



**MINIMUM STANDARDS**  
for the Protection of Children,  
Adolescents and Women in  
Refugee Accommodation Centres

# Preface

**Today, unprecedented numbers of people are leaving their home countries and are seeking protection in Germany. Their flight, homelessness, and traumatising make them particularly vulnerable. It is our task to support them in their search for safe places and to ensure institutional protection in accommodation centres.**

Children, adolescents, and women make up a sizeable share of refugees in Germany and everything needs to be done to provide them with a protective and supportive environment in refugee accommodation centres. In these centres, children, adolescents, and women must receive a basic package of assistance and supportive measures. The aim is to make information about the rights and entitlements of children, adolescents, and women available, and ensure that counselling and complaint mechanisms are in place. Accommodation centres must meet international and national standards. From the onset, in addition to protection from violence, access to learning, play and recreational activities for children and adolescents, medical care and psychosocial support for children, adolescents, and women must be guaranteed. This document addresses the protection of children and adolescents, as well as the protection of women; it is important to consider that the needs of both groups and the implementation of services may differ fundamentally in some respects.

In order to ensure that the protection of children and women is an integral part of the wide-ranging support in accommodation centres in Germany, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren,

Frauen und Jugend, abbreviated BMFSFJ) is cooperating with UNICEF in a joint initiative with key partners working on the protection of children and women in Germany. These partners include the Federal Association of Non-Statutory Welfare (BAGFW), Save the Children Germany and Plan International Germany, and with the participation of the German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK) and the crime prevention of the federal and state (Länder) police.

The minimum standards for the protection of children, adolescents and women in accommodation centres presented here are the result of the collaborative work of the initiative led by the BMFSFJ and UNICEF, and the technical contribution of the following members of the initiative:

Workers' Welfare Association (AWO),  
German NGO Network Against Trafficking in Human Beings (KOK),  
Der Paritätische Gesamtverband,  
German Caritas Association,  
German Institute for Human Rights,  
German Children and Youth Foundation,  
German Red Cross,  
Diakonie Germany,  
Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB),  
Association of Women's Shelters (FHK),  
Plan International Germany,  
Save the Children Germany,  
German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK),  
Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues (UBSKM).

These minimum standards are informed by practical experience and the latest developments in the field. All members of the initiative have committed to discussing the minimum standards on a regular basis so that they can be continually adjusted and refined.

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# Introduction

The minimum standards for the protection of children, adolescents and women in refugee accommodation centres are meant to protect children, adolescents, and women from violence and provide them support. All refugees – boys, girls, men, and women – are entitled to the protection of life, health, personal development, and the protection of human dignity. Due to their heightened vulnerability, children, adolescents and women are considered to be in need of particular protection.

The right to humane accommodation and protection from violence derives from the German Constitution and national law, as well as international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention); the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings; and the EU Directive laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. These norms oblige the German Federal Government to take the necessary measures to ensure appropriate and effective protection from violence.

Although the following measures also include the protection of particularly vulnerable persons defined in the EU Reception Directive, they are not always sufficient for those groups in every aspect. In order to ensure this, a separate evaluation and consideration of the respective protective needs is necessary.

The minimum standards for the protection from violence refer to all forms of violence. The different forms of violence are separately listed and defined in the glossary. The following text will consistently use the overarching term “violence” for all forms.

The following minimum standards include definitions and explanations as well as concrete rules for staff; the right to assistance for children, adolescents and women in dealing with suspicions; and clear procedures for cases of actual abuse or violent assaults, be it by adults or by children and adolescents.

These minimum standards are to serve as guidelines for developing and implementing an internal plan for the protection of children, adolescents and women in any form of refugee accommodation centre. Thus, the following minimum standards are to be implemented and adhered to in ALL refugee accommodation centres in Germany.

