



## The Danish National Observatory on Violence

- a team effort working to eliminate  
men's violence against women

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Ph: +45 33 12 80 87  
E-mail: [kvr@kvinderaad.dk](mailto:kvr@kvinderaad.dk)

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## Preface

In 1997 The Women's Council established a group of experts on men's violence against women. This task force, *The National Observatory on Violence Against Women*, consists of representatives from institutions, organisations, and individuals working within this field. Together The Observatory possesses a unique insight based on shared research, practical experience and feminist insight.

The members of The Danish National Observatory are engaged in various aspects of the phenomenon of men's violence against women, and represent different theoretical and methodical approaches. What they have in common though is a united endeavour to fight men's violence against women.

This report describes the diversity of The Danish National Observatory's work through a presentation of the members' areas of interest. It outlines the extent and characteristics of the violence in Denmark. This is followed by a description and discussion of the activities aimed to help battered women and children, and also to help abusive men. Finally, the government's Action Plan to fight violence against women (2005) is discussed, and the need to address new areas is pointed out.

It is our wish that this report will work as an introduction to students, journalists, politicians, social workers, activists and others that wish to be engaged with the problem of men's violence against women. We also hope that this report will inspire the development of observatories of violence in other countries. The Danish Observatory is participating in the cooperative work of The European Observatory on Violence against Women organised by The European Women's Lobby, which partly works to establish Observatories on Violence against women in EU member states.

Randi Theil Nielsen

The Danish National Observatory on Violence Against Women in The Women's Council

## Chapter 1

### The Danish National Observatory on Violence Against Women

#### – Aim and Background

The Danish National Observatory on Violence is a group of experts within The Women's Council that works to eliminate men's violence against women. This task force is composed on the principle that the members in aggregate cover the current knowledge concerning men's violence against women. Their aim is to gather and circulate information on various forms of violence, various scholarly approaches, practical based knowledge and feminist insight.

The Danish Observatory brings together a wide range of institutions, organisations, individuals and facilitates in the efficient exchange of information. It also assists in maintaining good relations and cooperation between the various members.

The Women's Council initiated the task force in 1997. As a member of The European Women's Lobby, The Council took part in a new European NGO, The European Observatory on Violence, which aimed to uncover violence against women in the EU countries. The task force was established to support the delegate<sup>1</sup> from The Women's Council to the European forum. The European Observatory on Violence sets the framework for the Danish Observatory.

The Danish National Observatory is founded on the wide definition of violence against women from the Beijing Action Plan<sup>2</sup>: "The term 'violence against women' means 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 private life." (Par.113).

In accordance with the Action Plan, men's violence against women is approached from a feminist perspective: "Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement." (Par.118).

The work of the Danish Observatory is also based on The CEDAW convention<sup>3</sup>. The states that have signed the convention are obligated to work to eliminate any form of discrimination against women. Denmark ratified the convention in 1983, and it is binding by law.

The Observatory focuses on men's violence against women. We know that some men are

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<sup>1</sup> Vibeke Jørgensen from The Danish Female Doctors' Association was selected in 1997 and was followed by Karin Helweg-Larsen from the Danish Institute of Public Health in 2001.

<sup>2</sup> The Beijing Action Plan was confirmed at the 4th UN Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995.

<sup>3</sup> "The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", passed by the UN in 1979.

exposed to violence from women and that these men can be in a difficult situation with the risk of humiliation and ridicule, because society does not recognise that women are capable of using violence. But it is important to point out that women's violence against men is minimal compared to men's violence against women. And when a woman does expose a man to violence it is often because he has already violated her.

The Danish National Observatory on Violence Against Women aims:

- to exchange experiences and collect information about violence against women and take action that will prevent violence against women in Denmark
- to secure that the Danish government lives up to national and international plans of action regarding violence against women
- to function as a task group for The Women's Council and The European Observatory on Violence Against Women

### **The long journey to a Danish Action Plan**

In 2002 the government passed an Action Plan to fight violence against women for the first time<sup>4</sup>, and in 2005 the next plan, covering a 3-year period, was put together<sup>5</sup>. To have an explicit obligation and resources – though they are few – towards a targeted effort is a huge step forward. At the same time, it is surprising that it took so long to put men's violence against women on the political agenda. It is also important to mention that both plans of action are limited to domestic violence. To this day a full and continual effort aimed at all forms of men's violence against women is still lacking, for example an effort towards violence against prostitutes and violence against women at work.

A significant benefit of the women's movement can be seen in the taboo of men's violence against women being broken. At the end of the 1970's women's groups established women's centres that were meant to function as both refuge for battered women, and as a basis for feminist activities. The feminist organisation The Joan Sisters was established in 1975 and it has participated in placing sexual and physical assaults against women on the political agenda. At the same time, it has offered woman-to-woman counselling to women exposed to sexual assault. *To make the private political* was a mantra of the women's movement in the 1970's. This meant that men's violence against women was primarily seen through the power structure of a patriarchal society with sexual roles that suppressed women, and included an unequal sharing of power between women and men.

This work continued throughout the 1980's and 1990's. During this period women's shelters were organised under The National Organisation of Shelters for Battered Women and their Children (LOKK), legislation was passed to frame the work of the shelters, and the shelters became professionalized. During the same period the women's movement succeeded in institutionalising the above efforts, which in turn has made today's grassroots activities more ambiguous.

During the past 5 years new legislation has been passed, new treatment centres have been established, better statistics and more documentation has been made, and information and prevention campaigns have been organised. Here are some examples, and the list could be longer:

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<sup>4</sup> "The Danish Government's Action Plan to stop Violence against Women" (2002).

<sup>5</sup> "Action Plan to stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children 2005-2008".

In regards to legislation, it may be noted that the women's shelters had their own paragraph in the social service legislation in 2004. This paragraph secures the standardising of the shelters' work. In the same year the Danish Parliament passed a law that makes it possible for the police to remove abusive persons from their home – the so-called Austria model.

The possibilities for treatment for victims of rape have improved, since Centres for Victims of Sexual Assault were established in 7 different hospitals in Denmark. The first centre opened in Århus in 1999. The centre at Copenhagen's central hospital also doubles as a research centre, it opened in 2000.

As a result of the Action Plan several treatment centres for abusive men have been launched, and efforts have been made to secure the women's shelter's possibility of assisting women with disabilities.

The statistical foundation for tracking the extent and characteristics of violence against women has improved since 2001 with a yearly publishing of gender-specific data.

Statistics concerning violence against women have been included in the Health and Sickness Study<sup>6</sup>. The Danish National Observatory has analysed the extent and characteristics of men's violence against women<sup>7</sup>. The Ministry of Gender Equality has published several reports, for example one about youth and violence. The Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability has drawn up documentation about women's shelters and relevant topics<sup>8</sup>, and several reports about abusive men have been published<sup>9</sup>.

The Ministry of Gender Equality has together with LOKK, The Danish Research Centre of Social Vulnerability, and The Danish Crime Prevention Council composed the information campaign "Stop Violence Against Women".

The way we talk about the violence has also changed. 'Domestic disputes' has been replaced by 'violence in intimate relationships', and also by the even more accurate 'men's violence against women'. There has also been a change of focus in the assigning of resources, in research, and to a certain extent in the legislative agenda<sup>10</sup>: the abusive man is now at the centre of attention. This is clear in the government's latest Action Plan, where a large part of the funds are assigned to the counselling of abusive men, while the rest of the resources are spread out on the remaining areas.

Another characteristic of the past years' debate and political initiatives regarding men's violence against women is the way in which the problem has been 'culturalised' or 'ethnified'. There is a strong public focus on the violence that occurs against women of

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<sup>6</sup> The Danish Institute of Public Health (2001)

<sup>7</sup> "Men's Violence Against Women" (2004), report and database by Karin Helweg-Larsen and Marie Kruse.

<sup>8</sup> "When violence is a part of daily life" (2005) by Vibeke Lybecker Jensen and Sissel Lea Nielsen, Vfc-udsatte and LOKK.

<sup>9</sup> "Dialogue against Violence" (2004) by Per Hensen and Helle Øbo Petersen. "Treatment of violent men – Does it work?" (2005) by Kenneth Reinicke.

