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## P R E F A C E

Financial support from the EU Commission (Daphne Programme) and the co-financiers (the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs, and the Municipality of Vienna) has made it possible finally to realise a project that had been planned for several years. The WAVE Co-ordination Office / European Information Office against Violence against Women has received innumerable inquiries from women and women's groups intending to establish a refuge and needing basic information on the necessary planning and operational steps. The present Manual is designed to meet this need. "Away from Violence" sets out first and foremost to address the practical issues involved for women who establish, organise, run and work in a refuge, although the publication also deals briefly with the specific theoretical background to violence against women.

A team of experts from eight countries contributed to the compilation of the material contained in this Manual. We were thus able to incorporate a wide range of experience and to produce a publication designed to be of use throughout Europe. The editors and project partners would be glad to receive comments and suggestions ([office@wave-network.org](mailto:office@wave-network.org)). They hope that this Manual will soon lead to the founding of new refuges serving the purpose of affording abused women and children the highest possible degree of protection, and also that existing refuges will find some of the information contained herein useful.

The editorial team

## GLOSSARY

To facilitate the reading of this Manual, those terms have generally been used which are most often encountered in specialised literature on the subject. However, the project's editorial team feels that it is important to explain here how they understand these terms.

**Refuge / shelter:** "Refuge" tends to be used in the European English-speaking countries to denote safe accommodation for women and children who have been exposed to (usually male) violence in a domestic context. "Shelter" has exactly the same connotations but is more commonly used in North America and Australia.

**Domestic violence:** denotes violence within the family and in intimate relationships committed by persons close to the woman. The perpetrator is in almost every case the woman's partner or former partner, occasionally other male relatives. The victims are primarily women and their children.

**Victim:** is used in the sense of "survivor of violence" (i.e. not in a passive sense)

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and children is a violation of human rights. Indeed, it is one of the most frequent human rights violations world-wide. Europe is no exception in this respect. The principal cause of the physical and psychological injuries inflicted on women and children is violence committed in the domestic sphere – in the family and in intimate relationships. Recent studies show that between one quarter and one third of women in Europe are subjected to violence at the hands of individuals in their immediate social environment. With few exceptions, the perpetrators are men: partners, husbands, fathers or brothers. Given the socio-economic conditions prevailing in our society, many women and children who are abused by a member of their family are forced to leave their homes in order to escape from the violence, save their lives and find protection and safety. A large proportion of them are admitted to women's refuges. Refuges constitute the key institutions in endeavours to combat violence against women and children. Since the first refuges were set up in the early 1970s, they have acted as an important factor in social development, not only by providing women and children with a safe environment but also by promoting equal rights and opportunities between women and men and by enforcing the fundamental human right to bodily, emotional and mental integrity.

In Europe the social issue of male violence against women and children was marginalised as a taboo topic until the early 1970s, in eastern Europe until the early 1990s. The very first women's refuge was established in London in 1972. Other refuges were opened in the British Isles before the movement spread to western, central and northern Europe, later to southern Europe and, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, to the countries of eastern and southeastern Europe. There are currently around 1500 women's refuges in Europe as a whole.

But many European countries – in particular countries in southern and eastern Europe – still suffer from a shortage of women's refuges offering protection to abused women and their children. Women who decide to establish a refuge in their home town frequently encounter insuperable obstacles: the lack of financial support or the lack of political will on the part of the national or municipal authorities. When money does sporadically become available, these women try to keep their refuge open for as long as possible.

The mere provision of (unprotected) accommodation for victims of domestic violence is not enough. Empowerment is a key factor which refuges offer abused women and children: they are encouraged to take charge of their own lives, and their self-confidence is boosted. The women and their children living in a refuge should finally regain the feeling of living in safety.

The European Union's most recent phase of enlargement was completed in 2004. The new Member States were required to adopt a large body of legislation and standards in order to qualify for membership. However, the existing standards in the social field – notably in the sensitive area of combating male domestic violence against women – still diverge widely from one Member State to another, whether old or new.

*Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)*, functioning as it does as a European network of women's support organisations combating male domestic violence, has from the outset treated Europe as a single geographical entity. It has always been our goal to facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge. With the help of the EU Commission (Daphne Programme) the WAVE Office has to date compiled an extensive database containing information on violence prevention in almost all European countries and listing over 2,000 organisations. In the year 2000 WAVE drew up a training programme suitable for use throughout Europe for professionals who deal with victims of violence.

The present Manual, likewise financed by the EU Commission's Daphne Programme, is designed to help in the process of formulating and subsequently applying European standards.

We see the manual as a step towards the implementation of the Council Framework Decision of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (2001/220/JHA), which defines guidelines and methods for providing professional support for victims of domestic violence.

## **1.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DIVERGENT STATUS OF REFUGES IN EUROPE**

The need for more women's refuges is documented by a survey carried out by WAVE under the auspices of a DAPHNE project in 2001. Experts from the then fifteen EU Member States and twelve Candidate Countries surveyed the standards of existing refuges, and the results were published in the booklet entitled "More than a roof over your head". The survey's starting-point was the question of how many families (1 woman plus children) European refuges could accommodate. In a recommendation issued in 1986, the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities stated that one refuge place should be available per 10,000 inhabitants.

The results of this survey gave an accurate picture of the extent of support facilities and prevention measures in place in a given country (no or incomplete data were provided for France, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Lithuania and Latvia). The above recommended standard was fulfilled only by Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Northern Ireland, closely followed by Sweden. Of the then Candidate Countries, only Malta came close to complying with the standard. The middle of the field included Denmark, Germany, Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, while Austria, Belgium and Finland were shown to have about one third of the refuge places called for. Slovenia followed close on their heels with 89 refuge places. Greece and Portugal performed dismally. As mentioned above, there were only very few refuge places for abused women and their children in the countries of eastern Europe. The refuges in these countries are few and far between, have to live with the prospect of closing down at any time, and cannot cope with the large numbers of women seeking assistance and protection. To make matters worse, the eastern European countries have to contend with poverty, insecurity and little prospect of improvement in the foreseeable future – factors which aggravate the problem of domestic and social violence.

In the new EU Member States there are at least a few women's refuges, and support organisations have increased in number and scope in the last few years. In countries like Georgia and Ukraine the situation remains difficult. Economic crisis and political instability have spawned not only higher levels of domestic violence but also other forms of violence against women. Despite the obstacles, women in many countries – also in eastern Europe – are setting about the task of establishing women's support services. In Russia, for example (and this is true of other countries as well), women's organisations have succeeded in opening a network of more than fifty women's crisis centres within the space of a single decade (ANNA Association No to Violence, see Appendix). The present Manual is intended to help all of these initiatives.

## **1.2 HOW THIS MANUAL WAS COMPILED**

Experts and refuge workers from eight countries with many years of service in the field have pooled their practical and theoretical knowledge to make up the consistent, practice-oriented approach which this Manual elucidates. Setting up a refuge entails finding answers to innumerable questions, such as: What security precautions need to be taken? Which facilities

are needed to provide counselling or a play area for children? How do you publicise the availability of a women's refuge when its address has to be kept confidential?

Over and above providing answers to practical questions relating to the setting up of a women's refuge, the project's implementing organisation, *Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)*, and the project partners (Sirkka Perttu from the Finnish Women's Line, Angela Romanin and Elisa Marchiani from Casa delle Donne per non subire a violenza Bologna, Patricia Lopes from AMCV Portugal, Elke Griemens from Frauenhaus Erftkreis, Sandra Messner from the 3. Wiener Frauenhaus, Sevaste Chatzifotiou from the TEI of Crete / Department of Social Work, Judit Herman from Nane in Budapest, and Anamaria Simon from Artemis Romania) set out to define quality standards for refuges.

The first stage in the project involved an extensive survey of existing source material. This was followed by the first workshop, held in December 2003, at which the participants defined the Manual's contents and discussed it in detail. The contributors declared their preferences for individual sections, based on their expertise in the various fields (cf. contributors' portraits in the Appendix). In the second stage, which lasted from January to April 2004, the chapters were drafted and then discussed at a second workshop in May. The final editing was completed by the end of July 2004.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL AND TARGET GROUPS**

The primary goal of this Manual is to provide practical assistance to those who are setting up a refuge. Given the widely divergent standards in women's refuges from one European country to another, publishing a joint manual on the setting up and running of a refuge is an attempt to help improve standards where they urgently need attention and to initiate a process of harmonisation as a means to enhance quality. The Manual's primary target group comprises women experts planning to set up a refuge and women working in a refuge. It was the steadily increasing demand, most notably from the countries of eastern and south-eastern Europe, that prompted the idea of publishing a manual for European women's refuges. The ultimate beneficiaries will be women exposed to domestic violence and their children.

However, the task of providing services for victims of domestic violence cannot be left solely to women's organisations. For many years now refuges and women's organisations working in the field of combating male domestic violence have been calling for adequate state funding for refuges. Thus, another important target group of this Manual comprises politicians, state authorities, state funding bodies and/or private sponsors. Finally, the Manual is intended to provide representatives of professional groups, journalists and members of the public with further information on the role of women's refuges in society.

## **2 . T H E O R E T I C A L   B A C K G R O U N D**

The basis of the work of women's refuges is an understanding of the causes of domestic violence against women, the forms it takes and the impact it has on the victims. Violence against women needs to be considered and analysed in the historical, political and social context of gender relationships. Any attempt to treat violence against women as an individual problem or as a matter of dysfunctional interaction will inevitably fall short of reality and will thus achieve little in terms of change. International bodies have again and again stated this view in documents and recommendations and have explicitly condemned violence against women as a human rights violation.

### **2.1 THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

“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.” (United Nations 1996, 75)

In the historical context, the process by which the modern state emerged assigned power within the family to the man (Sauer 2002). Men's dominance of women in the family unit was then perpetuated in laws and social norms and structures. Women were granted the right to vote much later than men, they were long excluded from the education system and from an active role in political life, in many areas they were deprived of the status of a legal person, they were subordinated to their father or husband, and they were prevented from making decisions about their own lives. This meant that numerous aspects of women's lives were subject to constraints and that they were obstructed in their development. Johan Galtung, the Norwegian pioneer in peace studies and conflict resolution, defines these as violent structures. Galtung asserts that violence will always prevail when people are subjected to outside forces that keep their actual somatic and intellectual advancement at a lower level than their potential advancement (Galtung 1971, 57).

Even in Europe, many of the old patriarchal structures remained in place well into the twentieth century. In some countries women were not given the right to vote until after World War II. The marriage laws in many countries continued to define men as the head of the family right up to the 1970s, and women were obliged to obey. Marital rape is still not a punishable offence in every European country. In the early seventies it was the second women's movement which (again) raised the issue of structural and inter-personal violence against women as a social issue. Women found themselves routinely exposed to violence at the hands of their husbands or partners. Many women discovered that the state and judicial authorities took little interest in combating this violence.

In many cases violence committed by husbands or partners went unpunished, even when women dared to come into the open with their experiences and brought charges against the perpetrator. The state did – and to some extent still does – little to prosecute domestic violence. The authorities tended to waive their exclusive executive powers where domestic violence was concerned, conceding the “rule of force” to the husband – if not legally, then in practice. In many areas the equality of women and men has been enshrined in law, not least thanks to the EU's non-discrimination policy. In practice, however, many instances of

discrimination and inequality remain. This is a factor in the constraints which compel women to continue living in violent relationships and which make it difficult for them to break free. Action to combat violence against women can thus be effective and reduce the level of violence only if the issue of structural inequality is addressed.

## **2.2 ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS**

The first time that a major international agency recognised violence against women as neither a “private” nor a “national” problem was at the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna. Women’s organisations from all over the world had prepared the ground and drawn up a petition signed by half a million people (Bunch/Reilly 1994). The conference’s final document, the Vienna Declaration, said that acts of violence against women constitute human rights violations, even when they are carried out in the so-called private sphere (United Nations 1993a).

The Vienna Declaration stated: “The human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights [.....]. Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated.”(United Nations 1993a, 18)

This places responsibility on the state for ending violence and safeguarding the effective protection of its female inhabitants.

The United Nations subsequently issued the Declaration against Violence against Women (United Nations 1993b (for this and other extracts from important international documents see Handout) and appointed a Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The elimination of violence against women was also a major focus of the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women in Peking. The final document, the “Platform for Action”, details a number of measures against violence against women which the Member States pledged to implement. (United Nations 1995).

A key document on combating structural and personal violence against women is the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Unlike declarations and resolutions, this convention is binding upon all states that have signed and ratified it and must be implemented. By April 2004 177 states had ratified CEDAW and deposited the document with the United Nations.

The CEDAW Committee General Recommendations Nos. 12 and 19 call on States Parties to “provide appropriate protective and support services for victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence.”

In 1999 CEDAW was supplemented by an individual complaints procedure allowing women whose rights have been infringed to lodge a complaint with the United Nations. A practical guide to the lodging of complaints has been drawn up by an internationally acclaimed Austrian legal expert (Frauenbüro der Stadt Wien 2001).

In Europe important initiatives to combat violence against women have also been introduced. The European Human Rights Convention of 1950 guarantees all people (hence self-evidently also women) the right to life, health and freedom and prohibits torture or any other form of inhumane or degrading treatment. This key convention thus obliges the signatory states to take action to combat violence against women and to protect all women from violence. In recent years the Council of Europe has issued a large number of recommendations relating to the issue of violence against women and domestic violence (see Literature), the most recent of these dating from 2002 (Council of Europe 2002). In its final report the Council of Europe Group of Specialists recommended that one refuge place should be available per 7,500 of the population (Council of Europe 1997).

In 1997 the European Union launched its DAPHNE Programme to provide support for trans-national projects combating violence against women and children. During Austria's EU presidency an European conference of experts was convened in December 1998. Devoted to the subject of the police and violence against women, the conference was co-organised by WAVE (Dearing/Förg 1999). This and the follow-up meetings of experts during the German presidency (Cologne) and the Finnish presidency (Jyväskylä) drew up a large number of measures and recommendations to enhance the protection and support of women exposed to violence (Keeler 2001).

At the instigation of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights, the member states of the European Union carried out a campaign against violence against women in 1999/2000 (European Parliament / Committee on Women's Rights, 1997). The European campaign came to a close with the conference held in Portugal in 2000. The year 2004 saw approval of the Daphne II programme, which will again provide support for anti-violence projects and action over the coming five years. The enlargement of the EU is just one reason why the Daphne Programme has been given a larger budget.

## **2.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN FIGURES**

Violence against women is recognised as a serious societal issue that has reached global epidemic proportion. Over 90% of all domestic violence incidents are crimes committed by men against women. UNICEF estimates that globally up to half of all women and girls in some countries have experienced physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner or family member (UNICEF, 2001). Statistics based on research data from around the world show that violence against women generally occurs within the family.

In Britain, it is estimated that 48% of all female murders are the result of women being killed by their partners, compared with 6% of male victims of homicide (WAVE, February 1998,1). On average, two women per week are killed in England and Wales by their partners/ex-partners (Mirlees-Black, 1995).

The WHO recently published an extensive report on "Violence and Health" based on 48 studies of the prevalence of violence against women. The report found that between 10 and 69 per cent of women (depending on the country concerned) are subjected to violence at the hands of their husbands or partners during their lifetimes (WHO, 2002). Representative studies of this kind on violence against women and their children in the family and the social environment have been carried out in several EU countries and in Switzerland in the last few years. The figures that emerge from these studies confirm the – hitherto estimated – extent to which women are exposed to violence at the hands of their partners.

A 1997 Portuguese study revealed that 43% of acts of violence were committed within the family. A Belgian study in 1998 indicated that 68% of women had been the victims of physical or sexual violence (European Women's Lobby, 2000). Data from the first Greek national study involving 1,200 women aged 18 years or older show that 36% of them have suffered physical abuse from their husband or partner (KETHI, 2003), and data from the first Spanish national survey on domestic violence conducted in 1999 and involving more than 2,000 women aged 18 years or older show that 14.2% of them have been victims of domestic violence at least once, and that 4.2% are repeatedly abused (The Lancet, 2000).

A large-scale French prevalence study showed that 10 per cent of the women interviewed had been subjected to violence by their partners over the previous twelve-month period. Young women in the age group 20 to 24 were twice as vulnerable to partner abuse as women over 45.

According to the Finnish study, 22 per cent of the women interviewed who were living with their husbands or partners had suffered physical or sexual abuse or the threat thereof by

their partner. Moreover, 9 per cent had actually suffered violence at the hands of their partners during the preceding twelve months. In the Dutch study, 65 per cent of the female respondents who spoke about their experiences of abuse by their current partner said that they had been subjected to mild forms of violence, 26 per cent to moderate violence and 7 per cent to severe violence. Two per cent said they had been subjected to very severe violence. However, these figures changed significantly in relation to previous relationships. Here 33 per cent had suffered severe abuse, 21 per cent moderate abuse and 23 per cent mild abuse. In Sweden 46 of the women interviewed said that they had been subjected to male violence since their fifteenth birthday. In 34 per cent of cases that violence had been sexual. Twelve per cent of the female respondents had experienced male violence during the twelve months prior to the interview.

A Swiss study carried out in 2003 by Daniela Gloor and Hanna Meier corroborated the high percentage levels above. In the survey of just under 1,800 patients in a gynaecology clinic in Zurich, one respondent in ten said that she had suffered violence in the previous twelve-month period. The highest proportion of perpetrators was accounted for by the partners (7.9%). More than three quarters of the respondents (76.8%) said that they had at least once been subjected to physical abuse and infringement of their personal freedom by a person in their immediate social environment since the age of fifteen (Gloor/Meier 2004).

Translated into absolute figures, this means that at any given time approximately 20 million of the 230 million women living within the European Union are currently being subjected to violence. These figures attest to the perception that violence against women and children is a grave social problem that results in massive psychic but also economic, social and health-related damage (Heise 1995). A Dutch study shows that violence against women incurs costs of 200 million Euro (more than 330 million guilders) a year. A Swiss report estimates the costs of violence against women for the federal, cantonal and municipal authorities at approximately 400 million Swiss francs a year (Korf 1997, Godenzi/Yodanis 1998).

## **2.4 FORMS, PATTERNS AND IMPACT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The international literature abundantly documents the importance of social and cultural factors in inducing women to reconsider their decisions to seek external help and/or leave their violent husbands (Mahoney, 1994, 60, McWilliams/McKiernan, 1993, 50-55, Dobash/Dobash, 1998, Kirkwood, 1993, Chatzifotiou, 2004). Violence against women affects a large number of individuals/victims, who pay a high personal, physical, psychological, mental, familial, social and financial price for surviving the violence (Stanko/Crisp/Hale/Lucraft 1997).

Traditional values in patriarchal societies suggest that being a wife and mother are the most important roles for a woman. Moreover, in Muslim and Arab societies it is also held that women only fully live up to their role when they are married (Boabaid, 2002). Not surprisingly, society places the burden of family harmony on the woman, with the implications that a failed marriage is her fault. This suggests that 'commitment' to the relationship constitutes a salient factor in the decision to keep silent, suffer the violence and not seek help for a long time (Strube/Barbour 1983, 786). Thus, the deeply ingrained ideas that marriages should be preserved at almost any cost for the sake of the family and that a wife acquires the stigmatised status of a divorcee are combined with the notion that she is the one to blame for the break-up of marriage. All these preconceptions are strengthened by friends, relatives and the representatives of social agencies, and they are important factors that deter a woman from seeking external help and leaving a violent relationship.

If women and their children are to receive appropriate and effective support, it is necessary to understand the dynamics and mechanisms of violent behaviour.

### **2.4.1 Violence Also Takes Non-Physical Forms**

Violence exists not only in terms of physical behaviour. Violence serves the end of exerting power and control over the victim, breaking and subordinating the victim's will. The US psychiatrist Judith Herman (1992) compares the patterns of violent behaviour towards women with techniques used in torture. Many women who have suffered violence at the hands of their partners report being subjected to various forms of psychological abuse such as isolation from the outside world, verbal abuse and denigration, threats and intimidation, or being forced to perform futile or humiliating acts. It can happen that the perpetrator alternates this kind of violence with periods in which he is affectionate, brings the woman flowers or takes her out to dinner. Such behaviour will confuse the woman and make her think that perhaps there is hope after all, that the man does have his good sides and could change. In reality, the man is simply manipulating her into staying with him and abandoning her thoughts of separating from him. In the context of the violent relationship as a whole, the man's occasional affectionate behaviour must be seen as a strategic aspect of his violence.

### **2.4.2 Violence as Trauma and Destruction of the Sense of Self**

Violence is a traumatic experience whose wounds are by no means confined to physical injuries. The aim of violent behaviour is to destroy the victim's self-esteem and break down her resistance. One consequence of violent behaviour is that the victim lives in constant fear of further violence. In many cases it is no longer necessary for the perpetrator actually to commit acts of violence: threats and the memory of previous violence are sufficient to ensure that the woman does what the abuser demands. Judith Herman offers the following explanation: "Although violence is a universal method of terror, the perpetrator may use violence infrequently, as a last resort. It is not necessary to use violence often to keep the victim in a constant state of fear. The threat of death or serious harm is much more frequent than the actual resort to violence. Threats against others are often as effective as direct threats against the victim. Battered women, for example, frequently report that their abuser has threatened to kill their children, their parents, or any friends who harbour them, should they attempt to escape" (Herman 1992, 77).

Many women have no way to protect themselves against violence, which may be inflicted on them over a period of many years, even after separation from the abuser. In some cases the victim may turn to addiction as a way of coping with her fear of further violence. "Female addicts are more likely to have a violent partner than non-addicts. They more often stand up to the violence or take revenge, risking further violence." (Miller/Downs 1993, Logar in HeXenhaus (ed.), 2002b).

Downs (2001, quoted by Logar, as above) recently carried out a study on correlations between violence and addiction. The points which the study revealed included the following:

- The majority of women enrolled in detox programmes had either been subjected to violence in childhood or had witnessed violence between their parents;
- The majority of women enrolled in detox programmes had recently been subjected to violence at the hands of their partners;
- Women enrolled in detox programmes who had been subjected to violence had a more serious addiction problem than those who had not been abused;
- A significant number of women in refuges had an addiction problem;
- Women in refuges who had an addiction problem had been subjected to a more serious degree of violence.

### **2.4.3 Living in Captivity**

“My husband didn’t want me to go out by myself. When he went to work he would take all the keys with him, so I couldn’t lock the front door. If I’d gone out, either I would have had to leave the front door open or I wouldn’t have been able to get in again. So I wasn’t locked in, but I still couldn’t go out.” (Laura, testimony given to the Women’s Refuge Counselling Centre in Vienna).

Women subjected to violence by their husbands or partners are often prisoners in their own homes. Perpetrators control all their movements, preventing the woman from leading an independent life. As the above example shows, the prison walls are often not visible from outside. Herman makes the point succinctly: “Political captivity is generally recognized, whereas the domestic captivity of women and children is often unseen. A man’s home is his castle; rarely is it understood that the same home may be a prison for women and children. In domestic captivity, physical barriers to escape are rare. In most homes, even the most oppressive, there are no bars on the windows, no barbed wire fences. Women and children are not ordinarily chained, though even this occurs more often than one might think. The barriers to escape are generally invisible. They are nonetheless extremely powerful. Children are rendered captive by their condition of dependency. Women are rendered captive by economic, social, psychological, and legal subordination, as well as by physical force” (Herman, 74).

### **2.4.4 Identification with the Aggressor – the Stockholm Syndrome**

One effect of constant exposure to violence is that the victims may start to identify with the aggressor and act on his behalf as a survival strategy. This subordination of the victim’s will is not a voluntary decision but a direct result of violence. The aggressor may not just demand the woman’s subordination but also that she loves him. Herman comments: “The perpetrator’s first goal appears to be the enslavement of his victim and he accomplishes this goal by exercising despotic control over every aspect of the victim’s life. But simple compliance rarely satisfies him; he appears to have a psychological need to justify his crimes, and for this he then needs the victim’s affirmation. Thus he relentlessly demands from his victim professions of respect, gratitude or even love. His ultimate goal appears to be the creation of a willing victim.” (Herman 1992, 75)

Identification with the aggressor as a response to being trapped in an apparently hopeless situation is referred to as the “Stockholm Syndrome”. This phenomenon was first observed after a hostage-taking in the Swedish capital: the hostages began to form a relationship with the bank robbers, and the bonds became stronger and stronger. After the bank robbers were eventually overpowered and detained, some of their former hostages even visited them in prison. Every person is prone to the Stockholm Syndrome – that is, to identifying with the aggressor – if four conditions pertain: the person’s life is threatened; the person cannot escape (or thinks she / he cannot escape); the person is cut off from the outside world; and the aggressor is at least sporadically friendly. Psychologists Graham and Rawlings (1998) note that these conditions often pertain in cases of domestic violence, and that the victims may also show signs of developing the Stockholm Syndrome. In such cases the woman will be terrified of doing anything to provoke or anger the aggressor. She will try to gain his favour and act as his ally. It can happen, for instance, that the woman seeks to protect him by such means as refusing to disclose the actual cause of her injuries or claiming to have hurt herself.

#### **2.4.5 The Close Relationship between Perpetrator and Victim**

The close relationship that exists between the victim and the perpetrator and the woman's economic or social dependence on the man make it very difficult for her to defend herself. A stigma still attaches to bringing charges against a member of one's own family. For understandable reasons, women have problems speaking openly about violence and calling the police. On average only 25% of cases of domestic violence are ever reported. The remaining 75% remain undeclared (European Women's Lobby, 2000). Experience shows that women may be abused as many as thirty times before they go to the police.

#### **2.4.6 Protecting Migrant Women from Violence**

The plight of migrant women in a violent relationship is often especially difficult. If they have not been issued a visa of their own, their resident permit ties them to the perpetrator, which places them at a higher risk of being abused. This dependence can only be countered if all European countries guarantee migrant women separate residence and work permits that do not tie them to their husbands.

Migrant women must also be given sufficient social and economic support to enable them to start a life of their own. They often have access to fewer resources than abused women, and in many countries they are barred from social benefits. This makes it all the more important to admit abused migrant women to refuges. For them and their children a refuge may well be the only place where they are safe. This accounts for the relatively high proportion of migrant women in refuges. In Denmark, for instance, 32% of women seeking admission to refuges in 2002 were migrants (L.O.K.K., 2004). In Austria foreigners accounted for more than half of the women admitted.

Women's refuges need adequate resources to provide mother-tongue counselling for at least the numerically largest groups of migrant women. Multi-lingual information material and other resources are necessary if migrant women are to receive the support they need.

#### **2.4.7 The Impact on Children**

Children are always affected by violence committed against their mothers, and in many cases they themselves are abused by their fathers or stepfathers. (Hester / Mullender 2003).

Research has shown that ninety per cent of children are either in the same or the next room when violence occurs. One third of them witness the abuse, try to protect their mother and may be abused themselves (Asian Women and Domestic Violence, Information for Advisors, 1995, 2 / Women Against Rape, 1998, 2).