## Minimum Standard 1

### Internal plan for the protection of children, adolescents and women

#### Validity and internal obligations

Every refugee accommodation centre must have an internally developed plan for the protection of children, adolescents and women (protection plan). It must be designed in a way that the protection of children, adolescents and women inside the centre is safeguarded in ALL service fields. The following service fields are standard in accommodation centres, and therefore oblige ALL staff to implement the protection plan:

- Management
- Social work and educational care
- Psychosocial counselling and social counselling
- Medical care
- Asylum procedural counselling
- Interpreters and interpretation services
- Site security, fire protection, and security services
- Caretaker service
- Supply services and catering
- Volunteers

## **Validity and external obligations**

The protection plan must be a contract component of every service field. Within the framework of the protection plan, external service providers must be contractually obliged to cooperate and to abide by the guidelines.

## **Gender-specific and risk-sensitive**

The protection plan is based on an internal, participatory risk analysis, which includes gender and age specific risks. In addition, the internal risk analysis must explore the following: risk factors on the agency and management level; risk factors at the staff level; and risk factors concerning workflows specific to the centre and local circumstances. The risk analysis serves as basis for developing targeted methods and procedures for minimising and managing risks. In this way, existing risks for children, adolescents, and women in the centre are minimised.

## **Integrating the protection plan into the existing institutional structure**

The protection plan must be an integral part of already existing internal rules and procedures, ongoing processes, and day-to-day work.

## **Participatory, transparent and openly accessible**

Staff and a sample of residents must be involved in analysing risks and monitoring the implementation of the protection plan. They actively help in its design and thus acquire ownership.

ALL staff, service providers, volunteers, and residents of the refugee accommodation centre are to be informed about the protection plan. For this purpose, residents are to receive the information in a clear manner, appropriate to their age and in their language. The protection plan must be transparent and accessible.

## **Commitment towards social interaction that respects limits/boundaries and non-violence as a guiding principle**

The protection plan will build on the basic philosophy of the accommodation centre. This includes compliance with humane standards for accommodation and the commitment to respect the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all residents. Interaction with all residents must be respectful on all levels, as a necessary condition for peaceful coexistence and should be an integral part of the staff's work ethic towards residents.

## **Protecting confidentiality and privacy**

The protection plan is based on the principle of confidentiality. This means that all suspicious facts and incidents must be treated confidentially. The principle of confidentiality includes maintaining discretion between individuals. Without consent, information will not be shared with third parties. It is imperative to always protect the dignity and privacy of all parties concerned, and share information about suspicious facts and incidents only with responsible staff and authorities. The principles of data protection will be respected. Staff are subject to professional confidentiality. Without the consent of children, adolescents and women, personal data will not be shared with third parties.

It must be considered and communicated that if children are at risk of harm according to § 8a SGB VIII (protection mandate for children at risk of harm) law prescribes a limit to confidentiality for staff. Risk of harm includes direct and indirect domestic/sexual violence. Permission to disclosure may also exist in case of a justified emergency according to § 34 Criminal Code for the prevention of imminent danger for life, body, liberty, and health etc. There is a legal duty to disclose and report offences if staff learn about a concrete plan or planned perpetration of particularly serious offences according to § 138 Criminal Code (murder/manslaughter, deprivation of liberty, abduction, robbery, offences endangering public safety etc.). Furthermore, it has to be considered that in the case of a trial/criminal proceedings staff do not have the right to refuse to give evidence per se.

# Personnel and personnel management

## Roles and responsibilities

The centre's management is primarily responsible for the implementation of the protection plan. It defines the roles and areas of responsibility of all staff and service providers in implementing the protection plan, among other things in job descriptions and contracts. Areas of responsibility will be explained to staff in a transparent way.

### Roles and responsibilities

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### Code of conduct and self-commitment

All staff, service providers, and volunteers of the centre will sign a commitment to adhere to the code of conduct for the protection of, and the intervention in, all forms of violence against children, adolescents and women by staff, service providers, other residents or family members. The signed document is a clear commitment against all forms of violence in the centre and is an integral part of the protection plan. It defines the basic approach and protection tasks of ALL staff and service providers towards children, adolescents, and women and holds all parties accountable.

