women in the municipality, by gathering data and statistics from all authorities, organizations, institutions, care and treatment facilities and other services that come into contact with abused women. The following statement from one municipality elucidates the importance of gathering data from many different actors: "There are many answers to this question, depending on who does the answering (the women's shelter, the police, the county administrative boards, etc.)."

Surveys of the extent of men's violence against women in the individual municipalities should aim at enabling politicians to better assess, on the basis of exhaustive information, what type of measures and resources are needed for the preventive work and for the support and protection of abused women and their children.

### **Amnesty International's recommendations**

The protection of women's integrity is a national political priority, which should also be reflected at local/municipal level. Amnesty International believes that the point of departure for all activities relating to men's violence against women must be zero tolerance. Moreover, Swedish municipalities must intensify their efforts to combat such violence in general. An important part of this work is to develop political, pan-municipal action plans that identify all aspects of society's responsibility for combating men's violence against women and lay down clear objectives, identify shortcomings and suggest relevant measures and areas for development. Strategies for cooperation between authorities and organizations should also be included. Furthermore, the action plans should specify how adequate protection of abused women can be guaranteed. Clear-cut plans for the follow-up and evaluation of all municipal activities in this field should also be included. Amnesty International also urgently requests those municipalities that have not yet developed and adopted guidelines for the responsibilities of the social services and handling routines for social services staff to initiate this work without delay. Such guidelines could facilitate for the municipalities to change and improve their methods and efforts to respond to the individual needs of abused women.

All types of guidelines and action plans must be supported and endorsed at senior official level and integrated in the respective organizations. Municipal efforts to combat men's violence against women and to provide support and protection for women at risk of being or who have been subjected to violence must not be dependent upon the knowledge and personal commitment of individual officials. If reorganization is carried out it should not affect officials with special competence in this field. Continuity is a prerequisite for working with this type of issues.

Furthermore, it is important to identify the extent of men's violence against women in the individual municipalities to enable politicians to better assess, on the basis of exhaustive information, what type of measures and resources are needed for the preventive work and for the support and protection of abused women and their children. All such surveys should be based on the insight that there are many unrecorded cases.

## Cooperation

Studies have shown that one third of all women who live or who have lived with a man subjecting them to violence have sought help elsewhere than by the police. The resources that these women turn to most frequently are the health and medical services, including the psychiatric services. Some women contact a lawyer, whereas others turn to the women's shelters, crime victim support centres, the social services or the social emergency service.<sup>10</sup>

Cooperation between different authorities and other organizations is of crucial importance, in order to offer the abused woman the help and support that she needs. Different actors have different roles to play and different areas of responsibility. Good knowledge of the kind of support and help that other actors can offer is essential, so that the abused woman can be referred to the proper resource, depending on the kind of help she needs. Cooperation is also essential for efficient coordination of the measures provided by the different actors.

The importance of cooperation at all levels was emphasized in the Protection of Women's Integrity Bill. At county level, several county administrative boards have initiated joint cooperation groups in which the municipalities as well as the county councils, the police and other actors are represented.

Amnesty International asked which other actors the social services in the municipality cooperate with. Almost all municipalities report cooperation in some form and the actors mentioned by most of the respondents were the police and the county councils/health and medical services. This includes cooperation with community health centres, child welfare centres, prenatal and maternity clinics, medical emergency services, youth guidance centres, specialist clinics, such as ear/nose/throat and gynaecology clinics, etc. The psychiatric services (both for children and adults) are another actor that many municipalities cooperate with, as are the non-institutional health and medical services and treatment services for drug and/or alcohol addicts.

Many municipalities also mention the public prosecution authority and non-profit organizations such as the women's shelters and the crime victim support centres, as well as local groups and projects. There also appears to be extensive cooperation with other municipal facilities, mainly the family advice centres and other units under the Social Services Administration and the social medicine clinic. Other cooperation partners mentioned by some municipalities are municipal crisis centres for women, the dental care services, the Church of Sweden, the national insurance office, job centres, men's advice bureaus, dedicated counselling centres for women and men, family doctors, the child care services, the students' health service, schools, the National Centre for Battered and Raped Women, the Swedish Association for Social and Mental Health (RSMH), the county administrative boards and housing companies/accommodation providers. Only very few municipalities report that the social services only cooperate with the corresponding unit in other municipalities or have no cooperation at all with other actors.

However, only 37 municipalities report more organized forms of cooperation and involvement of the Social Services Administration/social services in cooperation groups or networks in the municipality. Another 17 municipalities respond that they have cooperation on specific projects for the protection of women's integrity, such as the Frideborg Project in Östergötland, the Nyckelfrid Project in Södermanland, the Utväg ("Way out") projects in Västra Götaland, and the Karlfrid Project in Värmland. Seven municipalities report that they are involved in working groups at regional or county level. A few municipalities also report that the Social Services Administration/social services are represented in the local council for crime prevention.

A few municipalities have appointed a special coordinator, termed differently in different municipalities: public health coordinator, crime prevention coordinator or protection of women's integrity coordinator. However, they all seem to have the task, among others, of coordinating the cooperation at local level between the different actors involved in the work with abused women.

