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Winner print/online

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Ingvill Bryn Rambøl (40) is a freelance journalist living and working in Oslo, Norway. Her work is published in various magazines, such as A-magasinet, Tara, Mamma and Fagbladet. She started her career at the age of 18, with a short engagement with the newspaper Aftenposten, and has been active in the profession ever since, including 13 years as reporter, producer and assignment editor in The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation. She has a Bachelor degree from the University of Oslo, and an MA from the University of Southampton, UK.

Fag>bladet



UTESTENGT: Line Hinrichsen Sjøberg (20) elsker fotball, men fikk ikke være med på fotball-laget som barn. Foto: Inger Marie Grini

Adgang forbudt for fattige

– Jeg så ikke på meg selv som fattig før de andre barna begynte å mobbe meg for det, forteller Line Hinrichsen Sjøberg.

Ingvill Bryn Rambøl

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Mange tusen norske barn får ikke delta i sport og fritidsaktiviteter fordi foreldrene har dårlig råd. En ny bok forteller hvordan det er å være et fattig barn i et rikt land.

Å være annerledes

Line vokste opp i Skien sammen med moren og to eldre søsken. Hun var en aktiv guttejente som elsket å bygge hytte i skogen og å henge rundt på fotballbanen sammen med storebroren. De første årene på skolen var hun populær blant guttene fordi hun var morsom og ikke lekte med Barbie-dukke som de andre jentene. Hun var flittig og flink i timene.

Men så forandret alt seg. Barna begynte å legge merke til at hun gikk i klær hun hadde arvet fra broren. At hun ikke hadde egen



sykkel. At hun ikke hadde tursko når de var på klasseturer. Da hele klassen skulle på leirskole i sjette, var Line den eneste som ikke fikk være med. Da gikk det for alvor opp for henne. De hadde ikke råd. De var annerledes.

«Fattigdom er manglende mulighet til å delta i samfunnet på lik linje med andre.» Tone Fløtten, Fafo-forsker

Line, som nå er 20 år, er en av fem ungdommer som forteller sin historie i boka Barnefattigdom som kom ut rett før jul. Boka er resultatet av et samarbeid mellom blant annet Redd Barna, Framfylkingen, LO, flere fagforbund, direktorater og Fafo Institutt for arbeidslivs- og velferdsforskning, og den er redigert av Fafo-forsker Tone Fløtten.

Doblet på ti år

– Det fantes ikke noen samlet oversikt over kunnskapen om barnefattigdom i Norge. Inntil for ti år siden var ikke barnefattigdom engang noe tema her i landet. Det skyldes nok i stor grad at vi har lite fattigdom sammenliknet med andre land, sier Tone Fløtten.

Hva vil det si å vokse opp i fattigdom i et av verdens rikeste land? Å være fattig i Norge handler ikke nødvendigvis om å mangle mat, klær eller tak over hodet. Fattigdom er relativt. Fattigdom er manglende mulighet til å delta i samfunnet på lik linje med andre.

Inntekt er et vanlig mål på fattigdom. Når en families inntekt er mindre enn 60 prosent av median-inntekten, er det vanlig å definere familien som fattig. Ut fra dette bor det 85.000 fattige barn i Norge. Det er 35.000 flere enn for ti år siden.

Stengt ute

Line elsket fotball. Hennes største ønske var å få spille på klubblaget. Hun gikk i femte klasse og sparte alt hun klarte av penger. Hun plukket blomster og solgt pene, små buketter. Hun luftet hundene i nabolaget og ringte på hos gamle damer og spurte om de trengte hjelp med noe. Etter halvannet år hadde hun nok til å kjøpe fotballsko og Beckham-trøye. Stolt og full av forventning troppet hun opp på trening. Hun var klar. Endelig skulle hun få vise hva hun kunne.

