Online Counselling as means to access youth experiencing sexual violence
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Values and Work Attitude

- Focus on women and girls
- Against structural discrimination of and violence against women and girls
- Overcoming dependance and social power inequalities

- Understanding and reflection of the socio-cultural context of the survivors
- Profound knowledge about specific situation of migration and diverse cultural backgrounds as base for counselling
- Adopting the perspective of the persons who have experienced violence
- Women and girls are experts of their lives
- Strengthening self-determination
- Empowerment
- Understanding of complexity and contradictions in women’s life situations and contexts
- Strengthening self-determination
Areas of work for girls

- Crisis facility (Mädchennotdienst) (residential 10 beds)
- Crisis drop in (Mädchennotdienst) (in cooperation)
- Intercultural longer term residential facility Wohngruppe DonyA (9 beds)
- Individual support in apartments (Betreutes Einzelwohnen)
- Individual Aids for girls and families in their homes (Familienhilfe, Erziehungsbeistand)
- 2 counselling centers for girls who experience or have experienced sexual violence, supportive persons and professionals Mädchenberatungsstellen
- Counselling face to face, by phone, email, chat
- Groups and workshops for girls, parents and mothers
- Prevention workshops with schools
- Counselling of professionals and institutions
- Support in court trials
- Trainings, workshops, lectures, information dissemination

Areas of work for women

- Self-help and counselling center Frauenselfhilfe
- Information drop in for women, transgender, intersexuals Frauenladen
- Crisis drop in center at night FrauenNachtCafé – nächtliche Frauenkrisenanlaufstelle
- Counselling by phone, face to face, via email or chat
- Counselling for couples
- Counselling for family, friends and professionals
- Workshops
- Self-help groups
- Exchanges spaces for self-help groups
- Intervention and support for self-help groups
Online Counselling

- E mail and chat
- Chat practised for more than 10 years
- Individual and group chat
- In counselling centers for girls and for women
- Workers have had training
- Data protection is assured via beranet, safe online counselling platform

Potential of online counselling

- Easy to access
- New access to different groups of young people we have not reached before
- Anonymity
- Like streetwork online – counselling goes where youth are
- Users are comfortable with the medium
Whom do we reach?

- Girls who still experience sexual violence
- Girls and women who have experienced sexual violence in the past
- Family members, friends, professionals and other supporters
- A significant number of girls have never disclosed the abuse before
- Phone contact would be an insurmountable threshold
- Some are very isolated, live in rural areas or small communities
- Some are girls with disabilities for whom online counselling is more accessible

Example of one girl

You say you would like to talk about the chaos in your emotions and body with someone

Yes

Not with someone 😞

I don’t want to sit next to the person and don’t want to know her that is too 😞 it is a shame

They think I am totally crazy

I don’t want to tell anyone 😞

These are your reasons why you can’t talk to anybody?

No, not only

About yourself with someone who is with you in the same room

I am so embarassed, I cannot trust 😞

You can talk but not about these things
If you quarrel they can hurt you
And people mostly do that
And I don’t need that – really
I don’t want to talk about embarrassing things in reality, not really

Why does online counselling facilitate talking about sexual abuse?

- Medium is suitable for topics that distinguish themselves with shame and need a high level of protection and safety
- Users stay in control, can leave the chat at any time
- Users decide what they disclose and what they prefer not to say
- They can use their own name or stick with the nickname
- They can choose a safe place for them
- Looks and external features do not matter
- They are not seen and heard only read when talking about their experiences
- It is also easier to address feelings of guilt in the chat
Technical features

- Beranet provides a safe platform
- Mails and chat are SSL secured
- Each counsellor has an individual counselling room
- Chats can be one time or a series of sessions
- Requests can be via email or chat slots can be reserved directly
- Possibility of group chats

What is special about online counselling?

- Very quick form of communication
- Comes directly to the point
- Problems and difficulties are addressed immediately
- Sexual abuse is addressed quicker than face to face
- Building trust is easier
Content and aims

- Similar to face to face counselling
  
  In situation of current abuse:
  - Most important aim is to find realistic ways with the girl to end the abuse and to assure safety
  - Who could be supportive persons in her environment?
  - How can support be established?

Crisis intervention:
- What is her situation?
- What are her strengths, resources, capabilities?
- How can the counselling strengthen her self-confidence?
- Sorting out her situation
- Develop possibilities to act, solutions to her problems
- Planning next steps

Content and Aims 2

- If the girl is thinking about reporting the abuse to the police, focus is on information:
  - What are the next steps?
  - Which kind of support is available? (lawyers, psycho-social support)
  - What does a court procedure mean?

- Some use online counselling as step towards face to face counselling
- Some use it as continuous support in difficult life situations
- Emergency chat or email can be combined with face to face counselling
Methods used

- Counsellors have longtime experience in face to face counseling for girls who experience(d) sexual violence
- Counselling know-how is used
- E.g. techniques of creative writing like sentence completion
- Exercises in crisis intervention that focus on resources or enable a change of perspectives and new interpretations of the situation and lead to new solutions.
- In chat series it is also possible to agree on „homework“ that is discussed at the next chat
- Visualizing exercises like „the safe place“
- „reading stories“

Conditions for online counselling

- Staff resources
- Definition of budget of hours
- Supervision and intervision in the team
- Additional, specific form of counseling
- Needs calm room with pc and internet facility
- Counsellors need training in using the platform
Challenges

- Time resources need to be assured
- Email counselling requires quick answers
- Only accessible for people with internet access
- Not accessible for all groups of persons with disabilities (if written language is difficult)

Figures

Counselling centers for girls, supporting persons and professionals

- In 2011: 922 Mail and Chat counselling
- 2161 counselling by phone and 653 face to face

Klicks on the beranet platform Wildwasser in 2012

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<td>574</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>471</td>
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Feedback

I think I am becoming more courageous 😊
Since we had our last talk 😊
Courage is good
Yes somehow
A lot of courage for you
Thank you
I think I am learning from you 😊
You do that all by yourself

Kontakt

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Thank you for your attention!