The following reply from a municipality in Skåne County appears to be an apt description of the situation in many municipalities in the country: "The Social Services Administration has no organized cooperation with other authorities on this issue, but we have established channels for work with individuals in exposed situations in general, and these channels are used as needed. It is mainly a matter of contacts with the police and the health and medical services."

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<sup>10</sup> Lundgren, Eva; Heimer, Gun; Westerstrand, Jenny; and Kalliokoski, Anne-Marie: Slagen Dam. Mäns våld mot kvinnor i jämställda Sverige - en omfångsundersökning. ("Captured Queen: Men's Violence against Women in "Equal Sweden" - A prevalence study.") Translated by Julia Mikaelsson and Geoffrey French (Published 2001).

## **Amnesty International's recommendations**

The majority of municipalities report that they cooperate with other actors. This is a positive feature, as cooperation between different actors at local level is essential in order to provide the abused woman with the help and support that she needs.

Formal cooperation in dedicated groups may play an important role in terms of developing consensus and disseminating knowledge about the mechanisms and reasons behind men's violence against women, the extent of the violence and the difficulties surrounding the efforts to prevent violence and provide support, help and adequate protection for abused women. Deepened and broadened knowledge improves the possibilities of the different actors to detect violence at an early stage and to coordinate their efforts for the best possible result for the abused woman.

Lack of methods, knowledge and cooperation with other actors was stated as obstacles in the work to provide victims of crime with adequate support, in the follow-up of the social services' work with crime victims carried out by the National Board of Health and Welfare earlier this year.<sup>11</sup>

The importance of cooperation is often emphasized in the action programmes and guidelines adopted for the work of the social services. In municipalities with no or poor cooperation, the work for more efficient cooperation should be intensified.

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<sup>11</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare. Lägesbeskrivning: 5 kap. 11§ SoL – en uppföljning av socialtjänstens arbete ("An account of the situation. Social Services Act, Chapter 5, Section 11 – A Follow-Up of the Work of the Social Services").

# The role of the non-profit women's shelters

Over 25 years ago, in 1978, Sweden's first women's shelters were opened in Gothenburg and Stockholm. Today, there are non-profit women's shelters in close to 150 of the 290 municipalities in the country. The women's shelters are organized in two national associations; the National Organization for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters (ROKS), and the Swedish Association of Women's Shelters (SKR).

The women's shelters are usually run by women in the form of an emergency service on a volunteer basis. A few of the shelters have employed staff. A report compiled by the county administrative board in Västra Götaland shows that volunteers work at least 5,000 unpaid hours per month at 17 of the county's women's shelters.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the practical work, most of the women's shelters also carry out extensive political work to shed light on men's violence against women in society from a feminist perspective. The women's shelters around the country have amassed considerable valuable experience, knowledge and competence.

If the abused woman has no problems supporting herself financially, the decision to contact the social services may be very difficult. The fact that the social services are an authority may be a problem in itself:

An expert at a local government office describes the situation as follows: "It is important to have knowledge about the issue. People who are subjected to violence feel shame. It is a difficult decision to turn to an authority that may question whether the domestic situation is suitable for children. The social services register the woman and ask "unpleasant" questions, such as whether the children have witnessed the violence. The women's shelter does a fantastic job in our municipality. Women turn to them with confidence and they try to persuade the women to contact us in the social services. The fact that we are a public authority is a disadvantage."

Women who are subjected to violence have a right to remain anonymous when they contact the women's shelters. Many of the women who turn to the shelters have not reported the violence they have suffered to the police and they have no contact, or wish to have no contact, with the social services.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has been commissioned by the government to develop the knowledge among the social services about crime victims in a broader sense than just to include abused women. In 2004, the board carried out an initial follow-up in 29 municipalities of the social services' work with crime victims.<sup>13</sup> Among other things, they looked at whether the revision of the legislation in 2001 (Social Services Act, chapter 5, section 11), concerning the responsibility of the municipalities for providing support to crime victims and abused women, in particular, had resulted in any changes in the routines of the social services and the type of support offered by the social services to women who are subjected to violence and their children.

According to those interviewed in the investigation the most common type of support offered to crime victims by the social services is counselling and advice, and information about and contacts with the non-profit victim support centres and women's shelters, the church, and the psychiatric services for children and adults. Almost all the persons interviewed in the social services' follow-up reported that they were aware of the existence of either the victim support centre or the women's shelter and many also reported that they cooperate with them.

## Sheltered accommodation

Amnesty International asked the municipalities whether they have their own municipal facilities for offering sheltered accommodation to abused women. The three metropolitan municipalities of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö have their own municipal crisis centres that provide sheltered accommodation, among other services. Trollhättan and Lund municipalities also have municipal crisis centres for women with support and sheltered accommodation services, among other things. In Uppsala, the municipality offers sheltered accommodation with 24-hour manning since 2004.

Of the 214 municipalities that responded to the questionnaire, 55 report that they can provide emergency accommodation in the municipalities' own flats. These flats (also referred to as emergency flats or social housing) are rented by the municipality at secret addresses, but are not manned by support personnel. Some municipalities report that they have the possibility of providing women who live in municipal emergency accommodation with 24-hour supervision. An alarm system connected to the police has been installed in one flat.

