

SOLWODI

Solidarity with women in distress

Solidarität mit Frauen in Not

Newsletter

No. 90, December 2011

Dear friends and all other people interested in our work,

The Advent season has begun. The first candle on the Advent wreath is burning and lights up these hectic times of our society. Initially the Advent season was a time for fasting and repenting and meant as an encouragement for rethinking. When I reflect the past year, I see that we have managed to encourage a rethinking despite of all hectic. It is the small steps that count, such as our children's treats that we have celebrated and that you can read about on page 4 of this newsletter. Our report on page 2 about a judge who gives perpetrators a talking to at his court might also be an encouragement for reflection for some of our readers. There is not always injustice in our world. Every now and then a small light of hope appears. Our donors and volunteers contribute to that and I would herewith like to thank them all for this. For the future I would like to wish you the attentiveness to see the positive things in your surrounding and to be moved by them!



Yours, Sister Lea

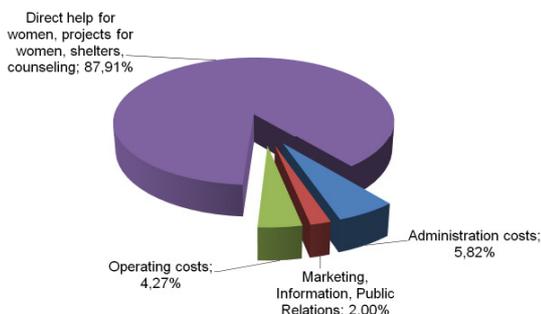
How your help contributes to our work for women in distress

Dear friends of SOLWODI,

The advisory board of the SOLWODI foundation would like to inform you about the very good use of the financial support by the entire organization of SOLWODI.

We, the members of the advisory board analyze the figures given to us by the executive board of SOLWODI Germany and can confirm this headline. In the years 2009 and 2010 the contingent for administration and operating costs of the entire organization of SOLWODI was around 10%. For the classification of the costs, SOLWODI refers to the principles of the German Charity Council, published on May 5, 2010.

Overview of the costs 2010



Including the fundraising costs, the quote is around 12 %. The German Central Institute for Social Matters has published a matrix for charity organizations which states that the above mentioned costs are to be seen as low if under 10 %, as adequate if between 10% and 20% and as justifiable if between 20% and 35%. In addition to that it is to be considered, that SOLWODI does **not** get any grants for administrative work.

As you can see: **Your support helps!**

Best regards

The advisory board of the SOLWODI foundation
Joris Bühler, chairman

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 **LOTTO STIFTUNG**
RHEINLAND-PFALZ

- Ein starker Partner im Land -

SOLWODI is kindly supported by the Rhineland-Palatinate's Lottery Foundation, to which we would like to express our sincere thanks.

Justice was dispensed

A court report by Soni Unterreithmeier

Court decisions are often complained about. Some reasons for this are false minimizations of the importance of the crimes, insensitive treatment of the victims as well as the downgrading of the elements of crime or low sentences. But it is not always like this, as the following report of a court case in Augsburg, Germany shows.

This court case held on October 6, 2011 before the third chamber of the county court of Augsburg was about severe human trafficking. The judge was Karl-Heinz Haeusler. The main perpetrator was the owner of a brothel chain disguised as training classrooms or massage studios with ten flats in Bavaria and Thuringia. The Romanian prostitutes in these brothels had to do what this man wanted them to do and were permanently controlled. The owner of the brothel chain took away over 50% of their incomings. Through newspaper ads in Romania, he had explicitly looked for young and inexperienced women without any knowledge of the German language to make them completely dependent from him. The court stated that this was an inhuman process. The women had been told that they would be trained and later employed as masseuses. But when they arrived in Germany they had to dress in just a G-string and perform erotic massages with obligatory

“hand relaxation”, which means until ejaculation. Other sexual services were also part of the program.

The judge stated that he was not aiming for a fast conclusion of this court case. He wanted to get a thorough picture of the accused and their comprehension of guilt. Only if they understood what they had done to these women would they be able to improve. The judge wanted to see if they just admitted their guilt to get lower sentences of if they really understood their wrongdoing.