– Så fikk jeg bare beskjed om at laget var fullt. Jeg skjønnte det ikke helt, for det blir jo aldri fullt på et sånt lag. Jeg tror det handlet om at jeg ikke var bra nok. Ikke i fotball, for jeg kunne rundspilt dem alle sammen. Det handlet om at jeg hadde lavere rang enn de andre. At jeg ikke var en del av gjengen. Det var sårt.

Sosiale goder

For å komme nærmere en forståelse av hva barnefattigdom i Norge egentlig er, har Tone Fløtten og Nova-forskeren Axel West Pedersen gjort en undersøkelse av hvilke goder folk flest anser som nødvendige for å vokse opp i det norske samfunnet. De listet opp goder som utenlandsferier, egen mobiltelefon, sykkel og nye klær, og ba folk krysse av for hva de mener alle norske barn over ti år burde ha råd til. Aktiviteter scorer høyt. Godt over 90 prosent mener at alle barn for eksempel bør ha råd til å delta i organiserte fritidsaktiviteter og til å gå i bursdager.

– Jeg synes det er interessant at sosiale goder vektlegges så sterkt. At barna kan delta i aktiviteter, ses på som viktigere enn materielle goder. Utenlandsferier, for eksempel, kommer langt ned på listen over hva folk mener er nødvendig, sier Fløtten.

Fritid koster

Samtidig viser undersøkelsen at 15 prosent av barna ikke deltar i organiserte fritidsaktiviteter. Rundt 3 prosent oppgir økonomi som årsak til at de ikke deltar. En firedel av barna i lavinntektsfamilier deltar ikke i organiserte aktiviteter i det hele tatt.

– Vi vet jo at det er en del barn som ikke deltar i fritidsaktiviteter, og vi vet at fattige barn og barn fra innvandrerfamilier deltar mindre enn andre. Det som er viktig nå, er å sørge for at de barna som ønsker det, får være med. At vi har en politikk som gjør det mulig å delta uten at det koster skjorta, sier Tone Fløtten.

Søkte dårlige venner

Line røpte aldri fotballschoene igjen. Hun satt mye hjemme, trøstespiste og ble ganske stor. Det hjalp ikke akkurat på

mobbingen. Så gikk hun ut og fant andre venner. Venner som drev med hærverk og pøbelstreker, og som tok henne imot som den hun var.

– Økonomi burde ikke være noe hinder for at barn kan drive med fritidsaktiviteter, sier Line i dag.

Nå bor hun på hybel og klarer å ta vare på seg selv og to katter. Det er to år siden hun fikk livet sitt på riktig kjølgjen, og hun er på god vei til å fullføre grunnkurs i byggfag.

– Det er alltid noen barn som ikke har råd til å være med på aktiviteter, og da må skolen eller kommunen bidra. Hvis ikke, blir ungene sittende hjemme og har lettere for å havne i miljøer hvor de gjør dumme ting.

Sosial inkludering

Akkurat dét er både forskerne og politikerne også klar over. I regjeringens tiltaksplan mot fattigdom fra 2006 står det at «det er særlig viktig å sikre sosial inkludering av barn og unge som på grunn av foreldrenes økonomiske og sosiale situasjon står i fare for å bli utestengt fra aktiviteter i skole- og fritidssammenheng».

Siden 2004 har staten bevilget tilskuddsmidler til et utvalg kommuner og bydeler med stor andel fattige barn. I 2008 ble det bevilget 26 millioner kroner til slike tiltak, fordelt på 51 kommuner. Pengene har blitt brukt til leksehjelp, støtte til kontingenter og utstyr, sommerleirer og familieturer. Noen kommuner har også opprettet egne utstyrsbanker i regi av idrettslagene, der familier kan låne utstyr til sportsaktiviteter for barna.

Det meste av hjelpen blir kanalisert gjennom barnevernet og sosialkontorene. Spørsmålet er om den når fram til dem som trenger det mest.

Skjuler fattigdom

– Barn er verdensmestere i å skjule fattigdom, sier Marianne Borgen, som er Redd Barnas programsjef i Norge.

