

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter
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Dear friends and all other people interested in our work,

"End prostitution!" The last quarter of 2013 was marked by our nationwide campaign against the enslavement of women. The response was overwhelming: By the editorial deadline, we had alone on the online petition platform change.org well over 5,000 signatures. With countless of volunteers mobilised to solicit signature lists across the country, we were already able to record more than 8,000 supporters in mid-November. Some signatories explained their motivations: "Because it is incompatible with the dignity of man. The existing law has exacerbated the situation of women," or even "Because I find it despicable, how women are treated." Another supporter worked "currently in a shelter in Romania, and see the circumstances women come from that forces them to be sold in Germany!"

We launched in November a much welcomed campaign of long-standing comrade Alice Schwarzer. In the current Emma booklet, she also calls for the abolishment of prostitution. Ninety celebrities such as Dr. Heiner Geissler, Prof. Dr. Margot Käßmann, Maria Furtwängler and many more, including Sister Lea are first signatories of Action Emma.

The link to our online petition can be found on www.solwodi.de "End Prostitution!" We need every vote because our demand to ban the purchase of sexual services faces tough opposition in liberal Germany. Human trafficking and forced prostitution are now subjects for discussion in the coalition negotiations. It will be back on the agenda in the new legislature. SOLWODI will be involved! And we can even hope for support from the highest level: Pope Francis is now planning to take decisive steps to combat human trafficking and forced prostitution. A good reason to cheer in the New Year! We most sincerely thank you for your interest, for your support and for your kindness. Wishing all of you a Merry Christmas!

Sister Lea & Monika Hartenfels

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Pilgrimage for more trust in God and for SOLWODI

For Brunhilde Schierl from near Bamberg, it was a childhood dream: in the beginning of May, she launched - without money, with little possession - a petition for SOLWODI in Flensburg. 1450 km and several months later, she arrived in Constance - still with an empty wallet, but with more than 1,500 signatures and a heart full of unforgettable encounters. The signatures were brought personally to Sister Lea.

Why did you make the journey as a penniless pilgrim?

Brunhilde Schierl: Even as a child I was fascinated by the biblical passage "Go out into the world, take no money and no bread!" That was then buried for many years, but the fire never went out. After years working for the homeless, it occurred to me: You would have to experience it for yourself to understand. When I was told by a pastor of his pilgrimage to the Camino de Santiago, it reignited the flames in me to do the same.

Your motto during the pilgrimage was God strengthens confidence!" - How did that happen?

I hid my faith all my life. I was always different, wrong for my family. I was even made to doubt my inner voice. Today I know that the latter was never wrong. I wanted to show my faith. Because this world needs God, he gives support in every crisis. God strengthens confidence - this is my message that I wear on t-shirt and backpack throughout Germany.

How did the commitment to SOLWODI come about?

Last year I saw the crime story "Throwaway Girls". It touched me deeply and I thought: If I'm walking through Germany, then I can use the opportunity to collect signatures for SOLWODI. Read for yourself.



SOLWODI is **regionally active** through the counselling centres, women's homes and shelters, and lobbying associations. SOLWODI Associations are **networked across the country**. SOLWODI is **nationally and Europe wide engaged** through political work.

Regional active ... Round table firmly established in Oberhausen

SOLWODI Oberhausen is pleased about the establishment of the Round Table on "prostitution". Since June regular meetings are held among representatives of all institutions that have contact with women in prostitution, such as Health, regulatory and youth services, the police, the equality body, Pro Familia and also SOLWODI. "The round table is a huge step in the right direction," said Patrizia Chudalla of SOLWODI Oberhausen, which at the last meeting presented the work of SOLWODI. "So we discover, for example, gaps in care services and avoid duplication of structures." There are now round-tables established in Aachen, Berlin and Münster.

... in Berlin: A Reason to celebrate: Five-year anniversary of the counselling office and move to Neukölln

There were two good reasons for a feast at SOLWODI in Berlin: The 5th Anniversary of the counselling centre and the move to Neukölln, making the counselling centre now much closer to their clients. Around 60 representatives from politics, religion and other counselling services came to celebrate. Prof. Barbara John confirmed that the commitment of SOLWODI for women, especially African women, is a plus for Berlin. Green MEP Dr. Susanna Kahlefeld supported the demand of SOLWODI that victims of trafficking be granted a residence permit, regardless of their testimony against perpetrators. The CDU deputy Burkard Dregger wished for future closer contact when campaigning on the themes of the counselling centre. A client expressed her gratitude to SOLWODI by singing the song "This little light of mine".