<sup>10</sup> "Things have changed for the better – a look at the history of rape" (2003), Annika Snare, in: Voldtægt. Retsbeskyttelse for den krænkede - retssikkerhed for gerningsmanden. Dansk Forening for Kvinderet (ed.).

ethnic minorities. But at the same time, very few efforts have been made to secure the rights and possibilities of ethnic minority women within Danish society.

The tendency to view certain forms of discrimination and repression against women as particularly unacceptable can also be applied in the debate concerning prostitution. The trafficking of foreign women into prostitution in Denmark has finally become the object of political interest, and legislation and Action Plans<sup>11</sup> that specifically address human trafficking have been passed. But a virtual code of silence comes into play when the subject of Danish prostitution comes to the fore. A plan has been made regarding prostitution<sup>12</sup>, but initiatives regarding this subject do not attract the same political interest that prostitution connected to human traffickers and illegal residency in Denmark does.

### **Looking towards the future**

While we rejoice in the making of Action Plans and new legislation, we also see the need for a continuing and coherent effort.

We know:

that insight into the consequences of psychological violence against women are lacking

that treatment centres for battered women and children are lacking

that knowledge about the efficiency of treatment of abusive men is lacking

that women of ethnic minorities have specific problems

that women in prostitution are exposed to violence

that women with disabilities do not have the same access to help as other battered women

that a great number of women are exposed to rape and other sexual assaults

that many women fail to notify the authorities of sexual assaults

that social and health workers, teachers, police etc. are not sufficiently prepared to cope with the problems in regard to men's violence against women.

This is why we keep working.

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<sup>11</sup> "The Government's Action Plan to combat Trafficking in Women" (2002).

<sup>12</sup> "Creating a different life" –The Governments suggestion for a more aggregate effort in the area of prostitution (2005).

## Chapter 2

### The Members of the Danish National Observatory on Violence

#### Against Women

The Danish National Observatory consists of 23 members that supplement each other with contributions from the various areas of violence against women. The members work with violence against women in all its forms through their engagement in different organisations, institutions and research centres. Among the subjects studied are prostitution, incest, domestic violence, and masculine behaviour, to name a few. By employing a broad range of themes within the field of violence against women, the Danish Observatory can address and understand the many different areas in society that are touched by the violence.

We have divided the members of The Danish Observatory into three categories: First Research and Documentation, second Care, Counselling and Treatment, and third Women's organisations.

#### Research and Documentation

This group of members research in violence against women. They are in contact with victims and abusers through their study of various research projects involving violence against women. The research is carried out using a number of different theoretical approaches and is conducted in both universities and research centres.

#### **Libby Tata Arcel**

Libby Tata Arcel is a senior lecturer of Psychology at the University of Copenhagen and an expert in trauma psychology and the psychological consequences of torture – with an emphasis on sexual torture. She has worked in a clinical setting with victims of torture for almost 30 years. During the past 12 years she has worked as a consultant for IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims), where she has worked with human rights and the convention of torture in relation to war violence against women. Ms. Arcel has worked in many different countries and she has contributed to centres for treatment of torture victims, especially in regards to war raped women. From 1993 to 1995 she worked as the EU's Senior Psychosocial Consultant in Zagreb where she helped establish psychosocial centres in the former Yugoslavian territory. She has also participated in establishing the permanent international tribunal for war criminals.

#### **Charlotte Mathisen Bech. The Danish Crime Prevention Council (observer)**

The Danish Crime Prevention Council (DKR) is an independent national advisory organisation, which is organised under the national police, and thereby under The Ministry of Justice. The Council works for the prevention of crime and is operating as an agency of cooperation between many different players within the field. The Council is engaged in the prevention of all types of violence against women. This is put into practice through the collection and communication of national and international data on violence

against women, and the exchange of information dealing with the different methods of prevention. They also help with counselling and economic support to national and local projects of prevention, the development and implementation of prevention efforts, and act as a liaison between local authorities, NGO's and community-based centres.

Charlotte Mathiesen Bech is an anthropologist and is employed in The Danish Crime Prevention Council.

### **Lise Bjerre. Centre for Development and Communication in the Handicap area**

Centre for Development and Communication in the Handicap area (UFC Handicap) is a nationwide and independent institution established by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Centre collects, arranges and communicates data and experiences about current developments related to the field of people with disabilities, this also includes data and experiences about violence against women with disabilities. The Centre cooperates through networks and specific projects with interested participants in developing the work regarding battered women with disabilities. The Centre also communicates this knowledge through presentations at courses, conferences and theme days. Lise Bjerre works as a consultant for UFC Handicap and has headed the study "Violence Against Women with Disabilities" (Bjerre and Lincke Jørgensen, 2002), which focuses on the subject in Denmark and other European countries. She has published the anthology "Over The Limit – An Anthology About Violence Against Women with Disabilities" (Bjerre (Ed.), 2004), and also works as a coordinator for a national network relating to this subject.

Lise Bjerre is a co-member of The Observatory on Violence Against Women, along with a representative from Women with Disabilities. The latter is a national organisation of women with physical disabilities that discuss and work to develop activities within the political arena.

### **Karin Helweg-Larsen. The National Institute of Public Health**

The National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) is an independent research institute under the Danish Ministry of the Interior and Health, and the institute's primary aim is to conduct research in health and sickness in the Danish population. NIPH has since the end of the 1990's concluded a number of projects that illustrate the extent of physical and sexual assaults in Denmark and the possible connections between assaults and well being. A research-team has been initiated which aims: 1) to describe the extent and characteristics of violence and sexual assaults in Denmark from a medical and a sociological viewpoint, 2) to estimate the consequences of violence and sexual assault to the public health, 3) to analyse gender based differences in, for example, the connections between health and physical violence and sexual assault, and 4) to contribute to the prevention of violence and sexual assaults and post-term stress through Danish and international publications and dialogue. NIPH participates in an international collaboration with institutes of research and communication in other EU member states about violence and the consequences of violence to health. NIPH has contributed to the government's Action Plans to combat violence against women. The Institute has established a national database about violence against women in Denmark in cooperation with The Women's Council and The Minister of Gender Equality. NIPH has also contributed to the phrasing of the European Council's indicators of violence against women, that will monitor the development in each member state in the future, and that will be used in the follow-up of the European Council's recommendations regarding the member states' effort against the violence.

Karin Helweg-Larsen is a doctor and senior research associate in NIPH's research-team of violence and sexual assault, and she is appointed by The Women's Council to be the

representative in The European Observatory on Violence Against Women.

**Sissel Lea Nielsen, Hanne Behrens and Tulle Koefoed. The Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability**

The Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability (VFC Socialt Udsatte) is an independent institution under The Ministry of Social Affairs. The Centre is engaged in the area of violence against women and children in the family, which covers the physical, psychological, sexual, material, economic, and latent violence that women are exposed to by their current or past partners. By looking at the problems of violence holistically, the Centre is able to study the after-effects that violence has on the victims, as well as on the abuser.

The Centre carries out a wide range of activity in the form of both research projects and professional communication. They perform both quantitative and qualitative analyses, with a primary focus on shelters. The Centre offers continuing education through both course work and literature. This work aims to increase the prevention of violence against women and to strengthen the help offered to both victims and abusers. The participants in these courses are the leaders and co-workers of organisations and institutions that work on a daily basis in the area of violence against women and children in the family. The Centre offers assistance at an organizational level and supports various centres in their development. The Centre has also been instrumental in the building of networks for battered women.

Sissel Lea Nielsen is a consultant in the group “Gender and Marginalising” and Hanne Behrens is a theme leader in this group.

Tulle Koefoed is a consultant in the group “Post term stress after sexual assault”. As in the proceeding one, this group collects and develops knowledge and methods to be used in work with young people (over 18 years old) that have been exposed to sexual assaults in their childhood. The public institutions that offer help possess at times only a random and coincidental knowledge of the subject area. The group has therefore written the report “The development plan” which includes possible ways to take action to keep the focus on the post-term stress. The report also reflects on the cooperative relations between public and voluntary organisations. Currently the group concentrates on a perennial project that allows 11-hours of psychological treatment. Initiatives have also been taken to draw up yearly statistics from the voluntary centres of support, and to make a project of method development regarding self-help groups.

Many of the juveniles and adults exposed to sexual assaults in their childhood find it difficult to deal with intimacy and closeness. They also experience difficulties managing or taking possession of social competences, which can explain why many in this group have difficulty keeping a steady job. It will take extensive work to establish and develop a dialogue with the professions that have contact with this group of people, since these victims are not very visible within the public framework of help.