A study carried out in the United States established that in 70% of cases in which women were abused the children were also subjected to violence (see Bowker/Arbitell/McFerron 1988). The fear that things will worsen if the abused woman takes action and seeks help from outside constitutes an important reason for not reporting the violence, deciding to stay in the violent relationship and suffer the violence, and not seeking help.

Children therefore need the safe surroundings and the support which refuges offer as much as their mothers do. Women's refuges are also children's refuges. More than half of the residents of refuges in Europe are children. Those children who are exposed to their father's violent behaviour towards the mother are more likely later to become perpetrators or victims themselves. Boys are more likely to grow up to be perpetrators, girls to suffer violence (Appelt/Höllriegl/Logar 2001). It is essential that children are given help and support in dealing with their experiences of violence.

## **2.4.8 Empowerment**

Violence leaves deep scars on both the body and the soul, and it destroys the individual's self-esteem and independence. It must be remembered, though, that women and their children who have been subjected to violence are not merely passive victims of their experiences. The women will devise a variety of strategies in an attempt to halt the violence and defend themselves, while children will seek to help their mothers by screaming, calling the police or trying to stop their fathers' violence. Women will watch their partners closely to see when an outbreak of violence seems imminent, and then flee to safety; they will try to placate the man if he comes home in an obviously aggressive mood, and they will protect their children from him at the risk of being beaten themselves. These are just a few of the survival strategies that women living with a violent partner often adopt. They develop great expertise in dealing with the situation, and they should on no account be regarded as mere victims. It is important also to see their strengths and their will to survive. Any tendency to classify such women as weak and incapable of independent action or even as pathologically abnormal not only does nothing to help them but further undermines their position.

Every woman has the right to lead her life as she deems fit and to make independent decisions in this regard.

Institutions with a strong bias towards administration and control are poorly suited to promoting the goal of empowering women. This is why women who are subjected to violence, and their children, need refuges whose planning and operational approach – as elucidated in the present Manual – are specifically gauged to address these needs. If women are to receive the kind of help and support which they require, they must be treated with respect for their strengths, with sensitivity, empathy and a perceptive awareness of their needs. The goal of work in a women's refuge is thus to strengthen and empower women so that they become capable of leading an independent, self-determined life free of violence.

## **2.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES AND WOMEN'S REFUGES**

Now to the specifics of help for abused women and their children. We will look at the requisite environment and resources for providing the victims with the support they need.

In this section we summarise the critical requirements for professional, appropriate support services as yardsticks for governments and state authorities responsible for providing these services. The same criteria are dealt with in detail in the Manual's section on Practice.

### **2.5.1 Numerical Requirements for Women's Refuges and Support Services**

Every country should provide a sufficient number of women's refuges. At least one refuge capable of admitting women and children round the clock should be available in every region, including rural areas. Every woman should be able to reach it quickly. Transport must also be available to take women and children to the nearest refuge. Each country should operate a nationwide toll-free helpline for women as their first point of contact. Regional phone lines should also be staffed round the clock in the refuges to handle emergency admissions.

Many refuges operate a mobile counselling service and provide non-resident counselling services in the refuge. These are also extremely important services for victims of violence. As in the public health sector, the field of violence prevention requires a wide range of services to support and meet the needs of women and children exposed to violence. These include safe accommodation in the refuge, mobile counselling, emergency helplines, outreach services in

rural areas, intervention centres, and accommodation programmes. It is always very important that the victims have a CHOICE of options.

Important though legislative protection against violence is, it should not be viewed as a substitute for women's refuges. The experience gained in Austria, where legislative protection against violence has existed for six years now, shows that women's refuges continue to be necessary – indeed, the number of banning orders issued under the Protection from Violence Act indicates that a larger number of refuges and/or refuge places is called for.

Here are some reasons why refuges continue to be necessary even when effective legislative protection against violence exists. Not every victim of violence wishes to turn to the police and the judicial system and bring legal charges; some prefer to go to a refuge and stay there as long as necessary. Women who are at high risk need safe accommodation during the separation process, because the law is not capable of providing complete protection against violence. Some women cannot or do not wish to remain in the dwelling: be it because it is associated with the trauma they have been through, or because their husband's relatives live next door, or because the lease has been terminated or is not in their name.

### **2.5.2 State Funding and Organisational Structures for Women's Refuges**

Women's refuges provide important psycho-social support and, like other social facilities, should be regarded as an integral part of the services which the state operates on behalf of the general public.

This implies an obligation on the part of the government and the state authorities to ensure adequate funding for women's refuges and other women's service organisations.

The financing of women's refuges should be safeguarded by law and cover all of the costs of running a refuge on professional lines.

Women's refuges, helplines and other support services can adequately address the existing needs only if they can rely on funding that is contractually guaranteed for several years (or an unlimited period).

In recent years those modern democratic states that regard the provision of public health and social care as a major obligation have tended to entrust more and more state functions to NGOs. These NGOs are independent, non-profit associations meeting needs and providing services within the fields of social work and social policy.

Women's refuges in Europe are for the most part run by women's NGOs, which have over the years acquired a great deal of practical experience and expertise in providing support for abused women. This structural form of service provision for women has proved very effective and should be taken over when new projects are launched. Women's NGOs are more flexible in the ways they provide support, and victims of violence tend to have fewer inhibitions about turning to an NGO than to a state body.

Co-operation between governments and women's support services has proved successful and produced beneficial results in many countries. The formula for success is thus "private-public partnership".

It is important that the state bodies insist on compliance with quality standards (as formulated in the present Manual) but that they also respect the professional independence of the institutions concerned. Continuous internal and external evaluation is needed to underpin the quality of the work in women's refuges and support services (see the chapter "Documentation, evaluation and quality control"). It should be remembered that quality is possible only if the requisite financial resources are available.

### **2.5.3 Appropriate Help for Women and Children – Feminist Principles**

Abused women and their children cannot be expected to seek refuge in shelters for the homeless or other social welfare institutions which are not gauged to their specific needs. It is simply not enough to provide abused women and children with a roof over their heads. What is necessary is a system of women's refuges whose concept and operational approaches uniquely suit them to providing precisely the support which abused women and children need. Protection and safety rank among the most important criteria of a refuge. But it is equally important that women and children should not be consigned to institutions in which they again forfeit their right to self-determination. The planning and goals of a women's refuge should be directed towards strengthening and empowering women and children.

The UN Declaration on Violence Against Women identifies the historical imbalance of power between men and women as the cause of violence. Women's refuges thus pursue an approach which envisages women liberating themselves from violent relationships and emancipating themselves from the control of men, whether or not they remain with their partners or leave them. The work of women's refuges aims to end violence. Whether or not a woman terminates the violent relationship is her own decision, which must be respected. It would, however, be misguided to pursue the objective of preserving the family rather than first and foremost seeking to halt the violence.

It must be made absolutely clear to violent men that there can be no justification for violence and that the responsibility for ending it lies solely with them. Women's refuges have also generated significant momentum in the field of perpetrator programmes and have developed important projects in this field (Logar/Rösemann/Zürcher 2002).

The practical experience gained by European women's refuges over the last three decades has shown that feminist and emancipatory principles and approaches work well in providing abused women and their children with the support which they need (Hanetseder, Bern/Stuttgart/Wien, 1992).

Government and state bodies can and should take this experience into account when setting up and enlarging women's services against violence.

### **3. GOALS AND PRINCIPLES**

A women's refuge provides safe accommodation in which women and their children who have been subjected to domestic violence can live without fear of being abused. A women's refuge offers special services and safety precautions. The guiding principle of working with abused women is a strong commitment to advocate women's rights and the empowerment of women to live an independent and dignified life.

Women's refuges fulfil a vital role in combating violence against women. Their functions go far beyond just providing shelter and a safe place to stay. In a refuge women and their children receive the kind of support which enables them to deal with their traumatic experiences, to end the violence, to regain their self-esteem, and to lay the foundations for a self-determined and independent life. Women's refuges offer crisis support and on-going counselling and support in all matters related to the violent experience (legal issues, housing and job problems, therapy). Women's refuges are communal environments in which women and children become acquainted with a different way of living together. Women's refuges also fulfil a public role: they seek to raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence, co-operate with and offer training programmes for professionals, organise events, participate in activities in the field, are engaged in preventative activities for schools, and much more besides.

A women's refuge is defined by:

- its specific goals,
- its clearly defined target groups,
- its operating principles,
- its specialised services and staff (see chapters 5 and 7),
- its specific safety precautions (see chapter 6).

Only if a refuge fulfils all the functions listed above and described below and in the relevant chapters can the term "women's refuge" be applied.

#### **3.1 THE GOALS OF A WOMEN'S REFUGE**

A women's refuge pursues a set of goals which should be clearly defined from the very beginning. This serves to ensure the quality of the services provided. Women's refuges have a role to play in preventing violence against women and children. By their very nature they aim to prevent further violence in that they offer victims of violence a safe environment and support to stop a recurrence of the violence. Abused women and their children need thorough care, practical support and accompaniment in legal procedures. They need counsellors who support them. Services have to meet the needs of abused women. Both crisis support and long-term therapy are needed in order to overcome the traumatic experiences.

However, women's refuges usually also take part in or organise activities in the field of primary and tertiary prevention (see chapter 5). Thus, they play a key role in an overall approach to combating and preventing domestic violence against women and their children.

##### **3.1.1 Protection and safety**

First of all it is important for victims of violence to be safe. Safety must therefore be given the utmost priority in refuges (see chapter 7).

### **3.1.2 Empowerment**

Violence is a traumatic experience, an experience of being powerless and at the mercy of somebody else. The aim of any support for victims of violence has to be to overcome powerlessness and to empower these women so that they can lead a self-determined life (again). Women who have become victims of violence should not be labelled “ill” or “distressed”, which would further weaken their position. Being weak is often the consequence of being exposed to violence. Violence leaves marks not only on the body but also on the mind and the self-esteem. Some approaches for working with abused women go wrong in that they see these weaknesses as characteristics of the women, who then become pathological cases. The experience of experts in the refuge movement shows that it is vital to regard women as the experts in their situation. They need support to realise and understand their situation and how it was possible for their partner to exert power over them (see also chapter 5.1.). Understanding the mechanisms of violence enables them to develop strategies to resist violence effectively. The ultimate goal is to live a life free of violence.

### **3.1.3 Social change**

Women’s refuges aim to eliminate preconceptions, attitudes and behaviour patterns in society which are the breeding ground for and perpetuate violence against women and children.

Women’s refuges set out to raise awareness of:

- the situation of the women and children
- the impact which domestic violence has on society
- effective ways of dealing with the issue
- effective ways of ending violence against women and children
- the benefits a non-violent society would have (see also chapter 5.3.).

## **3.2 WHO ARE REFUGES FOR? THE TARGET GROUPS**

Women’s refuges should be open to all women who have become victims of physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and economic violence committed by a partner, former partner or member of the family.

As pointed out in chapter 2, most victims of domestic violence are women, most of the perpetrators are men. However, women are in some cases abused by female partners or by a – usually older or higher-ranking – female member of the family (particularly in hierarchically structured societies).

A refuge should be open to all women regardless of age, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, legal, social and marital status, political allegiances and economic situation.

The age of a woman can pose problems. If a woman is not yet of age, legal difficulties can arise. In this case co-operation with the child welfare authorities is important. Some countries/cities offer services for young women and girls which might sometimes be a better solution, since young women and girls often have special needs and face particular problems.

There are more than 30 refuges for young women in Sweden

See ROKS:

[www.roks.se/index.html](http://www.roks.se/index.html)

Women's refuges are also refuges for children.

As explained in greater detail in chapter 5.2., domestic violence also affects children, because they are either victims themselves or witnesses of the violence perpetrated against the mother. Both types of experience can be traumatic. Furthermore, women might not be willing to seek shelter in a women's refuge if they were not allowed to take their children with them.

The confined living conditions and absence of privacy in women's refuges make it reasonable to impose an age limit for boys. If boys are not admitted on account of their age, though, it is the refuge's job to find accommodation for them, in a hostel or elsewhere.

One alternative can be to have special apartments for these families which might have a separate entrance, for instance.

Example: Frauenhaus Eisenstadt,  
more information at: <http://www.aeof.at>

It is important that each refuge decides on a policy in the light of the available possibilities and alternatives.

We have to be very clear that domestic violence / violence in intimate relationships is just one form of violence against women. Women also become victims of other forms (trafficking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual assault, rape in wartime ...). In general, it is up to the individual refuge to decide what group of survivors of violence are also taken in apart from survivors of domestic violence. The considerations should be based on the services that can be provided and also on the safety provisions. Women's refuges are usually not for women who are homeless, although it has to be taken into account that a lot of homeless women have a violent past and/or present and thus should have the right to a place in a refuge.

Women's refuges might have problems in adequately helping women suffering from substance abuse or acute mental health problems.

Substance abuse and mental health problems are very often connected with traumatic experiences linked to domestic violence and sexual abuse (see chapter 2). It is important for the refuge group to decide if they can help women adequately with their alcohol/substance abuse or severe mental health problems or if they need to co-operate with specialised services. It is advisable to make individual decisions depending on the problem concerned and the refuge's resources.

### **3.1 THE PRINCIPLES OF A WOMEN'S REFUGE**

The goals of refuge work are embedded in fundamental principles which determine all aspects of refuge work. These principles are:

#### **3.2.1 Feminist analyses**

Male violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women and a reflection of existing gender relationships in society and in politics. It must therefore be regarded primarily as a social and political problem. Women's refuges need to fulfil a political function in that they create awareness of the social, historical, cultural and political framework that fosters male violence. Activists seek to give women and children a voice to speak out against violence. Society has to make perpetrators responsible for their actions. The feminist principles as implemented in the refuge should demonstrate ways for women and children to free themselves from violence.

### **3.2.2 Women helping women**

Abused women suffer greatly from being dominated and abused by their male partners. It is therefore important for them to receive support and help from a female counsellor specialised in the field.

Women victims of violence also suffer from being in a weak position and from having lost faith in their own abilities and strength. Thus, the refuge serves as a model for women to experience their own ability to lead an active and self-determined life. This is also reflected in the structure of the refuge, where women not only work at the grassroots level but also handle the household responsibilities. It helps the women to rethink and overcome stereotyped gender roles. This principle also applies to other women's support services.

### **3.2.3 Advocacy for women**

Acting against violence means adopting a clear stance and condemning violence against women in all its forms ("There is no excuse for violence"). Trying to stay neutral on what has happened entails the pitfall of tolerating violence. Women who come to the refuge do not have to offer proof of the violence they have undergone. It is important to believe what they say and to treat them without preconceptions. Victims need advocates who stand beside them and support them at every step that needs to be taken. Advocacy and solidarity are essential.

It is always the perpetrator who is responsible for the violence. Adopting a clear stance against any form of violent behaviour demonstrates condemnation of violent acts but not condemnation of the perpetrator as a person.

### **3.2.4 Team work (and flat hierarchies)**

Women's refuges trace their origins back to the women's (rights) movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which called for equality and non-discrimination in every area of life.

The organisation of the refuge should also reflect these goals by promoting democratic principles, sharing power and avoiding excessively hierarchical or bureaucratic structures. In many refuges the staff work as a team, and management duties and responsibilities are shared. Even if the refuge has a director, it is still important to work on a team basis and to involve the refuge workers in all the decisions and enable them to participate in the development of the service.

These structures ensure that interaction and relationships are not based on exerting power from top to bottom but that people can live and work together in an atmosphere of solidarity and equality.

### **3.2.5 Participation and democratic structures**

Democratic structures and the opportunity to be involved in the various aspects of refuge life are very important principles. In all refuges there are regular meetings which are the basis of participation for the women. It is important to be careful that women's refuges are not turned into institutions in which the women's lives are dominated and controlled but that the women are included in all the operational processes. The power of the husband should not be replaced by the power of the institution. The staff are called upon to handle power carefully and to enforce the regulations in the house in such a way that they provide orientation without putting too many limits on the individual freedom of the women.

### **3.2.6 Right to self-determination**

It is important to respect women's right to decide about their lives (see Section 3.1.2. "Empowerment"). Very often relatives, friends and professionals in caring organisations try to tell the woman what to do. Some think she should separate from the perpetrator, others tell her to give him another chance. Unfortunately, it happens quite often that these people are disappointed or even annoyed if she does not follow their advice. Such advice can create even more pressure for the woman and is experienced as not helpful at all. It is important to convey to the woman that only she is in a position to decide and that her decision will be respected. The aim of an intervention is to end the violence, not to end the relationship. The right to self-determination is an important principle. How long a woman wants to stay in the refuge and if she wants to separate or not is solely up to the woman.

### **3.2.7 Confidentiality / Anonymity**

To protect a woman's rights and her integrity, it is necessary that she is able to decide which information is passed on. Therefore no information should be passed on by the refuge or by the counselling centre without the woman's consent. Exceptions should and have to be made if the life and health of women or children are at stake (i.e. suicide attempts, acute danger through the violent partner, or women abusing their children).

Women should also have the right to receive counselling and support without having to reveal their identity.

### **3.2.8 24 hour service and no time limit for stay**

A woman who has to flee from her husband needs immediate support and protection. She should be able to reach a women's refuge 24 hours a day every day. In women's refuges at least one staff member should be on call so that she can admit the woman. If there is more than one refuge in a town, at least one should be able to take a woman and her children in at any time. In principle, women and their children should be able to stay until they feel safe and empowered to lead a life without violence.

### **3.2.9 Diversity**

The diversity of women should not only be respected but be seen as something valuable that is encouraged. An asset of many women's refuges is refuge workers who reflect the diversity of society. They can offer additional language skills and a better understanding of the specific background of migrant women.

### **3.2.10 Accountability**

A refuge has a responsibility and is answerable to the women and children, to the organisation and its members and to society in general. The activities and the conduct of the refuge have to be transparent and comprehensible.

### **3.2.11 Principles regarding the quality of service**

Professionalism is a prerequisite for the full implementation of principles. The staff have to be adequately trained and paid. Provisions must be made for further training and supervision. The number of staff must be gauged to the number of women and children in order to provide all the necessary support and services and meet the requirements. Some refuges are dependent on support by volunteers. Volunteers have to be well trained. Resources should be managed economically and efficiently. Quality standards should be checked through regular quality control.

### **3.2.12 Principles regarding structure and funding**

Refuges should be run by non-governmental, non-profit and non-party women's associations (see chapter 2 and International Documents). Women's refuges need adequate funding by the state, as they fulfil necessary functions for society; they give shelter and support to battered and abused women and their children.

### **3.2.13 Services free of charge**

Support services for women and children victims of violence should be free of charge, certainly for women with little or no income. This is to ensure that women and their children in need can find shelter independently of their financial status.

## **4. FOUNDING AND FUNDING A WOMEN'S REFUGE**

A women's refuge is more than safe accommodation, a place where women and their children who have suffered from violence committed by the husband, boyfriend or father can become acquainted with solidarity amongst women and a non-violent environment, where they are protected and safe. Not only are operational principles necessary to fulfil the goals as presented in the previous chapter; the infrastructure also has to meet certain requirements in order to open new doors for these women and their children.

The first section of this chapter deals with setting up a refuge. It is designed to serve as a guideline on how to get started. It covers the main steps to be taken, from elaborating the original idea to opening the doors for the first time. The second section, on funding, contains recommendations and support with regard to state funding and private sponsoring.

### **4.1 FOUNDING A WOMEN'S REFUGE**

Founding a refuge involves thorough planning and the work of a group of totally committed people. This chapter details standards and recommendations relating to the original initiative, the legal basis, the identification of needs and outline planning, the drawing up of detailed plans, the need for lobbying and fund-raising, the location, and the infrastructure.

#### **4.1.1 Initiative**

The core of an initiative to set up a women's refuge should be made up of people with a basic knowledge of the forms, patterns and impact of violence against women.

A large number of women's refuges were founded by feminist women's initiatives. The refuge movement, at least as far as its early development in Western, Northern and Central (non-communist) Europe is concerned, is directly related to the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. The ideas and goals are based on the principles of equality and gender-democracy. The results achieved within a relatively short period of time led international bodies to recognise and acknowledge the important role of women's NGOs in the prevention of violence against women and children and in protecting them from male violence (see chapter 2).

#### **4.1.2 Legal basis**

The initial group has to make a decision on a legal form which the refuge will assume. Legal stipulations may vary from country to country. However, a non-profit, non-governmental organisational form is desirable.

Some kind of established legal status is necessary to be able to apply for any funding. Basic responsibilities and duties must be defined; this is usually mandatory when registering an

association / organisation. However, legal status does not automatically secure financial support by either public or private sponsors. It is advisable to make careful inquiries, if necessary to seek legal advice, and to look at the legal basis of other NGOs. It is also important to consider who is able and willing to assume responsibility (governing board) and what eligibility criteria will be applied to board members (someone who identifies with the goals and principles, has expert knowledge of the field or is a public figure and/or politician). Board members should be able to devote time to the work of the association, be aware of the responsibilities involved and be willing to participate in the process of conflict resolution.

### **4.1.3 Identifying needs**

It is necessary to establish the specific needs before taking further steps.

The basis for any calculation of the refuge's capacity should be two recommendations by international bodies. As early as 1986 the EU Parliament recommended "one family place per 10,000 of the population". In 1998 the Council of Europe Group of Specialists reduced this figure to 7,500. It thus has to be established how large the area is for which the refuge is designed. The further away the next refuge is, the less chance there is that an abused woman will consider seeking protection there. The mobility of women in the area, the quality of public transport, the employment rate of women, and the publicity attracted by the setting up of a refuge all have to be taken into consideration; so no more than approximate guidelines can be offered here.

**Further data – if available – should also be taken into consideration:**

- The incidence rate of domestic violence
- police and court statistics if they provide relevant data (gender-sensitive, relationship between victim and perpetrator / plaintiff and accused)
- studies on the prevalence of violence in your area / country
- service provision system in your area that is relevant for abused women
- experience gained hitherto at the national and international level

### **4.1.4 Outline planning**

It is essential to draw up detailed outline planning before any practical steps are taken. This plan should consist of:

- substantive planning in terms of capacity, services to be provided, and duty rosters
- a management plan for the refuge
- a building plan that includes security precautions
- a staff plan
- two budget plans (one for the start-up phase, a second for the annual running costs of the refuge)
- a plan for co-operation
- a fundraising plan.

### **4.1.5 Lobbying and fundraising**

Since a whole chapter is devoted to awareness raising and fundraising, this section is confined to key elements of both which must especially be born in mind in the early stages of setting up a refuge.

- Once a clear outline plan has been drawn up (including staff, capacity and budget – as explained above) – or even beforehand – it is important to find "allies".

- Not only financially well-off people can become supporters!
- Finding partners and supporters means creating a network of people who support the idea of setting up a refuge.
- Create awareness of the problem of violence against women and the benefits of women's refuges. Prepare concise information material. Don't forget to quote recommendations, resolutions etc. by international bodies of which your country is a member (see chapter 2)! Quote research results!
- But: Create a positive image of a refuge! Avoid using negative images. For public purposes, concentrate on the benefits!
- Different target groups need different kinds of information (media, politicians, social institutions, other NGOs, etc.).
- Try to establish personal contacts. Arrange meetings with local politicians, local media, local social services, influential personalities in the community / target area.
- When negotiating with politicians and sponsors, make it clear that setting up a refuge is just the beginning. A refuge has certain running costs per year. Try to get a commitment for further funding. Again quote international documents and research.
- Consider launching an awareness raising campaign.

#### **4.1.6 Location**

An appropriate building not only has to meet the capacity requirements as defined above; it must also be designed and located in such a way as to ensure maximum protection for women and children.

Ideally it should be feasible to keep the refuge address secret. If the building is located in a small town and/or in a rural area and/or in a very open society, keeping the address secret might turn out to be very difficult. However, this doesn't have to mean that it is impossible to set up a refuge, only that even greater care has to be devoted to security measures. It is important to have sophisticated technical security equipment and good co-operation with law enforcement and administrative personnel and the neighbourhood (see "Safety"). It can also be advantageous if a woman can choose between a close and a distant refuge location. If the perpetrator has been assessed as very dangerous, it is preferable to accommodate the woman (and her children) as far away as possible.

Depending on the size needed, various options are open. A refuge can be a single house or an apartment in a larger apartment building. If it is an existing building, it has to be checked to see if the requirements as laid out under the headings "Infrastructure and Room plan" can be met. If sufficient financial means are available, it can be advantageous to have a house newly built for the purpose.

It is also advisable at the planning stage to find out about the technical and legal requirements relating to the building and to meet these where necessary. Problems may arise from the fact that a refuge has special safety needs but is at the same time a public building. Emergency exits pose a special problem, because they are required to be kept open in the event of a fire. We suggest consulting the architect or building company and the public works authority to find a creative solution to such problems.

#### **4.1.7 Infrastructure**

Life in a refuge is of course different from living at home. Usually, there is less space, and some rooms have to be shared. This puts a lot of strain on women and children. It is therefore important to make life as comfortable as possible.

**The following considerations should be kept in mind:**

- Women and children need an appropriate environment to be able to recover from their traumatic experiences.
- Individual needs must be respected. The right to privacy and the scope for individuality should be guiding principles throughout the planning. These considerations presuppose the chance to be on one's own, not only when tending to one's personal hygiene.
- The refuge should be accessible for women with disabilities.
- A women's refuge is also a house for children and young people (see 5.2).
- Recent experience in some countries shows that refuges which are quite large tend to create a feeling of living in a hotel in the negative sense; they tend to be "anonymous" because it is difficult to get to know each other and to share. It becomes very difficult to create a "community" feeling in large refuges.

Example: A helpful approach might be to imagine that you yourself have to spend some time in a refuge. Shouldn't it offer attractive, spacious rooms with cooking facilities and a separate bathroom? The services provided include free meals, room cleaning, child care, therapy, medical care, and health facilities – just like in a four-star hotel. Although this may initially sound unrealistic, it is important not to think in too narrow terms. Women and children who have undergone violence have a right to the best possible support.

#### **4.1.8 Room plan**

##### **Rooms for women**

There should be a room for each woman and her children. There should be no more than two women sharing one bathroom.

Women (and their children) who seek shelter in a refuge are in a crisis situation. This cannot be compared with going on holidays and sharing a dormitory in a hostel or a mountain hut. To enable them to recover from their traumatic experiences, it is essential to create an environment which offers opportunities for solitude and rest. Financial resources are hardly ever so plentiful that a refuge can really offer four-star hotel service.

##### **Shared rooms**

A women's refuge is also a place in which women with similar experiences behind them come together. This gives them the chance to become acquainted with solidarity among women and to understand that partner violence is not a personal but a social problem, that the violence can be halted, and that living together can take many different forms.

There should be at least two larger rooms, a spacious kitchen and a laundry room. One large room should serve as a living room. The other should also be usable for group activities and should be large enough for celebrations (for all the residents plus staff).