### Personnel recruitment and management

Management at the accommodation centres will be accountable for requiring this signed commitment against violence from all persons working in the centre and to clearly state this requirement in job interviews and to all future staff and volunteers as a prerequisite for employment. The same goes for contracting external service providers.

Management will furthermore inform about the measures taken in the case of misconduct by staff and the consequences misconduct will have on the employment relationship. An additional agreement to the work

contract will enshrine the protection plan. The "commitment against violence" and the code of conduct are therefore part of contractual agreements with staff and external service providers. Consequences of a violent incident under criminal and labour law will be pointed out to staff.

Provision of an extended criminal record certificate is a basic requirement for the work of all staff, service providers, and volunteers in the centre.

Furthermore, an adequate number of female professionals is important for running the centre. A corresponding number of female staff should work in the centre's security service. It must be ensured that at least one female security staff is on duty in the centre at any time.

Compliance with the protection plan is part of personnel and quality management. It is a standing agenda item at the centre's regular meetings in all fields and services.

### Awareness raising and training

The protection plan must be anchored effectively in the centre's structure by increasing awareness, familiarising, and training all staff, volunteers, and external service providers.

All staff and volunteers as well as external service providers are obliged to participate in trainings for the implementation of the protection plan. Subject matter of trainings will be a basic knowledge and (sound) understanding of:

- the special background, living condition, and gender specific situation of refugee children, adolescents and women;
- forms/manifestations of violence, dynamics of violence, and the consequences of violence against children, adolescents and women;
- effective prevention and early recognition/detection of violence;
- adequate intervention when suspecting violence and actual violence as well as possibilities for supporting children, adolescents and women affected by violence;

- rights and the specific legal situation of refugee children, adolescents and women;
- disciplinary and criminal consequences for perpetrators of violence.

Trainings will aim at strengthening the capacity of staff, volunteers, and service providers to act according to their respective responsibility in case of violence; they are familiar with the prescribed procedures and contingency plans.

## Minimum Standard 3

# Internal structures and external cooperation

### House rules

House rules that lay down the basic rules for peaceful coexistence and for action against violent perpetrators will be translated into the respective languages of residents. They will be available in plain language and, in addition, in child friendly versions. They will be displayed in a central place. The house rules need to be presented for signature to new residents, internal and external staff, as well as to volunteers to ensure a clear commitment against violence and respectful interaction with all residents. Interpreters will be involved as necessary.

### Designated contact persons of the accommodation centre

Persons affected by violence need specially trained female and male contact persons who can counsel and support them. These contacts must be known to everybody in the accommodation centre. It must be ensured that children, adolescents and women have access to permanent contacts and interpreters at any time. Respective staff must have experience in crisis intervention and psychological first aid. Furthermore, they need to be able to address the special needs of children, adolescents and women.

All staff are informed about the contacts and can, if necessary, refer children, adolescents and women affected by violence to them.

### Independent complaints body

An independent, neutral complaints body must be set up where residents and staff can access it at regular hours. Its composition, staffing, responsibilities, complaints management, as well as its integration into the centre's external and internal network must be discussed and agreed in an open dialogue with the accommodation centre management, residents, staff,

refugee initiatives, and local counselling services, and must be part of the protection plan. The complaints body must actively inform residents about their right to recourse. The complaints body must be open to all residents but also to staff and volunteers and serve to solve emerging conflicts and to engage in dialogue on these issues. In doing so, it is important to emphasise the independence of the complaints body. Here acts of violence are discussed and the further process under consideration of the victim's privacy are documented.

### Informing actively about rights and practical support offers

All residents must be informed about the general rights of children, adolescents and women. Furthermore, the rights of children and women in case of violence will be explained to all residents and to whom they can turn to. It is particularly important to inform all residents about the obligation of professional secrecy and legal limits for staff and to point out that every resident can turn to the complaints body for a personal and confidential conversation with specially trained staff. Residents must be made aware of the existing support system for women affected by violence. Furthermore, local specialised counselling centres must inform them about the possibility of finding protection in a women's shelter or other safe houses. This information shall be made available through flyers, reference to external counselling services during the intake interview, and regular information events. Counsellors of specialised support services, support centres, and counselling centres must have access to the accommodation centres.