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<sup>12</sup> The Women's Shelters – Fellow Women, Not Authorities. A Survey of the Women's Shelters and their Activities in Västra Götaland County, 2004. Västra Götaland County Administrative Board: Report 2004:34.

<sup>13</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare. Lägesbeskrivning: 5 kap. 11§ SoL – en uppföljning av socialtjänstens arbete ("An account of the situation. Social Services Act, Chapter 5, Section 11 – A Follow-Up of the Work of the Social Services").

Abused women and their children can thus be offered temporary housing in emergency situations, provided that a vacant flat is available. However, several of the interviewees doubt that accommodation in municipal emergency flats really provides adequate protection for the abused women.

An official in a municipality in Skåne county states the following: "No, we have nothing in particular to offer. There are one or two emergency flats, but in most cases they do not provide the right kind of protection as this is a small municipality." One municipality in Gävleborg County provides the following answer: "The municipality has no sheltered accommodation to offer. The emergency flat can be used if necessary, if that is sufficient. The Social Services Administration has good cooperation with the women's shelter and women in need of sheltered accommodation are referred to their flat."

Two municipalities report that they have used hotels and one of these also reports the use of cottages in camping sites in emergency cases. Another municipality reports that the social services may contribute travelling expenses if the woman wishes to go and stay with relations/friends elsewhere and lacks the financial resources to travel.

There is no doubt that the municipalities still - and almost exclusively- rely on the non-profit women's shelters to fulfil the needs of abused women for support and sheltered accommodation. Of the 213 municipalities that answered the question, 105 report that there is a non-profit women's shelter in the municipality. Another 19 municipalities report that they share a women's shelter with one or several other municipalities. The majority of municipalities claim to have cooperation with the women's shelters and refer abused women to the shelters. Of the 89 municipalities that have no non-profit women's shelter, almost all of them state that they refer abused women to shelters in neighbouring municipalities that they cooperate with. Only two municipalities make no mention at all of the women's shelter. In at least six of the municipalities that lack a non-profit women's shelter, a shelter has existed before but has been closed down in recent years.

### **Municipal contributions to the women's shelters**

The National Council for the Protection of Women's Integrity published a report in 2001, entitled "Municipalities that close their eyes to men's violence against women." According to the report, as many as 68 municipalities gave no financial contributions at all to the women's shelters in the year 2000. The size of the grants varied considerably between the municipalities. All in all, the municipalities contributed SEK 24 million (Euro 2.617.516) to the work of the women's shelters during the year studied. That corresponded to a contribution of SEK 2.84 (Euro 0.3)/inhabitant in Sweden.

In the questionnaire, Amnesty International asked how much the municipalities contribute to the non-profit women's shelters. To enable comparison between the municipalities, we asked both about the total amount of money given by the municipality and what this corresponds to per inhabitant. One hundred and ninety municipalities provided answers in a format that allows a comparison to be made. The twelve municipalities that have only reported on the type of contribution; for example, rent for premises, salary contributions or activity grants, but not stated the amounts are not included in the figures below. Municipalities that have not responded or reply that they "don't know" (12 municipalities) are not included either.

Twenty municipalities, or 19% of the 190 respondents, report that they made no contribution at all to the activities of the non-profit women's shelters during 2004 (see Table 1). All but one of these have no women's shelter in the municipality, but most of them report that there are women's shelters in neighbouring municipalities to which abused women are referred. This means that they rely solely on the non-profit women's shelters in neighbouring municipalities for the provision of support and protection for abused women but make no contributions at all to the work of the shelters in the form of activity grants or other types of contribution. A few municipalities, for example, in Jönköping and Västra Götaland counties, report that they pay the "daily costs," i.e., they "buy services" for the women who turn to the women's shelters in neighbouring municipalities. A municipality in Skåne County makes no contribution to any non-profit women's shelter but gives a large grant to the municipal crisis centre for women in Lund, to which they also refer abused women.

Four municipalities state as their reason for not contributing to the women's shelter in their own or a neighbouring municipality that they have not received an application for an activity grant.

Eight of the municipalities that pay no activity grants to the women's shelters also report that they provide no sheltered accommodation under the auspices of the municipality, nor is emergency accommodation available. Two of these municipalities fail to answer the question of where abused women are referred to instead. A third municipality replies that "they (the women) should primarily turn to the social services," although they report that the municipality cannot offer any form of sheltered accommodation.

Fifty-six municipalities give a symbolic contribution to the women's shelter of SEK 2 (Euro 0.22) per inhabitant or less. Thirty-eight of these municipalities have no women's shelter. The rest of the municipalities have their own women's shelter or share a shelter with other municipalities. The smallest contribution was SEK 0.04 (Euro 0.004) per inhabitant; a total of SEK 400 (Euro 43.6) per year. The same municipality reports that they "buy services" from the women's shelter in the neighbouring municipality. Two of the municipalities with their own women's shelter announce that the contribution for 2005 will probably be multiplied.