**Kenneth Reinicke**

Kenneth Reinicke holds a Ph.D. and is senior lecturer in masculine behaviour at The Danish Research Centre on Gender Equality (CeLi) at Roskilde University Centre (RUC). His primary focus is masculine behaviour and acts of violence. His report, “Treatment of Violent Men – Does It Work?” (2005), highlights his research dealing with the treatment of abusive men. The report sheds light on the causes of male abuse within the family and

further the discussion on suitable forms of treatment.

Kenneth Reinicke has also written the books “The Whole Man” (2002) and “Men Between Desire and Distress” (2004), which focus on men and their relations to violence, rape and prostitution.

### **Annika Snare**

Annika Snare holds a Ph.D. in Criminology and is senior lecturer at the Faculty of Law at the University of Copenhagen. Through her research she has watched the development in viewing violence against women with a criminologists point of view since the 1970's. With a starting point in criminology and victimology, her research includes; the extent of violence against women, how police and criminal law treat the victims of violence, and research on the effect of laws or acts to reduce violence against women. The research draws on international knowledge and experiences to estimate possibilities and limitations in interventions by police or law.

## Care, Counselling and Treatment

Another group of members of The Danish National Observatory takes a practical approach to working with violence against women. Most of these members are in direct contact with battered women and children or abusive men. The members presented below advise women and/or men in families struggling with violence, work at shelters, or are employed at the organisational level in the field of violence against women.

### **Pia Rovsing Clemmensen (observer)**

Pia Rovsing Clemmensen has worked as a social worker after completing a master's degree in the field. Ms. Clemmensen has both researched the history of shelters as well as worked in one. She has written the book “The Right Help – For Battered Women” (2005), which is based on a research project she completed about battered women, with a focus on the help they receive and the long-term benefits the help offered.

### **The Joan Sisters**

The Joan Sisters were established in 1975. They are a feministic organisation that works politically with sexual and physical abuse against women. They view such abuse as a problem created by society. They are very active in participating in the public debate and publish educational material on the subject. Another purpose of the Joan Sisters is to support women exposed to violence, rape, sexual harassment and/or sexual abuse during childhood through woman-to-woman counselling. This counselling is anonymous – personal or by phone – and concerns the psychological, social and legal aspects of the woman's situation.

The Joan Sisters wish to remain anonymous.

### **Gittermarija Loiborg. Network of Battered Women**

The Network of Battered Women was established in 2003, and consists of women currently or previously in violent relationships, who support other victims of domestic violence, which includes physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, economic, verbal and/or materiel violence or threats of violence. The women support each other in acute situations, and help with the problems that arise when attempting to break away from abusive relationships. It is a nationwide volunteer based network. The Network works to

inform society about violence in relationships – its forms, means and consequences. The network strives to establish specific, free and highly specialised treatment to victims of domestic violence equal to the treatment currently offered to abusive men. At the moment such help to women is expensive and difficult to find.

Gittermarija Loiborg is chairwoman of The Network of Battered Women.

### **Jytte Mejnholdt. The National Organisation of Shelters for Battered Women and their Children**

The National Organisation of Shelters for Battered Women and their Children (LOKK) has existed since 1987 and works as an umbrella organization and pressure group for women's shelters across Denmark. LOKK is based on a feministic foundation and works to create awareness, prevent, and fight physical and psychological violence against women and children. The women's shelters mainly receive women and children exposed to domestic violence. The shelters also work with women exposed to violence due to prostitution and human trafficking. LOKK organises courses and conferences for its members and other interested parties, as well as managing the exchange of data to and from various shelters. This means that contact with the media, politicians and bureaucrats is an important part of LOKK's daily routine. LOKK publishes reports and works internationally with battered women and children, and every year publishes a detailed statistical overview of women and children in shelters. They offer legal assistance to women at shelters, administer a hotline for battered women for the ministry of Gender Equality, and have an advisory service for ethnic youth.

Jytte Mejnholdt is the chairwoman for LOKK.

### **Britta Mogensen**

Britta Mogensen holds an MA in Anthropology and has earlier worked six years in The Shelter of Dannerhuset. Her work has specialized in the legal position of foreign battered women. Her work in this area includes working as a social worker with several lawyers in cases involving securing permanent residence for battered women, forced marriages, abduction of children and child custody cases involving abusive fathers. She is a lecturer and along with having written several articles concerning ethnic battered women she has together with Sissel Lea Nielsen written the book "Solidarity or Clienting? – An Analysis of the Ideology and Structure of Dannerhuset" (2000).

### **Henrik Munkholm. The Men's Advisory**

The Men's Advisory in Ålborg is a treatment centre for abusive men. The treatment is free and anonymous and no journals are kept. Men contact the Advisory due to both physical and psychological violence issues. The starting point for treatment is the current situation of the individual man, and the length and extent of treatment is planned around his needs. Throughout the treatment The Advisory focuses first on who the man would like to be, the life he wishes to live, how he hopes to treat other people and how this can come about, and secondly on the violence he has committed.

Henrik Munkholm is a social worker, NLP Master Practitioner and NLP Master Coach and head of The Men's Advisory.

### **Dorit Otzen. The Nest**

The Nest opened in 1983, and was the first centre established in Denmark for women in prostitution. The Nest works with women engaged in street prostitution. The clients consist of women addicted to drugs, women with psychological handicaps, and a growing number

of foreign women, some of who are victims of trafficking. Violence and sexual assault is a constant factor of street prostitution and The Nest has worked hard to safeguard a prostitute's right to report abuse and sexual assault. In 2003 The Nest took over and re-established the country's only shelter for female addicts, today called The Hanne Marie House. Since 1991 The Nest has also worked to create awareness about the connection between human trafficking and prostitution. The Nest Stop Trafficking was established in 2002 as part of the government's policy to fight human trafficking.

Dorit Otzen is a social worker and director of The Nest and The Nest Stop Trafficking.

### **Kari Partapouli. Dannerhuset - A Women's Centre and Shelter**

Since 1979 Dannerhuset has existed as a Women's Centre, and currently houses one of Denmark's biggest shelters for battered women. Dannerhuset is based on a feministic foundation centred on the values of solidarity, liberation, openness, participation in decision-making and involvement. The overall purpose of Dannerhuset is to strengthen women's self-confidence and the belief in one's own power. The Shelter of Dannerhuset works with the principles of empowerment in the form of help to self-help. A growing number of women with a non-Danish background have applied at the shelter in the past few years. In response to these women's needs the method of help to self-help has been extended to include mediation of culture. Dannerhuset is owned by The Women's Centre Fond Dannerhuset and is run by 170 volunteers and 15 paid employees. The shelter has room for 18 women and 18 children, and they yearly respond to around 1000 battered women and relatives that contact them either by phone or in person. Dannerhuset understands violence against women as a symptom of the inequality between the sexes in society as a whole, and they work to eliminate this inequality.

Kari Partapouli is the project manager of the shelter of Dannerhuset.

### **Helle Øbo Pedersen. Dialogue against Violence**

Dialogue against Violence (DMV) is a treatment centre for men involved in abusive relationships. DMV focuses on the family as a whole, but has the abusive man and his issues as their starting point. Upon contacting the centre the treatment is planned out based on the man's specific situation and background. The treatment can include individual counselling, dialogue within the family and/or group treatment. DMV primarily offers treatment to men, but recently has begun to include the female counterpart so that she is also offered individual counselling, depending on her need. Parallel to the treatment, DMV wishes to create research cataloguing abusive men and to measure the effect of the treatment, thereby securing a progressive change of behaviour within this group. DMV started in Copenhagen and since 2005 has opened treatment centres in Århus and Odense. Their book, "Dialogue against Violence" (2004), describes their methods of treatment.

Helle Øbo Petersen is a pedagogue and project manager at Dialogue Against Violence.

### **Bergliot Riis. The Mothers Help**

The Mothers Help is an independent institution with departments in Copenhagen, Århus and Odense. Its purpose is to offer help and support to families with children. Since 1992 The Mothers Help has offered treatment to women and children that have experienced abusive relationships. They offer guidance in situations of both physical and psychological abuse as well as assist in situations of social or legal difficulties such as divorce, child custody, relocation and financial crisis. The help contains several elements; the women are offered individual interviews with a social worker or psychologist, group treatment in

the form of an intensive course of 10 interviews followed by meetings spanning up to 18 months. The method for treatment is based on the principles of trauma treatment. The women are also offered an alarm, which notifies the police through a control centre, if the woman feels threatened. Children are offered therapy in either groups or individually, with the purpose of dealing with the violence that the children have experienced. The employees of The Mothers Help are psychologists, social workers, pedagogues and lawyers. All work under supervision and partake in relevant courses.