### Making information clear and overcoming language barriers

Information about rights, confidentiality, counselling services and further assistance must be available in the necessary languages and be child- and target group-fri-

endly. Quite often communication problems can contribute to conflict. Good cooperation with interpreter services is therefore essential. Interpreters must visit the centres at regular hours, for example for consultation hours, to enable clear communication between staff and residents. During the complaint body's hours of operation qualified interpreters will be present and can be called upon if needed. In case of a violent assault, interpreters trusted by the affected person must be available upon short notice.

### **Availability of a basic package of courses and counselling services**

Courses for residents on issues such as forms of violence, legal information, women's rights, gender equality, women's health, non-violent upbringing, preventative work with parental work, children's rights or the like will be provided on a regular basis. Self-defence training and open counselling hours will be used to inform the target groups about legal protection and support centres, thus contributing to increasing awareness among children, adolescents and women about their rights, and encouraging them to speak about violence they may have experienced and to seek help. Therefore, the centre must offer such courses by trained personnel and make sure that language barriers do not prevent residents from participating. Furthermore, access to other specialised offers, such as early childhood development in day care centres, will be supported.

### **Involving cooperation partners**

To initiate and ensure individual and needs-based support, affected children, adolescents and women must be supported in finding and contacting competent service providers and organisations. The centre must have a database of suitable contacts for further support such as women's shelters, specialised counselling centres, refugee counselling centres, police, judiciary, legal counselling, services for persons with disabilities, youth welfare office, youth welfare institutions, health care centres, mosque communities, etc. This database must be thoroughly maintained. Furthermore, it is important for the accommodation centre to actively develop its cooperation with local partners. If needed, specially trained staff will accompany affected women and children to appointments and advise them on the choice of support services.

## **Minimum Standard 4**

# Dealing with situations of violence and risk management

## **Standardised procedures in cases of suspected violence**

**A**s a matter of principle, residents potentially affected by violence need to be adequately protected and supported in the best possible way. Every reasonable suspicion of violence by staff towards residents and every suspicion of violence by residents against children, adolescents and women must be investigated. Every suspicion must be taken seriously. For this purpose, procedures specific to the centre for dealing with and

analysing suspicions and indications of violence a) by internal and external staff, b) by residents, and c) by third external persons need to be developed.

### **Standardised procedures in case of violence**

If an act of violence has occurred in the centre, it needs to be ensured that affected children, adolescents and women immediately receive the protection and support they need. Medical care for the affected person(s),



psycho-social first aid, safeguarding their rights, and physical separation from the suspected perpetrator are particularly important. In consultation with the affected person(s), solutions must be found that ensure security and that take their interest such as staying at the centre, into consideration.

All staff must know the steps to be taken and persons to contact. It is important that all measures are taken in consultation with the affected person(s) and that they are informed about their various options. For minors, the measures taken must respect children's rights, in particular their right to participation and with the presence of their parents. Residents must be informed about internal procedures and emergency plans in writing.

The following points are central elements of an individual procedure and contingency plan, and are to be formulated in more detail by each accommodation centre:

- Assessing the danger;
- Immediate protection from further violence and support for affected children, adolescents and women;
- Bringing in interpreters;
- Medical care (this includes the possibility to have injuries medically verified);
- Informing a specially trained contact person in the centre and the parents or legal guardian in case of minors;
- For women: Counselling women affected by violence in an undisturbed environment (without the presence of the person(s) threatening or exercising violence or children);
- Information about the options of filing a report with the police for prosecution and emergency response (such as banishing orders);
- Notifying police and the youth welfare office in cases where the welfare of a child is endangered. If the affected person does not consent and if there is acute and extreme danger for life, body, and liberty of a woman and her children or if particularly serious criminal offences are imminent, the centre must call the police without the consent of the affected person. Any further action for the protection of the child is incumbent on the youth welfare office. The affected person must be notified thereof;

- Consulting doctors, lawyers, specialist advisors etc.;
- Documenting the violent situation and the testimony of the involved parties.