Some refuges offer training courses for women. This also has to be considered when planning a refuge.

Example: Equal Project FEMQUA  
see [www.aeof.at](http://www.aeof.at)

Women should have the chance to cook and take their meals together.

Since women very often come with just a few clothes, it is necessary to have good laundry facilities (washing machines and dryers).

## **Rooms for staff**

Separate rooms for counselling and administration are necessary.

There should be a central office room with all the main safety features. If staff stay in the house at night, they need a bedroom with tea-making facilities and a bathroom. At least one room for individual counselling is necessary (more in larger refuges). All office and counselling rooms have to be equipped with telephones and computers with Internet access.

### **4.1.9 Staffing plan**

For details see chapter 6.2 (Staff).

### **4.1.10 Safety measures**

For details see chapter 7 (Safety).

## EXAMPLE:

When planning the number of rooms, the kind and size of rooms etc., the maximum number of women and the number of staff has to be already known. It is possible, however, to make a distinction between what are basic requirements (○) and what are valuable extras (☼).

### Rooms for women and their children:

- living units for women and their children (1 room per woman and her child/children):
- ☼ one extra room for large families
- ☼ one bathroom per family, otherwise
- one bathroom shared by 2 units
- large kitchen (if the living units are not equipped with cooking facilities)
- assembly room (for daily and weekly house meetings) = dining room
- ☼ living room(s) for women (library, TV, stereo, tea/coffee-making facilities, etc.)
- ☼ study/seminar room equipped with computers
- play rooms for children (depending on the size of the refuge) – see 5.2 “Services for children”
- ☼ separate rooms for various age groups (0-5 years, 6-12 years, 12+), equipped with toys and facilities appropriate to age:
- ☼ activities room
- ☼ a multi-function room
- ☼ room for reading, doing homework/study (quiet)

### Staff and counselling facilities:

- room(s) for crisis intervention and counselling (depending on the number of staff)
- rooms for child care workers
- administrative and office room(s), equipped with telephones, PCs, photocopier, fax
- room for night shift (incl. bed, washing and tea-making facilities)

### Rooms for household purposes:

- large store room for household goods, especially with a communal household structure (food and drinks, office supplies, clothes, toilet articles, etc.)
- ☼ extra storage space (outside the refuge) should be available for storing private furniture, donations, etc.
- laundry room
- room for heating and hot water system
- store room for bikes, prams, etc.
- ☼ additional store room for garden furniture, gardening tools etc.

## 4.2 FUNDING A WOMEN'S REFUGE

Financial considerations are crucial in all aspects of setting up and running a refuge. The extent of financial resources has an immediate and significant impact on the quality of staff and services offered and on the living conditions in a refuge. They can be seen as a clear indicator of the value society attaches to combating violence against women.

Raising sufficient financial support is usually one of the most difficult tasks when trying to set up and run a refuge. In most countries raising funds is difficult in both the public and the private sectors.

### 4.2.1 State Funding

Women's refuges are victim service institutions performing an important social function. As such they should rank on a par with the other social services which the state provides. The state is obliged to afford protection from all forms of violence in private and public contexts. By extension, governments and state bodies are called upon to provide adequate funding for women's refuges and other women's support organisations (see chapter 2).

In recent decades modern democratic states which regard the provision of basic health and social care as one of their most important functions have tended to entrust more and more of the state's responsibilities to non-governmental organisations. These NGOs are independent, non-profit associations receiving public funds in order to perform social or socio-political functions and to provide specific services.

Most women's refuges in Europe are run by women's NGOs, which have in the past decades acquired a great deal of expertise and practical experience in supporting female victims of partner violence. This form of service provision for women has proved effective and should be adopted when new refuges are established, because women's NGOs are more flexible than public bodies in organising support systems on the ground. Moreover, victims tend to be less reluctant to seek help from non-governmental organisations than from state bodies.

Example: In the Austrian federal province of Upper Austria all the women's refuges are run by NGOs, and their existence is enshrined in law. All four women's refuges in Vienna have signed a contract with the municipal authorities covering their financing for an unlimited period. The Spanish province of Andalusia has approved an action plan to run for several years which includes the financing of the province's refuges.

Understandably, state bodies that finance women's refuges require compliance with quality standards and the provision of professional services (see the chapter on Standards). At the same time it is important that the state bodies recognise the refuges' professional independence. The quality of the work done in the refuges needs to be subject to internal and external evaluation (see the chapter on Evaluation). It should be remembered, though, that the quality of support services depends on the availability of adequate funding and other resources. Violence against women and children also incurs "costs". As the studies quoted in chapter 2 show, violence against women and children – apart from having a social impact – is a major drain on the financial resources of the state and the public authorities. Investment in preventive action, by bringing about a "less violent" future, thus also reduces public expenditure on the costs incurred by (domestic) violence. This is particularly true of the funding of women's support services.

#### **Here is a summary of recommendations for the financing of women's refuges:**

- Women's refuges should be run by professional women's NGOs.
- The financing of refuges should be enshrined in legislation.

- If women's refuges, helplines and other support organisations are to operate properly, they need long-term or unlimited contracts with the public authorities guaranteeing payment of the envisaged funding. Constant battling for money uses up a great deal of time and energy which is taken from the actual work with women and children. Financial insecurity and the dependence of the refuge have a contra-productive impact on the goal of providing women with security and independence.
- The funding contract should cover all of the services provided and not be split up into individual contracts.
- The funding must be adequate and comprehensive: it should also include public relations and awareness raising work.
- The contract should include recognition of the services' professional independence and the formulation of the professional standards to be met.
- The funding should be sufficient to guarantee the maintenance of professional standards.
- Staying in a refuge should be free of charge for abused women and their children.
- Each woman must be able to go to a refuge of her choice independent of funding regulations. Only the woman concerned is able to judge if she is safe in the nearest refuge or in a refuge that is further away. The level of funding must not place constraints on this freedom of choice.
- Refuges should not be forced to finance the services they provide themselves; they should be expected to contribute only a small percentage of their overall budget through their own fund-raising activities.
- Private sponsoring should be used only for specific and supplementary acquisitions like children's playground equipment, a TV set or PCs for training purposes, not to cover the regular running costs of the refuge.
- The funding contracts should also state that any funds raised through private sponsorship should not have an impact of the level of state funding, which would mean that the state withdrew from its responsibilities.

The experts from refuges should generally be involved in the formulation of criteria for the public funding of services for women victims of violence. Women's experts in the field can contribute their expertise to a realistic detailing of the tasks involved and to establishing standards for refuge work. Their expertise should be taken into account in drawing up funding guidelines, so that these guidelines promote rather than obstruct the work of the refuge. If procedures become too bureaucratic, they divert valuable resources which are needed for essential tasks.

#### **4.2.2 Obstacles to basic funding**

It is still the case that a large number of women's refuges have to rely on grants from private foundations or on sponsoring for their funding. In the new EU member states many women's support services owe their existence to financial support from abroad or from international organisations. The goal must be for women's refuges to be funded by the state in every country. This will require the EU to issue binding directives to that effect.

Women's refuges everywhere must realise that they will have to continue fighting for these basic demands in the foreseeable future. When negotiating with public authorities, it is vital to point to the interdependence between structural and individual violence, between adequate financial resources and the required support for women. Founders and workers in each refuge have to decide for themselves if they want to set up and run their refuge "at all costs" or if there is a cut-off point below which the services cannot be provided. High-quality work for abused women can only be done with adequate financial means. However, this implies

constant information activities and awareness raising, especially among politicians, to ensure that they support or continue to support women's refuges.

In many refuges women have to pay rent, out of their own pockets or from their social welfare allowances. It is important at least to guarantee that only rental costs are charged. In line with society's responsibility for combating violence, women victims of violence and their children should never be asked to cover the costs for counselling and other support services. Care for the children must also be free of charge. These services represent an obligation which the state is required to meet and not something that women have to be able to afford.

### **4.2.3 Private Sponsoring**

As argued above, private sponsoring should be used only to finance special acquisitions, while the regular running costs of a refuge should come from state funding.

However, many refuges still have to rely primarily on private sponsoring. We therefore include some advice on raising sponsoring:

As far as private sponsoring is concerned, it must be clear that violence against women in the family / in intimate relationships is a difficult subject to address and to communicate. To some extent it is shrouded by taboos which make many people feel uncomfortable. Every campaign or activity has to take this into consideration. However, it is necessary to go to the people, to tell them about the work done in refuges and in women's support services, and to find the points which could induce people to become interested in supporting this work.

Fundraising and sponsoring for non-profit organisations and projects can mean a variety of support (cash, equipment, services, personal help ...).

#### **Financial support can be generated through:**

- Donations
- Gifts
- Private support
- Organising events (fundraising parties)
- Charity bazaars (toys, second-hand-clothes, handmade articles)
- Co-operation with companies

### **What to do to raise support and donations**

#### **Presentation of your group's efforts to found or run a refuge**

- Create awareness of the problem of violence against women and the benefits of women's refuges. Prepare concise information material. Don't forget to quote recommendations, resolutions etc. by international bodies of which your country is a member (see chapter 2). Quote research results.
- But: Create a positive image of a refuge. Avoid using negative images. For public purposes concentrate on the benefits.
- Describe the impact and effectiveness of the work in a refuge / crisis centre. Sponsors like to work with strong partners.

#### **Contacting sponsors and supporters**

- Finding partners and supporters means creating a network of people who support the idea of setting up and running a refuge.

- Try to establish personal contact: arrange meetings with local politicians, local media, local social services, church groups, influential personalities in the community / target area.
- Make a list of your contact persons and keep it updated.
- Motivate different people to do something for the refuge.

### **Target group**

Different target groups need different kinds of information:

- Sponsors are interested in their economic success. They expect professional and efficient work. They will support you if your work matches the image of their company.
- Supporters are interested in social problems. They want to be inspired by our aims. Show them that their donation is necessary and useful. Give them the feeling that their support is valued.
- Politicians (and journalists) need facts and figures.
- Journalists need people-based stories.
- Local social services need a comprehensive description of the services and support provided.
- You should look after each target group in terms of their needs, e.g. detailed information, personal thank-you letters or regular circulars/newsletters describing your activities.

### **Looking for sponsors**

- Check your network! Which person could know something about a particular company or might introduce you to someone in a management position?
- Ask for information about companies by calling their public relations or marketing departments.
- Ask for their aims: maybe they want to improve their image, to demonstrate a sense of social responsibility, to gain wider publicity, to support an NGO in order to improve communication with their business partners, customers or the public authorities, to increase the identification of their employees with the company (CI), etc.
- Make sure that you know the correct names of your partners, titles, telephone numbers and addresses. Your partners must know the same of your organisation, as well as who is responsible for the next steps.
- Ascertain what they can offer you (cash, equipment, services).
- Ascertain what you can offer the company. Apart from the refuge meeting an urgent social need and enhancing the company's image (through their support for your organisation), you can point out the company's publicity in the media, in your information material, at fundraising parties etc.
- At your first meeting explain your work and give a written summary of your plans. Keep it short and simple (1-2 pages). You can provide more detailed information later if asked. Explain your financial planning for the refuge. Ask for a specific amount of money for a special project such as furniture, children's toys, a van for the refuge, special events etc. Let them choose between at least two sponsorship options.
- It might be useful after the meeting to send a memo on the arrangements made, to ensure that both sides are working on the same understanding.

### **Looking for supporters**

Everybody can be asked to support your work (by donations or by doing something):

- Write a list of what you need (brain-storming).
- Distribute this wish list in meetings, in a newsletter, on the website, in church groups, etc.
- The wish list must be regularly updated.
- The wish list can include current, specific needs, e.g. for the office or for the activities for children.

- The wish list should include the need for donations in cash (“if you want to leave the shopping to us”).
- A staff member should hand out a receipt / acknowledgment to the donor.
- By making the most of your contacts, you might find other supporters. Church groups or charity organisations might well want to support your work. Musicians, bands might want to give a concert; artists could make a public sale of their art for the benefit of a refuge. A neighbour might like to repair the bicycles of the children in the refuge.
- Supporters need personal contact. Remember that they like to choose how much time and effort they invest.

## **5. SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

Women's refuges offer a variety of support services, carry out a wide range of activities and fulfil a vital function in society. As far as the services are concerned, refuges provide shelter, crisis support and counselling for battered women and their children – also for non-residents or former residents. Moreover, women's refuges seek to prevent male violence against women: they set out to raise public awareness of the issue of violence, its causes and consequences and the necessity for specialised support services for victims. A network of supportive individuals and organisations and close co-operation with other professionals help to achieve this goal. To ensure the quality of services it is necessary to maintain documentation and to carry out evaluation (see chapter 11).

### **5.1 SERVICES FOR WOMEN**

The services described below are those which refuges commonly provide for abused women and their children. There are different organisational models for implementing the services. What is of overall importance is that these services are provided in accordance with the goals and principles outlined in chapter 3.

#### **24 hour services**

It is essential that women receive crisis support and that they can come to the refuge at any time, even during the night.

Resources of accommodation may unfortunately be limited. There should be a policy on how to handle capacity constraints. However, it should be a matter of principle that no woman in acute danger is turned away and forced to stay with or return to the violent partner.

When there is only one women's refuge in a given region, then this refuge must be open round the clock to admit women and their children. If a region or city has more than one refuge, at least one must be open on a 24-hour basis. Transport should be available at the lowest possible cost (preferably free of charge) to enable women and their children to get to the refuge without having to worry about the costs.

Example: The refuges in Vienna pay the taxi fare, drawing on a special budget created for this purpose.

Going into a refuge is usually not the first step a woman who is abused by her partner will take. The first personal contact is usually established by phone. Many refuges also operate a 24-hour helpline and counselling on the phone. Again, at least one 24-hour helpline should be available in the region/city to provide crisis support on the phone and assist in referral to the nearest refuge. It is important to ensure the widest possible publicity for the emergency phone numbers of refuges and helplines, so that women are aware of the existence of this support and actually turn to refuges for help (see chapter 9). A refuge worker should always speak to a woman before she comes to the refuge (see the section on "Admission procedures" below).

## **Counselling**

Counselling is one of the key services provided by women's refuges. Some refuges also offer counselling for non-resident women. Other refuges run separate counselling centres. Sometimes these centres also work as contact points for women who need a place in a refuge.

However the counselling service is organised, the most important consideration is that a woman subjected to violence is offered professional counselling and that she is informed about all the services available to her and her children.

Examples: AMCV in Portugal; Casa delle Donne in Bologna, Italy; Women's Aid in the UK

The first meeting serves to establish a relationship of trust. The refuge worker should listen carefully and identify the needs of the woman seeking help. Women have the right to receive professional and non-judgemental support, no matter what decision they take. The counsellor must always guarantee to the woman that all information is treated confidentially and that she can remain anonymous.

It is important to assess the dangerousness of the violent man and to elaborate safety planning (see the section on "Safety" below). The woman seeking help should also be given information about her rights and opportunities. Some of the information can be in written form. For her own safety it may be necessary to advise her not to disclose the information to the perpetrator.

It is also important to identify the resources and social network (family, friends, community services and so on) to which the woman can turn for support.

An individual plan should be drawn up for each woman detailing the support available.

## **Admission procedures**

How can women and children find the refuge? There are different models. In one the refuge is linked to a counselling centre whose address is publicly known, while the refuge address is kept secret. The woman will come to the admission/counselling centre first. In the second model the refuge – with a secret address – is contacted by phone and the woman seeking help is given the address of the refuge. There are also refuges which pick up the woman at a pre-arranged meeting place.

The woman (and her children) should be admitted by a professional refuge worker. Since many refuges do not have enough personnel to be staffed on a 24-hour basis, this might be difficult. At all events the woman should have the right to receive professional crisis counselling within the first few hours of her stay in the refuge.

Coming to a refuge may at first be a very bewildering experience. It is important to provide intensive help and assistance at the beginning of a woman's stay, and she should have a contact person from the start, ideally the refuge worker who admitted her or who carried out the first counselling. This is an important factor in establishing a relationship of trust and helping the woman to get her bearings. One should not underestimate the stress caused by the crisis situation the women and children are contending with, compounded by the stress of a completely new environment and dozens of unfamiliar faces.

Example: Many refuges have a notice board with pictures of all the women working in the refuge, together with their names and functions, to help the women and children get to know the staff.

After the orientation phase the woman should in principle have the right to choose a counsellor who should then be her contact person throughout her stay in the refuge. Often this will be the same person who was there for her at the beginning and with whom she has developed a close relationship. If this is not possible (for instance because the chosen

counsellor is booked out at the time), a viable alternative should be found in consultation with the woman.

When a woman comes to the reception centre or to the refuge, an evaluation of the needs of the woman and children and the degree of risk they are at should be carried out (danger assessment, safety planning, see Handout). The woman and children should be given the most important information about the refuge, and should be made familiar with the guidelines for life in the refuge (see chapter 8).

## **First phase of stay – Reflection period**

The first phase, the reflection period, is the period in which the woman becomes familiar with the refuge and the staff, in which she recovers from her traumatic situation, gets used to living in the refuge, reflects on her needs and concerns, and starts making decisions on the next steps she will take. This phase can last from some hours to several days or even weeks.

In this phase the woman has to decide if she wants to stay in the refuge or go somewhere else and if she wants to separate from her partner temporarily or permanently. It is important that the counsellor conveys to her clearly and repeatedly that it is up to her to make the decision, that she has the right to stay with her partner as well as the right to leave him. It is also very important that the woman knows that she can always come back to the refuge, even if she went home in-between. If the woman decides to go back to her partner, it is necessary to discuss the issue of safety and to develop strategies together with her on how to protect herself and the children, and how and where she can get support.

Some women ask whether violent men can change, if their partner can change. The available possibilities need to be looked at. In some countries programmes for violent men do exist. In this case a woman might make it a condition for her partner to attend such a programme if he wants her to return. However, it is advisable to refer violent men to perpetrator programmes only if these attach the utmost priority to the safety of the victims and work together closely with the women's services. Perpetrator programmes have to be victim-oriented and very concerned about the safety of the victims (see chapter 12).

It is especially important at this stage to ensure that the woman receives intensive and carefully thought-out counselling, because it is at this stage that most women decide whether or not to return to their partners.

## **Individual counselling and empowerment**

During the individual counselling sessions all the woman's needs and concerns are evaluated and priorities are established. An individual schedule for counselling and supporting the woman is drawn up. The professional's job is to discuss with her the full range of available options and to support her in achieving her goals.

Women need support in making their own choices. They must receive support in the process of empowerment and in the strengthening of their self-esteem and self-determination. It is important to make a woman feel that she has the power and the right to choose and can determine what she is going to do with her own life. She should also have the opportunity to talk frequently about her experiences of violence and to reflect on them (if and whenever she wants). We should bear in mind that women victims of violence sometimes need a long time before they develop enough trust and courage to talk about their experiences of abuse, especially about sexual abuse.

With the support of the counsellor, the woman comes to understand what strategies her partner used to gain power and control over her, and this enables her to develop strategies to resist and protect herself.

Refuge workers should also give women practical assistance in dealing with various administrative bodies and accompany her to the police, to court hearings etc.

It might also be beneficial to talk about women's role in society, about gender stereotypes and gender (in)equality and similar topics and to enhance her awareness of her own role as a woman.

Even bearing in mind that our goal is to empower women and children, there is the danger that we might act for her instead of with her. This comes from the power imbalance that is inevitable between the woman seeking help and the counsellor. It is therefore important for the counsellor always to reflect on the relationship and to ensure that the woman feels supported, not disempowered.

## **Group work**

Women's refuges offer various forms of group work. Group work is a valuable supplement to individual counselling in that it enables women to realise that they are not the only ones undergoing abuse by their partners.

Reflection groups or theme-specific groups are a space for women to discuss various topics: violence but also any issue they feel to be relevant to them. In addition to individual counselling, groups are a tool for helping women in the refuge to become aware of themselves as well as the social environment. The aim is for them to regain their self-confidence and promote interaction with other women. It is therefore important that the group participants feel responsible for the group process. Another specific form of group work is groups in which women discuss their roles as mothers, their problems in bringing up their children etc.

Another form of group work is the creativity group, in which women have the opportunity to express themselves by means of painting, singing, acting, etc.

The groups should be facilitated by a refuge worker. A good model could also be to run the group jointly with a woman living in the refuge.

Women's (individual) voices/opinions must be respected in these groups.

## **Safety/Safety planning**

The top priority of all counselling and refuge work is to ensure the safety of women and their children. As Appendix "Safety Planning" explains, the appropriate safety measures have to be planned and implemented independently of the woman's decision whether or not to stay in the refuge. On safety in the refuge, see chapter 7.

## **Self-defence**

Refuges should provide self-defence courses so that women can learn strategies to defend and protect themselves and their children when they are facing a violent situation (see also Seith / Kelly, 2003).

Example: Women experts have developed a special form of self-defence for women – WenDo.

## **Legal aid**

Women victims should be informed of their legal rights and opportunities. Every refuge should provide legal information and support in legal proceedings and procedures.

Legal information should cover:

- Specific laws concerning immediate and/or long-term protection from violence
- Police procedures
- Restraining orders
- Matrimonial and divorce laws
- Parental rights
- Migration laws
- Criminal law
- Victims' rights and compensation under criminal and civil law
- Social insurance regulations
- Social welfare regulations
- Housing laws etc.

Refuge workers should also accompany women to the police, to court, and to other legal institutions and should help them to prepare for legal procedures and court proceedings – for instance, by providing information about the sequence of events or by organising role games in which the woman can practise giving testimony. It is also important for the woman to be accompanied to criminal court proceedings, to prevent secondary traumatisation. According to an EU outline directive, every victim has the right to information and support at criminal court proceedings (see Appendix 1 “International Documents”).

In complex legal proceedings it is necessary for women to be represented by a lawyer. It is advisable to select women lawyers who identify with the cause of the victims, who adopt a sensitive approach to representing their clients, and who are willing to take on the case for little or no fee.

Example: In Vienna women have set up a Women's Legal Fund whose money is used to pay for legal representation for women in court cases. The Fund also sets out to contest test cases as a means of facilitating the enforcement of women's rights.

Example: Engaged feminist women lawyers have established a European network, the European Women's Lawyers' Association, within which they collaborate in “enhancing women's equality by means of law” in Europe (<http://www.ewla.org>).

## **Support in financial matters**

When a woman arrives at the refuge, it is important to support her in financial matters. If a woman does not have an income of her own, the first step is to help in finding resources. In many countries women who cannot support themselves financially are entitled to social welfare. It is an important function of the refuge to assist women to obtain social welfare without time-consuming administrative delays. To do this it is essential that the refuge establishes good contact with the social welfare authorities.

A refuge also serves the purpose of helping women to secure their rights and enforce their financial claims (e.g. alimony payments for herself and the children, unemployment benefits, children's allowances etc.).

The refuge must see to it that the woman's partner does not have access to her money. If children's allowances or other forms of financial benefits for the family are transferred in the perpetrator's name, this must be changed so that the benefits are paid to her.

Migrant women often have to face discrimination over their entitlement to social welfare benefits. In this case the refuge should assist the women to obtain money from private donations and sponsors.

Example: The Viennese refuges have established the Monika Burdak Fund, named after a refuge worker who was strongly committed to the rights of migrant women and sadly

died at a young age. For this fund the refuge association is raising money through private sponsoring. This money provides financial assistance to migrant women and their children.

## **Support in housing matters**

Women who are subjected to domestic violence, and especially women with small children, are often faced with the prospect of destitution, if the perpetrators refuse them access to money or an independent income as part of their control strategy.

This means they have difficulties finding affordable accommodation. It is very important that the applicable laws guarantee women victims of violence and their children the right to return to the family home as soon as possible after their stay in the refuge, or the right to stay in the home rather than having to go to a refuge all together (see also chapter 12).

If for any reason women cannot stay in or return to the family home, it is necessary to assist them in housing matters. It is advisable to co-operate closely with the local authorities and housing offices to raise awareness of the plight of abused women. These public bodies should feel responsible for giving such women immediate access to temporary accommodation at low rent (see also chapter 10).

Example: Vienna has a very efficient housing programme which enables women (also migrant women) to be given affordable accommodation within a matter of weeks.

## **Support in health-related matters**

When a woman is admitted to a refuge, she may need medical assistance right away. Refuge workers should accompany her to the medical services and ask for comprehensive documentation of all her injuries. The documentation could serve as evidence in court (more about methods of documentation and sensitisation of health professionals in the WAVE Manual on Training and Sensitising Professionals, Vienna 2000). Women should have access to medical services free of charge, provided by the State or in medical centres that collaborate with the refuge.

## **Support in job-related matters and training**

It is an important function of the refuge to support women in job-related matters, to assist them to keep their job or to get a job or enrol in a training programme.

Violence is an obstacle to the employment and equality of women. A woman may, for instance, lose her job because her violent partner harasses her at her place of work or prevents her from going to work. It also often happens that women quit their job or are dismissed because they cannot go to work after being beaten. The support of the refuge or the counselling centre in job matters is therefore very important. One further function is to encourage and assist women who are unemployed to find a job or to improve their qualifications.

Women can be supported when they apply for a job or are preparing for the job interview, by doing role-games with them, for example. Refuges also work closely with employment programmes. In some countries there are specific services or programmes for women.

For migrant women the first step might be to arrange for a course in the local language. Some refuges also provide training and qualification themselves.

Example: AÖF, EU Equal Programme Project "femqua", <http://www.a oef.at>

## **Migrant and minority women**

Women's services should have staff from all the relevant ethnic minority groups and provide counselling in various languages. Information material should also be available in different languages.

When working with migrant women or women from ethnic minorities, it is important to be aware of socio-cultural diversity and to respect it. Refugee workers should be aware of their own stereotypes or prejudices that can obstruct the provision of adequate support.

In many countries migrant women and asylum seekers depend for their legal status on their husband's residence permit. It is therefore necessary to advocate for a separate, independent right to stay and work in a country.

Some countries have developed special services for migrant women:

Example: Southall Black Sisters is an advice, campaigning and resource centre assisting Asian and African-Caribbean women experiencing domestic violence. Services provided range from practical support to counselling and support group work. SBS has also undertaken much policy work, notably around immigration, forced marriage and criminal justice

Phone: ++44- (0)20-8571 9595

Example: Interkulturelles Frauenhaus / Beratungsstelle in Berlin

Postfach 370542, 14135 Berlin

e-mail: [Interkulturelleinitiative@t-online.de](mailto:Interkulturelleinitiative@t-online.de): <http://www.interkulturellesfrauenhaus.de>

## **Adequate services for women with special needs**

Refuges should be prepared to accommodate women with disabilities, not excluding them from the general routine of the house but providing special care and structures. Rooms, for example, should have furniture that can be lowered to facilitate these women's movements.

Elderly women might need special medical care and assistance as well as a peaceful and quiet room in the women's refuge. Elderly women often depend financially on their husband's pension. It is therefore important to co-operate closely with social welfare institutions. Counsellors have to try to break the isolation of these women, support them in learning new survival strategies, and strengthen their self-esteem.