Bergliot Riis is head of the counselling in the department of The Mothers Help in Århus.

### **Katrine Sidenius. The Centre for Victims of Sexual Assault at Copenhagen's central hospital**

The Centre for Victims of Sexual Assault offers help to people exposed to sexual assault or attempted sexual assault. The centre is located in the gynaecological department and it is yearly contacted by between 250 and 300 women and men from the age of 12 and up, who have been sexually assaulted. There are six similar centres in the country, with the centre at The Central hospital receiving 50% of the referrals. Contact to a Centre should preferably be within 72 hours of a sexual assault or an attempted sexual assault.

However, The Centre treats all victims of a recent sexual assault who are in need of examination, treatment or counselling. The Centre offers follow up medical treatment, and the possibility of counselling with a psychologist or social worker free of charge. The Centre also acts as a national research centre committed to developing standardised procedures of receiving, examination and treatment of victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault. The Centre initiates and performs research about sexual assault and attempted sexual assault, and, being publicly financed, is obligated to teach and inform the public.

Katrine Sidenius is a consulting physician doctor who specializes in gynaecology at The Centre for Victims of Sexual Assault.

### **Lis Vahlun**

Lis Vahlun is educated as a social worker and has previously been head of the shelter of Dannerhuset. She has worked for LOKK, through which she has participated in a Russian project to establish women's shelters in St. Petersburg. Also at LOKK she participated in writing the report "When Dreams become Nightmares" (2003) about foreign women married to Danish men. Currently she works as a counsellor for people with problems of abuse and is in daily contact with women with drug and alcohol problems. These women have often been battered in their relationships and/or childhood.

## **Women's organisations**

Several of the members of The Danish National Observatory are also members of women's organisations, and some members are employed at, or represent, Non Governmental Organisations. In this way The Observatory is part of a complex women's political network working to secure women's rights in all areas.

### **Birgitte Husmark, Randi Iversen and Randi Theil Nielsen. The Women's Council in Denmark**

The Women's Council was established in 1899 and is Denmark's largest women's organisation. The Women's Council exists as an umbrella organisation for women's

associations and other organisations, and The Council works to secure women's rights and influence throughout Danish society. The Women's Council coordinates and communicates women's demands and is instrumental in setting the agenda both nationally and internationally when it comes to decision making on gender issues. In 1997 The Women's Council put together a group of experts on violence against women that formally became the National Observatory on Violence Against Women in 2002. It is also The Women's Council that coordinates The National Observatory on Violence. Several of the members of the Observatory are also members of the Women's Council; The Danish Female Doctors' Association, LOKK, KFUK's Social Work and Women with Disabilities. Randi Iversen is chairwoman, Birgitte Husmark is deputy chairwoman and Randi Theil Nielsen is secretariat director of The Women's Council.

### **Vibeke Jørgensen. The Danish Female Doctors' Association.**

The Danish Female Doctors Association has arranged meetings and courses concerning different aspects of violence against women since 1980. Some of the different themes are incest, prostitution as a social problem, and the need for better treatment for victims of sexual assault. More so than the social pattern of violence against women, The Association has focused on the consequences of the violence relating to women's health. The Association has also debated the damage that takes place to the children that witness violence between their parents.

Female Circumcision is another abuse of women's rights that the Female Doctors' Association has been occupied with. The association has organised informative meetings for employees in local departments of health about circumcision, and has been represented in the working group of the Ministry of Health concerning information and prevention of circumcision of girls. Some members of this working group, among them Vibeke Jørgensen, established The Association Against Female Circumcision in 2002. Vibeke Jørgensen is the chairwoman of Danish Female Doctors Association and is currently the secretary of The Association against Female Circumcision.

## Chapter 3

### Violence against women in Denmark. The extent and characteristics of the violence.

Assaults on women include both physical and psychological violence. Physical violence consists of striking, kicking, confinement, choking, rape and other forms of sexual assault, and the use of implements and/or weapons. Psychological violence consists of threats, isolation, sleep deprivation, belittling of the woman's injuries, mistreatment, ridicule, discarding of furniture and equipment from the home, and control over all aspects of the woman's life including time, work, finances, clothes, acquaintances etc. Assaults on foreign women may furthermore consist of threats of deportation, forced deportation, use of fear of the authorities, withholding of information, forced polygenic relationships, threats of or actual kidnapping of children, false information to the family in the home country, forced prostitution, incurring of debts by false signature, hindrance of integration, forced labour, exclusion from the public register etc.

Violence against women includes domestic violence, meaning violence committed by a present or former partner, sexual assault, violence in the work place, for example committed by a customer, client, patient or student, plus street violence etc.

#### **Registration of the violence**

In 2004 The Danish National Observatory, in cooperation with The National Institute of Public Health with financing from the Minister of Gender Equality, established a database that contains information about the current magnitude of violence against women and its increase over time. The database is based on different sources of information, including national registers, surveys, and administrative information from shelters and rape crisis centres. Therefore the data includes information about violence that is reported to the police, violence that entails medical treatment and violence that is not ordinarily made public. Different aspects of violence against women are compiled from the different sources of data. There is a significant difference in violence that is reported to the police, violence that is treated by a doctor and violence that women themselves report in surveys.

The register includes data from the criminological statistics, i.e. police-reported violence, and data of violence from emergency department records. The violence that is known by the authorities through police reports and treatments at hospitals is generally more severe. The data shows that physical injury following severe violence is more frequently reported, while less severe offences with no physical injury often go unreported.

The register's data does not cover psychological violence such as verbal assaults and threats.

Battered women that contact women's shelters often lack the possibility of staying with family or friends. This includes both women exposed to violence in their home, with the abuser being a current partner, and women stalked by a former partner. Women who visit shelters have a history of difficulty within the labour market and their social background is generally different from that of the women that do not visit a shelter<sup>13</sup>.

The extent of sexual assaults can be deducted through register data, data from centres for victims of sexual assault, and surveys. Physical violence is often a part of sexual assault, just as sexual assault is often connected to physical violence in intimate relationships. However, there is a significant difference in the profile of the victims of physical violence on the one hand, and sexual assault on the other hand. Victims of sexual assault are generally younger and more often single than victims of violence from an (ex) partner.

Below is a presentation of facts and numbers concerning the extent of violence against women and its different characteristics organised by the source of the data.

### **Register data of physical violence**

#### 1. Police-reported violence

- a. The number of reported homicides and attempted homicides with female victims has varied between 60 and 70 in the last few years (in 2003 there were a total of 71 reports, which include 9 victims under 15 years of age).
- b. Approximately 25 women aged 15 and older die each year in Denmark from injuries due to violence.
- c. Each year 0.1 percent (1 per thousand) of adult women in Denmark report to the police that they have been exposed to violence. The frequency is highest among women aged 20-24, 0.3%.
- d. Single women report violence more often than the rest of the population.
- e. Rates of violence reported by women not in the labour market is markedly higher than that reported by the rest of the female population.
- f. In 50% of the cases police-reported violence against women is committed by a present or former partner. In every fourth case, the victim and perpetrator live together or have lived together within the past 7 years.
- g. In most of the cases, the perpetrator is a person closely known to the victim, and the violence has taken place in a private residence in nearly two out of three cases (60%).

#### 2. Violence according to emergency department records

- a. 0,2% of all adult women are treated each year in a hospital emergency department for injuries resulting from violence. This corresponds to around 5000 different women. The highest occurrence is found among women aged 15-19, in this age group 0.6% of all women contact an emergency department due to injuries caused by violence.
- b. The number of emergency department contacts caused by violence has increased by 25% from 1995 to 2003. The highest increase is among

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<sup>13</sup> "When violence is a part of daily life" (2005) by Vibeke Lybecker and Sissel Lea Nielsen.

women 15-19 years of age (77%).

- c. The increase may be due to an improved registration of the cause of injury, to the increased severity of injuries, and to an increase in the amount of injuries caused by violence outside domestic areas. The frequency of domestic violence shows no significant increase.
- d. A present or former partner is the offender in one third of all cases.
- e. In nearly two of three cases (60%) the violence took place in a private residence, and in two out of three of these cases it was the home of the victim herself.