The accused admitted their guilt which led to an agreement. The main perpetrator was sentenced to 6 years and 9 months in jail. The other three accused, two women and one man, were sentenced to imprisonment between two and three and a half years. The committed crimes were considered to be of heavy nature and the so-called massage studios were seen as inhuman business practices. The judge stated that the accused had exploited the situations of distress and

the unsuspectingness of the young women. Knowing that the women were dependent from him, he had betrayed their trust and forced them into disgusting acts. The women had been put under psychological pressure and their human dignity had been taken. In this case the credibility of the victims was not doubted. They were believed to would not have prostituted themselves if it had not been for the perpetrators. The judge based his rendition on the purpose of the prostitution law of 2002 which was meant to protect women in prostitution. He visualized the aftermaths of their crimes to the accused and strived towards victim-offender mediation. The main perpetrator had to apologize to the women and pay 10,000 Euros to each of them for compensation. In his conclusion the judge mentioned the good cooperation between all the involved instances and the good treatment of the women by SOLWODI. I hope that court cases such as this one will become regular in Germany.

Cooperation with the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor

We continued our good cooperation with the legal authorities in Koblenz in September and October: SOLWODI took part in the open house presentation of the Higher Regional Court and the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor by joining a discussion round that was very well frequented, mostly by young people. Helga Tauch who leads the counseling center of SOLWODI in Duisburg talked about prostitution and its consequences for the women involved. During the discussion that followed, the questions were so many that SOLWODI was asked to hold a seminar at a school together with the prosecutors of the courts in Koblenz. Furthermore, Sr. Lea Ackermann and some of her colleagues joined a workshop with prosecutors at the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor in Koblenz. The Chief Public Prosecutor Erich Jung was also present in this workshop. Legal questions and current cases of our counseling work were discussed. Both sides were pleased by the outcome of this meeting: “We are basically heading in the same direction, which is holding up the constitutional state” said Sr. Lea Ackermann.

EU convention aims at fighting human trafficking

The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, being an agreement of international law, demands binding measures for the protection of the victims and a non-discrimination rule for its conversion. Furthermore it obligates all parties of the contract to perform a gender mainstreaming for all actions of protection for the victims. The convention was passed on May 16, 2005 and came into effect on an international basis on February 1, 2008. In the meantime it has been ratified by 34 states. Although Germany was one of the first states to sign the convention in 2005 it is now one of the last states in the Council of Europe to ratify it. It was not until October 17, 2011 that the Federal Government of Germany brought the draft bill before the Federal Parliament to start this important process.

SOLWODI is shocked about the forced separation of a mother and her child

Imputed child abduction instead of family reunion. A Dutch court separates a family due to false hypotheses. A report about one of the cases of SOLWODI.

Ms. H.* from Northern Africa fled from her country of origin several years ago together with her daughter Liane*, because they were threatened by their family. Here is what had happened:

After a car accident, her husband had fallen into a coma and her brutal brother-in-law claimed Ms. H. for himself. When she refused him, he held a knife to her throat, raped her and threatened to kill her if she did not agree to marry him. Her father-in-law who was a police man supported the threats of his son and threatened to search for her worldwide and kill her, should she attempt to flee. But Ms. H. was able to escape and asked for asylum in Germany. Out of shame and fear she did not dare to tell the whole truth. When her application for asylum was rejected, she was afraid that she and her daughter would be sent back to their country of origin and so they fled to her boyfriend in the Netherlands, where she also applied for asylum. During this time, Ms. H. became pregnant. The Dutch father of her unborn child immediately accepted it to be his. Because of a temporary psychological crisis, Ms. H. had to be brought into hospital. During this time, her

daughter Liane was brought to live with a foster family. Shortly after that, Ms. H. received a letter from the aliens department saying that she was to leave the country immediately and she was put into custody pending deportation. A few days later the aliens department gave her two train tickets for her and her daughter to travel to Bavaria. Ms. H. went to the Dutch foster family, took her nine year old daughter with her and went back to Germany. The youth welfare office in the Netherlands then accused her of child abduction. Two employees of the youth welfare office came to Germany, took the girl and brought it back to the foster family in the Netherlands. The mother is not allowed to enter the Netherlands. She cannot visit her daughter and she was not allowed to call her on the phone for several weeks, despite of the fact that the health authorities in Germany had confirmed that she was in a stable psychological state and the youth welfare office in Germany had stated her to be a good and caring mother. Neither Ms. H. nor her daughter Liane were ever heard before a Dutch court concerning their situation. Now that Ms. H. is allowed to call her daugh-

ter once a week, the girl is so nervous that it mixes up German, Dutch and her native language, which is why Ms. H. is almost unable to understand her. But one question always remains the same: "Mum, when will I finally be allowed to come back to you?"