Pregnant women or mothers of new born babies may need an especially silent room. A midwife who comes to the refuge when necessary may be registered as a contact person.

Until recently domestic violence in relationships between lesbian women was a not a topic at all.

It was therefore especially difficult for a lesbian woman who suffered from violence at the hands of her female partner to ask for help. Services for women should also address the specific aspects of violence in lesbian relationships.

Example: good practice work has been done by a German Daphne project:

<http://www.broken-rainbow.de>

## **Leaving the refuge**

Leaving the refuge is a major step for every woman. It is the start of a new life and has to be well planned. The refuge workers should assist a woman so that, when she leaves the refuge, she and her children (ideally) have:

- a steady income: salary and/or social benefits;

- safe housing (temporary accommodation or a house/apartment of her own);
- arrangements for the children: kindergarten, school, medical assistance and other necessary services;
- safety plan: elaboration of a safety plan taking into account the new living situation of the woman and children (see Handout and chapter 7);
- arrangements for further support and counselling (for the woman and her children) by the refuge or other services.

When she leaves the refuge, the woman should be reminded not to pass on information about other women, children and staff at the refuge and to keep the address of the refuge secret.

## **Support after the stay in the refuge**

After leaving the refuge the woman and her children should have continuing access to all the services they need. There are again different models on how to organise support. In countries where counselling centres for victims of domestic violence exist in addition to women's refuges, women can receive support from these counselling centres with regard to legal issues or other specific issues.

When a woman does not have the chance to make use of these services, it is important to inform her about the local services and to collaborate with them.

## **5.2 SERVICES FOR CHILDREN**

Children of abused women need special attention while living in the refuge. Qualified staff and special rooms for children are necessary. Sufficient budgetary means must be allocated to the care of children.

Children who come to the refuge are witnesses and often also victims of violence; in either case it will have been a traumatic experience. Special attention to their needs is therefore necessary. Research also shows that these children face a much higher risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence in their adult life than children who grow up in a non-violent family.

### **Goals of services for children**

#### **To ensure children's physical and emotional safety and promote their sense of security.**

Children accompanying their mother in refuges may be injured and may suffer from various health problems. Referral to medical care may be needed. Safety planning is also an important issue in refuge services for children.

#### **To improve children's mental and emotional health and well-being.**

This is a long-term goal of children's services but may acquire priority in crisis situations, when self-harm behaviour patterns occur. Through the support given to children's emotional and mental health, their safety can also be enhanced (see "Safety").

#### **To help children to regain and enjoy their childhood.**

Children who have been exposed to domestic violence may take an adult role or may feel anxious or tense as a consequence of what they have experienced. Through playing, relaxing and simply having fun they can enjoy their childhood again.

**To support the mother-child relationship.**

Mothers are in the best position to help their children to recover from effects of violence. Conjoint work with the mother should be considered as a way to address children's needs.

**Services for children during the stay****Comprehensive and high-quality services**

Services for children have to include crisis intervention, psycho-social, pedagogic, therapeutic and group-dynamic work.

Children who have witnessed or themselves been subjected to violence often suffer from a lack of self-esteem, in many cases also from anxieties and aggression. Some children may evince auto-aggressive behaviour. Most of the children show signs of reduced capabilities and a slowing of their development. Their social competences may also be impaired. Psychosomatic symptoms are very frequent (sleeping problems, tummy and headache, nausea, bed-wetting, eating disorders, etc.).

Coming to a refuge poses new challenges and entails hardships for children. When women seek refuge, their children face an equal degree of crisis and disruption in their lives. Professionals working in refuges note emotional and physical difficulties experienced by children during their stay. Health problems as well as acute feelings of loss, anger, fear, sadness, confusion and guilt and various adjustment problems result from the following refuge conditions (Peled / Davis 1995):

- recent crisis following the witnessing of violence at home;
- disruption of normal coping patterns and support systems following separation from the father and extended family or from friends, school, home, etc;
- the demand for rapid adjustment to a new living situation;
- difficult living conditions, including lack of privacy and high emotional intensity displayed by other residents;
- emotional and/or physical unavailability of their mothers because of their own emotional turmoil and the practical demands imposed by the need to rearrange family life.

When working with children in refuges, it is important to take into consideration their individuality and uniqueness in the process of dealing with the consequences of violence while bearing in mind the common experiences and needs they may have.

Children's needs during their stay in the refuge often require crisis intervention and ongoing emotional support, medical attention, co-operation with the educational system, legal and child protective services and academic help, and work to help mothers with parenting skills.

**Admission**

Usually it is women who request admission to a refuge, while children accompany the mothers. At the reception stage an initial assessment of child and mother is needed. It is also important to prepare the child for refuge life and for the changes that will occur; this is a way to convey to the child a sense of safety.

Areas of initial assessment:

- Establish the emergency level of the situation and the need for crisis intervention
- Identify the needs of children and mothers in order to develop their safety plans
- Assess the impact of abuse on children
- Assess the protective factors, children's and mother's resources for protection, health and safety

Preparing children for the experience of refuge life can be accomplished by:

- Explaining the aims, goals and activities of the refuge

- Assuring them that the refuge is a safe place
- Informing children about the refuge's rules and the policy on confidentiality
- Depending on a child's age, their understanding of the rules can be signed in the form of a written agreement.

### **Individual work**

Individual counselling provides the child with a supportive environment and allows him/her to develop a trusting relationship with an adult, which could represent a model for future relationships. These sessions focus on the feelings of the children (fear, confusion, loneliness, guilt, anger) and their needs. The counsellor helps the children acknowledge their experiences and recognise that they are not to blame for the violence of the adults. Strengthening a child's self-esteem is an important issue in this work.

Recommendations for individual counselling of children:

Create a safe therapeutic environment:

- by clearly communicating to the child that she/he will not be forced to talk about things she/he does not want to discuss
- by explaining confidentiality issues

Address safety planning from the beginning. Safety plans for children should be realistic, simple and age appropriate. Possible safety strategies to empower children are: (1) how to avoid situations of prior violence, (2) how to phone, (3) how to obtain emergency assistance, (4) escape logistics, (5) what to do if they are kidnapped. Safety plans should be developed with the mother and the child and should be rehearsed.

The topic of termination should be addressed early on the counselling process. Discussing separation and preparing for it is an important issue for children affected by violence.

Children do not always need formal counselling; sometimes they simply want to meet an adult informally. Having someone to talk to who is glad to spend time with them can be a rewarding and positive experience for children.

Counselling and working with the child varies according to the child's age. With adolescents it is possible to work out how they can feel safe again and what kind of agencies they or their mother can contact. In working with young people one can address their attitudes towards friendships and relationships and how they think about domestic violence. It may be useful to talk about attitudes towards domestic violence and social change, that it is a crime, that no-one has the right to abuse another person (Mullender / Debbonnaire 2000).

### **Group work**

Group work is recognised as an effective intervention with children and young people exposed to domestic violence. Formal or informal group sessions may be organised in a refuge. A supportive accepting environment is fostered, and this gives the children the opportunity to support each other and to learn new and effective ways of interacting and communicating their feelings, thoughts and needs.

The goals of most groups for children include helping children to define violence and the responsibility for violence; express their feelings (including anger); improve communication and other skills; enhance self-esteem; develop social support networks; develop safety plans; and enjoy a positive experience.

Educational, informational or preventive groups may be made available. Group activities should take into account the age of the participants and their developmental level and should respond to the needs of culturally different or disabled children.

### **Conjoint work with mothers**

Services for children in refuge should not be confined to practical work with children; working with mothers should be considered equally important, because they can give the best support to the children's needs. In some cases child workers can work individually with the mother; appointments can be fixed at her or the counsellor's request. The aim is to convey children's needs, fears and problems, when the children ask for this or if the situation requires it (for example, violence in the refuge). Another way of working with mothers is the group (mothers' groups), where child counsellors have the opportunity to share the children's point of view in terms of their age, observing the constraints of confidentiality. With regard to the methods (supportive or confrontational) utilised during the work with mothers, the role of child counsellors is to convey and advocate the children's needs.

### **Play therapy**

Play therapy is a valuable method when working with children who are developmentally or emotionally unable to express their feelings, thoughts and experiences through words. Play is the child's natural medium of communication, which he/she uses "to manage his/her fears and anxieties about abuse, express his/her feelings about what happened to him/her, and demonstrate his/her knowledge and understanding of relationships. Play therapy allows the child to represent symbolically those events that generate fear and anxiety and helps the child to move toward resolution and integration of frightening experience." (Urquiza & Winn, 1994, p. 59) Play therapy can also be utilized during individual and group counselling.

### **Art therapy / Expressive art therapy**

Art therapy is an important method of communication, assessment and treatment. The child utilises art to express feelings and emotions that he/she is unable to articulate in words. Drawing, painting, sculpting, poetry, drama, music or storytelling can help children to release accumulated tensions and anxieties. Individual and group work can benefit from this method.

### **Recreational and educational activities**

Play and recreational activity sessions in an informal setting that are not focused on violence are good opportunities for promoting peer support between children. Sport, walking, movement, dance etc. can be provided.

Some children may need educational support for improving their school-related abilities.

### **Support during judicial interventions**

A child who needs to testify at court proceedings benefits greatly from being introduced to judicial procedures by a specialist (psychologist, clinical social worker) who understands and can prepare the child for her/his appearance in court.

Recommendations for supporting a child during a court hearing:

- a week or so before the hearing, escort the child to the court building
- take the child to the courtroom where he/she will testify and allow the child to sit in the witness chair
- tell the child about the role of each person and where they will be sitting or standing
- offer the child all such emotional and informational support as is necessary to make the child as comfortable as possible with this part of the judicial procedures

## Staff

### Professional staff

Child care workers need to have adequate training in the psycho-social field as well as specialised training. Child psychologists, childcare workers and pedagogic experts can work to support children in refuge. Child care workers have to be paid according to their professional skills. Volunteers can support the work of the professional child care workers, but children need as much attention as their mothers when they come to the refuge.

In addition to refuge workers working with battered women, professionals are needed to work with children. They must be able to assess children's needs and act on their behalf. They represent children's needs in refuge and in the work of the staff as a whole.

### Staff requirements:

- full-time children's advocates on the staff are needed to provide services or develop referral sources
- qualifications in the fields of psychology, social work, teaching
- staff for children need to be thoroughly trained in assessment procedures, crisis intervention and counselling techniques for children
- knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence, child development
- knowledge of the legal aspects of child protection

Co-operation with the other counsellors/therapists at the refuge is necessary, especially with those working with mothers, to improve the well-being of children.

Professionals working with children often have to co-ordinate and collaborate with other professionals, such as police, prosecutors, attorney, and judges.

### Number of staff members:

At least two child care workers are recommended per refuge, in order:

- to be able to fulfil all the tasks as listed above professionally and for the benefit of the children
- to facilitate the exchange of experience
- to guarantee that the children are cared for in cases of sick leave or holidays.

Some refuges have male children's care-givers on the staff. The idea is to instil in the children a positive image of men and to show them that men can also be caring and affectionate and deplore all forms of violence. However, it may be felt (as at the women's refuge in Liège, Belgium) that it would be inconsistent with the feminist principle on which the refuge is run that men should occupy senior positions in the refuge's care of children.

## Infrastructure

### Special rooms and equipment

Adequate space for care, recreation and counselling for children should be provided. Rooms should comprise:

- playroom(s) with a range of equipment for children and youth of all ages,
- therapeutic toys, dolls, dollhouses, puppets, blocks, balls, sand etc.
- games: board games or games that require the child to construct or solve problems in creative ways; drawing, painting, writing etc. supplies; educational material,
- a counselling room,

- a multi-function room,
- a room for leisure activities,
- a garden where children and their mothers could benefit from physical and recreational activities,
- a room for adolescents.

The rooms should meet the special needs of children who live in a refuge. In particular, these needs are:

- security,
- communication,
- solitude,
- creativity and
- movement (to express oneself, to release tensions, etc.).

Well-lit rooms with robust equipment are recommended. Rooms should provide for accident-free games. Toys and games promote cultural diversity and satisfy the needs of children with disabilities. For administrative and organisational matters, the child care workers need a separate office equipped with telephone, fax and computer.

## **Obstacles / Drawbacks**

At present, reality looks quite different from the recommended standards defined above. In most countries in Europe child care work in refuges receives too little or no financial support from public sources (where public funding is usually common). Very often support for children is dependent on private donations and income from fund-raising events. This is particularly critical since children's needs are at least as important and urgent as women's needs when they come to a refuge. Either as witnesses or victims of violence, they are traumatised in varying degrees. This is intensified by the fact that children had to leave their homes, leave behind their clothes, toys, pets, and are taken out of their familiar environment (kindergarten, school, friends, relatives, etc.). Their mothers can provide only limited support and care.

Child care workers have to step in, address these specific needs, and begin a process of reappraising what has happened. In a refuge there are children of all ages, from different social and cultural backgrounds. Working with these children also means coping with a high fluctuation and different levels of traumatisation. Inadequate resources for either staff or infrastructure severely impede any progress that could be made to the advantage of the children during their stay in the refuge.

## **GUIDELINES / BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN (ARTEMIS 2001)**

In working with abused children, their well-being and safety have the foremost priority: The refuge is there to stop the abuse and protect the child and to meet her/his basic needs.

Working for children who have suffered abuse also means **counselling with adults**, especially with those who assume the responsibility for the well-being of the child. One of the best ways to support the child is by helping the mother, who has the role of non-abusing caretaker/trustworthy person in order to address the child's needs and to protect the child from further abuse for as long as needed. The mother will be involved in finding optimal solutions and bringing about the necessary changes for resolving the situation.

Psychological work with children on current abuse issues can be addressed only after safety is assured. The approach and mode of work should result in the child understanding that the abuse wasn't his/her fault. In developing a dialogue with the child it's important:

- That meetings take place in a familiar environment
- To explain to the child why she/he is coming to counselling or therapy
- The non-abusive/trustworthy adult has to give the child permission to talk about everything
- To clearly establish that the violence/abuse is not their fault
- To use clear and simple sentences and direct questions and to avoid sentences starting with "Why?" which often lead to a self-defensive situation or transmit the message that she/he is responsible for what happened or has been a part of it.
- To talk with children about "good" and "bad" secrets
- To give them the opportunity to talk about sexual problems using their own words/language – sometimes children take over the perpetrator's "ugly words"
- To use drawings, puppets – it is much easier for the child to explain the abusive event using non-verbal means
- To keep direct eye contact with the child without touching (this may be similar to an abusive situation, because (s)he is with an adult who expects him/her to do something)
- To talk about feelings, especially about fear, threats and ambivalence
- Not to create new secrets, new promises, to say thank you for trusting at the end of the meeting and to explain the next steps
- To understand and to take into consideration in intervention and assistance the dynamics of the abuser-victim relationship. The children's supportive system (non-abusive parent, non-abusive relatives, psychologists, therapists, social workers, and others) has to be aware of the fact that recurrence of any abusive behaviour towards the child will traumatise him/her again and exacerbate the damage.

A situation that should be avoided is the normalisation of abuse through attitudes, behaviour or messages that promote clichés of thinking, minimising abuse or wrong-doing, insufficiently prepared approaches – especially when intervening to stop persistent abuse of the child.

## **6. MANAGEMENT, PERSONNEL AND FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

The protection and support which refuges provide for women and children subjected to domestic violence are founded upon clearly defined goals and principles. Their realisation requires efficient management and professional organisational standards, the availability of specially trained and highly committed personnel, and comprehensive budget planning.

### **6.1 MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION**

Running a women's refuge calls for professional organisation throughout the operation. Refuges have evolved a range of management models to facilitate standards of efficiency and professionalism in the implementation of their goals. In some refuges the staff as a whole work on a team basis, running the refuge jointly. Other refuges are run by a director. A third model envisages team management combined with individual responsibility for specific areas, whereby the area leaders draw up and implement their planning independently but report to the team.

These are not the only models. Each refuge should develop the management structure which is best suited to the prevailing circumstances. At all events the refuge workers should respond flexibly and with an open mind to each new challenge and be prepared to discard structures that are no longer appropriate.

#### **6.1.1 Basic considerations**

Below we offer some basic considerations on the topics of team work, authority and responsibility, personnel rights, and management culture.

##### **Team work**

A key consideration is that the principles of flat hierarchies, democratic structures and participation should be observed both in the management of the refuge and in the way the team members work together. As has been pointed out, the refuge workers act as role models for the women and children living in the refuge, and their goal is to demonstrate that women are capable of managing a facility independently and or working together on an equal footing.

An excessively hierarchical structure – as for instance when one person takes all the decisions alone – would be a poor example of empowerment (see chapter 3, "Principles").

Moreover, modern management research has shown that staff who co-operate in a team and are involved in the decision-making process work more efficiently and happily and produce better results.

Management problems need to be detected in time and solved effectively. It may be, for example, that the work of a refuge is impeded by protracted decision-making processes,

because everybody is invited to participate in all the decisions. Then again, broad consultation in every area can lead to conflicts, which are equally obstructive.

It is extremely difficult to run an operation on a joint basis when the team is large. Barbara Sichtermann, a feminist organisational consultant, points out that small teams of up to six or at most seven women work well as a basis for joint management (this is, incidentally, also the limit to the number of musicians who can play without a conductor). Where the team is larger than this, difficulties occur: decision-making becomes too time-consuming, and the quality of the work may suffer. A larger team works better if one person is in charge.

The guideline for establishing the organisational and management structures is the attainment of the highest possible standards of efficiency and professionalism.

### **Authority and responsibility**

While the preferable structure will always be the team that works together on an equal footing, there are generally formal structures of authority which need to be respected. If the refuge is run by an association, for instance, this will normally consist of a governing board and members. The governing board bears the ultimate responsibility for everything the association does and is liable in financial matters. The board can delegate management tasks to the refuge team as a whole or to one or more individual members.

Refuge workers will usually be salaried employees with dependently employed status. The board of the association has the power to hire and fire them. However, personnel decisions of this kind are key management considerations which need careful thought and planning. Employment can prove a source of aggravation and conflict.

Recommendation: Refuge workers find it easier to identify with their place of work and its goals if they are not just employed by the association but also members of it. Many refuges work on this basis. In some refuges the staff – or at least some of them – actually belong to the governing board. This can give rise to difficulties, though, because it may involve the refuge workers concerned in a clash of interests. They may, for example, be required in their capacity as board members to dismiss employees because of budgetary constraints and at the same time be one of those affected by the measure.

Broadly speaking, it is helpful to define, establish and communicate the following points as clearly as possible:

- Who holds which position
- Which responsibilities (also financial) go along with which position
- What legal structures apply and how they affect operating procedures and working relationships.

### **Employees' rights**

In most countries refuge workers – like all other employees – enjoy certain rights under labour legislation. These include the right to a certain number of days' holiday per year, a prescribed term of notice in the case of redundancy and so on. Generally the board and the management are responsible for ensuring that these rights are observed.

Personnel management is thus part and parcel of the overall management responsibilities and involves being familiar with employment regulations and monitoring compliance with them.

Of course, a refuge can grant its employees wider rights than those provided for by the employment regulations – these are minimum rights. Additional rights may be formulated in the association's statutes or in a contractual agreement between the board and the employees.

### **Positive management culture – consultancy in organisational questions**

Like any other organisation, women's refuges pass through various stages of development. Problems can occur at any of these stages.

While the refuge's services are being planned and developed, it is advisable to make use of regular external consultancy, which might take the form of coaching (of individuals), team supervision, or organisational consultancy. Team supervision is designed to help develop team co-operation, while organisational consultancy is generally more comprehensive in scope and involves consultancy for the entire organisation – that is, also for the association as a whole, the members of the board and so on.

Inevitably, consultancy costs money, and the costs should be included in the budget planning. Supervision should serve not only as a forum for discussing counselling issues but in general as a means of enhancing the quality of the refuge's work. If sponsors ask why consultancy is necessary, a suitable answer would be that it is important to invest in good management, because management problems can cost a great deal of energy and thus also resources and money.

A positive management culture, job satisfaction, motivated staff able to contribute their full potential and their creativity – these are extremely important factors in refuge work and in combating violence against women and children.

In many countries there are consultants specialised in the work of women's support organisations who offer outstanding consultancy.

It is advisable to start making use of consulting services right from the early stages of refuge work.

### **6.1.2 Planning and implementation of management tasks**

Management skills are required in various areas of refuge work, where careful planning and the clear-cut assignment of duties and responsibilities are called for.

#### **The clear-cut assignment of duties and responsibilities**

This is an essential prerequisite for management efficiency. The assignment of duties and responsibilities should be laid out in writing in the refuge's operational planning.

The following questions might be helpful in drawing up a management plan:

- Which management areas exist?
- Who is responsible for which area?
- What do the duties and responsibilities involve in each case?
- Who takes the decisions in each area, and on what basis? (alone, in consultation with the team, on the basis of information provided by the team ...)

#### **Good planning**

It is important to draw up meticulous plans for each area of the refuge's work, to make sure everybody in the team is aware of this planning, to monitor the effectiveness of the planning, to evaluate it and where necessary to fine-tune it. Precise planning is in itself a factor in quality assurance (see chapter 11)

Here is a checklist for planning the work in the various areas:

- Draw up an outline plan (e.g. for one year)
- Draw up detailed plans (objectives, tasks, resources, schedules ...)
- Present the planning to the team
- Take decisions
- Implement decisions

- Monitor and evaluate: what works, what needs fixing?
- Present the results to the team
- Fine-tune the planning

### **6.1.3 Management areas in a women's refuge**

Depending on the management model chosen, the administration of and responsibility for the various areas of a refuge can be assigned to one manager or shared among several.

There follows an outline of the various management areas in a refuge. Responsibility for the running of each area should be assigned to one or more refuge workers (but not too many, because this impedes efficient management). However the management areas are assigned, it is essential that every management area is covered.

#### **Management area: Counselling and support (individual counselling, group work)**

This area includes the planning and running of the support services which a refuge provides for women and children (see chapter 5.1).

Many refuges can be reached round the clock, operate a helpline and can admit women at any time of the day or night. One focus of work in this area is organising these round-the-clock services.

There are several models for this. They include:

- A live-in staff member to answer the phone round the clock
- A staff member who stays in the refuge during the day and takes calls on her mobile phone during the night
- Volunteers for night or weekend shifts
- A 24-hour (local or national) helpline providing crisis support and, where needed, establishing contact with a refuge
- In some refuges long-standing women residents carry out admission procedures for new women and children, and a refuge worker is always reachable on her mobile phone. (In this model, the risks of secondary traumatising and excessive strain on the women have to be born in mind. On the other hand, if it works well, this approach can also be very empowering for a new arrival as a demonstration that a woman who has gone through a similar experience is now in a position to help her.)

This area also involves developing and running counselling, support and follow-up support services for non-residents, and drawing up and monitoring compliance with schedules for service provision.

#### **Management area: Working with children**

The members of the refuge staff who care for the children will generally assume responsibility for this area. Here too, the services provided for children need to undergo ongoing scrutiny in terms of planning, implementation and adjustment to changing conditions.

**Management area: Democratic structures and community life in the refuge**

In this area the objective is to ensure that community life in the refuge is as far as possible a positive experience for the women and children, that they feel at ease, and that they can live without anxiety and stress. The essence of this task is the fostering of the refuge's "culture" as one aspect of its overall management culture (see chapter 8). That means dealing with conflicts and applying the principles of conflict management. Responsibility for this area should be assigned to one or possibly two staff members who should ideally be trained in working with groups and in conflict management.

**Management area: Internal communications, team meetings, association**

Internal communications is an aspect that should not be neglected. Information needs to be passed on promptly and effectively. Other aspects of work in this area are: publicising the guidelines for life in the refuge and other necessary information; and planning and holding regular team meetings, association meetings and meetings between the staff and the governing board.

It may prove expedient to have the same staff member(s) responsible for both community life and internal communications, because there are synergic benefits to be exploited here. The concerns of the women and children can thus be made known to the team and the governing board and vice versa.

**Management area: Security**

A key function of women's refuges is to provide protection and safety for its residents (see chapter 7). One member of the team should therefore be responsible for this area alone, drawing up the plans for security precautions and overseeing their implementation, monitoring compliance with safety procedures, constantly evaluating their effectiveness and adjusting them as required. All the residents (women and their children) and the staff must always be involved in the planning and implementation of safety procedures.

**Management area: Personnel**

This is one of the classical management areas and should logically be assigned to the person / the body responsible for the refuge. It covers a wide range of responsibilities (see chapter 6.2):

- Finding new personnel: writing job profiles, interviewing, selecting
- Employing and training new personnel
- Closing off the employment of departing personnel
- Formulating work contracts
- Overseeing the flow of information to the staff in anything new
- Informing staff of their rights
- Assisting staff members in their current job and their career planning (What work am I doing now? How do I feel about it? In what ways should my job grow?)
- Providing support when problems occur, preventing burn-out
- Support in the event of conflicts between staff members
- Organising supervision
- Handling holiday leave, other leave, replacements for sick leave
- Fostering a positive management culture, organising staff outings, birthday parties, celebrations for positive achievements and communal reflection on failures or unsolved problems etc.

Note: Personnel must be told that they are obliged to maintain confidentiality, and they should agree to do so in writing when they sign their contracts.

**Management area: Budget and fundraising**

It goes without saying that this area is of key importance, because a women's refuge can only operate if it has access to adequate funding (see chapter 4.2). This is an extremely sensitive area, involving as it does financial responsibility, and should be assigned to the person(s) running the refuge, if there is such a person. Fundraising is another task that should be taken over by the association's governing board.

If the refuge runs into debt, this may have to be covered by the association. It is important to decide and clearly establish who has access to the association's bank account(s) and is entitled to carry out monetary transactions. Personnel who bear responsibility in this area should have the appropriate qualifications.

The area Budget and fundraising entails the following tasks and responsibilities:

- Fundraising
- Current budget planning and calculation of running costs
- Accurate bookkeeping in the prescribed form
- Payroll accounting
- Payment of taxes, social security payments and other deductions
- Assignment and supervision of outsourced contracts
- Financial transactions (payment of salaries, bills etc.)
- Interim and annual accounts and financial statements
- Report to the governing board, auditing by the board
- On-going contacts with sponsors, clear-cut agreement on accounting and payment procedures etc.

Note: Many women's refuges entrust some of the above tasks (like bookkeeping) to freelance staff. However, it must be remembered that responsibility for the refuge's financial dealings will always ultimately rest with the members of staff responsible for the refuge's financial affairs and/or with the governing board, and that the greatest care must therefore be taken in this area.

It is essential to ensure that the association's financial dealings are sound, not least with regard to the financial support which it (hopefully) receives from public authorities. Any inaccuracy in the accounts can give rise to problems, especially when the association renews an application for funding. It is therefore advisable to reach clear-cut agreements with the funding body on the financial procedures involved. At the same time, the financing bodies should take into account that refuges generally have no "capital" (indeed, they are not allowed to have any capital resources), so that they have to rely on the prompt handling of their applications and transfer of the money.

