

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter

No. 96, June 2013



Dear friends and all other people interested in our work,

What kind of society do we want to live in? One in which sexuality – intimate expressions of relations, of love, of being human – is for sale? One in which a liberalized international trade in women

as a commodity is not halted, where sexual services can be bought like bananas, vacuum cleaners or insurance policies? Where the state bothers itself with improving the work conditions of women in prostitution instead of offering them alternatives – women who are often there against their will and have never had a choice?

Who profits from all this? Definitely not the exploited women.

The legalization of prostitution in Germany has absolutely not helped them. On the contrary, it has turned our country into the El Dorado of human traffickers. An EU study published in April showed that human trafficking grew year by year while action against human traffickers are increasingly rare.

Why is it that the court accepts only statements from victims, who are justifiably often too afraid to say anything? Why does no one look at the clues from money or allow statements from the police or third parties? The Federal Government has not once implemented the EU demands for better victim protection. That leaves us speechless but definitely not inactive!

This newsletter is therefore about big and small stories and an insight into a country in which equality is still a far away dream. For there is surely courageous women who risk their lives for their rights. That gives courage also to fight further for a society in which all women and men have equal rights and possibilities. And one in which no one, as a result of personal distress or societal and family pressure, is forced into prostitution.

Who profits from this? All of us.

Sister Lea & Monika Hartenfels, SOLWODI Directors

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SOLWODI Munich steps onto the Infobus

Refugees, asylum seekers, stranded individuals – these are the people who especially urgently need help. Yet, it is exactly these people who rarely have the courage to seek help. Hence, SOLWODI's Counseling Centre in Munich has joined in now on the 'Infobus-Project' which has been run with success by Amnesty International and the Munich Refugee Council for 12 years. The Infobus – an old, converted camping wagon, sprinkled with bright colors – offers concrete advice and assistance which comes to the people: the vehicle rolls twice a week into the grounds of the Bavarian Barracks, an initial reception centre, in which Bavaria accommodates asylum seekers currently numbering 450 people.

"To be begin with, it's about giving the asylum seekers information in hand about the formal and legal cycle of asylum procedures," says one of the responsible staff members of SOLWODI Munich. "In doing so we go in and speak with the women every week; asking if they have problems. With some, we suspect that they are victims of trafficking and forced prostitution." With each meeting the trust grows and is at some point perhaps good enough that these women have confidence in SOLWODI. "I think people who have problems have an additional problem with reaching out to people about their needs," according to Sister Lea Ackermann who is pleased about this new outreach initiative. "It is so important that one goes to these people and demolish hurdles in order to make it easier for them to open up."

While men usually come of their own initiative to a counseling, women are especially hard to reach according to SOLWODI's Munich personnel. Hence the Infobus offers a consultation hour once a week especially and only for women, without any accompanying men. The success speaks for itself: SOLWODI already regularly looks after twenty women in the Bayernkaserne through the Infobus.



SOLWODI makes the difference

What is special about SOLWODI? The engagement of our personnel, the immeasurable commitment of our volunteers, the attention of those who are convinced by our mission....and the structure! We are **regionally active** through our counseling centers and women's homes. We are **networked across the country** through the SOLWODI Non-Profit Associations in the federal states. And SOLWODI is **nationally and Europe wide engaged** through the political work. Read for yourselves!

Regionally active... in Osnabrück: An apprenticeship for the future

A young woman came to the SOLWODI Counseling Centre in Osnabrück in January 2010: an African sold to Germany, pregnant from a German client. Her condition slowly stabilized and the baby arrived at the end of April. In the meantime the police investigation did not make headway and was called off. As her residence status here was at risk, SOLWODI helped with an asylum application with success. In December 2011, with great effort, the woman's two older children were brought from their homeland. What joy for her and the children! With help from SOLWODI, the young woman undertook a language course, found an apartment, completed a certification as a care assistant and went on to undertake an apprenticeship for elderly care. "Without the help of SOLWODI, I would never have made it here in Germany!" - for us, the most beautiful expression of gratitude.

... in Koblenz: volunteers provide great assistance with the development association

The development association SOLWODI Schutzhaus Koblenz e.V., established at the beginning of the year, supports SOLWODI Koblenz with energy: A teacher provides German lessons to the women in the shelter, another offers sports and fitness, others accompany them to see the authorities and doctors, collect donations and assist in PR. Even when a woman moves out of the shelter to an apartment and needs help adjusting, the 21 women and two men of the development association are on hand to help. For the fixed SOLWODI staff members, these forms of assistance mean an enormous relief and the women in the shelter discover more that they are not alone.

Nationally networked ... in Berlin: the Berlin Senate Workshop brings stakeholders together

The staff members from the Senate, authorities, police and labor unions and NGOs like SOLWODI met at the end of April at the invitation of the Berlin Senate. The goal of the meeting: the exchange of experiences, tips and tricks as organizations (like SOLWODI) which focus on helping victims of sexual exploitation usually have different strategies, networks and counseling approaches from those whose focus is on victims of trafficking and work exploitation. At the end of the day all were in agreement: one can learn a lot from one another!