Ms. H. urgently needed a Dutch advocate and a translation of her documents for the Dutch court. She received money from SOLWODI to pay for this. In the meantime the Dutch court decided that the girl is to remain in the foster family in the Netherlands! This decision was taken despite the fact that a cooperation with the youth welfare authorities in Germany would be ensured. The daughter now has a permanent residence permit status for the Netherlands and her mother is not allowed to enter the country. This is against all human and family rights. SOLWODI will keep on fighting for Ms. H. and her daughter, so that they will be able to be together again...

We will inform you about the process in our next newsletter.

**Names changed*

Soni Unterreithmeier, manager of the SOLWODI counseling center in Augsburg

Benefit events in Ludwigshafen

Early this year SOLWODI, represented by our counseling center in Ludwigshafen, was chosen to be a supported project by the international association of artists "artists for freedom" who fights against human trafficking and slavery with its artworks. From the 12th of March until July 30, 2011 the former shipyard halls in the Luitpold harbor were transformed into exhibition space by many sponsors and volunteers. The artwork of almost 100 artists was shown there in three exhibition blocks. During the opening and finishing celebrations, Eva Schaab,

the manager of our counseling center in Ludwigshafen, presented the work of SOLWODI. 50 % of the revenues were donated to charity projects and so SOLWODI was happy to receive

over 1,500 Euros for its work with victims of human trafficking. For the decoration of our counseling center we also received an abstract painting from the artist and organizer of AFF, Christina Seibold. In addition to that, the association "Culture Rhine-Neckar" organized a feast for SOLWODI to which everyone participated voluntarily. Music, a buffet, dance and art draw many visitors to this feast and contributed to a successful evening. The profits of this evening of 1,000 Euro were also donated to SOLWODI. We would herewith like to thank the donors again for their support. Furthermore we would also like to thank the volunteers, the press and the interested visitors for the positive feedback.



www.artistsforfreedom.net

Of children’s laughter and nice football people

Thanks to the support of the German Football Association (DFB) and with the help of many volunteers, SOLWODI was able to give happiness to approximately 100 “SOLWODI kids” this summer.



During the children’s feast at our shelter in Koblenz the children were very excited when they unwrapped presents that were often larger than themselves. The presents included soft toys, toy cars, colored beads, painting utensils and many more things to make a children’s day interesting. We played, laughed, painted, had a barbecue and ate cake and ice-cream.

Thanks to the social campaign of the DFB called “children’s dreams 2011“ that supports organization who work for the wellbeing of children and teenagers, we were also able to experience a nice feast in Mainz. Josef Hens, the vice president of the Football Association Rhineland brought a treasure box with him which was unwrapped with great excitement. The t-shirts and the football that were in this box were immediately taken over by the young “athletes“. The SOLWODI team in Mainz organized many interesting games and a buffet. Josef Hens also handed over a certificate that stated the work of SOLWODI with children from different countries to be of great social importance.



“I let the small light shine in me” sang a big African woman in Berlin. The SOLWODI team in Berlin organized a feast with music and many culinary specialties from different countries to give the visitors an afternoon free of sorrows. The magic of Africa was sensible. Approximately 70 women and children gave each other attention, respect and love. The women smiled, danced and sang in their native languages. For some time they were able to enjoy their cultures and to move freely to the music. The final song sang by all of them together was very moving. Every woman shone in her own light.



The SOLWODI team in Bad Kissingen organized an interesting afternoon together with communion kids, with borrowed toys, a para-balloon and many presents, such as a child car seat for our children. “The communion kids from Schönderling asked us what we needed for our children and bought it from the money they received for their communion” said Renate Hofmann, the manager of our counseling center in Bad Kissingen. In addition to that, every communion kid brought some of its own toys for the children of the women that are supported by

SOLWODI. The happy faces of our children showed how much they enjoyed this afternoon and how thankful they were for it.

Contact:

SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. / Propsteistraße 2 / D-56154 Boppard-Hirzenach
 Tel: 0049 – (0)6741 – 2232 / Fax: 0049 – (0)6741 – 2310
 Email: info@solwodi.de <http://www.solwodi.de>

Bank Accounts

Volksbank Koblenz Mittelrhein e.G.
 Acc.-No. 656565 1000
 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
 Sorting Code 560 517 90
 BIC MALADE51SIM
 IBAN DE02 5605 1790 0001 1270 00