**Management area: Internal administration**

Administration is one of the more extensive management areas. Refuges tend to have a high turn-over rate, as some women and their children move out and new arrivals take their places. The furniture and equipment are constantly in use and frequently need repairing. It is a daunting undertaking to keep the refuge in shape to the extent that its residents can live there in comfort. This area, then, requires a separate staff member to take responsibility. She should enjoy handling organisational tasks and working closely with a large number of women and children. In most refuges the women residents are asked to contribute to carrying out the household duties. This can be helpful and good for the women. However, the administrator must remember that the women may well be in a critical situation, they may have to handle a great deal on their own behalf, and they must not be put under undue strain. On no account should the women residents be expected to handle all the household duties themselves. It is advisable for the refuge to allocate funds for cleaning staff, for instance.

**Management area: Co-ordination of volunteers and trainees**

Many women's support organisations also include volunteers on their staff. There are two reasons for this: because the organisation is under-budgeted, but also because it is important and expedient to integrate volunteers in certain areas of work. The volunteers are in turn multipliers whose acquired knowledge and experience in the field of combating violence against women and children will be of benefit elsewhere (see chapter 6.2). Many refuges also take on trainees who work there for several weeks or months as part of their training programme (e.g. social studies). Selecting, instructing and supervising trainees also requires planning.

Example: One of the oldest refuges in England, The Haven, has volunteers working in several areas. For more information, go to <http://www.havenrefuge.org.uk/>.

**Management area: Public relations, networking, lobbying**

In many refuges several (if not all) members of the staff are involved in these areas of work, because it entails such a wide range of activities. However, it is necessary for either one or two persons to be responsible for the planning and co-ordination of activities in this area in order to ensure continuity and a carefully targeted approach (see chapter 9).

This management area also includes lobbying with potential sponsors and donors and with those in positions of political responsibility.

**Management area: Statistics, data compilation, evaluation and quality control**

The on-going compilation of work-related data and the drawing up of statistics and reports make up another important area of work. Obviously, this should be handled by members of the staff who have the necessary specialised qualifications. Continuous evaluation and quality control are further aspects of work in the refuge (see chapter 11).

**Management area: Policy, statements, development and long-term planning**

Issuing statements on various specialised issues or on draft legislation and writing and publishing articles are important ways of conveying the refuge's experience and expertise to the public.

It is necessary to hold regular working group meetings on the development of the refuge's work and its long-term planning. This ensures that the necessary adjustments are detected and made.

Formulating a long-term perspective and investigating the question "How will our refuge look in 10, 15 or 20 years?" help to take the decisions needed to keep it on track for the years to come.

Because: "Today's visions are tomorrow's reality."

## 6.2 STAFF AND INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

### 6.2.1 Fundamentals of personnel management in a women's refuge

Years of experience gained by women's refuges in Europe have shown that a woman who has been subjected to violence by a male person can more easily open up and trust if she can talk to another woman. It is therefore one of the principles of work in women's refuges that they are staffed by gender-sensitive female personnel. There is also a socio-political reason behind employing gender-sensitive female personnel: since violence against women is gender-specific, the approach to ending this violence also needs to be gender-specific. It was not society as a whole that raised the issue of male violence against women; rather, it was women themselves who initiated the movement to halt this violence. Women have been subjected to severe discrimination, which has disadvantaged them. Violence is one of the most severe forms of discrimination. By initiating and implementing projects like women's refuges and helplines, women have brought the issue to the attention of society. This model of politics "from the bottom up" is typical of women's organisations and of other social movements that address the needs of specific groups.

Sufficient financial resources are a prerequisite for opening a refuge, but having adequately trained and motivated staff is an equally important factor.

Women working in a refuge need a clear motivation. It is important that they are fully committed to the goals and principles of refuge work (see chapter 3). The aim of training is to gain specific expertise on the issue of violence which will enable the staff to offer effective support to other women.

It is vital to recognise and adequately remunerate their work. Refuge staff should be paid according to their qualification and the standard salaries for these qualifications (i.e. in accordance with collective salary agreements).

When setting up a refuge, the association must decide which services to provide, then **which professional skills** will be required by these services, and finally which **other supporting skills** will be needed.

Refuges usually need a wide range of qualifications in order to carry out their complex work. Skills and qualifications in the following areas are called for: crisis intervention, individual and group counselling, group work, conflict resolution and mediation, training in social work, therapeutic skills in working with traumatised victims, psychological and pedagogic qualifications, legal training, leadership and management, fundraising and financial management, public relations, cultural mediators, language skills etc. As refuges usually cannot hire professionals from all of these fields, it is necessary that refuge workers have multiple qualifications and skills and that they receive adequate training.

Once the staff have been trained and the service is up and running, further **on-going training** becomes very important to increase the aggregate experience and gain a more specialised expertise which will allow the refuge to increase the depth of the services provided and to tackle new problems (like opening other refuges, offering different services ...).

Training, together with regular **supervision sessions**, will help the staff to maintain and develop their professional skills and also to foster an awareness of their experience on both an emotional and a cognitive level.

### 6.2.2 Staffing levels

The **size of the refuge**, the **number and type of services** and the **organisational structure** in place (separate refuge, combination refuge / counselling centre) should be taken into account

when determining the number of staff. Refuges with a separate counselling centre usually have two teams, one managing the services in the refuge and the other team managing the helpline and the counselling services.

There are several essential services that should be provided for the women and their children (see chapter 5).

### **6.2.3 Example - Staff hours needed in a refuge**

The following calculation is a guideline for the staff resources needed in a medium-sized refuge providing the following services:

- Refuge places for 10 to 15 family units, making a total of 25-35 places
- Operation of a 24-hour refuge helpline
- Counselling services and support as outlined in chapter 5.1
- Public relations and networking

Working hours per week:

- At least 200 hours/week (40 hours = 1 full time position, 200 hours = 5 full time or correspondingly more part time positions) to run the refuge including the 24-hour helpline; at least 80 to 100 hours should be handled by refuge workers with special skills to support migrant women (50% or more of women living in a refuge are migrant and ethnic minority women, see chapters 2 and 5.1)
- Counselling and support (at least 80 hours)
- Child care work (at least 60 hours)
- Administration (at least 40 hours)
- Management and PR (at least 40 hours)

A medium-sized refuge providing professional and effective support will thus need about 10 full-time staff.

Note: the above rule of thumb is independent of the way the work in the refuge is assigned. In many cases each of the refuge workers (with the exception of the child care specialists) will take over several areas of work (helpline, admission procedures, counselling, refuge assembly etc.). These tasks will account for part of their working hours. The remainder of their time will be spent on individual counselling and support or on specific tasks (see chapter 6.1).

The above calculation method does **not** include those personnel resources needed for specialised responsibilities – part-time lawyers and legal experts, an accountant, PR experts and so on.

In calculating staffing levels, it is important to remember that staff members will take holiday or sick leave and will attend further training. So a refuge's staff budget must also include substitutes for the regular staff.

### **6.2.4 Workload and remuneration – risk factors**

As pointed out above, it is important that the number of staff matches the workload and that the level of remuneration likewise matches the professional skills required. It is a caring profession that involves working with people who are highly traumatised, so it warrants the same social status as equivalent professions in other fields.

It is vital that the staff workload is closely monitored (as a group and individually) and that various steps are taken to reduce it, such as increasing the number of staff or closing down

some of the services if the funds are not sufficient to hire more personnel. The human and professional resources must be safeguarded to ensure that they are available for the services provided to women.

This means that each group and each refuge worker individually is responsible for a certain area, should have the time to plan their work, time to carry it out, time to evaluate the work done, and last but not least time to fine-tune the way a project / intervention is carried out (see chapter 6.1).

Example: When planning the time allocated for an individual counselling session, each of the following steps should be included: Careful preparation gauged to the individual woman; conducting the session with the woman; documenting the results after the meeting; taking time to reflect on her story and what has been said; and if necessary formulating questions for the next supervision, which will allow you to redesign the intervention with this particular woman.

Example: As a group: Planning a project for evening meetings in the refuge for the women and their children (like health promotion meetings); carrying out the project; meeting with the group to reflect on what happened during the meetings, the women's reactions, new findings / awareness; planning future projects.

If we notice that in our day-to-day work it is not possible to include these steps or there is too little time for all of them, then we need to raise awareness of the problem and try to find a solution, because the consequences could prove detrimental for both the staff and the organisation.

The risks involved if the workload is too great (not enough staff) or the salaries are inadequate (professional expertise not recognised) are:

**Staff burn-out:**

The staff are no longer able to provide professional help (poor standards of care, conflicts with colleagues, feelings of impotence / disproportionate power, avoiding responsibilities, lack of personal freedom or even the complete loss of structure of the service);

**High fluctuation in staff:**

This will prevent the organisation as a whole from gaining experience and raising the level of expertise.

## **6.2.5 Work schedules**

When drawing up work schedules / duty rosters for the refuge, the group or the co-ordinator (depending on the organisational model chosen) should bear the following general guidelines in mind:

- First, one person should be responsible for the duty rosters and management. That person should draw up a schedule that meets the needs of service provision. The roster needs to be distributed and approved by all the staff, and there have to be rules for switching duties (a minimum number of days in advance followed by approval by the duty manager).
- Some of the services are provided 24 hours a day 7 days a week, while other services (like counselling, children's activities, therapy and so on) are usually available only during office hours.

- Shifts can be decided on a monthly basis but with the possibility of making changes on a fortnightly basis. When planning the monthly roster, take into account days off for those working on the night shift, and staff for special forthcoming events.

Depending on the size of the refuge and the possible emergencies that can occur, it is preferable that – apart from at night – there are always two refuge workers present in the refuge.

### 6.2.6 Staff Training

The objective of staff training is to create competence areas in the field of intervention and the prevention of violence against women and children, and familiarity with the practical aspects of work in the refuge. The approach followed is the feminist approach based on empowerment (see chapter 3).

The trainers need to be qualified trainers with several years of experience. Each NGO should choose the trainers on the basis of the specific requirements for their training.

The training includes an initial phase, which should be relatively intensive, consisting of a course of at least 80 hours (10 seminar days or two weeks' work), followed by ongoing training and supervision sessions.

The contents of the training programme can be divided into:

- **a basic module** including *scientific and theoretical aspects* of gender violence (definition, prevalence of the problem, forms of violence against women, cycle of violence, short and long-term impact of violence, perpetrator strategies); *guidelines* for intervention and empowerment (to provide protection and safety, to name the violence experienced, to re-assign responsibilities stressing social responsibilities, to take the victim's side, to believe her, to do more than just respecting her choices, jointly to draw up a plan for her safety, to consider the complexity of the intervention...); *networking* with other agencies on a local, national and international level
- one or more **specific modules** in accordance with the refuge's *organisation*, the different *services* provided in the refuge (admission, helpline, counselling, prevention, public relations, etc.) and the *target groups* (women, children, adolescents, elderly women, disabled women, migrant women...)

It can be very useful if some or all of the workers spend a period of on-the-job-training in a refuge that is already up and running. When new refuge workers are taken on, they should also receive this initial training, in the form of one to one training sessions with an experienced refuge worker and working side by side with a number of experienced refuge workers.

### 6.2.7 Further training of staff

The initial training needs to be followed up by ongoing training. In order to maintain the quality of the services provided, the refuge needs to run regular further training sessions on more specific topics such as sexual abuse and violence against children, trafficking in women, female circumcision, legal amendments, laws relating to migrant and refugee women, support for women and children with disabilities, post-traumatic stress syndrome, etc.

Another way to enhance the staff's skills is for them to attend conferences, seminars and other events on gender violence, combined with reading specific material on the issue. Every member of staff should be free to devote at least two weeks a year to further training.

Finally, exchanging training with other refuges on a local, national or international level is a valuable way to improve services and prevention measures. Another aspect of the training consists of enhancing awareness of gender violence.

### **6.2.8 Train the Trainer seminar**

Refuge staff with at least two years' experience should also be given the opportunity to attend a train the trainer seminar (at least 40 hours or 5 days' seminar) gauged to training professionals (doctors, lawyers, police, social workers, psychologists ...) in dealing with the issue of violence against women and children (see WAVE 2000).

### **6.2.9 Supervision**

Supervision is a means of reviewing and improving one's own work. Supervisors are specially trained experts who provide counselling on a team, group or individual basis. In many countries supervisors are affiliated to associations which have formulated standards for supervisor training programmes and which publish lists of qualified supervisors. It is advisable to look for a supervisor who is sensitive to gender issues and has experience in the field of violence against women and children.

A professional distance is a necessary element in effective supervision for a team or a whole organisation. One quality criterion is therefore that it is carried out by an external supervisor.

Supervision has to take place within a defined setting, which relates to both the attitude and the rules established in order to carry out the task in the best possible circumstances.

Supervision should be compulsory for all the staff and volunteers: no worker is professionally reliable if she isn't ready to work on herself.

Every refuge should provide at least team supervision. It makes sense for individual supervision to be available as a means of reviewing counselling work. This is especially important in the case of new staff members.

The frequency of the supervision sessions depends on the number of staff and on the overall experience of the group. It varies from monthly sessions to weekly sessions if the service has just been established.

### **Why supervision is so important in a refuge**

Supervision is a major and indispensable part of the caring relationship. The Secondary Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome makes supervision necessary, because it arises from caring for or listening to people who have undergone a trauma. Refuge workers are continuously exposed to traumatic stories told by the women. Workers may also witness a woman by her partner in court or if he breaks into the refuge.

If a woman's personal situation makes one of the staff workers feel uneasy by causing strong emotions (such as anger, a sense of impotence or disproportionate power, pity, love, etc.) or by bringing back the memory of past personal experiences or else by creating a standstill in the caring relationship, supervision can help to find new ways of going on with the work with the woman. This is achieved by helping the staff member to work through her own emotions and become aware of her own experiences on both a cognitive and an emotional level.

The relationship with either a woman or a child will sometimes bring up emotions which can make it difficult to continue working by creating confusion, collusion or entanglement.

Situations that can bring about the need for supervision are:

- the anger created by somebody breaking the rule of secrecy;
- mourning the loss of a woman when she leaves the refuge;
- the feeling of powerlessness if a woman decides to go back to her violent partner;
- the problems and difficulties encountered in everyday relationships with women;
- conflicts among colleagues;
- the enforcement of the refuge rules and the conduct to follow in the event of a woman breaking the rules;
- the management of staff meetings;
- the respect and consideration for the different roles among the refuge staff.

Sharing and analysing the problems with the group under the guidance and help of an external supervisor, together with the sense of protection and safety afforded by a defined setting, will facilitate the resolution of conflicts among staff which can easily arise from working so closely in difficult and traumatic situations.

The results achieved by the supervision are generally:

- resolution of the emotional blockages;
- reassurance and support in going on working with women who have been severely traumatised.

Of course, experienced refuge staff are also qualified to give advice to new staff members and to help them review their work. This form of internal support is termed "intervention" and is not the same thing as supervision.

Supervision may also usefully be applied to organisational development, in which case it will serve as a forum for discussing the facility's structures and functions and for promoting its development and goals (see the section on Management).

### **6.2.10 Volunteers**

Whether or not a refuge takes on volunteers must be an individual decision. The principles advocated in this Manual state that staff in refuges should be paid and refuges should not be forced to rely on volunteers because of lack of financial means. The basic services outlined in chapter 5 should be covered by paid staff.

When working with volunteers, the following requirements should be met:

- The work of volunteers should be co-ordinated by one refuge worker who is responsible for all matters relating to the volunteers.
- Volunteers should be women with an awareness of gender-based discrimination and strong motivation to devote some of their time to working with women and children who have been subjected to violence.
- When a woman applies for a post as a refuge volunteer, she should be interviewed about her expectations and ideas.
- Only after this interview should both parties decide whether the woman is suited to the work; if so, then an agreement should be signed detailing the duration of the voluntary work and the responsibilities involved.
- Volunteers must accept the rules of the refuge (secrecy, code of conduct, etc).
- Volunteers must receive adequate training and supervision.

Volunteers need to receive maximum respect for their work. Minor acts of carelessness towards a colleague can happen (keeping someone waiting, forgetting to pass on important information etc.). This kind of lapse can have more serious consequences if it happens with volunteers. It might give them the feeling that their work is not important.

### **6.2.11 Different types of voluntary work**

Every refuge has a wider “catchment basin” of supplementary staff formed by women who have recently become interested in the issue of gender-based violence. The refuge can draw on these women when hiring additional staff, or when there is need for more help (sensitisation and information campaigns, fundraising activities, etc.).

There are different kinds of volunteers:

- Voluntary workers who fully participate in the daily activities of the refuge (counselling, staff meetings, supervision sessions ...)
- College trainees who spend a period of training at the refuge. Their commitment is therefore temporary and limited to the area of their academic studies.
- Trainees from other refuges; their commitment is of a professional nature and usually on a longer-term basis.
- Sympathisers and friends who support the refuge by giving donations and helping on special occasions like fundraising events, campaigns etc.

Volunteers can come from very different backgrounds and have varying experience: some may have just encountered the issue of violence against women or only temporarily join the refuge, some may have a wide experience, some may be widely involved like the members or the board members of the associations who run the refuges. The women in the association or the board often have important responsibilities and competences and may have worked in the refuge since its foundation. They make up a special group of “volunteers” and also bear financial responsibility. Formally, they belong to the refuge’s management.

Volunteers often play a key role in bringing in new ideas about procedures or initiatives, projects etc., and in spreading information about the issue of violence against women and the role and services of the refuge. They are key multipliers and perform a valuable function, along with the full-time staff and the association members.

## **6.3 FINANCIAL PLANNING**

Careful and thoughtful financial planning is necessary already in the early stages of an initiative to set up a women’s refuge. The same care and consideration has to be devoted to the annual budgeting and to budgeting for particular events, activities, etc. It is important to be very clear about the real costs before starting to look for funding possibilities.

It is not possible to give exact figures on how much the setting up of a refuge and the annual running of it will cost. Too much depends on the local price level. However, the following budget plans should provide a tool for calculating all the costs that will definitely occur no matter where a refuge is located.

These budget plans should, however, not be seen as final. Additional costs are likely to arise depending on the range of services and activities possible.

### 6.3.1 Budget plan for setting up the refuge

It is not possible to give exact figures on what the actual setting up of a refuge will cost. Apart from variations in local prices, different costs occur depending on whether you buy a house, you buy land, you have a house built, you are given a building which needs to be adapted etc. However, certain fixed costs are bound to occur.

Particularly when you are setting up a refuge from scratch, it is advisable to seek the advice and assistance of experts. Of course it is helpful if you can fall back on personal contacts here. But public authorities and other women's support organisations can also offer advice. At all events it is important to consult experts in construction and technical security systems and to discuss the planning and cost estimates with them.

The table below serves only as a broad outline; the specific sums may vary widely.

<b>COST OF FACILITY</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
purchase of property (alternatively renting a facility) or	
purchase of land +	
building costs (calculate by square metres, use local estimates) incl.	
electrician, plumber, floor layer, painter, etc.	
security installations (as above)	
costs of equipment	
furniture for rooms for women (beds, wardrobes, tables, chairs)	
dining room	
living room	
kitchen (incl. cooking pots, dishes, cutlery)	
bath rooms	
office rooms	
counselling rooms	
children's rooms	
toys, games, teaching equipment and material	
entrance area	
storage facilities	
garden (plants, garden tools, garden furniture, playground)	
washing machine(s), clothes	
office equipment (phones, PCs, photocopier, fax, etc.)	
<b>Total</b>	

### 6.3.2 Budget plan for annual running costs of the refuge

The annual financial plan for a women's refuge requires equally careful planning. In all cases local prices should be taken as the basis. This is also true of personnel costs: staff salaries and the labour costs of the other people working in the refuge. Salary levels for work in a refuge should not be lower than those for other employment at the same qualification level.

The sums involved will tend to vary from year to year, the variables including salary changes / increases, higher staffing levels, varying special expenditure and investments, changes in energy costs etc.

The following costs usually occur:

<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>AMOUNT PER YEAR</b>
Staff costs (see chapter 7)	
Counsellors for women and children	
Counsellors for non-residents	
Staff for night shifts	
Accountant	
Trainees	
Freelancers, consultants	
Cleaning personnel	
<b>Tax advisor</b>	
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Rent	
Overheads	
Energy costs (electricity, heating, water, etc.)	
Maintenance (repairs, renovation, etc.)	
Insurance	
Investments in immovables (furniture, office equipment)	
Car/van (insurance, repair, running costs)	
<b>Running costs</b>	
Phone	
Mailing	
Cleaning	
PR and awareness raising	
Travel costs	
Further training	
Supervision	
Specialised literature	
Office and training supplies	
Household supplies	
Expenses for children	
Costs of children	
Cost of food	
<b>Total</b>	

Drawing up cost estimates is just one aspect of this field of responsibility. Financial planning and estimates of subsidies to be applied for also have to be dealt with in good time. In the case of some funding sources and some expenditure categories (e.g. campaigns), it is necessary to plan several years ahead.

There follows a broad outline:

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>AMOUNT PER YEAR</b>
Regular income	
Public funding (national, regional and/or local bodies)	
Subscription	
Variable income	
Donations	
Sponsoring	
Rent paid by women / public authorities	
<b>Total</b>	

## 7. SAFETY AND SECURITY MEASURES

Women and children seeking shelter from physical abuse need a safe place where they are protected from the violent behaviour of the partner or father. In some cases the perpetrators persist in their aggressive and threatening behaviour towards women and children even when the latter are living in a refuge. Often they want the woman to return home, and they employ a variety of strategies to secure this goal: imploring, begging, bringing flowers and promising that they will never again be violent. The failure of these strategies to produce the desired effect may result in sudden outbursts of violence. Some violent men are extremely dangerous, refuse to come to terms with the separation, and resort to massive, life-threatening violence.

It is not only the women and children living in a refuge who are in danger: the refuge workers and other people can also be at risk. In the women's refuge in Sankt Pölten (Austria) a violent perpetrator who had managed to get inside the refuge pulled a gun and killed a policeman and seriously injured a woman resident and her son. The man had contrived a bomb warning and had got inside the building while it was being evacuated and searched. During a garden party in the Lucerne refuge in Switzerland a violent man whose wife and children were living there killed and seriously injured several women and children. Many refuges throughout Europe have had to contend with violent attacks, although the toll is fortunately not always as severe. Nevertheless, a women's refuge must always be braced to deal with threats and attacks.

Security, then, is a key issue, objective and agenda in women's refuges. It is short-sighted of state authorities to try to save money in this field, because in extreme situations security precautions and systems can save lives.

The police are responsible for safeguarding the safety and security of the public as a whole and thus also of refuges, so it is important to involve them in the drafting of security strategies and the formulation of a security plan.

**There follows a checklist of important points relating to security:**

### 7.1 TECHNICAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Technical security precautions are extremely important in a women's refuge. The necessary standards require the following precautionary measures:

- Safe **entrances** which cannot be forced open.
- Entrances should always be kept locked, and access to the building should be monitored. Ideally there should be a **technical monitoring system** (cameras, automatic opening and locking devices for doors).
- If the building has several entrances, this is a safety hazard, so a refuge should have only **one main entrance**. Any other doors to the outside should be kept locked and barred so that they cannot be forced open.
- A **yard or garden** are an asset for the women and children but pose a security risk. The yard or garden should likewise be secured against forced entry, and it should not be possible for anyone to look inside, throw objects or shoot. This means a high wall, a barrier, a protective fence or an alarm system.
- The **yard or garden gate** should also be secure, and the refuge workers should make a habit of locking it, especially at night.

- **Ground-floor windows** are a security risk, and ground-floor rooms facing onto the street should not be used as living or working areas.
- Windows – at least those that are located on the ground floor or can be reached from the outside – should have **gratings**.
- Every women's refuge should be equipped with an alarm system by which the police can be called in the event of an emergency. One example is a direct emergency line to the nearest police station (see the section 7.2.2 on "Police Protection").

**Summary of the most important security features:**

- Strong, secure doors
- Doors permanently locked, monitored access area
- Gratings on windows
- Direct emergency line to the police.

Example: The new women's refuge in Vienna, opened in 2002, is a newly constructed building which has a two-door security lock in the entrance area – the second door doesn't open until the first has closed. Several cameras have been mounted to monitor the street in front of the building. The garden is surrounded by a high wall and is secured by an alarm system.

## 7.2 SECURITY IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

In some areas the refuges are very small, often consisting of a single apartment, and are not staffed day and night by refuge workers. It is important that this temporary accommodation should also comply with at least minimum security standards. Women who are at high risk and who have recently separated from a violent partner should wherever possible not be accommodated in an apartment without round-the-clock staffing and security precautions.

## 7.3 CONFIDENTIAL ADDRESSES, ANONYMITY

The addresses of many refuges are kept confidential in order to safeguard the security of the women and children living there. Only the refuge's emergency phone number is publicised. Women seeking help are given the address only when they actually go to the refuge. In some cases the women and children are picked up at a public place by prior arrangement and taken to the refuge. But even if the address remains confidential, it can still be found out, especially if the refuge has existed for some time. Hence the need for additional security precautions.

In small towns it is often impossible to keep the location of a refuge secret. In such cases it is advisable to switch to an offensive strategy: everybody is told where the refuge is, the address is publicised, and the police and local authorities are involved in the security planning.

Especially in rural areas it can be very important to involve the neighbourhood in order to ensure that a threat is detected in time and help can be organised promptly. The relevant institutions and the people living in the vicinity should be assigned active roles in the security planning (e.g. frequent police patrols, neighbours are informed and asked to notify the refuge or the police if they notice anything suspicious).

Each refuge should decide for itself on the basis of its location and the resources available which strategies to adopt and then draw up its own security plan (see section 7.2.4 on "Security Planning"). Where safety is concerned, it is essential to stick to the rules and to make sure that everybody always complies with the safety procedures.

## 7.4 POLICE PROTECTION – POLICE SECURITY PLAN

Effective co-operation with the police on security issues is indispensable. Before the refuge opens, a security plan needs to be drawn up, and this should be subject to constant revision.

**The necessary security precautions and features include the following:**

- The refuge should have a technical security system by which the police can be called directly in the case of a serious threat (button-activated alarm line to the police station as used in banks)
- The police should be in possession of a ground plan of the refuge and know where the entrances are, what facilities are located where etc.
- There should be a contingency plan for emergencies
- There should be regular meetings with the police to discuss security issues
- Like all security plans, this one should be evaluated and updated at regular intervals (annually).

## 7.5 INDIVIDUAL SECURITY PLANS AND ASSESSMENT OF THREATS

Some women and children are at particularly high risk because the perpetrator concerned has been assessed as very dangerous. Perpetrators may threaten and endanger not only their own partners but also other people in the refuge, as the examples quoted above show.