Ninety-three municipalities contribute between SEK 2.10 (Euro 0.23) and SEK 9.90 (Euro 1.08) per inhabitant to the women's shelters. A few of these municipalities also contribute to municipal crisis centres or regional projects for the protection of women's integrity, for example, the Utväg Project in Västra Götaland and the Frideborg Project in Östergötland.

Fifteen municipalities contribute to the women's shelters with between SEK 10 (Euro 1.09) and 14.90 (Euro 1.63) per inhabitant.

Four municipalities, Karlskoga, Falun, Umeå and Gothenburg, contributed SEK 15 (Euro 1.64), 16.36 (Euro 1.78), 17 (Euro 1.85) and 17.80 (Euro 1.94) per inhabitant, respectively, to the non-profit women's shelters. These amounts correspond to SEK 445,000 (Euro 48.533) (Karlskoga), SEK 900.000 (Euro 98.157) (Falun), SEK 1.9 million (Euro 207.220) (Umeå), and SEK 8.5 million (Euro 927.037) (Gothenburg), respectively. Gothenburg municipality also allocated SEK 10.1 million (Euro 1.101.538) to the Crisis Centre for Women, the Crisis Centre for Men and the Utväg ("Way out") Project, working with women, children and men. All three activities are run by the municipality. The total contributions by Gothenburg municipality amount to SEK 38.93 (Euro 4.25) per inhabitant.

Malmö municipality allocated between SEK 10-12 million (Euro 1.090.600-1.308.760) – corresponding to approximately SEK 40 (Euro 4.36) per inhabitant – to the women's shelter and the Crisis Centre for Women and Children and the Crisis Centre for Men, both run by the municipality. The figures for Malmö are not, however, included in the table below, as the municipality has failed to specify how much of the money is allocated to the non-profit women's shelter.

The City of Stockholm has not replied to the question of how much money they contribute to the work of the women's shelters.

Härnösand municipality in Västernorrland County allocated SEK 20.60 (Euro 2.25) per inhabitant to the women's shelter, while Hofors municipality in Gävleborg County reports that they contributed as much as SEK 23.40 (Euro 2.55) per inhabitant to the non-profit women's shelter, which corresponds to a total of SEK 240.000 (Euro 26.175).

The answers to the questionnaire do not indicate how many municipalities also pay on a daily cost basis for women and children who stay at the shelters, in addition to the reported grants and contributions.

**Table. Contributions from the municipalities to the women's shelters.**

<b>Amount/inhabitant (SEK/Euro)</b>	Number of municipalities	Comments
0	20	All but one have no women's shelter. However, two of these municipalities contribute to the municipal crisis centre in the neighbouring municipality/regional project for the protection of women's integrity.
0.10-2.00/0.01-0.22	56	38 of which have no women's shelter.
2.10-9.90/0.23-1.08	93	21 of which have no women's shelter.
10-14.90/1.09-1.63	15	One of which has no women's shelter in the municipality.
15-20/1.64-2.18	4	Women's shelters in the municipalities.
>20/>2.18	2	Women's shelters in the municipalities.
Contribution, but not amount, stated.	12	State the type of contributions; for example, rent for premises, salary contributions and activity grants, but not the total amount divided by the number of inhabitants.
No reply/don't know	12	

The average contribution to the women's shelters from the municipalities was SEK 4.93 (Euro 0.54) per inhabitant in 2004.<sup>14</sup> However, the six municipalities that give more than SEK 15 (Euro 1.64) per inhabitant improve the average for the country as a whole.

### **Average contribution to the non-profit women's shelters from the municipalities**

Average for all municipalities: SEK 4.93 (Euro 0.54) per inhabitant

Average for municipalities with their own or shared women's shelter: SEK 6.12 (Euro 0.68) per inhabitant

Average for municipalities without women's shelters: SEK 2.36 (Euro 0.28) per inhabitant

In municipalities with a non-profit women's shelter, the average contribution is much larger than in municipalities without their own women's shelter. A probable and contributing reason for this may be that the existence and the political work of a women's shelter shed light on men's violence against women in the municipality and the need to support and protect abused women.

<sup>14</sup> Includes a number of municipalities that responded to the questionnaire during January-February, 2005, and report on activity grants for 2005.

## **Amnesty International's recommendations**

Since 1998, the municipalities are obliged by law to provide the support and protection that abused women and their close relatives need. Despite this, there is no doubt that the municipalities still – and almost exclusively – rely on the non-profit women's shelters to fulfil the needs of abused women for support and sheltered accommodation. Through their work, the women's shelters give a massive contribution to society at a very low cost to the municipalities in the country.

Compared with previous information from the National Council for the Protection of Women's Integrity, the number of municipalities who do not contribute at all to the work of the women's shelters has more than halved. The average amount among the municipalities studied was also somewhat higher than according to previous information from the Council for the Protection of Women's Integrity.

While it is positive that more municipalities than before contribute to the women's shelters, Amnesty International is concerned that there are still municipalities that pay nothing at all. It is also a matter of concern that there is still massive variation between municipalities with regard to the amounts that they contribute, which results in greatly varying conditions for the local women's shelters. It is natural that small municipalities with a small number of inhabitants contribute less in total. However, when the total contributions are divided by the number of inhabitants, considerable variations emerge; from SEK 0.04 (Euro 0.04) per inhabitant in the municipality that contributed the least, to over SEK 23 (Euro 2.5) per inhabitant in the municipality with the largest contribution to the work of the non-profit women's shelters.

