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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.