Nationwide engaged... in Hamburg on the Evangelical Church Day: A whole day against human trafficking

The Evangelical Church Day in Hamburg devoted an entire day against human trafficking. Sister Paula Fiebag reported on 2 May on the subject "Forced Prostitution at our Door? - A Blatant Inequality" and discussed in connection with experts from police, national and international NGOs and politics.



... in Berlin: SOLWODI's Founding Membership of "Together against Human Trafficking"

Chaired by CDU Federal Parliamentarian Frank Heinrich, the alliance "Together against Human Trafficking" was founded in Berlin in mid-May. Aside from other organizations such as the "European Freedom Network" and "Stop the Trafficking", SOLWODI was also a founding member and even represented on the board through Berlin colleague Beatrice Mariotti. "Together against Human Trafficking" wants above all, through a nationwide publicity exercise, to ensure that human trafficking and its injustices become socially and politically discussed, acknowledged and fought against.

... in Berlin: SOLWODI urges implementation of the EU Human Rights Convention in Germany

The Council of Europe Convention against Human Trafficking launched in 2008 is above all an important step of the victims. It places human trafficking for sexual exploitation in a human rights context for the first time and strengthens the rights of those affected: included are the rights to compensation, payment of unpaid wages, a minimum period of residence, instead as it is in Germany, to be treated and deported as illegal foreigners.

Although the numbers of victims of EU wide human trafficking has grown from year to year, only six EU countries have ratified the convention as of today – Germany is not one of them. The deadline for ratification expired in April. Due to the fact that prostitution is legal in Germany, the latter is main destination country for women trafficking, according to SOLWODI's Director Monika Hartenfels.

"The German Prostitution Act sends the signal to society that it is perfectly all right for men to buy sex and as a result women," continued Hartenfels. "We are however certain that this has strengthened the demand. We should ask ourselves, if we want to live in such a society!"

SOLWODI appeals to the Federal Government to follow up as quickly as possible on the ratification of the EU Convention Against Human Trafficking. SOLWODI's accredited expertise drawn upon in the media reports on the subjects such as in programmers like the ARD "Tagesschau" and SWR "Landesschau".

Being a woman in ... Columbia

by Julieta Romero Güeto

I still remember well my first beauty competition – it took place in kindergarten. I had just turned five, wore a pink dress and was told to move elegantly. I come from Columbia. For over 80 years, the Miss Columbia Pageant has been taking place in my hometown Cartagena. It is the media event of the year.



Columbian girls are aware from a young age how women look, how she should behave and be equally successful as a mother as she is in her professional life. And even the boys learn early: men do not cry, men do not cook and they do not also look after the children.

Clearly defined roles, each knows his/her place – the many problems began exactly there. A rigid role perception is also a major cause of domestic violence, according to a study carried out by the United Nations in 2010 in Columbia. Almost half of the women interviewed for this claimed to have been victims of gender-based violence. Half of all Columbian women are victims of violence, only because they are women? That shocked me. How can that be? The strict roles subjugating women in Columbia, brings together in an unholy alliance widespread low education levels and a patriarchal culture that is over hundreds of years old: Men need to protect their honor, punish infidelity, jealousy is a virtue, women who are ugly or not especially intelligent, are despised. And violence is seen in Columbia as a legitimate means to solve conflict. And it comes to these numbers: between January and October 2012, according to the Colombian Criminal Statistic, 47,390 women were victims of domestic violence, almost 18,000 of them victims of sexual abuse. The men were seldom punished: 80 percent of offences did not result in any consequence for the perpetrators.

It is no wonder because in a country like Columbia, even the media them-

selves hardly address the violence against women. The politics is turbulent, corruption scandals are a daily affair, the war makes headlines each day. The broadcasting time left is occupied by entertainment topics. As I began my studies, it became trendy to bring in contestants of the Miss Columbia Pageant as moderators on TV: after the political and economic news, they were permitted, skimpily dressed to present the latest news from the world of Hollywood stars and soap opera heroes. This is how the Columbian media sees women.

Despite all that, a piece of news in June 2012 was more important than all others: the death of Rosa Elvira Cely, a street vendor who was raped and killed. She was impaled, just like in the Middle Ages. Her fate sparked a storm of shame and indignation. In Bogota, the capital, thousands gathered for a symbolic demonstration and cried in chorus: "No more! No more!"

Yet something else often makes the lives of women in my homeland hard: the war. Leftist guerilla groups, armed forces, right winged paramilitaries, and the drug cartels have been fighting for over 40 years over the control of land. Women are particularly affected in this war. According to a current study, fighting against men is not be carried out the same way. Violence against women is a sharp weapon: they are subjugated, raped, violence on their bodies carried out, dishonored as bad mothers and bad wives. According to Human Rights Watch, the war in Columbia has resulted in more than 4 million

internal displaced persons, 10 percent of the population are refugees in their own land. Half of them are women.