– Barn som vokser opp i lavinntektsfamilier forteller kanskje ikke hjemme at de er invitert i bursdag, fordi de vet at de ikke har råd til presang. De spør ikke engang om lov til å få være med på klasseturen, de bare sier de har vondt i magen den dagen. De sier heller ikke noe om at de gjerne vil begynne i korpset eller på fotballen. Og da blir det heller ikke sendt noen søknad om tilskudd til kontingent.

Spør barna

I et samfunn der mer og mer av barnas aktiviteter er organisert gjennom skolefritidsordninger, idrettslag og kulturinstitusjoner, koster det i økende grad penger å leke med andre barn. Dermed fører fattigdommen til sosial eksklusjon, mener Borgen. Og derfor må tiltakene mot fattigdom ikke bare handle om å få foreldrene i arbeid, men også om å få barna i aktivitet. For å finne ut hvilke konsekvenser barna opplever av familiens fattigdom, er vi nødt til å begynne å lytte mer til barna selv, sier Borgen.

– De ansatte på Nav-kontorene må begynne å snakke med barna, ikke bare telle dem. De må spørre dem hva de mangler og hva de ønsker seg. De må ta barna på alvor og se på dem som fullverdige brukere av våre trygdeytelser, ikke bare som vedheng til sine foreldre.

Når Marianne Borgen sier dette til ansatte på sosialkontorene, blir hun møtt med reaksjoner. Noen sier de ikke er trent på å snakke med barn. Andre sier de vil skjerme barna fra familiens problemer.

– Det er helt misforstått. Man skjermer ikke barna ved ikke å ta dem på alvor. Man påfører dem en tilleggsbelastning. Barn er så lojale mot familien, at hvis vi ikke spør dem, får vi ikke vite noe. Disse barna står ikke og banker på døra til kulturskolen eller idrettslaget. De spør ikke hjemme engang – de vet at pengene ikke fins.

Lindrende tiltak

Idretten og kulturlivet selv må også bli flinkere til å få med disse barna, mener Borgen.

– Man kan innføre kulturkort og stipender. Det er mye penger i idretten. Noen av disse pengene burde kanskje skyves nedover slik at man klarer å inkludere flere enn i dag.

Lindrende tiltak, kaller Redd Barna dette. Det er tiltak som lindrer smerten ved å være fattig, men de fjerner ikke

fattigdommen. Likevel er fritidsaktiviteter viktig også i et mer langsiktig perspektiv, mener Tone Fløtten.

– Det å kunne delta i samfunnet gir ikke bare barna et bedre liv her og nå, det legger også grunnlaget for framtidig læring. Noe som kan gjøre det lettere å løfte disse barna ut av fattigdom når de blir voksne.

For forskningen viser nemlig ikke bare at tallet på fattige barn i Norge har økt det siste tiåret. Den viser også at fattige barn har lett for å bli fattige voksne.

Framtidsplaner

Akkurat den statistikken har ikke Line tenkt til å bli en del av. Hun har framtidsplanene klare.

– Først og fremst skal jeg komme meg gjennom skolen, få fagbrev, kjøpe meg bil og bygge mitt eget hus. Et skikkelig stilig hus. Når jeg har jobbet og tjent penger i noen år, har jeg lyst til å flytte til utlandet. Thailand, kanskje. Jeg var der på min eneste familieferie som barn og likte landet og menneskene. Der var det veldig mange fattige. Det hadde vært gøy å hjelpe til med å bygge skoler og barnehjem for dem. Å kunne hjelpe noen som virkelig trenger det. Det er jo ikke noen vits i å sitte her hjemme i Norge og kjøpe stadig større tv-er og dyrere biler.