It is therefore very important that the dangerousness of the threat posed by the perpetrator should be assessed on an individual basis with each woman in the refuge and that a security plan be drawn up for:

- the duration of her stay in the refuge
- the event that she goes back to living with her partner
- the event that she decides to separate from her partner and live by herself.

Everybody in the refuge should be aware of perpetrators who have been assessed as particularly dangerous, and special security precautions will have to be enforced at certain times. One extremely important measure is to make it clear to the perpetrator that definite limits apply – that, for example, it will not be tolerated if he waits in front of or close to the refuge in the hope of meeting his partner and/or children and talking to them. Conversations in front of the refuge can be extremely dangerous and are a frequent occasion for violence. A woman staying in a Viennese refuge, for instance, went to the front door to talk to her partner and try to “calm him down”, with the result that she was severely injured. The man wanted her to return home and, when she refused, pulled out a knife and stabbed her. By the same token, any meetings outside the refuge can put the woman at high risk.

As Chapter 2 explained, there is a particularly high risk of severe, possibly life-threatening violence during the process of separation and divorce, and special attention must be paid to security considerations during these times.

Many refuges use a checklist in assessing the dangerousness of a perpetrator and another checklist to draw up individual security plans with the women in the refuge (see Appendix “Safety Planning”).

## 7.6 SECURITY PLANNING

In addition to individual security plans, it is necessary to draw up a security plan for the refuge as such. This serves the following purposes:

- To define preventive measures designed to rule out the occurrence of dangerous situations
- To ensure that everybody knows what to do in dangerous situations, so that the procedures don't have to be improvised when an emergency does occur
- To enable people to respond to dangerous situations as promptly and professionally as possible with a view to preventing or containing violence and its consequences
- In the wake of dangerous situations and acts of violence, to handle the after-effects, shock and trauma professionally so that everybody can deal with the incident and learn from it.

Security must also be a key issue in day-to-day life in the refuge. All the residents (and their children) should be told what risks are involved and what they need to do in the way of maintaining safety standards (for instance, never leaving the door open). Security issues must feature in the rules governing life in the refuge, but they should also be discussed at residents' meetings.

Where security is concerned, discipline is of paramount importance. Security precautions and the provisions of the security plan must be observed by everybody. It is necessary to carry out regular security drills and to keep evaluating and revising the refuge security plan.

## **7.7 SELF-DEFENCE**

Learning the skills of self-defence is an effective way of countering the danger of violent attack. The purpose of acquiring these skills is not to overpower the perpetrator but rather to outwit him by ingenuity and resourcefulness in order to defuse the situation or escape from it. Self-defence techniques developed specifically for women like WenDo have proved effective, and both refuge workers and residents should have the opportunity to attend training courses.

## **7.8 FIRE PREVENTION AND OTHER SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

It goes without saying that refuges must comply with other safety standards as well. For example, they must take the necessary fire prevention precautions. Some refuges have had to contend with fires and have found out the hard way how important fire prevention and fire fighting techniques can be. In most refuges large numbers of residents live within a relatively small area, which increases the risk of fire breaking out and of a high casualty rate if it does.

Most countries enforce stringent fire regulations. It is essential that refuges are aware of these regulations and comply with them. State authorities which fund refuges should also provide the financing for effective fire precautions. The same obviously applies to other safety measures like child-proof wall plugs and safety standards relating to toys, household appliances etc.

## **8 . C O M M U N I T Y L I F E I N T H E R E F U G E**

Refuges provide services that should meet the highest possible standards of efficiency and professionalism and therefore need a certain degree of institutionalisation. Institutional structures have their role to play, but they harbour the danger that the institution's rules may assume greater importance than the people on whose behalf the institution was established. Structural principles can loom so large that they rob the individuals' freedom and take control of their lives. A refuge must therefore be careful to maintain a judicious balance between the interests of the individual, the community and the institution.

Generally speaking, life in a refuge should be planned in such a way as to safeguard the following:

- The greatest possible degree of individual freedom – respect for privacy and human rights
- No more requirements and rules than are necessary in the given situation
- Participation, co-determination and consultation
- A spirit of solidarity and community
- Scope for feedback and complaints.

The hallmarks of life within the refuge community are: autonomy, solidarity, and respect for diversity and human rights. These considerations leave their mark on both the refuge's internal organisation and its discernible character, making up its unmistakable corporate identity.

### **8.1 REFUGE GUIDELINES – RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Women and children who seek shelter in a refuge are invariably in distress. The first thing they need is to feel safe and get their bearings. It is therefore very important to explain to new arrivals about the structures and principles of life in the refuge.

Refuge Guidelines should exist in written form and be available in various languages. The Refuge Guidelines should list the principles of the refuge, the rights of the women and children living in the refuge, the services provided to them and the rules and responsibilities. Refuge guidelines should not be made up exclusively of prohibitions and obligations – this would be a one-way process reminiscent of homes or youth hostels and would fail to take the women seriously.

Rules serve as the foundation for living together and thus need to be observed. At the same time, though, it is far easier to comply with rules if one understands why they exist and are important. It is therefore necessary to explain the purpose of the rules. The residents should perceive the rules as an aid to peaceful co-existence, not as coercion, even less as arbitrary regimentation.

In practice people tend to forget about rules, so it is important to keep repeating them – before something happens rather than after the event. Women and children might find it difficult in the beginning to bear everything in mind; they need time to find out and understand how the refuge works.

Complying with security rules can be a matter of life or death, so refuge residents should constantly be reminded of their importance.

### **8.1.1. Checklist for Refuge Guidelines**

The Refuge Guidelines should contain information about:

- The structures and principles of the refuge
- The services offered to the women and children
- The staff
- Security in the refuge
- Visiting regulations
- Responsibility for children
- The residents' rights
- The scope for participation (house assembly, refuge council ...)
- Rules and responsibilities
- Contact person(s) in the event of conflicts or complaints
- Guidelines for moving out

### **8.1.2. Modifying the rules**

The rules governing refuge life should be binding, but they should not be immutable, so it is important to keep reviewing them in the light of their appropriateness. The residents should be involved in the formulation of the rules and their approval – for instance, at a refuge assembly. However, the refuge staff should establish those rules that absolutely have to be observed (like security regulations).

It should be clear and understandable to the residents which rules can be changed and which cannot. The principles by which a refuge is run are part and parcel of the facility's corporate identity and cannot be modified at will. This too needs to be explained carefully.

### **8.1.3. Right to freedom of choice**

Special mention should be made of the right to self-determination in terms of the resident's own life. In practice this means that the resident has the right to leave the refuge at any time or to return to her violent partner if she wishes. However, she can always turn to the refuge again for shelter and support. In many cases women leave the refuge strengthened by the resources which they will need in finding a way out of their violent relationship.

### **8.1.4. Fair Procedures – Hearing**

One of the most difficult decisions that have to be taken in a refuge is whether or not a woman who has broken the rules and agreements should be prematurely dismissed from the refuge. Many women have nowhere else to live, which makes it very difficult for the refuge staff to expel her – and then there are her children, who also have to suffer the consequences. But if no decision is taken, other women and children might suffer.

One fundamental consideration should be which behaviour or which offences are so serious that they warrant dismissal. Because the consequences can be extremely far-reaching, this form of sanction should be used very sparingly, and there should be other consequences for breaking rules. We have also to bear in mind that rules are guidelines for communal living, and it would be unrealistic to demand that they should never be broken.

Often refuge guidelines define norms but do not prescribe procedures and sanctions in the event of non-compliance. It is therefore important to establish formal procedures to deal with

infringements in a constructive manner. Any such procedures must include and respect the rights of the women concerned.

Example: As we have said, expelling a woman from a refuge is one of the most far-reaching decisions. The team of a refuge for homeless women in Vienna, Austria, has, with the help of a supervisor, tried to develop a fair procedure and form of hearing to deal with this problem.

The procedure can be organised along the lines of the following questions:

- What was the infringement to be sanctioned?
- Who is acting as the “prosecutor” ? (i.e. who is responsible for monitoring compliance with the rules and reporting infringements?)
- Is this a “first offence” or have there been prior infringements? If so, how were they dealt with before?
- Before which body will the hearing take place? Who is responsible?
- Who has a seat on this body?
- When will the infringement be dealt with?
- Who will present the arguments representing the refuge rules?
- How is the woman concerned represented, does she have the right to be present at the hearing?
- Who will “defend” the woman concerned – her counsellor or another staff member? (It is very important that somebody takes her side and is accepted as defending her without being seen as “betraying” the refuge rules.)
- Should representatives of the residents be present?
- How should the hearing be conducted?
- How can the best decision be reached? What are the alternatives?
- Who takes the final decision?
- When, how and by whom will it be enforced?
- How will this decision be explained to the woman concerned and the other residents, and by whom?

A fair hearing which the residents can understand helps to build up and maintain trust in the refuge. Intelligible procedures avoid decisions taken by the staff appearing arbitrary. This is one way of offsetting the imbalance of power between refuge staff and residents.

## **8.2. FORMS OF PARTICIPATION**

Women living in a refuge should be involved in its organisation and administration. This approach, by promoting the principle of help for self-help, requires women to participate and is a factor in empowering them and supporting them in the process of regaining their self-confidence.

Many women and children who seek shelter in a refuge have been exposed to a great deal of violence and abuse. Some of them have spent years in isolation imposed by their partners or husbands. Some have had their self-esteem systematically eroded. Life in the refuge, founded as it is upon non-violence, solidarity, involvement and democratic structures, constitutes an alternative way of life to the violent relationship they have left.

This section suggests a number of ways in which participation and democratic structures can be practised in a women’s refuge.

### **8.2.1. Refuge Assembly**

In many refuges the most important forum for involvement and co-determination is the Refuge Assembly. It is customary to hold a Refuge Assembly at least once a week as a forum for all the residents to voice their concerns and ideas.

**The purpose of the Refuge Assembly might be defined as follows: “The Refuge Assembly should be an integral aspect of the refuge’s democratic practice. It should be treated as an important opportunity to build up the residents’ social skills, helping them to learn to adjust to others, to stand up for their own interests but to be aware of the interests of others, and to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable demands.**

(BMFSFJ 2000, Vol. 191.2, 31)

When organising regular Refuge Assemblies, it can be helpful to consider the following:

- All the residents should attend.
- An agenda should be drawn up in advance to structure the proceedings.
- All the women should have the right and be encouraged to add items to the agenda.
- The agenda of the Assembly might include such issues as the introduction or amendment of refuge rules, the election of refuge representatives, planning joint activities, or the discussion of specific issues (e.g. with external experts) etc.
- It is advisable that two persons facilitate the assembly; a viable model would be that a woman living in the refuge together with one refuge worker act as facilitators.
- It is important to define what rights and powers the Refuge Assembly has: for instance, the introduction and amendment of refuge rules etc.
- Any decisions reached by the Refuge Assembly should be written down and displayed on a notice board or made public in some other way.

### **8.2.2. Children’s assemblies**

The children living in the refuge should also have assemblies where they can discuss matters important to them. Young people often want to have their own assembly. These assemblies are usually facilitated by a child care worker or, in the case of young people, self-organised.

### **8.2.3. Organisational meetings**

Numerous organisational matters have to be dealt with in a women’s refuge. In many refuges the women play an active role in running the joint household. This calls for detailed planning in allocating the various tasks. Such discussions are perhaps best not conducted during the Refuge Assembly, because there is the danger that too little time would then remain to deal with the Assembly agenda as such.

### **8.2.4. Refuge Council**

It is important for the residents to be able to voice their concerns and wishes in the presence of the refuge staff and the members of the board. Setting up a Refuge Council creates an opportunity for this. It should meet at regular intervals and be attended by representatives of the residents, the staff and the board.

The residents should receive assistance in electing representatives (the Refuge Assembly is an appropriate forum for the election procedure).

The Refuge Council is a key factor in empowerment. It ensures that (a) the residents are involved in the decision-making process, and (b) that the more dominant of the residents do not exert a disproportionate influence.

### **8.2.5. Conflict resolution team**

Living conditions in a refuge can often be cramped, and this easily leads to conflicts which must be defused as quickly as possible. Several of the staff members should therefore have received training in mediation and conflict resolution, so that they can form a conflict resolution team. It is also advisable to pass on conflict resolution skills to the residents.

### **8.2.6. Obstacles to participation**

Women and children living in a refuge might be reluctant to participate, especially at the beginning of their stay. They need time. However, the staff should always provide for their involvement in the planning and practical running of the refuge. It is important to invest special energy in the residents' involvement. The resultant processes of argumentation, discussion, decision-making, dealing with conflicting interests and other conflicts are, as has been stated, a valuable learning process for everybody concerned.

It might save time if the refuge staff took all the decisions on their own, but the residents would soon get the feeling that they are being "administered" instead of being empowered actively to determine their own lives and that of the refuge community. A further drawback of top-down decision-making is that people who are treated like children tend to behave accordingly by putting up resistance or becoming passive but not acting like the independent-minded adults they are.

## **8.3. FURTHER ASPECTS OF COMMUNAL LIFE IN THE REFUGE**

Over and above their rights and responsibilities, there are further factors moulding the communal lives of the women and children in a refuge. Non-violence and an equitable allocation of power are important goals, although they are not always easy to realise. The women have an active role to play in life in the refuge, as reflected in the available scope for providing feedback, participating in external evaluation and becoming involved in the process of social change. Diversity and solidarity afford opportunities which need to be used as widely as possible.

### **8.3.1. Preventing violence**

Every refuge upholds the important principle that no violence is tolerated. When a number of people live in cramped conditions under a single roof, as they often do in a refuge, there are bound to be conflicts and emotional outbursts. Psychological and physical violence can occur even in a refuge – between the children and young people, between the women or towards children.

One important pillar of community life in the refuge is a constructive approach to dealing with violence. It is not enough to proclaim the rule that violence is not allowed. Non-violent co-existence requires everybody to make an active contribution, detecting and preventing

potentially violent conflict and practising a constructive manner of handling conflicts (see above). One aspect of this is the need for women and children to learn to stand up for themselves in the face of violence.

Children and young people also need to learn that a refuge is a place where violence is not tolerated. It is therefore necessary to work with mothers on non-violent education.

### **8.3.2. Balance of power**

Even in a refuge, despite the best intentions of establishing equality, power is not distributed equally. The refuge workers are in a stronger position than the residents, while the children are in a weaker position than the adults. Women who speak the language of the country concerned are at an advantage over those who don't, and so on. It is impossible to eliminate these imbalances in a refuge, so it is all the more important to deal with them effectively.

The goals should be:

- To create an awareness of power imbalances and to address them
- To offset them where possible (e.g. through involvement and upholding the rights of the residents)
- To treat difference and diversity as strengths rather than drawbacks (e.g. pointing out that a woman speaks such-and-such a language – and perhaps others too – rather than that she doesn't speak the local language)
- To work constantly on the goal of preventing the abuse of power.

As has been outlined above, participation and the practice of democratic structures are important approaches to reducing the unequal distribution and abuse of power and preventing violence.

### **8.3.3. Suggestions and complaints**

One feature of the democratic and professional organisation of a refuge is that women who have availed themselves of the services provided by a refuge are asked for their feedback. The purpose is to carry out an internal evaluation and thus to improve standards (see chapter 11). The responses should include both positive and negative aspects of life in the refuge.

There are various methods of collecting feedback. One is by means of a questionnaire to be filled out when a woman leaves the refuge. Another option is a "letter box" for suggestions and complaints. Feedback should be anonymous: residents have to rely on the help of the staff, so that voicing criticism personally could be difficult.

There should also be a body or a person to which a resident can address complaints if she feels her rights have been infringed. This could be a member of the board. There should also be an opportunity to bring complaints to an external body such as the National Network of Refuges, that could serve as an ombudswoman for refuge residents and provide mediation in cases of conflicts, or another independent body (most democratic countries have established citizens' advocates offices for lodging complaints).

However the refuge organises this, the idea is that every resident should be informed (for instance, in the Refuge Guidelines) where she can register complaints. Refuge workers are extremely committed and do their best. Still, they can make mistakes and overlook someone's problems when things get hectic. The right to lodge complaints should be taken seriously as a fundamental civic right in democratic societies.

#### **8.3.4. Participation in external evaluations**

Regular external evaluations are another important means of monitoring and improving the quality of service in refuges. Women and children availing themselves of these services should always be invited to take part in such evaluations. (For more on this topic, see chapter 1.)

#### **8.3.5. Involvement in social change**

The residents should not just be involved in internal processes within the refuge and the moulding of the structures of communal living but should also be given the opportunity to participate in outside activities, public relations and awareness raising work.

Of course nobody should be compelled to participate, and safeguarding women's security and anonymity must take precedence. On the other hand, women need to be treated as socially aware and active individuals and be invited to contribute to various activities in line with their interests and needs.

Examples:

- Refuge residents are involved in the preparations for International Women's Day on March 8 and the campaign "16 Days Against Violence" from November 25 to December 10
- Residents accompany refuge workers to meetings with politicians
- Refuge Assemblies discuss such issues as women's poverty

#### **8.3.6. Diversity**

The values upheld by refuges include respect and tolerance towards all women and children and an acceptance of diversity. In most refuges women of different nationalities, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and religions live together. This diversity is factual and constitutes an enrichment.

Such differences can, however, spark conflicts and negative reactions like isolation and discrimination. Racist, sexist, xenophobic and homophobic attitudes in society at large are reflected in life in the refuge. It is an important function of refuges to address and change such attitudes.

To cater to the cultural and linguistic diversity in a refuge, the following can be useful:

- Staff may be recruited from various cultural backgrounds: residents find it easier to open up to them, and talking in your mother tongue is always easier
- Migrant and minority women should be especially encouraged to engage in participatory activities such as being elected a refuge representative
- Training for refuge workers: women from different cultures are asked to familiarise refuge workers with the features of their culture
- Celebrating feast days in various religions and cultures: the refuge residents can jointly celebrate Orthodox Christmas and New Year, for instance, or Moslem and Jewish feast days
- Joint activities centred on a specific cultural feature: Roma or Sinti women, women from rural areas might, for instance, talk about their culture in the house assembly or cook a traditional meal ...

### **8.3.7. Solidarity**

Another major objective of life in a refuge is to promote solidarity. Planning joint activities, offering mutual support, carrying out activities in the refuge or talking to each other about what one has been through are just some of the various ways of strengthening the feeling of solidarity.

Women who have spent some time in the refuge act as role models for new arrivals; they may serve as “mentors”, helping the women who have not yet got their bearings. Some women who have stayed in a refuge return as volunteers or staff members. These are extremely important factors in the empowerment process.

## **9 . PUBLIC RELATIONS AND AWARENESS - RAISING**

It is the aim of public relations and awareness-raising to create and influence the process of public discourse, communication and the perception of male violence against women and of women's refuges. PR is a must! Who is supposed to care about women's refuges if not women activists and refuge workers themselves? Male violence against women is still a taboo in many countries. Public interest seems low. Single contacts and isolated supporters cannot ensure the continuation of refuge work. Refuge workers need supporting networks for successful PR.

### **9.1 PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S REFUGES**

When founding a women's refuge, it is important to bear in mind that even a women's refuge needs some kind of 'advertising'. There are several reasons for providing information about the work of a women's refuge. These are:

- To make the existence of a women's refuge publicly known
- To underline the importance and the benefit of such an organisation
- To create a positive image within the local environment
- To build confidence within the political and social environment
- To persuade important players / the public to back the refuge's concerns and goals
- To create supporters' networks for reasons of political lobbying and financial support

When developing a comprehensive information policy and formulating the message, there are five points that absolutely must be taken into consideration. The first is decisive in developing a corporate identity:

- Who are we?

Two questions deal more generally with the final output:

- Who are the target groups?
- What methods have the highest multiplication factor in relation to our means?

And the last two questions relate more directly to content:

- How do we define the services we offer? or What is a/our refuge, and what it is NOT?
- What are the implications of giving information about our refuge in terms of safety and confidentiality?

#### **9.1.1 Who is sending the message?**

First of all it has to be clear who is sending the message. What is the refuge, which services can it offer? What is the understanding of the refuge workers and the responsible women of a women's refuge? These questions should help to develop a corporate identity. It is important that refuge workers agree on the goals and contents of PR activities. Positive self-image ("We the refuge workers are proud of our work") and a solution-based (vs. problem-based) approach are prerequisites for successful PR.

### 9.1.2 Target groups

Ideally, it is good to think through consciously whom women's refuges wish to address with our information. Who is the recipient of our message? This will to a significant degree influence both contents and methods. It is advisable to focus on relevant target groups within and outside the women's refuge.

**Internally** communication and information are directed at the refuge workers, the board, the association and its members, women living in the refuge and colleagues at other women's refuges or women's support services. Internal information should comprise up-to-date information material which covers all areas of work, publications and studies and the promotion of further training. Regular meetings are the focus of internal communications; the refuge workers have weekly team meetings, while the women living in the refuge attend regular house meetings. The board will be informed two or three times a year. Refuge workers of different women's refuges will meet to exchange experiences and discuss campaigns or initiatives which may go beyond daily refuge work, or participate in training seminars.

External public relations should address three main groups: firstly experts and expert groups, e.g. from specific federations, institutes, political parties, parliaments and advisory committees or members of parliament; secondly supporters from society and business, e.g. victims / survivors of male violence, relatives of murdered victims, supporters, sponsors and contributors; thirdly representatives and consumers of the media like reporters, editors, readers or radio-listeners.

It might be a good idea to list not only target groups, but also the core message that will be the organising element of the contents chosen. After listing all groups and possible messages, we might end up deciding that the same means of communication are useful for several groups, but still, we are likely to get better results if this is the result of a conscious process.

A few examples of such pairs include:

<b>Target group:</b>	<b>Core message:</b>
Women in violent relationships	"We are here to support you", "You have a right to safety and security."
Other services (e.g. child welfare)	"Refuges provide safety for battered women and children."
Potential donors	"We need your support to provide a safe environment for battered women and their children and to empower them."

### 9.1.3 Methods

Given the limited human and financial resources of refuges, it is very important to identify out PR methods with the highest possible multiplication factor. Before we can do this, however, we need to decide whether we want to reach national, regional or local audiences with our message.

Once this has been decided, it is useful to brainstorm on the different media that can be used in the given geographical context, as well as the effectiveness and cost involved. For example, the electronic media, both radio and television, reach a wide section of the population, and the target group receives the information without actually seeking it. At the same time, this has the highest production costs; in addition the costs of buying air time in the electronic media are generally very high. Thus, if the refuge decides to use this option, special attention must be given to fundraising, to resources that can be shared (for example video spots produced somewhere else which can be easily adapted) and to getting as much in-kind media support

from the TV channels and radio stations as possible. Another option is to target the acquiring of “free media” (more about this in Section 9.3 Campaigns and other activities on special occasions), which can be very effective, but if it has not been done before, the effects are much less predictable than by donated or bought airing time.

What can be more beneficial is to look for journalists who are open-minded and interested in the problem of domestic violence. It is important to invest some time in talking to them and explaining the context of domestic violence, especially the impact of it. It is not always necessary to inform the press as a whole but supply your journalists “of trust” with relevant information and work out with them how to address the issue of domestic violence in their media. One important issue that should definitely be addressed is how to interview victims. In view of the principles of how the media work, it might in some cases be important to talk the victim herself. Sensitising journalists is the most beneficial approach in combining the needs of both sides. And educating individual journalists is more realistic and more rewarding than trying to educate a whole group of professionals!

There are, however, other methods that can be very effective, and sometimes it works wonders if one can combine two cost-effective means that have different handicaps. An example of this would be flyers and Internet websites. Flyers can be very cheaply produced (also, because part of the surface can be used to list donors; in-kind donations from printing houses might be forthcoming), but to be able to produce large quantities, it has to stay brief. The Internet is becoming increasingly available to a growing group of women. On its own, the Internet is more a medium of the converted: you need to seek the information actively to get it. However, if the small flyer provides links to the refuge’s website where virtually unlimited information can be made available, we have successfully combined two cost-effective methods. As far as operating an Internet website is concerned, it is useful to know that – especially newly starting companies continuously look for reference clients, for whom they create pages at little or no cost, so that they have work to show to other prospective clients. If the refuge itself does not have a staff member or an activist who can be trusted to create a website, you might be able to find such a company.

Examples of PR Instruments:

- Stickers for buses, taxis, public transport
- Posters for schools, youth hostels, hospitals, doctors, lawyers, social services, counselling centres, churches
- Information material, leaflets, flyers, folders
- Website
- Regular newsletter
- Press releases and newspaper articles
- Participation in panels, expert meetings, conferences or political lectures
- Organisation of events like fund-raising parties, public exhibitions, marches
- Acceptance of invitations by political parties, local associations, social organisations etc.
- Radio, television and newspaper interviews
- Collaboration with politicians and other decision-makers
- public speak-out (letting victims and relatives of victims talk publicly)

#### **9.1.4 Definitions (what it is, what it is NOT)**

The present Manual's aim is to provide certain standards relating to refuges. As it is, some countries do not have any services that could be defined as refuges, so that in these countries the members of our target group are purely notional and sometimes derive from news reports or from direct or indirect experiences abroad. At the other end of the spectrum, we find countries with a high level of activity and in some cases with widely divergent services.

Either way, when planning to make our services known to a given target group, it is very important to take into account that we and they might not share a common definition of our services. Bearing this in mind, it is useful to include in our information both what a refuge IS and can do, and also, what it is NOT. When coping with very limited scope for presenting this information, build on the experiences of staff and volunteers to define the most common points about which potential clients, other service providers, and potential donors were not clear in the past, including such objective issues as regional limits of acceptance, maximum duration of stay and myths like "refuges break up families".

#### **9.1.5 Obstacles - What information NOT to give**

The conclusions below are drawn solely from incidents that have actually occurred.

Once a flyer or even an official letter leaves our hands, we can no longer decide where it will end up. Even if it is only circulated in the refuge itself, info materials have a life of their own, as it were. Taking this into account, if the secret address is an important feature of the service, it is crucial not to use either the address or pictures of the house anywhere in any kind of information material, including the letterhead of the refuge. The anonymity of the refuge staff might be another safety issue to consider; so before automatically listing staff members with photographs in the public yearly report, consult each other. It is unrealistic to assume that the people you address for funding and the people from whom you want to hide your refuge do not have anybody in common. However tempting it might be to organise a fund-raising event at the refuge, consider another location. Donors have to come to understand that by maintaining a policy of strict confidentiality, you are actually doing your job, and the price of their support cannot be an event which jeopardises the existence of the service.

### **9.2 CREATING AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM**

It is important to create awareness of the issue of male violence against women, its causes and consequences and the exit strategies, otherwise violence against women and children will never stop.

Given the very limited resources of refuges, there are two issues that need to be taken into account in achieving highly effective ways of informing target groups about the problem. One of them is the issue of multiplication, which has already been discussed under "Methods" in the previous sub-chapter in connection with information campaigns. Campaigns are, however, not the only way to raise awareness. It can be just as useful to target specific groups of multipliers, such as teachers, members of helping professions in other services, police, etc.; in other words, groups of people who themselves deal with victims and survivors, or train others to do so.