Amnesty International believes that it is a serious democratic and human rights problem that women threatened by or subjected to violence are not provided with protection, or that the protection offered varies with where the woman lives. For this reason, the municipalities must allocate sufficient resources, regardless of whether sheltered accommodation is provided by the municipality itself or through the non-profit women's shelters. This also applies to municipalities that share a women's shelter or those who use the shelters in neighbouring municipalities.

Amnesty International reiterates the demands already put forward that the financial contributions from both the government and many municipalities to the non-profit women's shelters must be increased, to make it possible for the shelters to develop their work and apply a long-term perspective to their efforts. However, increased resources from the municipalities and the government must not be conditioned and lead to political control of the work of the women's shelters.

Municipalities that "buy services" should also consider contributing activity grants to the shelters to ensure a long-term perspective for the work. The shelters also receive women who wish to have no contact with authorities, which means that the municipality has no way of knowing whether these women are being accommodated by the shelter. As a consequence, the shelter has to assume the costs if the woman cannot pay herself.

Municipalities without a non-profit shelter should consider opening municipal women's shelters. Small municipalities without the means of running their own shelters should allocate sufficient resources and actively cooperate with other municipalities to operate shared women's shelters.

## Support for abused women with special needs

Many women have a life situation that may entail a need for specialized support, if men with whom they are in intimate relationships and/or other people in their immediate environment subject them to violence. These women often suffer double discrimination; that is, they are discriminated against both because of their gender and because of other factors, such as disability, ethnicity, social background, drug- and/or alcohol abuse, age, and sexual inclination and gender identity. Women who are disabled, young, mentally ill, asylum-seekers or lesbians are examples of groups of women who may have special needs in terms of the support and help offered to them in connection with abuse and violence. This also goes for women with drug- and/or alcohol problems and women of foreign origin who risk being subjected to so called honour-related violence.

Amnesty International asked the municipalities about the support available locally for women who are mentally ill, drug and/or alcohol addicts and disabled and for women of foreign origin and other exposed groups of women who are being subjected to violence by men with whom they are in close relationships.

Most of the municipalities replied by explaining that the groups mentioned that might have special needs receive help and support through the ordinary work of the social services and that "they are entitled to the same support as everybody else." Support is given on the basis of the Social Services Act or the Act on Special Services for the Disabled (LSS). The social services make individual assessments and adapt the support to the needs of the individual woman.

An official at the Individual and Family Care Unit in a municipality in Jönköping county replies as follows: "No single group has been given special attention, but they are of course entitled to the same support as all women in exposed situations, as all handling and assessments are based on the individual case and on the specific needs of the individual woman."

The chairperson of the social welfare committee in a municipality in Västernorrland County gives the following answer: "We do not differentiate between women in terms of what support we offer; everyone is entitled to the same kind of support. The woman's individual needs determine what we do."

### **Support for women who are mentally ill, drug and/or alcohol abusers or disabled**

The Health and Care Administration and the units for adults and for individual and family care within the Social Services Administration are examples of units that can provide support for women who are disabled, mentally ill or who have drug- and/or alcohol problems; for example, in the form of contacts with special caseworkers, counselling, housing support liaison officers, etc.

Drug dependence clinics and other non-institutional treatment for persons with drug and/or alcohol problems, group care activities, rehabilitation housing, adult psychiatry and municipal socio-psychiatric clinics are some examples of support measures listed by the municipalities. However, the answers to the questionnaire do not indicate how and to what extent the care offered – which is targeted to patients with drug- and/or alcohol problems or mental illness – can also accommodate and deal with the problems and consequences of the fact the woman has been subjected to violence.

One municipality in Jönköping County highlights this in its reply:

"Support is available for women who are mentally ill, drug- and/or alcohol addicts or disabled, in accordance with the Social Services Act. However, no specific measures have been taken for women who have also been subjected to violence in intimate relationships."

One local government commissioner in Västra Götaland county replies as follows to the question on the type of support available for groups of women with special needs who are subjected to violence: "According to our action plan, these women should be given special consideration and be supported. Problems occur when drug or alcohol-abusing women need sheltered accommodation as the House for All Women/the women's shelter won't take them in."

A municipality in Jönköping County provides a similar answer: "Unfortunately, abusing women have very slim chances of getting the help they need. Women with drug- and/or alcohol problems are not accepted by the women's shelter."

Some municipalities appear to rely on the non-profit women's shelters to support and provide sheltered accommodation also for groups of women with special needs. Women of foreign origin who are subjected to violence can get support and sheltered accommodation at the women's shelters. However, women with drug or alcohol problems and mentally ill women are particularly vulnerable in situations when they need emergency protection, as the non-profit shelters have no possibility of taking them in. Nor do most municipal crisis centres for women, as a rule, accept mentally ill women. Women with drug or alcohol problems are given help, provided that they are drug-free.