Kilder

Tone Fløtten (red.), Bamefattigdom,

Gyldendal 2009

Bjøm Richard Nuland, Jens Lunnan Hjort, Tone Fløtten og Elisabeth Backe-Hansen;

Aktivitet og deltakelse for fattige barn og unge, Fafo-rapport 2009

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Translation

Access prohibited for poor people

“I did not consider myself poor until the other children began bullying me about it,” says Line Hinrichsen Sjøberg

EXCLUDED: Line Hinrichsen Sjøberg (20) loved football, but was not included in the football team as a child. Photograph: Inger Marie Grini

Many thousands of Norwegian children are unable to participate in sports and leisure activities because their parents cannot afford it. A new book describes what it is like to be a poor child in a rich country.

Being different

Line grew up in Skien together with her mother and two older siblings. She was an active tomboy who loved to build huts in the woods and to hang around on the football pitch with her older brother. During the first years at school, she was popular with the boys because she was funny and did not play with Barbie dolls like the other girls. She was hard-working and able in class.

But then everything changed. The children began to notice that she wore clothes handed down from her brother. That she did not have her own bicycle. That she did not have trainers when they went on class trips. When the whole class was to go to an outdoor pursuits centre in Class 6, Line was the only one who did not go with them. That was when she realised: they could not afford it. They were different.

Line, who is 20 now, is one of five young people who tell their story in the book *Barnefattigdom* (Child Poverty) which is being published shortly before Christmas. The book is the result of collaboration between Save the Children, Framfylkingen, LO, several trade union federations, directorates and Fafo Institutt for arbeidslivs- og velferdsforskning (Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research), and is edited by Fafo researcher Tone Fløtten.

“Poverty is a lack of opportunity to participate in society on an equal footing with others”
Tone Fløtten, Fafo researcher

Doubled in ten years

“There was no comprehensive overview of information about childhood poverty in Norway. Until ten years ago childhood poverty was not even a topic of discussion here in Norway. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that we have little poverty compared with other countries,” says Fløtten.

What does it mean to grow up in poverty in one of the world's richest countries? To be poor in Norway is not necessarily about not having enough food, clothes or a roof over one's head. Poverty is relative. Poverty is a lack of opportunity to participate in society on an equal footing with others.

Income is a standard gauge of poverty. When a family's income is less than 60 percent of the average income, it is usual to define the family as poor. Based on this, there should be 85,000 children living in poverty in Norway. This is 35,000 more than ten years ago.

Excluded

Line loved football. Her dearest wish was to play in the club team. When she was in Class Five, she saved all the money she could. She picked flowers and sold pretty little bunches. She walked people's dogs in the neighbourhood and rang old ladies' doorbells and asked if they needed help with anything. Within six months, she had enough to buy football boots and a Beckham shirt. Proud and full of anticipation, she turned up for training. She was ready. Finally she was going to show what she was made of.

"Then I was just told that there were no vacancies on the team. I did not quite get it, because such a team never had a full complement. I think it was because I was not good enough. Not at football, because I could outplay all of them. It was about me having a lower rank than the others. That I was not part of the gang. It hurt."

Social benefits

In order to reach a better understanding of what child poverty in Norway actually is, Fløtten and Norwegian researcher Axel West Pedersen conducted a study of the benefits which people consider most necessary for growing up in Norwegian society. It lists benefits such as holidays abroad, one's own mobile telephone, a bicycle and new clothes, and asked respondees to tick off what they thought all Norwegian children over ten years old should be able to afford. Activities score highly. Well over 90 percent think that all children, for example, should be able to afford to participate in organised leisure activities and to go to birthdays.

"I think it is interesting that such importance is attached to social benefits. That children can participate in activities is considered more important than material benefits. Holidays abroad, for example, come far down the list of what people think is necessary," says Fløtten.

Leisure costs

At the same time the study shows that 15 percent of children do not participate in organised leisure activities. Approximately 3 percent indicate their financial position as

the reason for not participating. A quarter of children in low-income families do not participate in organised activities at all.

“We know that there are some children who do not participate in leisure activities and we know that poor children and children from immigrant families participate less than others. What is important now is to ensure that the children who wish to can be included. That we have a policy which makes it possible to take part without it costing a fortune,” says Fløtten.