The other issue is co-operation on different levels, so as to use the added value of joint efforts.

### **National co-operation**

The most obvious form of co-operation is between organisations of similar profile, in this case refuges, or between refuges and other types of women's organisations dealing with violence against women. By sharing the workload and the financial burden, more effort and money can be put into actually bringing the issue to the attention of the target group(s).

Some ideas for sharing and co-operation include:

- The financing of designs, texts, etc., which need to be created once anyway, and cost the same, whether they are ordered by one organisation or several.
- Co-ordinated activities which divide the target groups geographically or by institutions among co-operating organisations.
- Joint fund-raising.
- Bringing in different experiences of the same issue (e.g. refuges have a more in-depth view of the stories of women, whereas hotlines have a more diverse experience of the issue in society).

Another common form of co-operation is **multi-sectoral**. It can occur between different types of NGOs as well as between NGOs and municipal or government bodies. In both cases, the model that seems to be most often used is that the refuges contribute the expertise as well as qualitative and quantitative data relating to the phenomenon, whereas the partner organisation has a strong mainstreaming effect, thereby making target groups which are not as easily accessible to the refuge more open and understanding to the issues at hand. One example of co-operation between different NGOs is Amnesty International's global violence against women campaign, for which they chose regional and national strategic partners in the form of women's NGOs active in the field of violence against women. As for NGO-GO co-operation, the most successful examples so far have been training seminars and other activities organised together with the police.

## **9.3 CAMPAIGNS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES TO MARK SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

For many organisations, especially for those which are directly involved in providing services such as refuges, free media coverage is more often than not the only way to gain publicity. If you are lucky, the local and national press already know that on certain issues it is very useful to have your voice. If this is not the case, you might need to let the press know about your standpoint on certain things. The question is, how to do it effectively.

It is important to inform journalists regularly and actively. This requires good information material (concise and precise), updated statistics and information folders. Regular press releases should cover current events. It is helpful to prepare separate lists for local, regional and national recipients (newspapers, television channels, radio, local associations, contacts with individual journalists). Always keep the lists up-to-date!

### **9.3.1 Obstacles**

Anybody who has tried to attract the attention of the press knows very well that a press release or a press conference even – however important the issue may be – is not particularly attractive to the press. They tend to look for relevance with some specific news item, but you might not want to sit around and wait for a tragedy to happen that is outside the public's regular experience of domestic violence. One possible strategy is to follow the daily press closely, and whenever a relevant news item appears, issue a statement relating to that event.

### 9.3.2 Good practice

Long-running campaigns are always more likely to have an impact than short-term ones. It is not necessarily the case that long-term campaigns are more expensive. There are openings for such campaigns which are very efficient. Here are some examples:

There are a few **international days** every year commemorating women's rights and the issue of violence against women. In such a context, it is more likely that your press statement will be quoted, as the press has its "relevance" in a larger context.

There are several other national and international days and anniversaries on which both print and electronic media regularly report, like International Human Rights Day, International HIV/AIDS Day and All Saints' Day. In NANE's experience, as these days recur from year to year, journalists are often desperate to find a new angle from which to approach the regular feature. So it can work to look up every such day in the calendar and mark a deadline approximately a week before, when you send out a statement to the press regarding the connections between domestic violence and that given special day, so that you are quoted in the features that appear on the given anniversary.

It is also possible to **create your own special days**, such as the anniversary of opening the refuge.

For any of the above events, you are more likely to gain media coverage if you plan a special event and don't just issue a press release.

#### **The example of the Silent Witness Exhibition**

NANE Women's Rights Association launched its Silent Witnesses project in 1998 to coincide with the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence', which we mark with some form of participatory public events every year. The idea for the **Silent Witnesses Exhibition** came from the US-based campaign of the same name. We contacted the original organizers and were sent extensive resource materials and a lot of encouragement. We created the first fifteen sculptures on our own, made possible exclusively by the donation of money and the work of our own volunteers. The original Exhibition has gradually been reduced in numbers, as the material has suffered in the various outdoor activities.

In 2002 we used the OSI-NWP 16 days media campaign funding to create an SW Exhibition of 40 figures which was almost representative of the number of women murdered every year (minimum one woman a week) in domestic violence. This was a rather unusual usage of the funding source, as most applicants in other countries financed TV spots or billboard posters with the money. However, because even the maximum funding was relatively small given the circumstances of the Hungarian media, and as it is not typical of Hungarian media enterprises (televisions or billboard advertising companies) to be very charitable, our strategy was based on creating an event which would catch the attention of the news media instead. The project lived up to our expectations by bringing in the type and quantity of free media which would not have been available from the funding OSI-NWP was able to provide: after the first march and exhibition which took place in November 2003, every evening news showed the exhibition and interviews with staff and survivors, and every daily paper ran an item on it the next day, some of them even giving it extended coverage the following weekend.

The event-like use of the Silent Witnesses, plus the fact that they provide good visual material, has proved to be a good tactic. In fact, we know from subsequent experience that this effect is slow to wear off: this year we used the Witnesses again on International Women's Day, and again, there was considerable media interest.

Others have also been convinced of the usefulness of this project: foreign NGOs whose members either saw our exhibition at international fora (such as the European Youth Center Budapest), or who learned about it through presentations by OSI, have also picked up the idea,

and by now several NGOs are running their own exhibitions in the Central-Eastern European region.

A woman with her five-year old son was looking at the figures and reading their stories. She said to her son: "Look, I could have been one of them." A middle-aged woman: "You are doing something very important here. I was in such a situation twenty years ago. I had nobody to talk to about it. But now I see I was lucky. I'm alive and well." (Quotations from people at the exhibition).

## **9.4 CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS**

Organising conferences can have several benefits. As always, it is essential to consider the multiplication factor; that is, to ensure that the limited resources bring the highest possible results.

Conferences themselves can be a further type of special event creating relevance for news coverage. A good PR for such a conference ensures that from the first day many more people benefit from the conference than those participating. As conferences are a type of more conventional activity, the very fact that a conference is organised on the topic of domestic violence, on the role of refugees, etc. can have a mainstreaming effect in the community that hears about it.

Nevertheless, in the first place conferences and other types of meetings are meant primarily to benefit the participants. There follow a few points that need to be considered for an effective meeting (See Handout).

## **9.5 TRAINING COURSES**

### **9.5.1 Internal training courses**

As one cannot get a standardised degree that qualifies for working in a refuge, most refuges offer training to their new recruits, be they volunteers or staff members. So far this seems to be the best way to ensure a continuity of the service. Such training courses can have a role in integrating new people into the team, so it is advisable to include experienced staff members or volunteers in the training programme, either as resource persons or even as trainers.

### **9.5.2 Training courses for partners**

Refuges, whether they operate their own 24-hour hotline or not, rely heavily on services that refer clients to them, or which work with the women and children who stay in the refuge. Whether offered by the refuge or jointly organised by several services, agencies and institutions, training courses provided to staff in other agencies are very useful. The content might vary widely depending on the given circumstances: in some countries awareness of domestic violence is higher than in others. Therefore some training courses might go into more detail about how and what the refuge does for its clients, whereas others might stress the basics of domestic violence.

#### **Some recommendations for such training courses:**

- Whenever possible, these training courses should take place outside the usual working space of participants.

- The training course should involve a small group (maximum 15 participants), which enables the trainers to facilitate most of the learning process through interactive exercises rather than frontal presentations.
- The training team should include both refugee trainer and a trainer from the sector whose members are being trained; in mixed-gender groups it is important that the training team is also of mixed gender.

Example: Wave Training Manual

## **9.6 SPECIAL SERVICES FOR DONORS (SUPPORTERS) AND FUNDERS**

It can be essential to have PR activities which show donors and potential donors that your refuge is functioning and using funding and donations in the way it is intended.

Some ways to do this:

- create a regular newsletter (it might be enough to make a joint summary of the funding reports, which you have to produce anyway) and send this information to your updated list of (potential) funders and donors,
- invite supporters to all public events that you organise or participate in;
- name and give full credit to sponsors (e.g. on homepage, in publications)

### **Obstacles**

Most refuges operate in an NGO form. This form gives a relatively high independence in certain areas. But it can also be the source of financial difficulties. Furthermore, in some countries NGOs are generally mistrusted, because there is a large number of party-politically affiliated organisations and corrupt, money-laundering organisations which abuse the NGO format.

## 10 . NETWORKING AND CO - OPERATION

Women's refuge work is embedded in a network of institutions and services which can be supportive for the abused woman's issues if the representatives of these institutions are well informed about the special dynamics of domestic violence. Refuge workers have to discuss with their clients which procedures may be necessary and which institutions have to be contacted or could offer some kind of support. They accompany their clients to some of these institutions if they wish – to the police or the court, for example. As a result, women's refuges co-operate closely and continuously with other agencies. It is therefore advisable to develop strategies of co-operation and networking in good time, so that they are in place if needed.

### 10.1 THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S REFUGES IN NETWORKING AND CO-OPERATION

**Networking and co-operation among women's refuges takes place on two levels:**

- On the one hand, it is very important to develop networks with other women's refuges and women's support services active in the field of prevention of domestic violence. Such support services include women's counselling centres or women's helplines in the region and nationwide. A network of support services for abused women and their children serves as a source of support and exchange internally as well as a common voice against violence against women externally. This highly issue-specific coalition can be broadened by involving other women's NGOs in order to make a joint stand for women's rights.
- On the other hand, inter-agency co-operation is a necessary instrument to support abused women and their children and prevent domestic violence in general.

Women's refuges provide their knowledge and expertise to other professionals working in community or government-based services e.g. social and health care professionals, police, judges, prosecutors and teachers.

It is important that refuges are involved in education and public awareness raising activities in communities (although it is the government's responsibility to provide education programmes for professionals and similar activities). Refuges can also initiate these activities.

Through co-operation, refuge workers can also promote the rights of the victims in services and in communities.

Co-operation with other agencies can prove difficult. The reasons include the following:

- lack of knowledge of each other's work, goals and problems
- sector barrier thinking (or territorial thinking)
- domineering behaviour
- negative competition
- shortage of financial resources
- problematic attitudes, prejudices and bad experiences.

## 10.2 WAYS TO PROMOTE NETWORKING AND CO-OPERATION

There are different ways and methods to improve contacts and co-operation between refuge workers and representatives of institutions and services and other professionals. These include:

- Multi-professional training, interdisciplinary seminars
- Joint projects
- Multi-professional working groups
- Networking of co-ordinators
- Local action plans for prevention of violence against women (in intimate relationships).

## 10.3 TARGET GROUPS OF NETWORKING AND CO-OPERATION

Co-operation is unsatisfactory when only sought on a case-by-case basis. Personal and professional contacts and supportive networks are necessary to find supportive structures and services for women victims of violence and their children.

### **Refuge and other women's rights organisation networks**

Women's refuges have created networks on local, national and European levels. The most important goal is to exchange experience. Moreover, refuge networks offer mutual support, organise campaigns and set out to lobby political actors jointly.

Example: Some national networks of women's refuges are (see also Appendix: WAVE Focal Points):

- Women's Aid Federation England, [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- Austrian Women's Shelter Network, [www.aoef.at](http://www.aoef.at)
- ROKS, [www.roks.se](http://www.roks.se)
- Northern Ireland Women's Aid, [www.niwaf.org](http://www.niwaf.org)
- ZIF- Zentrale Informationsstelle der autonomen Frauenhäuser, [www.zif-frauen.de](http://www.zif-frauen.de)
- LOKK (Denmark), [www.lokk.dk](http://www.lokk.dk)

Example: Other examples of women's rights networks:

- WIDE – Women in Development Europe, [www.wide.org](http://www.wide.org)
- EWLA – European Women's Lawyers Association, [www.ewla.org](http://www.ewla.org)
- EWL – European Women's Lobby, [www.womenlobby.org](http://www.womenlobby.org)
- Network of East-West Women, [www.neww.org](http://www.neww.org)
- Profem, [www.profem.cz](http://www.profem.cz)
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, [www.wilpf.int.ch](http://www.wilpf.int.ch)
- Women in Black, <http://womeninblack.net>

### **Child protection services**

Close co-operation with social workers in child protection, family counselling centres, family guidance clinics/facilities, youth welfare institutions etc. is vital. The top priority must be women's and children's safety.

**Social welfare services**

The objective is to secure financial support for women with little or no income.

**Support services for migrant women**

The goals are to share information in general about the social impact of battering, and to provide information on women's rights and legislation in the country in question.

**Migrant authorities**

In general, the objective is to raise awareness of the special vulnerability of migrant women and their specific problems, which are often connected with their legal status.

**Health care services**

The main objectives of co-operation in this field are to support health care professionals to avoid medicalisation of the victims (e.g. battering is not a psychiatric problem for the victim), to influence medical responses to the victims, and to promote the recording of medical evidence of physical, sexual or psychological violence against the woman. This is done by sharing information about the impact of battering (violence) on women's and children's health. Refuge workers accompany women to medical examinations.

**Police**

The main goal is to promote victims' legal rights by sharing general information about the impact of violence against women. Training of police forces is therefore essential.

**Legal system**

The main goal is to promote the development of sensitive approaches and services for women victims.

**Housing authorities**

The main objective is to promote women's safe housing and economic independence.

**Political institutions**

The aim is to give information to decision-makers about the victims' problems and needs and the need for protection.

**Multi-agency co-operation**

Co-operation does not always have to happen on a one-to-one basis. Bringing together many agencies dealing with domestic violence clearly enhances the effectiveness of prevention. It is important, however, to establish multi-agency co-operation on a regular basis.

Examples of successful networking and intervention projects are:

- BIG ([www.big-interventionszentrale.de](http://www.big-interventionszentrale.de))
- The Swiss intervention projects ([www.frauenhaus-schweiz.ch/d\\_links.html#bip](http://www.frauenhaus-schweiz.ch/d_links.html#bip))
- Domestic Violence Fora in the UK ([www.womensaid.org.uk/network/a-z\\_for\\_a.htm](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/network/a-z_for_a.htm))
- Round table groups in Germany and elsewhere
- Domestic Violence Intervention Centres in Austria ([www.interventionsstelle-wien.at](http://www.interventionsstelle-wien.at))

## 12. ADDITIONAL SOCIAL NEEDS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Assistance and intervention in cases of violence against women must be comprehensive in scope and gauged to the specific situation of the woman and her children. What is needed is crisis support followed up by medium and long-term support strategies.

Women's refuges have to be integrated in a system of preventive action and activities. The following section gives a brief overview of the most important aspects of such a system.

### 24-HOUR HELPLINES

A toll-free **24-hour helpline** that provides support and crisis counselling and refers women to face-to-face services such as refuges, counselling centres or the police is an essential part of support services for women victims of violence. Support by a helpline is often the first step to a safer life.

Every country should operate at least one nationwide women's helpline. In larger countries there should also be regional helplines. National helplines provide important initial counselling to abused women, as envisaged in a Council of Ministers' decision (Council Framework Decision of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings). These helplines should be funded by national governments and operated by women's NGOs with long-standing experience in providing counselling and support for victims of violence.

Examples: Women's helpline against male violence in Austria ([www.frauenhelpline.at](http://www.frauenhelpline.at)), National Women's Line in Finland ([www.finnishwomenline.com](http://www.finnishwomenline.com)), National Domestic Violence Helpline in the UK ([http://www.womensaid.org.uk/help/national\\_helpline.htm](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/help/national_helpline.htm)).

### NON-RESIDENT COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

In addition to refuges, women exposed to violence should be able to turn to non-resident counselling services. Many women need counselling and support but do not (yet) want to move into a refuge. There should thus be an adequate network of counselling centres. For severely traumatised women and children, additional facilities – like trauma centres, where they can rest for a few hours – are necessary. Trauma centres should provide counselling, child supervision, meals, medical care and crisis support. Many countries still do not have such centres.

### LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND THERAPY

Long-term support should be available for women who have been exposed to violence. In some cases this support may have to continue for a year or more. Herman ("Trauma and Recovery") says that trauma can be remedied only after the woman has gained a feeling of being safe. After leaving a violent relationship, a woman may undergo psychic crises and depression. It is important to make long-term therapy available to such women free of charge.

## **SUPPORT AND PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN**

As has been pointed out, children are always affected by domestic violence, either directly or indirectly, and need massive care and support. If long-term damage is to be averted, all children must receive crisis support and therapy. One of the indispensable standards of a refuge must therefore be that counselling and care extend to children.

It is also important to develop methods and good practice, for example for schools, on how to recognise children who are exposed to violence (and/or sexual abuse) and how to help them.

## **WITHHOLDING OF CUSTODY AND VISITING RIGHTS FOR VIOLENT FATHERS**

Especially during the separation phase, children run a high risk of undergoing violence. An English study (Hester 1998) shows that children may be subjected to various forms of violence when a father exercises his visiting rights. Men may take revenge on their wives by inflicting violence on the children.

A violent father does damage to his children and thus disqualifies himself from the role of father. Before he can exercise his custody and visiting rights he must terminate his violent behaviour, face up to the fact that he has a problem with violence (for instance by attending an anti-violence training course), and work slowly and without pressure on helping his children to gain or regain their trust in him. So during the initial phase of separation a violent father should not be given visiting rights. Only when the violence has stopped and the father is working on his problem should contact with the children gradually be restored – provided that the children want to see him.

## **MIGRANT WOMEN AND PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE**

Migrant women should have access to counselling and therapy in their mother tongue or in the language which they speak best.

The applicable legislation should ensure that migrant women are given a residence permit independent of their husbands and that they receive a work permit and social benefits.

Women without legal residence status who are exposed to violence tend not to go to the police. They run the risk of forced repatriation, while the perpetrator will often get away without prosecution. Women in this situation should not be repatriated but should be granted a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.

## **WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES**

Measures to assist and support women with disabilities include wheelchair compatibility in women's refuges and counselling centres, information material gauged to the special needs of women with sight or hearing impairments, and specially trained support personnel for women with mental disabilities.

## **THE UNSUITABILITY OF INTER-PERSONAL AND FAMILY THERAPY AND MEDIATION IN VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS**

Inter-personal and family therapy and mediation are unsuitable approaches to dealing with a violent relationship because they take too little account of the threat to the victim and the imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Domestic violence against women is not a problem that occurs within the relationship but is caused by the person practising the violence. Work on terminating the violence should therefore be confined to the perpetrator (see below).

## **WORKING WITH PERPETRATORS**

**To terminate the violence it is necessary to work with the perpetrator. Perpetrator programmes are just one form of intervention; they need to be integrated in an overall intervention scheme and coupled with legal protection and support for the victim.**

*(Gondolf 2001, in Logar/Rösemann/Zürcher 2002).*

The victim's needs and safety must be the first priority in perpetrator programmes, which must always work in close cooperation with women's support services.

Example: Since 1999 the Men's Counselling Service and the Vienna Intervention Centre have been running a joint Anti-Violence Training Programme that complies with international standards ([www.interventionsstelle-wien.at](http://www.interventionsstelle-wien.at)).

## **LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE**

Women who are subjected to violence should be able to receive free legal counselling and support in legal affairs at women's support centres.

It is necessary for the law to provide effective protection. This means that the police must be empowered to expel the perpetrator from the dwelling, making it possible for the victim to remain there. Such laws exist in countries like Austria, Germany and Luxembourg. Legislation governing protection from violence has also been passed in Spain, Italy and Turkey, but the provisions for its enforcement are inadequate.

## **INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES**

Laws that exist only in the statute books help nobody. They have to be enforced. If this does not happen, it is necessary to pursue the question why it is that victims of violence are unable to invoke laws that are supposed to protect them. Laws on protection from violence must be accompanied by the establishing of victim support centres providing active support, and by intervention centres co-ordinating action on behalf of the victim (see Logar at [www.interventionsstelle-wien.at](http://www.interventionsstelle-wien.at)). Switzerland and Germany have, like Austria, instituted intervention programmes (see Gloor 2000, Kavemann 2001).

## **THE PROSECUTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

It should always be the state, not the victim, that is responsible for bringing charges against the perpetrator. Given the victim's dependence on the perpetrator, it is often difficult for abused women to take legal action against their partners.

The principle that it is incumbent on the state and not on the survivor to initiate proceedings against the perpetrator has been enshrined in numerous international documents. The United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has developed model strategies which have been endorsed by the General Assembly (United Nations 1997).

Laws can be seen as a clear commitment by a society as to what is right and what is wrong. The legal system of a country and of international bodies like the EU have to make it clear that inequality between women and men will not be tolerated and that, in particular, violence against women is a crime and that the victims shall receive maximum protection and support.

Every form of violence against women must be declared a breach of law and accordingly be prosecuted by the state. This must include marital rape, stalking, trafficking in women, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced prostitution etc. (Logar in Keeler 2000).

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE WORK OF THE STATE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE AND THE COURTS' SPECIAL DEPARTMENTS**

Guidelines for dealing with cases of domestic violence should be drawn up for the State Prosecutor's Office and the criminal courts on the lines of the guidelines for the police. Notably in larger urban areas, not all the professionals involved can be trained in handling violence against women, so it is advisable to set up special departments. Where this has been done – as in Berlin, for instance – domestic violence tends to be taken more seriously and greater consideration is given to the survivor's situation and the background to the offence (Logar in Keeler 2000).

## **VICTIMS' ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT**

Every EU member state is committed to implementing the Council Framework Decision of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings. This includes providing support during court cases for women and children who have been subjected to domestic violence.

Because criminal proceedings entail the risk of further traumatising for the victims of violence, they should be accompanied to court by experts from support organisations. Gender-sensitive lawyers should be available free of charge. The victim should not have to encounter the perpetrator, should have to give testimony only once, and should have the right to claim damages during the court proceedings (see Council Framework Decision).

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND HOUSING**

Abused women need financial assistance to enable them to find protection against violence and to separate from the perpetrator. When a woman goes to a refuge or the perpetrator is barred from the dwelling, she should receive prompt social assistance if she has little or no income.

Local authorities should also provide accommodation for victims. Refuges must not become the "end of the line" just because women cannot find accommodation they can afford.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK FOR WOMEN**

Economic dependence and poverty put women at a higher risk of being subjected to violence. A range of qualification and educational programmes is needed to help reinforce women's independence. At the same time, education is an important factor in personal development,

encouraging women as it does to understand their own situation and the connections with social conditions and thus enabling them to participate in the process of social change.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PREVENTION**

Prevention work at every social level has a decisive impact because it targets the prevention of violence at its roots. Women's support organisations play a far-reaching role in this field (training programmes for various professional groups, lectures in schools, compilation of information material etc.), sometimes in conjunction with state authorities – as in the case of awareness-raising campaigns. Sufficient financial resources must be made available for these purposes, because the problem of violence against women cannot be solved only by providing support for victims on an individual basis.

For examples of campaigns, see the WAVE website: [www.wave-network.org](http://www.wave-network.org).

## **PREVENTION / AWARENESS-RAISING PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS AND YOUTH CENTRES**

Since violence is intrinsic to our societies, it is essential that children and young people become familiar with non-violent ways of resolving conflicts, living together, dealing with problems etc. as early as possible. Activities to promote non-violence have to be part of all levels of child education. Experts from women's organisations / women's rights experts must be included in the development of programmes, curricula etc. and also be involved in their implementation.

## **INTEGRAL PART OF TRAINING AND FURTHER TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS**

Professionals working with women and children who have been subjected to violence must be aware that violence against women is a crime. They need to know how to respond and how to provide proper support. Training on violence against women has to be an integral part, not an alternative subject/course, in the training and further training of every professional group dealing with abused women and children in their work. Such groups are professionals working in the areas of justice, law enforcement, health, education, social work etc. In addition, on-going training should be made available especially for those who wish to extend their expertise. In 2000 the WAVE Office – with financial support from the DAPHNE Initiative – drew up a comprehensive training programme for professionals.

## **EQUALITY MEASURES**

Both international bodies and women's NGOs refer to the root cause of violence as the outcome of the historically manifested inequality between women and men (see chapter 2). It is therefore right to assume that there will be gender-based violence as long as there is inequality between the sexes. Equality measures need to be implemented in a variety of contexts such as economic life (in particular the labour market). It is vital that women have an income of their own which enables them to live independently, also and especially when they have children.

Moreover, the labour market must adjust to the specific needs of women. It is no longer tolerable that women's lives are curtailed by the demands of the economy. Women usually bear the brunt of child care. Adequate and high-quality child care facilities must be made available by the state. For women with little or no income, they should be free of charge.

## **NATIONAL ACTION PLAN - GUARANTEED IMPLEMENTATION WITH PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN'S NGOS**

A National Action Plan on violence against women is a minimum requirement. At the Fifth World Conference on Women, all states committed themselves to drawing up and implementing action plans to promote the interests of women and combat discrimination (see United Nations 1996). A National Action Plan serves as an indicator of the political priority accorded the issue.

Example: In 2001 the Spanish province of Andalusia approved an action plan under which more than 38 million Euro will be made available up to the end of 2004 for combating violence against women.

Example: Germany has also drawn up a comprehensive action plan and has established a working group at the joint federal-länder level to oversee its implementation.

## **OUTLOOK**

In recent years many European countries have made great strides in combating violence against women. Several countries (like Austria) have introduced legislation empowering the police to expel the perpetrator from the dwelling, while the victims are entitled to go on living there (Dearing/Haller 2000, Logar 1998). A number of European countries have carried out awareness-raising campaigns (Heiliger/Hoffmann 1998, Heiliger 2000). In 1999 the EU initiated a European campaign against violence against women.

Despite these efforts, many prejudices and preconceptions live on, and these stand in the way of victims receiving the support they need. Victim blaming – the tendency to ascribe the fault for violence to the victim – has not been wholly eliminated. And women continue to encounter prejudice in the police and judiciary which ultimately benefits the perpetrators to the detriment of the victims. Prejudice and victim blaming in society are a key factor in the continuation of violence against women, because they give men the feeling that their behaviour is condoned.

Another grave problem is that too little money is being spent on the prevention of violence against women and children. While this clearly has serious implications in terms of human rights, it is also an economic problem because violence entails high costs (for therapy, medical treatment, sick leave, police operations, criminal proceedings, prison terms etc.; see chapter 2). It can also involve costs for the state if victims or family members bring charges against the state on the grounds of failure to render assistance and violation of international law guaranteeing the right to the protection of life, health and freedom (European Human Rights Conventions, CEDAW). By ensuring prompt and effective prevention and intervention and thus averting continued violence, the state will in the long term cut costs. Protection against domestic violence that costs nothing cannot be effective any more than efforts to combat terrorism will make any impact without expenditure.