### 3. Cases of violence against women reported to both the police and hospitals

- a. Half of the victims who reported violence to the police in 2002 were also treated for their injuries in emergency departments.
- b. Every third victim of violence treated in hospitals for their injuries, also reported violence to the police.

In total 6,500 women reported physical violence to the police, were treated in hospitals for injuries from violence, or both. In every year since 2000 0.3% of all adult Danish women are exposed to violence to a degree that leads to either a police report being filed, or treatment in a hospital.

## **Register data of sexual assaults**

### 1. Police-reported assaults

- a. Between 400 and 500 cases of rape or attempted rape among adult women are reported each year to the police. 452 cases were reported in 2003, whereof 67 of the victims were under 15 years old.
- b. One third of the victims are between 15 and 19 years old.
- c. In less than 10% of the assaults a present or a former partner is the offender.

### 2. Contacts to the national centres for victims of sexual assault at hospitals

- a. 500 women contact one of the centres each year because of rape or attempted rape.
- b. Two out of three victims are under 25 years of age.
- c. Four out of five victims live alone.
- d. In approximately every third case there is a close relationship between the victim and the offender.
- e. About 2/3 of the victims choose to report the sexual assault to the police.

## **Population based surveys on physical violence**

### 1. Danish National Health Survey among adults in the year of 2000

- a. Almost 4% of all adult women report that they have been exposed to at least one form of physical violence during the past year. The figure corresponds to 64,000 Danish adult women per year. The frequency is highest among women aged 16-20 (13%) and women aged 21-30 (7%).
- b. Among women that report violence, older women are more prone to experience severe violence than younger women.
- c. Women with a higher education report violence more often than women with little or no education.
- d. However, when adjusting for age difference in the risk of being abused, it

is women not in the labour market or in lower work groups that most often report assaults of violence.

- e. In two of three cases the reported violence is committed by a present or former partner, or by another person closely related to the victim. This means that 2.5% of Danish adult women report to have experienced violence from an intimate partner each year.
- f. Around half of the reported physical violence concerns minor assaults (being pushed or slapped) and more seldom severe violence. In 5% of the cases the assault included attempted choking or the use of a weapon.
- g. 4% of the women that reported violence in the year of 2000 were treated in an emergency department because of injuries from an assault. This corresponds to around 2,600 women.

## 2. Youth Survey 2002

- a. 9% of girls and 6% of boys aged 15-16 report experiences of their mother being battered at home.
- b. 9% of girls aged 15-16 report that they have been exposed to physical violence during the past year.
- c. The frequency of violence against mothers and adolescent girls is higher among those with a non-western background.

### **Population based surveys on sexual assault**

- a. 2% of women aged 15 to 19 and 0.8% of women aged 20 to 29 report experiences of forced sexual activity within the last year.
- b. This means that around 9,500 women in the age group 15-59 have experienced forced sexual activity in the last year.
- c. The offender is often a person with a close relationship to the woman.

### **Shelter statistics**

- a. Each year 2000 adult women and 2000 children stay in the 37 Danish women's shelters that are members of LOKK.
- b. The women are most frequently married or cohabiting.
- c. At the shelters three out of four women (75%) report that a present partner was the abuser and 15% that he was a former partner.
- d. 39% of the women have been exposed to at least one form of violence daily.
- e. Women with a minority background are over-represented (around 46%). This can partly be explained by differences in the possibility of staying with family or friends.
- f. Among non-ethnic Danish women the violence in 15% of the cases is committed by an ethnic Danish man.

## Chapter 4

### Measures taken to combat men's violence against women – a focus on victims and abusers

The Danish government launched the first Action Plan to combat men's violence against women in 2002 and the Action Plan was renewed in 2005. The different methods used to combat the violence are described in the Action Plans, and initiatives to help the women, men and children are included in the plans. The new Action Plan continues where the first one left off, with a continuing focus on four areas. 1) Support to the victims, 2) measures aimed to help the abusers, 3) measures taken to aid professionals dealing with families of violence and 4) creating an increase in knowledge and information. The intention of the new Action Plan is to strengthen the existing focus areas from the first Action Plan, thus establishing continuity with the first Action Plan. Apart from the focus areas, the new Action Plan also highlights three target groups; women of ethnic minority background, children and adolescents, and men.

This chapter concentrates on the measures taken to help the victims and abusers of violence. Support for women in general, for women with minority backgrounds and for children are discussed according to the focus of the Action Plan. Also included is a section dealing with support for women exposed to sexual assault, as well as treatment centres for abusive men. Apart from a short rundown of the possibilities for treatment in Denmark the chapter also discusses whether the efforts are sufficient and effective. An emphasis is placed on areas where things are not running smoothly and suggestions are made to improve the effort. A critical perspective offers the possibility to look towards the future and optimise the struggle against violence.

The Action Plans does not address sexual violence such as prostitution, incest, rape and other sexual assaults. The government has chosen to separate sexual violence from domestic violence, thus the National Observatory on Violence Against Women has therefore suggested making a specific Action Plan to combat sexual violence.

#### Measures aimed at supporting women that are victims of violence

##### Support to women exposed to domestic violence

The main help to women exposed to domestic violence in Denmark consists of the approximately 40 women's shelters that are spread throughout the country. Here women exposed to physical and psychological violence can take shelter. The shelters can receive women in acute need, and if one shelter is fully occupied they will refer the woman to another one. Prices vary from centre to centre with most centres able to accommodate women up to three months. While few women can afford the cost of accommodation, the social services department pays for most. Apart from the possibility to stay, the shelters also offer counselling in the form of personal interviews, either in person or over the telephone. Over all, the shelters offer battered women a place to stay, protection, support and counselling. Most shelters are managed through a mix of professional and volunteer

workers.

Battered women that are not interested in what the shelters have to offer have a very limited possibility of professional treatment or help. Family doctors and social workers can only rarely send a battered woman to a psychologist. The Joan Sisters offer counselling and The Mothers Help offers actual treatment to both women and children. The women's shelters (LOKK) also runs a hotline where battered women can receive counselling any time of day, while The Network of Battered Women offers support in volunteer groups around the country.

Two other quite different possibilities for help exist. Firstly battered women have the possibility to receive an attack alarm from the police. An attack alarm gives the woman the possibility of a fast and direct line with the control centre at the police station if she feels threatened by her abuser. Secondly a law was passed in 2004 that gives the police the possibility of removing violent people from their homes. The intention of the law is to create safety for the woman in her own home, while directing the focus on the perpetrator.

Generally it is important to say that the current possibilities of free and specialized treatment aimed at the needs of women and children, who are the victims of men's violence, are insufficient. As will be shown at the end of this chapter, treatment centres are to a much greater degree available for men than they are for women.

### **Organising help to battered women**

The shelters coordinate the different efforts involved in helping battered woman, but the main responsibility to help in cases of violence falls upon the social services department. When a battered woman is in need of help, four different areas come into play – the political, the legislative, the social services department, and social counselling. In the following paragraphs these areas and recommendations for their improvement will be discussed.

At the political level a new Action Plan was launched in 2005 to combat men's violence against women. The Action Plan focuses on information, campaigns, time-limited projects, a strengthening of the help to self-help method, and voluntary social work. The finances connected to the Action Plan run through the year 2008 with the idea being that the local municipalities will take on the economic responsibility at that time. On the overall political level it is important to insure that the local authorities have the means and ability to implement such ideals as "women should have access to the proper help to create a life without the violence". The national government maintains that the municipalities can handle the job by prioritising their responsibilities, and a conference for the heads of the social departments has been planned. However, it will not be possible to implement the current initiatives locally without increased spending in this area.

It is of great importance to create interdisciplinary proposals that can provide guidelines for cooperative work at the local level. The departments affected by such guidelines are the social services department, the police, hospitals, psychologists, day care institutions etc. Equally, professionals within the judiciary branch, at the immigration office and the chief administrative authority need to be included. All authorities working in this interdisciplinary coordination should undertake a specialised education regarding men's violence against women. Such an education and coordination of relevant authorities will

secure for a battered woman the support that she needs.

Within the **legislative** arena it is essential that the ideals of the social legislation be put into action. The legislation ought to hold a special paragraph that secures victims of violence the help that they need. A battered woman has specific problems and needs specific help to regain power over her own life. This also includes the right to after-care with follow-up help and counselling at a women's shelter.