Gravitated towards the wrong crowd

Line never touched her football boots again. She stayed at home a lot, ate for comfort and grew quite fat. This did not exactly help the bullying. So she went out and found other friends. Friends who were involved in vandalism and hooliganism and who accepted her for who she was.

“Finances should not prevent children from being able to engage in leisure activities,” says Line today.

Now she lives in lodgings and manages to take care of herself and two cats. It is two years since she got her life back on an even keel again, and she is well on the way to completing a foundation course in the building trade.

“There is always some child who cannot afford to take part in activities, and then the school or the municipality must help. If not, young people are left sitting around at home and it is easier for them to end up in environments where they do stupid things.”

Social inclusion

Both researchers and politicians are also clear about precisely this point. The government’s plan of measures against poverty from 2006 states that, “it is particularly important to ensure social inclusion of children and young people, who, on account of their parents’ financial and social situation, are at risk of being excluded from activities in the context of school and leisure time.”

Since 2004, the state has granted subsidies to a range of municipalities and neighbourhoods with a large proportion of children living in poverty. In 2008 NOK 26 million was granted for such measures, spread over 51 municipalities. The money has been used for help with homework, support for subscriptions and equipment, summer

camps and family outings. Some municipalities have also set up their own equipment banks under the management of athletic clubs, where families can borrow equipment for sports activities for children.

Most of the help is channelled through child welfare and social security offices. The question is whether it reaches those who need it most.

Concealing poverty

“Children are world champions at concealing poverty,” says Marianne Borgen, director of the Save the Children programme in Norway.

“Children who grow up in low-income families may not mention that they have been invited to a birthday party at home because they know that they cannot afford a present. They do not even ask for permission to be able to go on the class trip, they just say they have a stomach ache on the day. Nor do they say anything about how they would like to join a band or play football. And then no application for a subsidised subscription is sent out either.”

Ask the children

“In a society where more and more children’s activities are organised through school leisure arrangements, athletic clubs and cultural institutions, it increasingly costs more money to play with other children. As a result, poverty leads to social exclusion,” Borgen thinks. “And therefore measures against poverty must not only involve having parents in work, but also having children involved in activities. To discover the consequences of family poverty as experienced by children, we must begin to listen to the children themselves more,” says Borgen.

“Employees at NAV offices (Norwegian social security) must start talking to children, not just counting them. They must ask them what they lack and what they would like. They must take children seriously and consider them as full consumers of our social benefits, not just as an appendage of their parents.

When Marianne Borgen says this to employees at social security offices, she faces reactions. Some say they are not trained to speak to children. Others say they want to protect children from the family’s problems.

“This is a complete misunderstanding. You do not protect children by not taking them seriously. You give them an added burden. Children are so loyal to the family that if we

do not ask them, we will not discover anything. These children do not stand knocking on the door of the school of music and arts (kulturskolen) or the athletic club. They do not even ask at home – they know that the money is not there.”

Alleviating measures

“Athletics and cultural life themselves must also become easier for these children to obtain”, thinks Borgen.

“You can introduce cultural cards and grants. There is a lot of money in athletics. Some of this money should perhaps be filtered down so that more than at present can be included.

Save the Children calls this an alleviating measure - A measure which alleviates the pain of being poor, but it does not remove poverty. Likewise, leisure activities are also important from a longer-term perspective”, thinks Fløtten.

“Being able to participate in society not only gives children a better life here and now, it also provides the basis for future learning. Something which can make it easier to lift these children out of poverty when they are adults.

Because research shows that not only has the number of children living in poverty in Norway increased in the last decade, but that children living in poverty are likely to become adults living in poverty.”

Plans for the future

Line has no intention of becoming a part of these statistics. She has her own plans for the future.