Yet more and more activists, lawyers, journalists and victims dare to tell their story publicly and fight for their rights. Aida Quilcué is one of them. She belongs to the indigenous Nasa people and fights tirelessly to ensure that the armed forces finally vacate and return the land to its people. Her case speaks for itself. It was a day in December 2008, Aida Quilcué just returned from Geneva where she had publicly reported to the UN Human Rights Commission on violence against the indigenous peoples of Columbia - since the military killed her husband in a supposed accident. The attack itself was actually meant for her. But Aida Quilcué is not giving up: "Even if they kill me, even if they kill all of us, we will continue to fight for our dignity, for our freedom!"

I came to Germany three years ago to do my Masters in international journalism. My first stop was Dresden, where I lived for a year. In this city, the girls wear little makeup, sometimes they run around in jogging pants, high-heeled shoes are rarely seen. And I must say, I enjoy this anti-beauty trend. Today, at the end of my studies, I see my own culture and the challenges my country faces much more clearly.

One thing I hope with all my heart is that when I go back home, I would be able to create space as a journalist. Space for the stories of all those women who are the heroines of my home – and not because they have won a beauty contest.

SOLWODI goes to school

Those wishing to change society must start early. Boys eventually become men, girls women – it would be good when both start early to consider what that means. Hence, SOLWODI places much value on that through presentations and supporting school projects that lay the foundations early.

For example the Maria Ward School in Eichstätt. Soni Unterreithmeier (SOLWODI Augsburg) visited Beate Trampert's religious classes many years ago and explained her work. At the end, student speakers presented a check of 3.989,- € – all proceeds from various school events.

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But that was not enough, because the religious class would not let the issue go: developed with the support of the Diocese of Eichstätt, the entire class produced and edited a film about the work of SOLWODI. "No one examines - we have" is a minute long short film, in which the students perform, showing how important the work of SOLWODI is when doors are shut and the unbelievable behind them happen - in a brothel, hourly hotel or car.

"Such projects are the ones that stick," said teacher Beate Trampert. "When one commits for social things, for organizations, for something you can really throw your weight behind. Because the students will always remember." Simply learning for life. The film is expected to be on display from June of the SOLWODI website. In order to reach more students, SOLWODI Koblenz launched, with immense support from the GLOBE Foundation, a groundbreaking new project on forced marriages and honor killings. In the course of a year, a teaching model is being developed with educators and experts, tested and applied to students to clarify the issue of forced marriage and honor killing and ability to deal with such cases in their immediate environment. The scope and design flexibly depend on the possibilities of interested schools.

Need help and suggestions for teaching? Write (see address below) to the SOLWODI headquarters in Boppard Hirzenach!

Foundations and Donors for SOLWODI Today: The "Helping Together" Initiative

Donations - large or small amounts, time or personal use - are indispensable for SOLWODI. Therefore, we introduce again people who help us. Today: A conversation with entrepreneur Peter Adelfang, manager of the advertising materials manufacturer APA, who founded the initiative "Helping Together" with his wife.

Why do you get involved?

Peter Adelfang: My wife and I, when we got married 18 years ago, said: We are doing well, we are on the sunny side of life, we do not need gifts, but would much rather do something good. So the private initiative "Helping Together" emerged. Whenever there were celebrations, we raised money with our guests. And then we examined and asked: Where is the need, where are projects that we want to support?

How did it come to a special commitment to SOLWODI?

Peter Adelfang: My sister is a nun who knew Sister Lea Ackermann's personally and made us aware of their work. I first thought: "Women who are introduced here against their will and forced into prostitution - that still cannot be with us!" Then my wife and I were shocked. Around the same time my mother died. Brigitta Adelfang, has been a lifetime socially dedicated person. For her funeral, she had determined that instead of flowers and wreaths that the mourners should donate money. Thus began, in 2000, our financial commitment for SOLWODI.

What impresses you the most about SOLWODI?

Peter Adelfang: Sr. Lea - and it is not only the person but also the way she's done it. The perseverance, tireless energy. You can feel the spirit and the spirit of optimism. Sr. Lea will not let you go. Whenever we meet her, she says: "Do not forget SOLWODI!" And where we act we do it.

What else can a firm still do for women's rights?

Peter Adelfang: We do not bring to our business a particular women's quota - but we make sure that the person best suited gets a job. In our company, we attach great importance to ensuring that all have the same opportunities, the same starting positions. And I experience it often that the women more dedicated, reliable employees.

Please note our new address: 86150 Augsburg, Schießgrabenstr. 2, Tel: 0821-50 87 62 64, Fax: 0821-15 44 45

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Bank Accounts

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Sorting Code 570 900 00

BIC GENODE51KOB

IBAN DE68 5709 0000 6565 6510 00

Landesbank Saar, Saarbrücken

Acc.-No. 2000 9999

Sorting Code 590 500 00

BIC SALADE55XXX

IBAN DE84 5905 0000 0020 0099 99

Kreissparkasse Rhein-Hunsrück

Acc.-No. 11 270 00

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