A battered woman should have the right to anonymity when she leaves her abusive partner; this includes the time she spends in the shelter with her children. Many social workers are not aware that the social authorities are not obliged to inform the spouse when the woman checks into a shelter with her children, since a shelter has the same legal status as a temporary residence. This point needs to be stressed. It is imperative that the woman can legally attain temporary custody of the children until a custody trial can take place. The abusive father should not be allowed visiting rights since this is a way for him to keep control over the woman after she leaves him. Under current legislation the abusive father has visiting rights, this right is not necessarily in the children's best interest. Thus this point needs to be debated to insure that the child's best interest is taken into consideration.

The legislation that gives the police the right to remove an abusive man from his home also needs to be addressed. The Danish National Observatory supports the right of the victim to stay in the home. At this point in time the current legislation does not address the fact that there are an inadequate number of intervention centres established to follow-up and secure proper help for the battered woman and the abusive man.

The **social services department** needs to be streamlined in order to best insure that the battered woman receives the help she requires to change her over-all situation. Violence is seldom addressed as the cause of the woman's problems. It is important that information can be found in the waiting room, and the department must prioritise giving the proper direction and guidance, since many women are unaware of their rights and possibilities. The family department of the social services needs to look at the family as a whole, and not only focus on whether there are children with special needs. Only addressing the child's needs will not necessarily help if the real problem is a battered mother.

One of the biggest problems facing a battered woman that wishes to leave her abusive partner is a general lack of housing. The heads of the various social service departments must work co-operatively to find a common solution, since a battered woman will often have to move to a different county in order to escape the grasp of her ex-husband. Poor, single, battered mothers can receive economic support to a residence share. However, this money is often a loan, and this can be a problem if her former husband has denied the woman access to her own economic resources. The social services department asks the woman to predict future expenses, but this is almost impossible if she does not have the ability to access her own means.

With regards to **social counselling** the Action Plan focuses on information and education of professionals within the field. This is an important task, but an improvement in this area can only be achieved with sufficient time and resources. Apart from education, social

workers are in need of local guidelines that spell out the possibilities for the help they can offer. Support from the higher political authorities is also vitally important.

### Support to foreign battered women

Women with minority backgrounds make up 46% of the women in the shelters in Denmark<sup>14</sup>. These women face a difficult situation and are in need of special help. The government's Action Plan 2005-2008 has ethnic minority women as one of its target groups. The plan is to create a campaign with information about women's rights, to give counselling and guidance to ethnic minority women, to teach the women how to address the public authorities, and to assist in the building of networks.

Foreign women can apply for permanent residency after 7 years of residence in Denmark with their husband if the following conditions are met:

1. no criminal record
2. no debt to public authorities exceeding 50.000 kr.
3. completed integration program with a minimum attendance rate of 85%

A battered woman that leaves her husband before she holds a permanent residence card can ask to keep her residence permit according to paragraph 19, section 8. In this case it is necessary that she can document the violence through either statements from an emergency department or a doctor. Police reports, shelter receipts, psychological profiles, social documents etc. are also important to the case. The political and social conditions of the woman's home country are also taken into consideration. The Danish Immigration Service considers the woman's over-all situation when ruling whether to let her keep her residency permit.

An abusive husband of a woman with a minority background will typically also expose her to psychological violence. This may include isolating her from society, forcing her into hard physical labour, restricting her from participating in school and/or homework so that she will not be able to complete the integration program, etc. This reduces her ability to gain a permanent residence permit no matter how long she has lived in the country.

If the woman chooses to leave her husband without the proper documentation of the violence, she has the possibility of keeping her residence permit if the couple have common children and the husband is able to see the children regularly. It is not unusual, however, that an abusive man will demand that the woman refrains from exercising her right to the former common residence or alimony if he is to help her by keeping above mentioned contact with the children. It has also occurred that the man refrains from exercising his visiting rights, only to turn around and have custody signed over to him in his home country, thus enabling him to claim custody of the children once he returns to Denmark. This means that the woman loses her children and the children lose their primary person of care.

The authorities should secure battered women against such strategies of pressure in a way so that the women's possibility of residency does not depend on the husband

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<sup>14</sup> Yearly statistic of LOKK 2004.

exercising his visiting rights.

A woman of foreign descent that does not have permanent residence can incur large expenses connected with leaving an abusive relationship. The foreign woman must herself pay for an interpreter for the legal proceedings regarding the marriage problems. She also needs to pay for any statements from a psychologist or doctor that are used in her case. According to the law, any person bringing a foreign spouse into the country must provide the finances to cover possible future public expenses. However, the man regains the whole amount if the woman moves to a shelter and the couple is separated. Instead the social services department should maintain access to the money to cover any expenses that the authorities and the battered woman may incur in connection to domestic violence. This includes the cost of an interpreter, statements from a psychologist and/or doctor, the cost of legal aid, maintenance, court costs, and any other expenses that can be directly linked to the violence.

### Support to children in families exposed to violence

Children are most often directly exposed to violence or witnesses to violence between the parents in abusive families. A child's health and well-being are affected by both of these, and children from abusive families have a higher risk of becoming abusive themselves in the future<sup>15</sup>. It is therefore of great importance that children receive help to deal with their experiences.

By securing the rights and safety of the children the battered mother is also helped indirectly. Whether the woman has children or not is of great importance when plotting a course of action. The woman might stay in an abusive relationship because of fear that the husband might gain custody of the children if she leaves him. Or she might be afraid that the husband will kidnap the children if she leaves him.

The new Action Plan includes children as one of its target groups. The planned initiatives consist of information for adolescents concerning violent relationships, an online digital children's network where children can chat with others in the same situation, and a treatment centre connected to a development project.

Apart from the above initiatives, children can move to a shelter accompanying their mother. Most shelters have child specialists, psychologists and other professionals among their staff to help the children, though not all shelters can offer these services at present. A battered woman will not necessarily be able to support her child while she is herself in a crisis, and it is therefore of great importance that the children receive the appropriate professional support or treatment. Available psychologists and acute help should be secured for all shelters.

When it comes to securing children's rights it is important to discuss whether an abusive man should hold visiting rights with the common children after his wife leaves him. In the current legislation the rights of the father supersede the child's right to safety. With the abusive man keeping his right to see his children, he also has the possibility of

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<sup>15</sup> "Youth and gender. Gender differences in the usage and exposure to violence among adolescents" by Karin Helweg-Larsen and Marie Kruse. (2004).

maintaining control over the woman, whereby the possibility of her creating a new life free from violence directed at her and her children is made impossible.

## Support to victims of sexual assault

There is no record of the exact number of rape and other sexual assaults on women. We know that many victims of rape choose not to report the assault to the police, and this is especially true in cases where the perpetrator is an intimate partner, ex-partner or friend. Sexual assault is a primary focus of the media and often becomes sensationalized to the disadvantage of the victim. Although the public's attention is focused on sexual assault, this does not mean that the taboo of the experience has vanished: guilt and shame are still feelings that haunt victims of sexual assault.

The possibilities of help and treatment have greatly improved with the establishment of centres for victims of rape and sexual assault at 7 hospitals in Denmark. Also the knowledge of the characteristics of the assault and the social and psychological ramifications for the victim has grown due to increased research. A national research centre has been connected to the Centre for Victims of Sexual Assault at Copenhagen's Central Hospital since 2000. Research based on 1100 visits to The Centre gives a better picture of who the victims of sexual assault are, the type of assaults that they are exposed to, and under what conditions the assault takes place<sup>16</sup>.

It is important that victims of sexual assault throughout Denmark have the possibility of receiving a coordinated treatment, and counselling from a coordinated team of medical, psychological and social professionals. Continuous research and documentation is also important to secure the development of strategies to prevent rape and other sexual assault.

The legislative conditions present a specific problem in regards to sexual assault. Rape is a crime that often takes place without witnesses, which means that the explanations of the victim and perpetrator are the only bases for the situation. It is important that the sexual habits and actions of the victim, as well as her physical appearance, do not factor into the legal proceedings. It is therefore imperative that a discussion of legal reform is entered into.