Despite this, several municipalities state that they cooperate with the women's shelter, also for women with special needs. One municipality in Skåne County states as follows: "When they come to the social services we refer them to other bodies or organizations, primarily to the women's shelters."

Some municipalities have, however, realized that this is a problem and have developed special support services for these groups. Vetlanda municipality in Jönköping County provides sheltered accommodation for mentally ill and women with drug or alcohol addiction who have been subjected to violence. Trollhättan municipality in Västra Götaland county reports that they have a special room with sheltered accommodation for women with abuse problems that have been subjected to violence, at the municipal housing facility for drug- and/or alcohol addicts.

The same municipality also reports that they have conducted special training programmes for psychiatric staff to enhance their ability to "identify and deal with mentally ill women who are being subjected to violence in intimate relationships." This is of particular importance, as the National Association for Social and Mental Health (RSMH), among others, have noted that the psychiatric services lack knowledge of the extent of the gender-based violence and its underlying mechanisms, and that the treatment of crime victims often leaves a great deal to be desired.<sup>15</sup> Mentally ill women who are subjected to violence risk being referred from one authority or treatment facility to another, without receiving adequate help, support and security.

Malmö municipality reports limited facilities for the protection of women with active drug- and/or alcohol problems/mental illness or severe mental disabilities. The Härbärgert shelter in the municipality has two rooms that can be used to provide some protection, but states that: "So much more is needed. We are working on what needs to be done and how to solve this problem, but no definite proposals exist at this stage."

Trollhättan municipality reports that disabled women are offered counselling at the municipal Crisis Centre for Women, and that the staff there "can be mobile to reach this group." Sheltered accommodation is also offered, "to the extent that the woman's disability allows this."

One municipality in Stockholm County reports that, "one of the municipality's emergency flats is adapted to disabled persons, allowing a person in a wheelchair to stay there."

Some municipalities report that they have informed and/or submitted their programme of measures for support to abused women to the authorities responsible for the care for the elderly and the disabled, among others, with the aim to improve the knowledge and awareness among the staff of the risk of disabled and elderly women also being subjected to violence by men with whom they are in a close relationship or by other people in their immediate environment.

Gothenburg municipality reports participation, together with Malmö and Stockholm, in a project involving research. The aim of the project is to "give better support than is the case today to women with drug and/or alcohol problems who are being subjected to violence." Three of the municipality's district councils have been involved in a special project in cooperation with the Council for Disabled Persons, to highlight men's violence against disabled women, and two projects in cooperation with a non-profit women's shelter on men's violence against elderly women.

### **Support for abused women of foreign origin**

The question about support for women of foreign origin seems to have been regarded as discriminatory by several municipalities. The chairperson of the social welfare committee in a municipality in Kalmar county writes as follows: "The Individual and Family Care Unit provides support for all women, regardless of their origin." Helsingborg municipality offers counselling in groups with interpreters for abused women as a part of the Johanna Programme. Another municipality in Skåne reports that they provide considerable support for and have "good knowledge of these women," without stating what the support consists of.

However, several municipalities mention no particular efforts for this group, other than the use of interpreters if needed. A few municipalities mention that the church and voluntary organizations, such as the Red Cross or "organizations for foreign women" play an important role – even when support for abused women is not the primary aim of the organization. A handful of municipalities report that men's violence against women is brought up as a part of the introduction programme for new refugees/immigrants in the municipality and that they cooperate with the refugee reception service in the municipality.

A few municipalities in the counties of Värmland, Stockholm and Västra Götaland report that sheltered accommodation is available for girls and women who risk being subjected to so called honour-related violence. One municipality reports that they have been running a project during 2004 to "equip school personnel with the necessary knowledge and tools to identify, handle and help young women who are at risk of honour-related violence." Uppsala municipality runs a special project, entitled "Famnen" (Embrace) with two employees. Individual support is offered to "girls of foreign origin who live in patriarchal family situations," but can also be extended to special target groups, for example, schools. The girl's family can also "become a part of the package of support measures."

<sup>15</sup> Aftonbladet, Debate: "Våld är vardag för psyksjuka kvinnor" ("Violence is a part of everyday life for mentally ill women"), 2004-03-08.

## **Violence in same-sex relationships**

No municipality mentions support for women who have been subjected to violence in same-sex relationships.

## **Amnesty International's recommendations**

The municipalities must take a special responsibility for groups of abused women with special needs; for example, women who are mentally ill, women with drug- and/or alcohol problems or disabled, as well as women who are subjected to violence from their partner in homosexual relationships and women of foreign origin. Women in these groups must be given access to support, help and emergency protection adapted to their needs.

Knowledge about men's violence against women and of the causes and consequences of the violence are decisive to ensure relevant and efficient measures and support efforts by society. The existing expert knowledge on drug- and/or alcohol abuse, disabilities, mental illness and care for the elderly must be extended to also include the experiences of women who have been subjected to violence.

Improved knowledge is also needed about the risks of young girls and women being subjected to violence and about the experiences of violence in same-sex relationships of lesbian and bisexual women, in order to improve the awareness of these women and offer them support that is adapted to their needs and situation. The municipalities should also identify appropriate channels for reaching out to these groups of women with information about the support and help available.