Nationally networked ... in Thuringia: SOLWODI helps state government on establishment of advisory structures

Thuringia currently has no advisory and support services for victims of human trafficking. Hence, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Family and Health contacted SOLWODI, to learn about building a nation-wide support structure. Designed at the invitation of the Ministry, SOLWODI Managing Director, Monika Hartenfels, was a keynote speaker at the inaugural event on "Forced Prostitution and Human Trafficking - Help and Advice in Thuringia" on 18 November 2013 in Erfurt.

Engaged in Germany and Europe ... throughout the country: Campaign "End prostitution!" already has over 8,000 signatures: Participate! All information on www.solwodi.de

... in Mönchengladbach: Meeting with CDU Member of the Bundestag, Dr. Günter Krings

Together with representatives of the city of Aachen, SOLWODI Associate Roshan Heiler met in mid-September with Dr. Günter Krings, group leader for the coalition negotiations of the CDU. The aim was to sensitize Dr. Krings to the issue of human trafficking and forced prostitution. This was clearly a success judging from Dr. Krings post after the meeting on his Facebook page: "That would be for me one of the most important issues in coalition negotiations."



Günter Krings, Maria Drews, Roshan Heiler, Rudolf Henke

...Vienna : One year of SOLWODI Austria

On 15 October last year, six religious communities came together to set up a protective shelter for eight women with children and founded SOLWODI Austria. "We were very surprised that we have received so many requests from pregnant women or those with young children," says Sr. Patricia Erber, the representative of SOLWODI Austria. She is pleased that already this year, 14 women and 13 children – of which three were born at SOLWODI - were taken in. Sr. Anna Mayrhofer, Head of Protective Housing, appreciates the good co-operation and networking that was very quickly built with other organizations, advisory bodies and authorities, thereby greatly facilitating the work for the residents of the protective housing. Two social workers and a psychotherapist form the full-time team. Nine volunteer staff members are involved, especially in the night and weekend service. The project is financed by SOLWODI through the Association of Ordained Women in Austria (VFÖ), religious communities and private donations.

... in Ludwigsthal: Panel discussion with experts from three countries

The increase in crime, especially trafficking and forced prostitution stands in stark contrast to the development of a good neighbourhood in the border areas of Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria. Representatives from all three countries met in mid October at Castle Ludwigsthal to discuss those issues. SOLWODI was represented by Renate Hofmann of Bad Kissingen. Lively sex-tourism occurs in the border areas and is a major problem in Czech cities. All participants agreed that only uniform EU rules and a European-wide implementation of the EU human trafficking directive, which is still pending in Germany, can rectify the situation.



Renate Hofmann 3.left

The language of the street

Outreach work - or street work - at SOLWODI Aachen

This day once again offers everything it has: Starting with a routine question of health advice to a self-employed prostitute who wanted to plan her exit to Albania for months to the Albanian who crumples the SOLWODI business card. You need good nerves, empathy and patience. But it's worth it. Street work is often the only way to reach the women who need help especially. Therefore SOLWODI offers this form of consultation wherever resources and people make it happen.

Roshan Heiler has packed her first aid kit. First aid for women in prostitution is mainly time, an open ear and addresses of help locations, SOLWODI staff, and physicians, packed in a



handy folder. At least every two weeks, she or her colleague visits the women in the red light district as part of the STELLA project.

"The women must be able to rely on us. Only then can trust be built," says Heiler. "But one never knows beforehand quite what to expect."

The path from the central SOLWODI counselling centre whose premises has been the Diocese for three years, is not far. At the Town Hall 100 metres away – standing in on Antonius Street we see many small storefronts in which scantily clad women present themselves, waiting for customers. For many, the Antonius Street is an eyesore in the middle of the city, which would do best is to disappear to somewhere on the outskirts. Out of sight - out of mind.

"That would be a catastrophe for the women," says Roshan Heiler. "A piece of social control would disap-

pear when they are out in the industrial areas outside the city. It would be hard to reach the women there.'

Even the women do not want to move, especially since the problem of parked cars has just been solved. Starting immediately, thick iron barriers prevent visitors unfamiliar with the city from parking in front of the windows.

A slender woman, probably in her early 40s, with long blonde hair waves from her window. "I must drop by your office," she said. "A client told me that Aldi pays above the standard rate. Is that true? I must eventually do something else. Will you help me with the application? I do not know how to work with computers." Roshan Heiler reaffirms SOLWODI's offer of assistance, knowing that the situation is harder for women the older they get. Most of them do not pay into a social insurance and have no security for old age and are at risk of poverty.