Over the next ten years the EU and all the countries of Europe should make it a priority goal to eliminate social attitudes that condone or acquiesce in violence. This will require the EU to establishing binding guidelines on the elimination of violence against women and to encourage national governments to provide adequate funding for women's refuge and support organisations, awareness-raising campaigns, training programmes and prevention work. Because "violence against women is a human rights violation and an obstacle to women's equality."

## 10.4 BUILDING RESPECTFUL AND COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Each professional group has its own attitudes towards prevention work. It is important to clarify the attitudes, roles and responsibilities of each professional group and to learn each others' constraints and problems. Without respect for the work of other professionals, co-operation cannot be successful.

### Some general recommendations for collaboration

- Maintain an assertive style.
- Allow others to complete their thoughts before you speak.
- Stand up for your position.
- Make your own decisions about what you think is right.
- Try to understand the feelings of the others before describing your own.
- Try to talk about problems before they turn into crises.
- Face problems and decisions squarely.
- Consider yourself to be strong and capable, but generally equal to others.
- Face your responsibilities with regard to the situation and action that is needed.

*(Source: Examples of people working together. Ideas for collaboration at work. Interdisciplinary project on domestic violence. A resource kit from Canada.)*

### Nine stages of developing co-operation

1. Creating a mutual philosophical orientation, principles and goals. The most important principles are the safety of the victims, the responsibility of the perpetrator, and the avoidance of victim blaming.
2. Creating mutual procedures. Sensitivity to the victim's experiences
3. Monitor/track cases to ensure the accountability of the professionals concerned. Clarify the roles of each professional group; by monitoring single cases, the gaps in accountability can be found
4. Co-ordinating the exchange of information between professionals by developing mutual understanding of secrecy rules and shared information
5. Providing resources and services for victims
6. Ensuring sanctions, restraints and services for perpetrators
7. Developing action to prevent harm to children and developing therapeutic work for children's traumatic experiences.
8. Evaluating the co-ordinated justice system response:  
response of the police  
response of public prosecutors and judges  
probation services' response
9. Ongoing training

Respectful and collaborative relationships are based on trust and understanding. Trust and understanding can be built through sharing and discussing each others' perspectives and experiences. Emphasising only mistakes is not a useful way to create collaborative relationships. When barriers emerge, the best way to continue is to work out how things could be done better.

**Collaborative relationships can be built by using the following steps to building coordinated cooperation:**

- Arranging meetings and discussions with professionals from different services one or two vocational groups at a time. In large groups people tend to be reserved, and building trust can take a long time. This method takes time but can be the basis for effective cooperation.
- These meetings can be followed by meetings involving all the professionals / authorities at once.
- After the meetings the key occupational groups, their roles and responsibilities can be identified.
- The coordinating activator can be agreed.
- The coordinated network and how it works can be agreed.
- The working group of central activators can be formed, and the larger networking activators are defined.
- The central working group meets regularly and more often than the larger networking group.

This can be a useful method, especially if refuge work is new in the community and is not known to other services, there are no collaborative activities between services, or there are problems with power relationships between authorities.

*(based on: Waltz / Derry 1999)*

Example: Anticipation Dialogues (AD): They consist of a set of methods that have been developed by the National Research and Development Center for Welfare and Health (STAKES). The methods have been put into practice by Stakes in collaboration with several cities and professionals in Finland. These methods are resource-centred and network-oriented and their goal is to cross sector boundaries, develop preventive work involving social and health services and other networking actors, and improve the quality of the work with clients. The methods are highly structured, and the lead at round table discussions is taken by two independent moderators. The AD set includes multiple applications; for instance, clients can be taken along to the round table discussions and development work. The client is encouraged to bring friends or other trusted persons with them.

(see Arnkil / Eriksson / Arnkil 1999 and Seikkula / Arnkil / Eriksson 2003).

# 11. QUALITY MANAGEMENT, DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Quality management is one of the areas of management responsibility in a women's refuge. Its purpose is to ensure that the services provided maintain a high level of quality. Documentation and evaluation are essential factors in the work and critical review processes involved. They also form the basis of the information and reports provided to sponsors and the public.

During the evaluation process it is important to involve the women and children who make use of the refuge's services. As "end users", they can provide feedback about what they found helpful or otherwise which can substantially improve practice. The principal purpose of quality assurance is to help review and improve refuge services on a permanent basis. Both documentation and evaluation have to be planned and implemented carefully to avoid misuse.

## 11.1 QUALITY MANAGEMENT

It is important to remember that the concept of "quality management" has its origins in the economic and patriarchal world and could therefore be problematic in the context of women's refuges and their principles. Innovative approaches by feminist refuge workers and researchers are needed to adapt the concept of quality management to the reality of a women's refuge. Moreover, some financial donors may argue that keeping up high standards can be expensive and will therefore ask for minimum standards.

Brigitte Sellach (2000, 262) proposes a two-fold strategy as a response. On the one hand a refuge defines precise and agreed standards which have to be met at all events. In addition, a refuge may – sponsorship permitting – outline maximum (good practice) standards which are implemented as part of the particular refuge's overall range of services and are subjected to a separate process of evaluation and review in terms of their effectiveness.

The present Manual defines practice-oriented standards based on more than 25 years of experience. Quality standards need to be founded upon clear-cut fundamental values (see chapter 3). The fundamental values behind quality assurance may be regarded as the rights of women who are forced to seek shelter in a refuge.

Sellach (2000, 280) defines these rights as follows:

"Women have

- the right to bodily and emotional integrity
- the right to state protection and assistance for themselves and their children in the form of safe accommodation and help provided by staff working at a high level of professional expertise
- the right to self-determination, empowerment and dignity."

Maja Heiner (in Sellach 2000, 277) defines holistic quality management as "an on-going self-organised learning process comprising four elements:

- The development of quality standards (concept)
- The application of these quality standards in professional activity and/or through the appropriate action (practice)
- The review of the results of this application (evaluation / self-evaluation); and in the light of this
- The revision of quality standards (concept)"

When designing a concept for quality control in a refuge, three main aspects can serve as guidelines:

**Quality control should help:**

- to develop the refuge's work in empowering women,
- to develop the refuge's work influencing professionals' attitudes towards women victims of partner violence, and
- to develop strategies to impact women's rights in society.

**Methods which can be used to achieve these goals include:**

- Monitoring the work regularly and adapting concepts and practice according to the needs of the women and children seeking help
- To monitor their work, refuges can use:
  1. (anonymous) questionnaires for victims
  2. interviews with the victims
  3. questionnaires for professionals in community work
  4. feedback after sessions in schools etc.
  5. external evaluation
- Women victims are given the opportunity to comment on the work and assess it.

It is very important to stress that any documentation and evaluation methods used must safeguard compliance with the applicable data protection regulations and the residents' anonymity. Anybody involved in these processes has to commit herself to treating all information confidentially.

## 11.2 DOCUMENTATION

There are various practices concerning documentation in refuges. However, documentation can usually be grouped into:

- person-related data
- internal statistics
- reports.

### 11.2.1 Person-related data

In order to provide effective services for women, it is necessary to document facts. However, any information should be kept strictly confidential. It is particularly important that the violent partner does not receive any information. Information should be passed on to public authorities only with the explicit consent of the woman concerned. Exceptions have to be made in cases of danger to life or health of the women or the children (see chapter 3). A counsellor may also decide not to pass on information – although the woman has given permission to do so – if she feels that it would be dangerous or disadvantageous for the woman (and her children). In some regions / countries it is necessary to collect and provide data on a client in order to get funding from local authorities. In other cases women in the refuge have to be registered because their municipality covers their daily refuge costs. This kind of financing is highly problematic because it jeopardises the victims' anonymity.

Most of the women's refuges collect data on women staying in the refuges and the situation of their children. They also collect the relevant data on violent men with respect to the safety of the woman, children and the refuge (assessment of the perpetrator's dangerousness).

### 11.2.2 Statistics

It is very important for a refuge to keep internal statistics in which all person-related data are made anonymous. Which details are collected and analysed and how detailed the data should be is basically up to the individual refuge – this should be gauged to the refuge's specific needs.

**However, as a guideline, statistics should show:**

- how many residents (women and children separately) are in the house (on a daily / weekly / monthly basis)
- how long the women stay
- if it is their first (second, third, etc.) stay
- how old they are
- how many children they have
- how old the children are
- their marital status
- their relationship with the perpetrator
- how long the abuse had been going on before they sought shelter in the refuge
- the type of violence the women were subjected to
- the type of violence the children were subjected to
- how long the children had been abused
- the circumstances of leaving the refuge (back to the perpetrator, new apartment, etc.)

**Statistics may also include data relating to:**

- the women's nationality
- their domicile
- their legal status.

However, the examples above are likely to be sensitive data. A lot of thought should be given to which data are made public and which data are kept solely for internal purposes.

### 11.2.3 Reports

Many funding authorities ask for (generally annual) reports. Reports are a good means to detail the full range of services and activities provided by the refuge.

## 11.3 EVALUATION

Evaluation of the work of a refuge can be carried out internally or externally. Depending on the methods and particularly on the purposes, it can be done continuously or at regular intervals, e.g. every five years.

In social services, evaluation is viewed as a tool to support client-oriented services. In service provision, the clients are in a key position, and they should be involved in the process of collecting the information used for evaluation. It is considered important to know the needs and opinions of the clients using the social services and to acknowledge the significance of evaluation performed by the clients themselves, given the nature of these activities.

In refuges this can be done by means of a feed-back questionnaire which the woman fills out before leaving the refuge. A standardised interview might also be conducted. However, the feedback provided must be made anonymous so that women feel free to state an open and frank opinion. This question also has to be considered in the socio-cultural context; in some countries strictly anonymous feedback questionnaires might work better than conducting an interview.

### 11.3.1 Example of an evaluation questionnaire

An evaluation of the impact of the work done with a woman in the Espoo Refuge in Finland:

The questions below are discussed with the woman before she leaves the refuge. It is advisable that her counsellor is not present at the meeting. In Espoo the interview is conducted between a woman and the manager of the refuge. The manager is also responsible for developing tools to improve the quality of the work done in the refuge.

**The questions:**

- What kind of support has benefited you the most?
- How did you feel about the conversations with the refuge workers?
- How did you feel about the interaction with other women staying in the refuge?
- What practical issues have you dealt with while staying in the refuge?
- With what issues have you had help from the refuge workers?
- Have you been given any new information during your stay in the refuge?
- What kind of information has been most useful to you?
- How would you improve the work of the refuge?

### 11.3.2 Contents and implementation of evaluation studies

Evaluation may be implemented by staff members or by an external person. In the latter case, it is advisable to draw up a written agreement. The agreement specifies the process of evaluation as planned as well as its stages and end product, the evaluation report. When selecting an external evaluator, it is expedient to take into consideration the degree of political pressure exerted on the evaluator. The evaluator's autonomy is important. Evaluation constitutes societal action. It is therefore crucial to analyse the needs and interests of all involved, which may be widely divergent. The ethical questions of evaluation, needs and interests should be negotiated before signing the written agreement.

The evaluation may also combine external evaluation and self-evaluation. The positive aspect of self-evaluation is the fact that the organisation itself learns to evaluate its activities and may use this knowledge in further developing its services. On the other hand, the risk of self-evaluation lies in the fact that it is difficult for the people involved to see the problems, their causes and interconnections. Self-evaluation can be cheaper than external evaluation. However, a careful calculation should be made, taking into account the staff working hours spent on carrying out the evaluation. When self-evaluation is the only form implemented, special attention should be paid to its quality.

**The characteristics of a high-quality evaluation are:**

- the purpose of evaluation is clearly defined;
- the goal of evaluation is defined;
- the evaluation focuses on the factors it was supposed to;
- the results are described truthfully;
- the conclusions are analysed from a broad perspective and presented to all concerned.

Self-evaluation best serves immediate developmental needs that can be responded to promptly. However, external evaluation has the important advantage of an outside perspective. Refuge workers are generally highly motivated, which may mean that they lack the necessary objectivity. One way round the problem of money shortage is to have an external evaluation carried out as a university or college dissertation.

Evaluation may contain an analysis of the services which the organisation provides, its operational policy and activities and their impact. Impact is often hard to evaluate, but the difficulties of evaluation should not be exaggerated. The impact is manifested in changes visible in the service user's life resulting from service use. What is crucial is the formulation of the evaluation criteria and indicators, measurement and an information-based assessment. The

criteria may be based on, for example, clients' needs, the goals of actions and activities, the implementers' objectives, professional standards, regular practices and norms, the law, ethical values, circumstances or costs.

The implementation of evaluation is governed by needs and principles. The key persons in service activities are the clients, whose needs should determine the evaluation and its implementation. Evaluation can mean that the participants are given a voice and space. In empowerment evaluation, which stresses the inclusion of service users, the latter become key implementers of evaluation as well as creators of the evaluative targets and criteria. Empowerment evaluation helps the recipients of activities to participate and learn, and it also enlarges their sphere of independence. The aim is to increase an individual's ability to direct the course of his or her life.

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## APPENDIX 1

# DECLARATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

## UNITED NATIONS

The **UN Declaration Against Violence Against Women** (1993) states:

“For the purposes of this Declaration, 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 in private life. ... (United Nations 1993b, article 1 and 2).

The Declaration emphasizes the important role played by the women’s movement and the NGOs working to eliminate violence against women. On this subject it states:

“Governments should (...)

Recognize the important role of the women’s movement and non-governmental organizations world wide in raising awareness and alleviating the problem of violence against women;

Facilitate and enhance the work of the women’s movement and non-governmental organizations and cooperate with them at local, national and regional levels.” (United Nations 1993b, article 40 and p)

The United Nations Member States acknowledge that funding on a commensurate scale is necessary to combat violence against women:

„Governments should (...)

Include in government budgets adequate resources for their activities related to the elimination of violence against women.” (United Nations 1993b, article 4h)

The **Platform for Action** notes:

“Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed. ... In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture. The low social and economic status of women can be both a cause and a consequence of violence against women.” (United Nations 1995, article 112)

“Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. In many cases, violence against women and girls occurs in the family or within the home, where violence is often tolerated. The neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and rape of girl children and women by family members and other members of the household, as well as incidences of spousal and non-spousal abuse, often go unreported and are thus difficult to detect. Even when such violence is reported, there is often a failure to protect victims or punish perpetrators.” (United Nations 1995, article 117)

“Violence against women throughout the life cycle derives essentially from cultural patterns, in particular the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices and all acts of extremism linked to race, sex, language or religion that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplace, the community and society. Violence against women is

exacerbated by social pressures, notably the shame of denouncing certain acts that have been perpetrated against women; women's lack of access to legal information, aid or protection; the lack of laws that effectively prohibit violence against women; failure to reform existing laws; inadequate efforts on the part of public authorities to promote awareness of and enforce existing laws; and the absence of educational and other means to address the causes and consequences of violence." (United Nations 1995, article 118)

The United Nations also point out that women are particularly vulnerable to violence: "Some groups of women, such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women migrants, including women migrant workers, women in poverty living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, female children, women with disabilities, elderly women, displaced women, repatriated women, women living in poverty and women in situations of armed conflict, foreign occupation, wars of aggression, civil wars, terrorism, including hostage-taking, are also particularly vulnerable to violence." (United Nations 1995, article 116)

In the Platform for Action the signatory states pledge to implement a wide variety of measures to combat violence against women. The document details specific action to be taken ... "by Governments, including local governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the public and private sectors, particularly enterprises, and the mass media, as appropriate:

Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence;

Establish linguistically and culturally accessible services for migrant women and girls, including women migrant workers, who are victims of gender-based violence;

Recognize the vulnerability to violence and other forms of abuse of women migrants, including women migrant workers, whose legal status in the host country depends on employers who may exploit their situation;

Support initiatives of women's organizations and non-governmental organizations all over the world to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women and to contribute to its elimination." (United Nations 1995, article 125)

## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

The Recommendations issued by the Council of Europe stress the need for close co-operation between Member States and NGOs. The Council of Europe "recommends that the governments of member states

1. Review their legislation and policies with a view to: (...)

3. ensuring that all measures are co-ordinated nation-wide and focused on the needs of the victims and that relevant state institutions as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) be associated with the elaboration and the implementation of the necessary measures, in particular those mentioned in this recommendation;

4. encouraging at all levels the work of NGOs involved in combating violence against women and establishing active co-operation with these NGOs, including appropriate logistic and financial support (...)" (Council of Europe 2002, p.5).

The Recommendations also state:

"Members states should (...)

23. ensure that victims, without any discrimination, receive immediate and comprehensive assistance provided by a co-ordinated, multidisciplinary and professional effort, whether or not they lodge a complaint, including medical and forensic examination and treatment, together with post-traumatic psychological and social support as well as legal assistance; this should be

provided on a confidential basis, free of charge and be available around the clock” (Council of Europe 2002, p.9).

Paragraph 24 adds:

“Member states should in particular ensure that all services and legal remedies available for victims of domestic violence are provided to immigrant women upon their request”.

## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **Standards and Recommendations of the Conference of Experts on Police combating Violence against Women – Baden, December 1998**

36. Women's institutions were the first ones to address the issue of violence against women in public and to offer victims support and assistance. All states should pay tribute to these institutions and give high priority to the work they are doing.

37. States are responsible for creating a sufficiently dense network of women's institutions and for allocating funds to them to pay them for their activities. In accordance with the recommendation made by the Committee for Women's Rights of the European Parliament, in homes for battered women at least one place per 10,000 of the population\* should be available.

40. Basic funding must be assured for both women's institutions and all organisations committed to the goal of combating violence against women.

*\*Amendment of the original based on the European Parliament Resolution on Violence Against Women, Doc A2-44/86*

### **Recommendations of the Expert Forums of the EU Conference on Violence Against Women – Cologne, 29 and 30 March, 1999**

#### **Expert Forum 4: Help organisations and co-operation with institutions, European networks**

All national governments are to be obliged to establish and to finance a comprehensive and cost-free offer of support for abused women and their children, regardless of their legal status, under the management of women's NGOs. To this end, such support is to involve women's shelters, women's advisory offices, emergency organisations, legal and social help organisations, offers of support for children and intervention projects, for which standards have been developed in Expert Forum 4 and are to be implemented.

### **Recommendations of the EU-Expert Meeting on Violence Against Women – Jyväskylä (Finland) 8-10 November, 1999**

#### **Recommendations on standards for shelters/refuges**

##### Prerequisites

Laws to protect women and children are essential. Victims should have the right to stay in the home in cases of domestic violence; it is the perpetrator who should be removed from the residence in such cases. If the woman prefers to leave, accommodation in a shelter/refuge should be guaranteed.

### Objectives

- Prevention - the ultimate goal is the prevention of violence
- Protection - protection of the victims (stop the present violence)
- Provision - the provision of services and the empowerment of women

### Principles

- The empowerment of women is essential.
- Victims' confidentiality must be guaranteed.
- No victim's right to stay in a shelter/refuge should be dependent on her financial situation, and the stay should be as long as needed for the woman to evaluate her options.
- Shelters/refuges should be open to all women, including women with no children and women of minority groups, who are victims of any form of violence.
- Children must be protected from violence and from the perpetrators.
- Shelters/refuges should be run by women's NGOs that have a feminist perspective and believe in women helping women. However, there are also other models organised from the perspective of women's and children's rights.

### Services

- Refuges/shelters for victims of men's violence should be easily accessible.
- Advocacy and support services should include help lines, drop-in centres, women's groups, self-help, proactive services (outreach work on awareness-raising), aftercare, and free legal aid.

### Availability

At least 1 family refuge space per 10,000 of the population and 1 drop-in centre per 50,000 of the population are required.

### Staff

- The staff working in shelters should have an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and receive ongoing training.
- The staff should be properly remunerated for their work.
- Among staff there should be one qualified child care worker for each shelter/refuge (as at any given time about 2/3 of all residents at a shelter/refuge are children).

### Training and research

- All staff who come into contact with victims of domestic violence, including social workers, health service workers, police, etc., must receive specialised training in working with victims of domestic violence.
- Ongoing training must be made available for all staff working with victims of men's violence.
- Those providing legal aid for victims must be specialised in family law.
- More research into all forms of violence against women and children is needed.
- Monitoring and evaluation of existing services should be ongoing.

### Funding

- Governments are obliged to establish and to finance a comprehensive and cost-free offer of support for abused women and their children, regardless of their legal status.
- The responsibility for the violence should always be placed solely on the perpetrator.
- Women should be able to directly access refuge/shelter accommodation.

## **Council Framework Decision of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (2001/220/JHA)**

### **Article 4**

#### **Right to receive information**

1. Each Member State shall ensure that victims in particular have access, as from their first contact with law enforcement agencies, by any means it deems appropriate and as far as

possible in languages commonly understood, to information of relevance for the protection of their interests. Such information shall be at least as follows:

- (a) the type of services or organisations to which they can turn for support;
- (b) the type of support which they can obtain;
- (c) where and how they can report an offence;
- (d) procedures following such a report and their role in connection with such procedures;
- (e) how and under what conditions they can obtain protection;
- (f) to what extent and on what terms they have access to:
  - (i) legal advice or
  - (ii) legal aid, or
  - (iii) any other sort of advice,if, in the cases envisaged in point (i) and (ii), they are entitled to receive it;
- (g) requirements for them to be entitled to compensation;
- (h) if they are resident in another State, any special arrangements available to them in order to protect their interests. (...)

3. Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that, at least in cases where there might be danger to the victims, when the person prosecuted or sentenced for an offence is released, a decision may be taken to notify the victim if necessary.

#### **Article 6**

##### **Specific assistance to the victim**

Each Member State shall ensure that victims have access to advice as referred to in Article 4(1)(f)(iii), provided free of charge where warranted, concerning their role in the proceedings and, where appropriate, legal aid as referred to in Article 4(1)(f)(ii), when it is possible for them to have the status of parties to criminal proceedings.

#### **Article 8**

##### **Right to protection**

1. Each Member State shall ensure a suitable level of protection for victims and, where appropriate, their families or persons in a similar position, particularly as regards their safety and protection of their privacy, where the competent authorities consider that there is a serious risk of reprisals or firm evidence of serious intent to intrude upon their privacy.

2. To that end, and without prejudice to paragraph 4, each Member State shall guarantee that it is possible to adopt, if necessary, as part of the court proceedings, appropriate measures to protect the privacy and photographic image of victims and their families or persons in a similar position.

3. Each Member State shall further ensure that contact between victims and offenders within court premises may be avoided, unless criminal proceedings require such contact. Where appropriate for that purpose, each Member State shall progressively provide that court premises have special waiting areas for victims.

4. Each Member State shall ensure that, where there is a need to protect victims —particularly those most vulnerable —from the effects of giving evidence in open court, victims may, by decision taken by the court, be entitled to testify in a manner which will enable this objective to be achieved, by any appropriate means compatible with its basic legal principles.

#### **Article 9**

##### **Right to compensation in the course of criminal proceedings**

1. Each Member State shall ensure that victims of criminal acts are entitled to obtain a decision within reasonable time limits on compensation by the offender in the course of criminal proceedings, except where, in certain cases, national law provides for compensation to be awarded in another manner.

2. Each Member State shall take appropriate measures to encourage the offender to provide adequate compensation to victims.

3. Unless urgently required for the purpose of criminal proceedings, recoverable property belonging to victims which is seized in the course of criminal proceedings shall be returned to them without delay.

### **Article 13**

#### **Specialist services and victim support organisations**

1. Each Member State shall, in the context of proceedings, promote the involvement of victim support systems responsible for organising the initial reception of victims and for victim support and assistance thereafter, whether through the provision of specially trained personnel within its public services or through recognition and funding of victim support organisations.

2. Each Member State shall encourage action taken in proceedings by such personnel or by victim support organisations, particularly as regards:

- (a) providing victims with information;
- (b) assisting victims according to their immediate needs;
- (c) accompanying victims, if necessary and possible during criminal proceedings;
- (d) assisting victims, at their request, after criminal proceedings have ended.

### **Article 15**

#### **Practical conditions regarding the position of victims in proceedings**

1. Each Member State shall support the progressive creation, in respect of proceedings in general, and particularly in venues where criminal proceedings may be initiated, of the necessary conditions for attempting to prevent secondary victimisation and avoiding placing victims under unnecessary pressure. This shall apply particularly as regards proper initial reception of victims, and the establishment of conditions appropriate to their situation in the venues in question.

2. For the purposes of paragraph 1, each Member State shall in particular have regard to facilities within courts, police stations, public services and victim support organisations.

## APPENDIX 2

# SAFETY PLANNING

**If the refuge offers counselling for non-resident women and the client is staying with the perpetrator, the following points need to be gone over with her:**

- Who can she talk to about her situation (teachers in school, relatives, etc.)?
- She should pack a bag with her most important belongings, especially with all her important documents, and leave it with somebody she can trust. Remind her always to have the keys for the house/apartment and the car with her so that she won't leave them behind.
- If there are weapons in the house, explore ways to have them removed.
- Whom can she call in an emergency?
- In an emergency what works best to keep her safe?
- Would she call the police if the violence starts again? Is there a phone in the house or can she work out a signal with the children or the neighbours to call the police or get help?
- If she needs to escape temporarily, where can she go? Help her think through several places where she can go in an emergency. Write down the addresses and phone numbers and tell her to keep them secret from the perpetrator.
- If she has to escape, where are the escape routes from the house?
- Remind her that in the middle of a violent assault, it is best to run away, sometimes to placate the assailant, anything that works to protect herself.

**If the client is planning to leave the perpetrator, review the following points with her:**

- How and when can she most safely leave? Does she have transport? Money? A place to go?
- Is she comfortable calling the police if she needs them?
- Whom will she tell or not tell about leaving?
- What can she and others do to prevent her partner from finding her?
- Whom in her support network does she trust to protect her?
- How will she travel safely to and from work or school to pick up children?
- What community / legal resources will help her feel safer? Write down their addresses and phone numbers and tell her to keep them secret from the perpetrator.
- Does she know the number of the local refuge?
- What custody and visiting provisions would keep her and the children safe?
- Would an injunction be a viable option?

**If the battered woman has had the perpetrator evicted or is now living alone, evaluate the following options with her:**

- Changing locks on doors and windows.
- If possible installing a better security system – window bars, locks, better lighting, fire extinguisher etc.
- Instructing the children or family and friends to call the police in a situation of danger.
- Talking to school teachers and child care providers about who has permission to pick up the children and developing other special precautions to protect the children.
- Building up a social network to support the victims, e.g. finding women's support services knowledgeable about family violence to explore custody, visiting and divorce provisions that protect the children and the victim, etc.
- Obtaining an injunction.

**Advise your client to have the following available in case she needs to escape:**

- Passport, birth certificate (original or copies)
- Social security cards
- Marriage certificate, driving licence and car papers
- Bank account number, credit cards, savings books
- Welfare and immigration documents
- Medication and prescriptions
- Divorce papers or other court documents
- Phone numbers and addresses of family, friends and community agencies
- Clothing and comfort items for her and the children
- Keys (house, car)
- Children's favourite toys to make the stay more comfortable
- School books etc.