## Information material

In order for an abused woman to seek help and support, she must know where to turn to and what kind of help is available. For this reason, it is essential that the municipalities have easily accessible information material about the support offered by the social services and other local actors.

Of the 214 municipalities that responded to the questionnaire, 63 report that they have produced their own information material. In 16 of these, information material is also available in one or several foreign languages. Nine municipalities report that information material is available, but do not state whether they have produced it themselves or use material from some other source.

Many municipalities report that they have not produced any material themselves, but use information produced, for example, by the women's shelters. In some cases, material produced by the police and brochures from the Crime Victim Support Authority are also mentioned.

Some municipalities have produced joint information material within the framework of the local cooperation group. Other municipalities use material from large cooperation projects, such as Operation Protection of Women's Integrity, carried out in Stockholm County. Material from various project activities is also used, for example, from three different Utvåg projects in Västra Götaland.

A few municipalities report that they are in the process of producing information material.

Only very few municipalities have information material in other languages than Swedish. A handful of municipalities report that they use material from Terrafem and ROKS.<sup>16</sup> A municipality in Västerbotten County writes as follows: "Other languages have not been relevant so far, but should be as we now have a number of refugees who speak other languages."

Skellefteå municipality initiated a special "Women's web page" in 2002, with information in several different languages. According to the municipality, the web page is very frequently accessed, not least in connection with long weekends and during the holiday season when it is on the main page of the municipality's homepage.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, the majority of municipalities have produced no information material at all, neither in Swedish nor in any other language spoken in the municipality. The chairperson of a social welfare committee in a municipality in Kalmar County writes as follows: "The women's shelter advertises. The social services can be found in the telephone directory."

### **Amnesty International's recommendations**

A prerequisite for being able to access help and support is that the abused woman knows who to contact and what kind of help she can get. For this reason, municipalities that lack information material should produce and disseminate such material without delay. The information should be presented in such a way as to be accessible for all women. It should be easy to read, available in different languages, in Braille, etc. The information material should be disseminated outside of the waiting-room at the social welfare office and be available in many public places, such as pharmacies, health care centres, dental clinics, libraries, the national insurance offices, etc.

As previously mentioned the municipalities should also identify appropriate channels for reaching out with information on the support and help offered to groups of women with special needs.

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<sup>16</sup> The National Organization for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters (Riksorganisationen för Kvinnojouren och tjejjourer i Sverige - ROKS), and the Terrafem immigrant women's shelter with a nationwide 24-hour emergency telephone service in 35 languages for women and girls of foreign origin.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.kvinnofrid.skelleftea.se>

## Raising awareness among the citizens of the municipalities

The questionnaire also asked about what the municipality does to raise awareness about men's violence against women among people who live in the municipalities. Unfortunately, very few of the responding municipalities report any particular measures to that end.

The head of the Individual and Family Care Unit in a municipality in Kronoberg County replies that, "We lack a strategy for such measures." The director of the Social Services Administration in a Västerbotten county municipality replies, "As far as I know, we do nothing." A municipality in Skåne writes that they "have no special activities, apart from those directed at those who come to us for help and support."

The local government commissioner in a municipality in Västerbotten County describes the situation as follows: "I am not aware of the municipality taking any special measures, other than trying to develop an action plan!!! I am somewhat critical of this and I think my criticism is justified. Gender equality here is only a matter of equality of pay. My interpretation is that issues concerning the equal rights and value of women are problematic for an old industrial community to deal with."

Some of the answers are very general in character and report no detailed initiatives. A few municipalities welcome ideas about how best to reach out to the general public.

Among the measures mentioned, advertising and publicity in the local media are the most common. Several municipalities with a local cooperation group/protection of women's integrity group report that information to the public is a task for such groups. Some municipalities also report that they participate in activities that cover the whole county, but make no mention of the type of activities or whether they are directed towards to general public.

Several municipalities are of the opinion that support for or grants to non-profit organizations that actively inform about men's violence against women can be regarded as a municipal effort to raise awareness among the citizens of the municipality. Others mention the adoption of guidelines/action plans as a way of making the inhabitants in the municipality aware of the problem. In many cases, however, these programmes are not published on the municipality's homepage, which is an important point of contact with people who live in the municipality.

Theme days, educational initiatives and information about men's violence against women appear to be mainly internal activities or measures taken in collaboration with other units/authorities/cooperation partners. Only a few municipalities report on detailed measures and activities directed towards the general public to raise awareness about men's violence against women. The municipalities that direct information to the public often mention several of the following activities:

- Debates
- Lectures open to the public/study circles
- Information/theme days in schools
- Letters to all households about the work done in the municipality to prevent crime
- Film screenings
- Theatre performances
- A dedicated "Women's web page" with information in several languages
- Participation in events organized by different organizations
- Information to newly arrived refugees
- Media publicity
- Appointment of a special coordinator for the protection of women's integrity, including information

## **Amnesty International's recommendations**

Amnesty International believes that the municipalities have a responsibility to take a clear stand against men's violence against women, and to carry out long-term preventive work to combat such violence. The municipalities must take on an active and innovative role and reach out to raise awareness among people who live in the municipality and contribute to changing attitudes over time. The work to disseminate knowledge and change attitudes must rest on an understanding of gender-based violence as an extensive social problem with its roots in the prevailing gender power structure, rather than as a private family problem that only affects a few individuals.