### Assessing danger after violence has occurred

If children and adolescents are affected, management must call on a trained and experienced specialist for assessing the level of threat after a violent incident has occurred. Procedures according to § 8a SGB VIII (Social Code) are to be followed.

In case of violence against women, management must make an assessment upon consultation with the affected parties and, if necessary, in cooperation with the police to determine whether the threat of violence against the woman persists, whether other residents are at risk, and what further measures need to be taken. If the person exercising violence is a resident, they – in accordance with applicable law – are required to leave the centre. In such a case, centre management must make sure there is subsequent accommodation.<sup>1</sup> Testimony by the affected parties can be an important source of information about the kind of violence, its severity and extent, as well as regarding current dangers. For assessing the danger and identifying risk factors (without involving the police) it may be helpful to consult a checklist with relevant risk factors for guidance.

In case of violence in close social relationships, affected women must be actively informed about their options for protection according to the Protection against Violence Act (banishing order, protection order, handing over of the common living unit), as well as possible police measures.

If remaining in the centre is untenable due to security concerns, women affected by violence must (upon consultation) be transferred to a women's shelter or another safe accommodation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1. If necessary, steps for changing residence restrictions or the condition of fixed abode need to be taken. In case of a ban on entering the centre, centre management must make sure that the perpetrator(s) don't become homeless. Management must inform about alternatives for short term accommodation and direct them to the immigration authorities immediately.

2. In case of domestic violence, women should be actively informed about their options (banishing order, protection order, handing over of the common living unit according to the Protection against Violence Act)..

<sup>2</sup> In doing so, the necessary steps need to be taken to change the condition of fixed abode and to clarify who will cover the costs for the women's shelter.

## Involving the police

If the risk of renewed and severe violence cannot be assessed and a threat to legally protected rights persists, the police must be involved to increase the security and the protection of the affected parties and to reduce or avert the danger of further acts of violence. The police may carry out a sound, systematic risk assessment and initiate further security measures. In this regard, it has to be taken into account that due to the principle of legality, the police will initiate preliminary proceedings irrespective of the will of the affected parties, as soon as they gain knowledge of criminal offences.

## Asserting the rights of victims

For persons affected by violence, asserting their rights can be difficult. Therefore, after an act of violence, it is particularly important to call in trained specialist advisors and specialised counsellors, or to refer those involved to specialists who can advise and support them on legal protection, criminal proceedings when needed, on entitlements according to the Victims Compensation Act, on banishing orders by the police, and measures according to the Protection against Violence Act.

# Minimum Standard 5

## Humane, protective and enabling conditions

### Building safety measures

Building safety measures in refugee accommodation centres are indispensable for the security of children, adolescents and women. These minimum standards range from designing living surroundings (e.g. lighting, signposting, enclosure) to entrance doors, lockable and secure living units (e.g. doors, windows), service alarms with emergency buttons and illuminated hallways, and gender-segregated sanitary facilities.

### Guaranteeing the possibility of privacy and private spaces

Cramped conditions can promote or foster acts of violence. One goal must therefore be for residents to be able to live in a manner that is as self-reliant and self-determined as possible and to provide them with a sufficient degree of privacy. For accommodation in collective centres, self-contained, lockable and accessible living units must be available. When allocating rooms, family needs must be considered along with other relevant factors. If sanitary facilities need to be commonly used, they must be strictly gender-segregated and must be lockable as well as accessible.

Inside, there should be curtains or another form of barrier to safeguard privacy. For women and their children who travel alone, there must be self-contained and lockable rooms separate from men. To safeguard children, adolescents and women who have previously or in their country of origin experienced violence, rape or sexual assaults, they must be provided with the necessary protective space they need. To prevent renewed victimization, it is particularly important to divide apartments or living units so they are spatially separated from male residents. If this cannot be facilitated due to the centre's structural conditions, women with special protection needs must be accommodated in suitable apartments or other housing with this in mind.