## Measures aimed at men that are abusers of violence or at risk of using violence

There are currently three different publicly financed places of treatment for men that have been abusive in the family or towards their partner in Denmark. Kenneth Reinicke describes the places and their programs of treatment in detail in a new report<sup>17</sup>. The program Men's Advisory has existed the longest, while Alternatives to Violence is founded on years of experience from a similar program in Norway. The Dialogue Against Violence is a fairly new program that receives large financial support as part of the government's Action Plan.

### Initiatives in the Action Plan 2005-2008

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<sup>16</sup> "Centre for Victims of Sexual Assault, status 2000-2004 og Year report 2003" (2004)

<sup>17</sup> "Treatment of violent men – Does it work?" (2005) by Kenneth Reinicke.

The new Action Plan takes a two-pronged approach when dealing with men. Not only are abusers of violence one of the four focus areas in the new Action Plan, but men have also been listed as one of the new target groups in the plan. The Action Plan states: "In the same spirit, abusive men must be given help when they want to depart from violence. This action plan prioritises treatment of abusive men by launching a nationwide perpetrator programme for men [Dialogue against Violence]. The Government will continue to evaluate the options for treatment of perpetrators serving prison sentences, and the possibility of compelling perpetrators to receive treatment as a condition for suspending their sentences must be reviewed in detail." The Action Plan stresses that Dialogue against Violence is obligated to provide statistics about the results of their programme of treatment so that the treatment can be continually developed. This should lead to plan of how treatment can also be directed at men with minority backgrounds. Due to the strong focus on men, Dialogue against Violence receives 5,8 million Kr. out of the 15 million. Kr. yearly allotted to activities connected to the Action Plan 2005-2008.

It seems sensible to try to fight the violence by focusing on the men that are the perpetrators. The European Council summed up an international seminar in 2004 about therapeutic treatment of men that have abused violence in the family by concluding that economic investment in programmes of intervention directed at abusive men is recommendable as long as the programs draw on the many years of experience from England, Norway and Canada. Even if violence is only prevented among a small number of men in the program the investment will pay off because violence is so costly for society. Off course the most important reason to establish programmes aimed at perpetrators is to prevent repeated violence in the family and to provide safety to battered women and children. However, the actual effects of the programs remain at present unsubstantiated.

The European Observatory on Violence concluded at the previously mentioned seminar that evaluations show that these programmes tend to distort the distribution of resources in favour of the perpetrators, while the effect of the perpetrator programmes on the battered women remain unclear. It can be argued that publicly supported perpetrator programmes can be seen as a sign of the government making an effort to help battered women, where in reality the programmes may not sufficiently benefit the women.

### **Aim and rationale of the perpetrator programmes**

The programmes aim at an over-all prevention of violence among men, as well as a prevention of repeated violence. The purpose of the treatment is to enlarge the safety net of women and children. In most cases the programme of treatment does have this effect. But in some cases the programmes can indeed increase the risk of violence by giving the battered woman hope that the man will change his violent behaviour, thus encouraging her to stay in an abusive relationship that she would have otherwise left. Experience shows that a high number of men leave the treatment as soon as the immediate crisis is passed, or when the immediate goal is obtained, i.e. the woman staying in the relationship. A majority of men do not see themselves as having a problem and are therefore not interested in a long, and thereby more efficient, course of treatment<sup>18</sup>.

The knowledge of men and violence is in fact limited. The treatment centre Alternatives to

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<sup>18</sup> Dobash et al. (1996): "Research evaluation of programmes for violent men.  
Dobash et al. (2000): Changing violent men.

Violence in Norway uses an interdisciplinary approach and builds on more than 15 years of experience, and they underline the need to use complex explanations to understand why some men use violence. They believe that it is not possible to use standardised procedures in treatment because of a number of limitations these procedures possess.

### **Dialogue against Violence**

Dialogue against Violence is part of the private organisation Askovgården. Askovgården has a number of psychosocial treatment programs for mentally impaired persons, and people excluded from society. They also run institutions for children and adolescents, including day care centres, youth centres, youth clubs and girl's clubs, plus a socioeducational treatment centre for families and children with severe problems with interpersonal relationships.

Dialogue against Violence started as a treatment centre for violent men in August 2002. Its main focus is aimed at men in the age range of 20-50 that are in an intimate relationship and have children between the ages of 1-14. The treatment is separated into three phases: First a phase where contact is made and the situation of the abusive man is sorted out so that the best programmes for treatment can be planned. Afterwards comes a motivation and visitation phase, where the outer motivation for treatment is sought to become an inner motivation in order for the expectations of the relatives to become secondary to the man's own goals. As these goals are made more clear and defined, it is decided what form of intervention will benefit the man the most. At the end a treatment phase includes individual interviews, group interviews, family interviews and children's interviews. The last phase might take up to a year and consist of four different methods: individual interviews, group treatment, integration of the new knowledge, and reabsorption into society. The treatment is voluntary and is therefore aimed at men that are motivated to break the circle of violence.

Dialogue against Violence undertakes research in connection with the treatment in order to create a better understanding of the abusive men. Some conclusions were published in 2004 based on an analysis of 39 clients<sup>19</sup>. An external evaluation of the programme has yet to be made.

40% of the men concluded their treatment at Dialogue against Violence, and by September of 2004, 52 men had enrolled in the treatment programme. One psychologist, three masters of educational theory and psychology, and three educationalists are currently connected to Dialogue against Violence. In 2005 treatment centres were established in Århus and Odense to supplement the existing treatment centre in Copenhagen.

### **Scandinavian experiences - Alternatives to Violence**

The Norwegian programme Alternatives to Violence has the most experience in treatment of abusive men within Scandinavia. The programme was established in Oslo in 1987 and currently has two centres in cities in southern Norway. 300 men are treated yearly and 18 psychologists are employed fulltime. Although the treatment has been evaluated externally, the centres see a need for further external research and independent evaluators in order to insure that the treatment is continuously progressing. It is the

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<sup>19</sup> "Dialogue against Violence" (2004) by Per Hensen and Helle Øbo Petersen.

experience of Alternatives to Violence that most men are in need of a prolonged, qualified and individual programme of treatment. They conclude that there are no uniform standards for procedures of treatment, thus they are critical of the uniform cognitive programmes that are widely used in North America<sup>20</sup>. Alternative to Violence concludes that they need to constantly differentiate and update their programmes.

### **The Men's Advisory**

The Men's Advisory in Ålborg offers counselling for a number of problems relating to life choices and intimate relationships, including problems of violence. The Men's Advisory is therefore also a treatment centre for abusive men. The treatment is free and anonymous and no journals are kept. Men contact The Advisory due to both physical and psychological violence issues. The starting point for treatment is the current situation of the individual, and the length and extent of treatment is planned around his needs.

### **Evaluation of the treatment**

Kenneth Reinicke concludes, on the basis of his examination of the possibilities for treatment, that no specific profile of the abusive man exists. He also states that no secure data exists to show how efficient an individual program is, though he does conclude that treatment works best when it is not limited by time, or is not too schematic in addressing the problems. Treatment of the perpetrator has obvious possibilities, but also real limits. An evaluation of the treatment programmes shows a number of men leaving the program prematurely, as well as a dubious preventative effect. A great number of difficulties are associated with evaluating the programmes; it is thus recommended that the programmes be continually evaluated by external researchers.

The European Council has written a report about therapeutic treatment of men that are violent within the family<sup>21</sup>, and one of the conclusions reached is that treatment programmes should be prolonged. At the same time it is stated that there is a desertion rate of 40-60% within the first three months, while only 33% continue the treatment into the second phase. Dialogue against Violence experience smaller rate of desertion, but still report that 15% of the men do not show up to the first session, and the same amount leave the treatment during the first month.

Only few treatment centres have been evaluated with regard to the prolonged effect of the treatment. However, an English treatment programme reports that only around half of the clients that have undertaken the treatment actually stop using violence in intimate relationships.

### **Programmes within the Prison System**

The Danish methods of treatment are aimed at men that contact the treatment centres voluntarily, either out of their own will or encouraged by their partner, or because of a referral from the social authorities. No systematic evaluation has so far been made of the need for treatment among convicts, and only sporadic measures have been taken to help people that are sentenced for violence. This is opposed to the Canadian prison system, that since the mid 1990's has established a number of programmes aimed specifically at

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<sup>20</sup> Isdal: Proceedings European Council, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> The European Council, 2005.

preventing a return to violence, as well as promoting appropriate modes of social interaction among the inmates. These programmes are based on existing evidence of different psychological models of treatment and are continuously evaluated by international panels. The Danish prison service is currently working to promote anger management programs and to establish different programmes for inmates. This is part of the Action Plan 2005-2008.