Important fora where the municipalities can work preventively are schools, where also parents and staff can be reached, adult education facilities (educational associations, folk high schools, municipal adult education institutions), various citizens' fora, workplaces, through web pages and by arranging series of open lectures and debates. Individual politicians in the municipalities also have an important role to play in shaping public opinion and taking initiatives.

## Amnesty International's conclusions and recommendations to the government

The review of the municipalities' work carried out by Amnesty International covers 75% of all municipalities in Sweden and shows large variations between municipalities in terms of their work for the protection of women's integrity.

Many municipalities work actively to combat men's violence against women and to give abused women support and protection, which Amnesty International welcomes. However, in many other municipalities, men's violence against women is a low-priority issue.

These municipalities still lack guidelines for the work of the social services, information material about where abused women can seek help and statistics on the number of women seeking help. The municipalities fail to provide support and protection in emergency situations and rely entirely on the work of the non-profit women's shelters. Far too many municipalities fail to contribute financially to the work of the women's shelters, other than with token contributions.

Amnesty International therefore requests that the government carry out a review of what additional demands should be placed on the municipalities to speed up, strengthen and develop the work to combat men's violence against women and protect women's integrity in all municipalities in the country. The government clarified the responsibility of the municipalities through the Protection of Women's Integrity Bill in 1998. Although six years have passed since then, far too many municipalities have failed to realize and implement the intentions of the bill. Amnesty International believes that men's violence against women is a serious social problem and that large-scale measures are needed to assert and realize the right of all women to a life without violence. The work for the protection of women's integrity is a matter of exercising and upholding fundamental human rights by combating men's violence against women. It is unacceptable, from a democratic point of view, that the support and protection offered to abused women depend on where in Sweden they live. In Amnesty International's opinion it is highly unsatisfactory to leave it up to the individual municipalities to decide whether to give priority to the issues of women's fundamental human rights and protection from violence.

Amnesty International welcomes the current work on formulating directives for a revision of the social services act, with regard to the municipalities' responsibility for providing support, help and protection for abused women. At the same time, Amnesty International would like to point out that the need to improve and strengthen the support and protection for abused women, and the need to tighten up the law regulating the responsibilities of the municipalities have already been made clear, i.e., in the government's report "Empty Gestures," on the work to protect women's integrity. What remains now is to translate words into deeds.

## Annex 1: Amnesty International's questions to Swedish municipalities

1. Has men's violence against women in your own municipality been discussed? Has the issue been discussed by the local council, the municipal executive board and/or the social welfare committee? When was it last discussed?
2. Does the municipality have a politically adopted action plan to combat men's violence against women?
3. What are the objectives in the action plan?
4. If no action plan has been adopted, why not?
5. Does the municipality provide its own sheltered accommodation for women subjected to violence?
6. Is there a women's shelter in the municipality?
7. How large is the municipality's contribution to the women's shelter?
8. How much does this correspond to per inhabitant (in SEK)?
9. If there is no women's shelter, where do abused women turn to and to whom are they referred?
10. Which other actors do the social services in the municipality cooperate with?
11. How many women are subjected to violence every year in the municipality? What is the source of your information?
12. Does the municipality have information material about where women who are subjected to violence can turn? Is the material available in other languages than Swedish?
13. What kind of support is available in the municipality for women who are mentally ill, drug- and/or alcohol abusers or disabled, and for women of foreign origin and other groups of vulnerable women who are or have been subjected to violence from men with whom they are in a close relationship?
14. What does the municipality do to raise awareness among people who live in the municipality about men's violence against women?

## Annex 2: Municipalities responding to Amnesty International's questionnaire

### Blekinge County:

All 5 municipalities responding.

### Dalarna County:

12 out of 15 municipalities responding.

### Gotland County

1 out of 1 municipality responding.

### Gävleborg County

9 out of 10 municipalities responding.

### Halland County

4 out of 6 municipalities responding.

### Jämtland County:

4 out of 8 municipalities responding.

### Jönköping County:

11 out of 13 municipalities responding.

### Kalmar County:

12 out of 12 municipalities responding.

### Kronoberg County:

8 out of 8 municipalities responding.

### Norrbottn County:

10 out of 14 municipalities responding.

### Skåne County:

25 out of 33 municipalities responding.

### Stockholm County:

22 out of 26 municipalities responding.

### Södermanland County:

6 out of 9 municipalities responding.

### Uppsala County:

2 out of 7 municipalities responding.

Värmland County:

12 out of 16 municipalities responding.

Västerbotten County:

10 out of 15 municipalities responding.

Västernorrland County:

7 out of 7 municipalities responding.

Västmanland County:

7 out of 11 municipalities responding.

Västra Götaland County:

30 out of 49 municipalities responding.

Örebro County:

9 out of 12 municipalities responding.

Östergötland County:

9 out of 13 municipalities responding.