### Child friendly spaces must be a fixed component of the centre

Child friendly spaces offer children in refugee accommodation centres a safe and protected area where they find stability and support. Child friendly spaces need to be designed in an accessible and age-, culture- and gender-sensitive manner. The concept of child

friendly spaces implies integrated room planning and a design that takes into account structured play, recreation, education, health, and psycho-social support for children. Registration procedures for children, fixed child care ratios, and staff qualified in child protection, psycho-social first aid, and interaction with children are part of the protection ensured in the framework of child friendly spaces.

### **Safe common spaces for adolescents, women and mothers with children must be integral part of the centre**

Common rooms specifically for adolescents, women and mothers with children are designed to be age and gender sensitive and accessible. As protected common spaces, they are open to adolescents, women and mothers with children at different opening hours.

The concept of age and gender sensitive common rooms implies integrated room planning and a design taking into account structured play offers, recreation, education, health, and psycho-social support for adolescents, women and mothers with children. Furthermore, information about rights, entitlements and support possibilities for the target group should be provided in the common rooms.

## **Minimum Standard 6**

# Monitoring the protection plan's implementation

An important component of the protection plan are procedures and mechanisms that ensure regular monitoring of its implementation. Such monitoring must capture and analyse to what extent the recommendations have been implemented and what practical findings have been gained in the implementation of the protection plan. The subject of the monitoring are the structures created (e.g. feedback and complaint mechanisms, instruction and training offerings etc.) and instruments (e.g. guidelines, handouts, standardised work instructions, risk and need analyses with checklists, documentation forms etc.) as well as the dissemination and use thereof. The effectiveness of the instruments (e.g. the prevention of and improved handling of violence), however, are not subject of this monitoring. They are to be recorded separately.

The results of the monitoring must feed into the further planning and possible revisions or adaptations of the protection plan.

The monitoring must be carried out in a participatory manner, i.e. specific monitoring mechanisms should ensure the involvement of staff, service providers, residents, and external cooperation partners.

Effective monitoring requires a sound concept, implementation plan, and someone to manage the operation. It must be integrated into the centre's existing monitoring system.

The monitoring of the protection plan implementation must include a participatory, internal monitoring (e.g. a self-audit procedure with subsequent reflection of its results with the support of partner organisations involved in the implementation of the protection plan<sup>3</sup>), as well as an external monitoring by an independent monitoring body.

<sup>3</sup> For this purpose, working aids can be provided.

# GLOSSARY

## Forms of violence against children, adolescents and women

**Physical violence** – applying physical violence to an affected person in a forceful manner. Pushing, beating, face slapping, shaking, throwing, beating with the fist, kicking, biting, burning, gagging, and poisoning are all forms of physical violence.

**Neglect of children** – when parents or legal guardians fail to offer a child the conditions that are fundamental for its physical and emotional development and well-being, even though they would be capable to do so.

**Emotional violence against children** – refers to actions that are not appropriate for children on the verbal or symbolic level, the long-term persistence of negative patterns by parents or legal guardians towards children, resulting in children not receiving the appropriate emotional support. Such behaviour impairs children's self-confidence and/or social competence.

**Sexual violence against children** – sexual abuse is any sexual act by an adult or juvenile carried out on girls or boys against their will or to which they cannot knowingly consent due to physical, psychological, mental or language impediments. In the case of children under 14 years of age, it is generally assumed that they cannot consent. Examples of sexual acts include: touching of genitals, buttocks or breasts, masturbating a child or masturbating in front of them, oral, vaginal or anal penetration with penis, finger or objects, exhibitionism, showing of pornography, involvement in the production of displays of acts of abuse (so-called child pornography). In doing so, perpetrators use their position of power and authority to satisfy their own needs at the expense of the child.

**Violence against women**<sup>4</sup> – any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in

private life. It includes many different forms of violence against women and girls, such as intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, trafficking, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting.

**Intimate partner violence** – behaviour by an intimate partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. This definition covers violence by both current and former spouses and other intimate partners. Other terms used to refer to this include domestic violence, wife or spouse abuse, spouse battering.