“First and foremost I am going to get myself through school, get qualified, buy myself a car and build my own house. A decent, stylish house. When I have worked and earned money for a few years, I would like to move abroad. Thailand, maybe. I went there for my only family holiday as a child and liked the country and the people. There were a great many poor people there. It would be great to help to build schools and children’s homes for them. To be able to help someone who really needs it. It is no fun staying at home here in Norway and buying ever larger televisions and more expensive cars.”

Sources Tone Fløtten (ed.); Barnefattigdom (Child Poverty), Gyldendal 2009

Bjørn Richard Nuland, Jens Lunnan Hjort, Tone Fløtten and Elisabeth Backe-Hansen; Aktivitet og deltakelse for fattige barn og unge (Activity and participation for children and young people living in poverty), Fafo report 2009

Winner AV

Per Kristian Orset and Kåre Breivik

Report title: "Tiggerhuset" ("The house of beggars")

Published in: TV2, 23/09/2010

Kare Breivik was born in Bergen, Norway. He has worked in TV2 since 1993 as cameraman and video editor in the field and in the newsroom. Have experience from most kind of working situations nationally and internationally. As he is also educated in graphic design and communication Kare has worked for 4 years in advertising agencies as both art director and copy writer.

Summary: "Tiggerhuset" ("The house of beggars")

TV Announcer:

First to the case of Romanians who come to Norway to beg. It has become increasingly attractive to a lot of them. The couple we are now about to meet have built a house in their native country of Romania for the money they begged in Bergen.

Voiceover:

They are Gypsies, or Romanians. They have travelled from the new poor Eastern EU countries, and are part of the new picture in Norwegian towns. Foreign beggars can sit with their disposable cups for three months. This is how long they are allowed to stay in Norway without a work permit for. It is not allowed in some other countries, like for example Romania, but begging is allowed in Norway. The amount of beggars here are on the rise. TV2 selected a begging couple in Bergen. We waited until they left town, and decided to find them in their home country. We wanted to find out where the money went.

We are driving on dusty roads in a little village in Romania. The couple from Bergen have no idea we are coming to see them. But the neighbours show the way, and everybody is very surprised.

Surrounded by a big group of curious bystanders we are suddenly by a big house under construction.

Presenter: So this is the new house?

Woman: Norwegian money.

Man: I have not been anywhere else, only in Bergen. I have been to Bergen for six months a year the last three years. I have struggled for three years to build this.

Voiceover: The busker would like to show us how this house will turn out.

Man: Kitchen, but the roof is not done. Bedroom.

Presenter: It is incredible to stand here and see how happy they are for all the change that has made its way to the disposable cup in Bergen. This house is in fact built solely by the help of the money they have begged in Bergen.

Voiceover: The price is high if you are to beg in a foreign country. It was a hard time for their eight children.

Daughter: Especially the fact that Mum was abroad. I was at home with the children. It was tough. I missed them and cried.

Voiceover: We bring out pictures from Bergen. For the first time the children can see where their parents have been for months. But even for a Gypsy it is hard to beg when you are a Christian like Adriana.

Woman: I said: "God, can you forgive me? You know my situation. I have nowhere to live."

Voiceover: For several years they have paid a lot of money for a couple of rooms at a neighbour's house. They will live there until they have gone for more begging trips to Norway and the house is habitable. After Adriana, by gesticulating with her fingers, explained to people in Bergen about her situation the Norwegians displayed a remarkable pleasure in giving spontaneously.

Woman: One gave me NOK 5,000 another NOK 4,000 which I sent home. We have bought these bricks.

Voiceover: NOK 4-5,000 is an incredible amount of money in Romania. A new house is only NOK 120,000, and the begging has so far financed half of that. There is no doubt – this couple wants to beg more in Norway.

The national winners were selected by a national jury which consisted of:

- Børre Arnøy, Director, Engelsberg Senior Home, Kirkens Bymisjon (NGO)
- Ragnar Semundseth, Information Coordinator, EU delegation
- Tom Berntzen, Geelmuyden Kiese/ AV journalist
- Olaf Tvede, NIB Representation