### **Conclusion on the measures taken to help abusive men**

Perpetrator programmes have primarily been established to prevent violence within the family in the long term, and to protect women and children against repeated violence in the short term, thus insuring their safety so that they need not go on living in fear of violence. The overall purpose is thereby to protect the victim against assault. There is no clear evidence that perpetrator programmes lead to a prevention of repeated violence, or that they increase the safety of the woman. Other measures directed specifically at the victim of violence might be more efficient in increasing the woman's possibility of leading a proper life.

It is important to separate, on the one hand, the more general preventative effects of programmes directed at men's violent behaviour, and, on the other hand, the programmes focusing on men that already have experiences of being violent within the family. The most reliable experience shows that treatment programmes must be prolonged and that different men need different courses of treatment. There is no such thing as a prototype of a violent man, and therefore no simple methods of treatment can be established.

## Chapter 5

### Future measures

#### Equality

If men's violence against women is seen as a product of – and a manifestation of – inequality between men and women, this means that possible suggestions to improve the effort to fight the violence must be concerned with enhancing equality between the sexes. Fighting men's violence against women cannot be limited to the development of specific measures to help battered women and children and abusive men, even though such measures are fully necessary and should be improved. It is not practical to only employ treatment for a social problem; the effort must address society more widely and be connected to other initiatives that aim at equality between women and men.

Girls and women with self-esteem and knowledge of their rights are also exposed to violence. Boys and men that are raised in a society that cherish equality also become abusers of violence in some cases. By working to secure that sexist discrimination is not legitimised and to stress respect between the sexes, the chances of developing a society that will be aware of victims and abusers of violence become enhanced. The ability to react to the violence, renounce it, and offer better solutions is imperative. This is important in regards to both violence between intimate partners and other forms of gender based violence.

This perspective stresses the importance of integrating knowledge of gender and intimate relations in the education of children and adolescents. It is necessary that both educationalists and teachers become qualified to handle this job. The personal experience of being a man or a woman does not in itself equal knowledge of gender.

It is our recommendation that the Ministry of Education evaluates the curriculum of all educations that engage children and adolescents. It is important to insure that gender becomes an integral part of education, and that gender perspective becomes a natural part of all subjects.

It is equally important to integrate such a gender perspective into educations in the fields of social work, health, police and the judicial system.

#### Anchoring the Action Plan

It is important that the national measures to combat men's violence against women become a continuous effort that is rooted in the permanent systems. Campaigns and individual projects can be important in revealing problems, creating public awareness, initiating local measures, and developing new methods and standards, but the Action Plans must be replaced by permanent measures with more substance.

The municipalities hold the main responsibility for offering the citizens social services. It is

also their responsibility to secure help, counselling and other necessary measures to battered women and their children. Sufficient finances must be made available to the municipalities so that they have the resources to anchor the measures locally that have been initiated through the national Action Plan. All municipalities should pass an interdisciplinary Action Plan that provides standardised guidelines to all occupational groups of importance on how to work cooperatively to prevent violence, and to help battered women and their children. Local centres must also be provided so that women can be offered acute help if her abusive husband is removed from the home. Time and resources are vitally important to providing the proper social counselling.

All battered women and their children should have access to prolonged support free of charge, whether they are interested in using the shelters or not. The effort to secure battered women a new residence should also be improved.

The women's shelters are the primary measure of support for battered women. The shelters should be provided with the proper resources necessary to provide for women and their children who have different needs. One result of the Action Plan is a stronger focus on the shelters ability to receive women with disabilities, but to this day it is still only a few shelters that can receive women with disabilities. Measures must also be taken to provide help for battered women that are drug addicts or mentally ill.

Psychological violence is at least as damaging as physical violence, but battered women that experience psychological violence are often under prioritised by the judicial system, by social workers, or by other public authorities that the women encounter due to the violence they experienced. A stronger focus on psychological violence is necessary.

Foreign battered women have specific problems that are worsened by the restrictive regulations connected to obtaining permanent residency. The women can find it very difficult to document the violence, and often have problems meeting the demands of residency in Denmark and integration into the Danish society. We recommend that the Aliens Act be changed so that it is made easier for foreign battered women to obtain independent residency. A permit of residency should not depend on the husband's relationship, or lack thereof, with the children, and an exemption should be made with regard to the demand of personal ties to Denmark.

The large number of foreign women at shelters shows that shelters often provide the only possibility for a foreign woman to leave a violent relationship. The shelters must be provided with the proper qualifications to offer foreign women the optimal help while they are residing at the shelter, and efficient after-care must be created to help the women break free of the isolation and build new networks.

There is a need for a long-term integration effort with a variety of measures to help women with an ethnic minority background. Counselling is currently offered to women with an ethnic minority background, for example The Women's Council's Advisory for Ethnic Minorities run by the Women's Council. Counselling for both professionals within the social services, as well as for adolescents is run by LOKK. Measures of this kind should be permanently supported through the Finance Act.

Children are in need of specialised support when they grow up in families where their

father abuses their mother. It is important that the shelters have a psychologist among their staff that can offer acute help to children.

The right to shared custody comprises a specific problem. We believe that the safety and wellbeing of the battered woman and her children holds the highest priority, and suggest a change in the law that will make it more difficult for an abusive father to see his children. An abusive man that has the right to see his children has the possibility of controlling the woman and keeping her from establishing a new life with her children.

Measures to prevent violence in men and to treat male perpetrators are a fairly new idea in Denmark. The knowledge of the effect is therefore based on little experience and uncertain results. Foreign experiences show that treatment programmes must be prolonged. We recommend that external researchers continuously evaluate the Danish treatment programmes and that a great variety of treatment be offered. Also the measures to support battered women are lacking in research-based knowledge of the effects of the treatment and measures.

The Danish National Observatory on Violence Against Women recommends that:

1. Temporarily financed Action Plans are replaced by permanent measures.
2. That measures against violence be based on a broad definition of violence including physical, psychological, sexual, material and economic violence. This definition must be reflected in treatment programmes, education, research, documentation and in the judicial system.
3. Funds are secured to both qualitative and quantitative research.
4. That measures be planned and coordinated across political ministries, with the responsibility being anchored in the individual ministry.
5. Prevention of violence must be given higher priority.

## The National Observatory on Violence – websites

Centre for Development and Communication  
in the Handicap area

[www.ufch.dk](http://www.ufch.dk)

The Centre for Victims of Sexual Assault  
at Copenhagen's Central Hospital

[www.centerforvoldtaegtsofre.dk](http://www.centerforvoldtaegtsofre.dk)

The Danish Centre for Research  
on Social Vulnerability

[www.vfudsatte.dk](http://www.vfudsatte.dk)

The Danish Crime Prevention Council

[www.dkr.dk](http://www.dkr.dk)

The Danish Research Centre on Gender Equality

[www.celi.dk](http://www.celi.dk)

Dannerhuset - A Woman's Centre and Shelter

[www.dannerhuset.dk](http://www.dannerhuset.dk)

Dialogue against Violence

[www.dialogmodvold.dk](http://www.dialogmodvold.dk)

The Joan Sisters

[www.joan-soestrene.dk](http://www.joan-soestrene.dk)

The National Institute of Public Health

[www.si-folkesundhed.dk](http://www.si-folkesundhed.dk)

The National Organisation of Shelters  
for Battered Women and their Children

[www.lokk.dk](http://www.lokk.dk)

The Nest

[www.reden.dk](http://www.reden.dk)

Network of Battered Women

[www.netvaerk.org](http://www.netvaerk.org)

The Men's Advisory

[www.manderaad.dk](http://www.manderaad.dk)

The Mother's Help

[www.moedrehjaelpen.dk](http://www.moedrehjaelpen.dk)

The Women's Council

[www.kvinderaadet.dk](http://www.kvinderaadet.dk)

## Suggested reading

\* In order to give meaning to the works of the various authors mentioned in this report the titles have been translated into English throughout the report. Many of the works are only available in the original Danish editions.

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Lindqvist, Britta M., Kari Helene Partapuoli og Lea Holst Spenceley (2004). *Kvinderummet. Dannerhuset som kvindepolitisk forum og krisecenter*. København: Informations forlag.

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