**Gender-based violence against women** – "...violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately."<sup>5</sup>

**Forced marriage** – forced marriage is when at least one spouse has been forced into a formal or informal (i.e. in a religious or social ceremony) marriage through violence or threats. The possible refusal by one spouse either was not heard or the affected person was too fearful to resist. Also threats of existential financial or immigration law consequences can lead to forced marriage.<sup>6</sup>

**Stalking** – intentional and persistent harassment of another person, thereby strongly impairing that person's life. Stalkers attempt contact with their victims over a long period of time even if they are persistently and explicitly refused. Examples for harassment include: following, permanent presence near the victim, telephone calls at all times, letters, text messages, emails, posts in internet fora, forced entry into the living quarters, damaging property, leaving behind bodily fluids or waste, threatening with physical violence.

**Sexual violence** – sexual violence means that sexuality is being forcefully used as an instrument of power. It is not about consensual violent sexual practices

<sup>4</sup> See WHO: "Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: WHO clinical and policy guidelines", 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 2011, Article 3, <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/convention>.

<sup>6</sup> See Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled "Preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage" (A/HRC/26/22). Issued on 2 April 2014.

but about degradation, abasement, and humiliation of women and children. The focus for the perpetrator is obtaining a feeling of power. There are different forms of sexual violence, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape:

- **Sexual harassment** is widespread in our society. Women and girls experience it in public, at work, at school and vocational training, on the internet or on the phone. The degradation of women and girls in the media, in advertising, and a misogynistic language are conducive to these, mostly verbal, harassments. Sexual harassment limits girls and women in their personal liberty.
- **Sexual assault** means forcing the victim into sexual acts directed against their will. This can refer to coercion into sexual acts as well as to specific sexual practices or watching pornographic material.
- **Rape** is the most extreme form of sexual violence, in the course of which the woman's or girl's body is penetrated against their will.

**Female genital mutilation/cutting** – refers to:  
a) removing, infibulation or carrying out any other mutilation of the complete large or small vulvar lips or clitoris of a woman or of a part of it; b) a behaviour forcing or making a woman undergo one of the acts listed under letter a); c) a behaviour inducing, forcing or making a girl undergo one of the acts listed under letter a).

**Trafficking** – refers to recruiting people by force, deception or threat, and making them perform or continue exploitative services and activities.

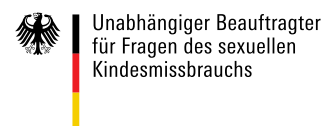
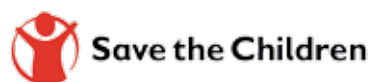
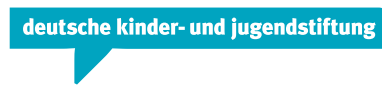
**Support system for women affected by violence** – Germany has a differentiated, specific support system for women affected by violence. This system includes women's shelters, safe houses, counselling centres, emergency hotlines in cases of sexual violence, and intervention centres for domestic violence. Services are aimed at all women who have experienced violence irrespective of when the violence took place or form of the experienced violence, whether they are with or without children; have a disability or not; irrespective of nationality, age, social status, income, cultural background, and religion. Services focus on protection and support in overcoming consequences of violence. Women's shelters are shelters for women

and their children threatened or affected by domestic violence. Protection from violence means first of all safe accommodation and crisis intervention. Women's shelters are available around the clock. As a general rule, their addresses are not made public. As part of their counselling, women's shelters offer psychosocial support and stabilisation work. Furthermore, clients receive support in processing their violent experiences and in developing new life perspectives. Counselling centres for violence against women provide a substantial part of the ambulatory counselling of women affected by violence. They support women in overcoming violent experiences, in improving protection from further violence, and in exercising their rights. Services are aimed at women affected or threatened by physical, sexual, intimate psychological or economic violence, in their family, in relationships, in daily life, at work or in other societal contexts.

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**MINIMUM STANDARDS**  
**for the Protection of Children,**  
**Adolescents and Women in**  
**Refugee Accommodation Centres**