"Many find it hard to step out of prostitution, especially women who are good in business and earn quite a bit in a month. That makes it hard for women to find alternatives," says Heiler. A graceful, well-groomed woman comes to us, a Greek who speaks French but no German. "She said two years ago that she is only saving for a nest," explains Heiler.

"But she is still here. Most women tell me that prostitution destroys them eventually and no one can take it for long. It all makes one psychologically ill."

A couple of doors further and Roshan Heiler has to rely on her Spanish. A woman from South America needs a medical examination but has no health insurance. Not a problem when one knows where to turn to.

One thing is clear: the language of the streets is not German but Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Russian, Polish, Spanish, even French and English. Roshan Heiler speaks five languages, her colleagues another two. An Albanian accompanies, when possible, to translate. Along with the consistency of the visits, encourage the women to open their hearts to the workers.

Nevertheless, the work is sometimes frustrating. An Albanian crushes demonstratively, under the eyes of her handler, the SOLWODI visiting card and throws it to the ground. "We simply cannot reach some women," says Heiler. "Not yet."

Yet again, the word of mouth propaganda works. We wanted to leave Antonius Street as a woman waved to Roshan Heiler. "Upstairs is a woman who wants to quit. She is already waiting for you." And she does not have to wait long.

Volunteer engagement: Koblenz association's summer party

Around 150 guests came to celebrate the first summer party of SOLWODI Protective Housing Koblenz at the end of August in the Oberwerth Sports School. Everything was available - from painting kids faces over live music with the Mini Maxi Singers and Django Reinhardt to the sumptuous buffet. "We help the helpers, for example with donation drives and public relations like this party," according to Dr. Ingeborg Thümmel, Chairperson of the Association who recently celebrated his birthday. SOLWODI's founder Sr. Lea Ackermann was thrilled with the successful part, the volunteer commitment and also the donations. The Lotto-Rhineland-Palatinate Foundation alone presented a check worth € 2,500.



Africa exchange

Visit to Africa: Successful skills building and training for women in Kenya



SOLWODI helps thousands of women and girls in Kenya every year through the projects SOLGIDI (Solidarity with Girls in Distress) and SOLASA (SOLWODI Women’s Sport Association). The important thing is to show a way out of prostitution and that refers most of all to arranging traineeships, strengthening confidence, team spirit and discipline for example through sport. Once a year, one or two of SOLWODI’s employees in Germany travel not only to see firsthand what the projects need, where problems or special needs arise but examples of good practices. This time, Gudrun Angelis and Ulrike Gottlob, a volunteer, visited for one week several of SOLWODI’s jointly implemented projects: counselling centres, bakeries in which even poor families can afford bread, tailors, shoe repair shops, schools and well projects. The wells are precisely a key to the education of girls.

No one can go to school when she has to collect water every day. “It is totally impressive, what a project time frame of eight months can do for women,” says Gudrun Angelis. “I am confident that in Germany, we would not have achieved so much, so quickly and so successfully.”

SOLWODI presents host country Kenya in CREATIVA 2014

CREATIVA, Europe’s biggest fair for creative design, opens its doors in Westfalenhallen Dortmund from 19 to 23 March 2014. In this framework, SOLWODI presents a special exhibition “2014: Kenya to host – globalisation, life and culture.” According to the motto “understanding by doing” SOLWODI encourages CREATIVA visitors to experience a foreign world and life through hands on activities. Those who encounter the theme of globalisation for the first time will be informed through political statements and creative modes of representation and visualisation.

Visit from Africa: Women power in football – trainers’ camp in Koblenz

“I play football, it has been my life since I was in primary school,” says Faith Cheron. Together with her colleague from SOLWODI Kenya, Elisabeth Nyambura Shako, she visited the International Football Trainers Institute in Koblenz in September, financed by the Lotto-Rhineland-Palatinate Foundation and supported by the Rhineland Football Association in cooperation with the DFB.

Back in Kenya, over 500 women will profit from her newly acquired skills. There are by now around 26 SOLASA football groups in which women experience community and team spirit, and slowly but surely develop the self-confidence to work through their grief and trauma. The girls and young women have lived through terrible experiences – loss of parents, rape, poverty, prostitution, violence – and new found courage is urgently needed.

“At SOLWODI, all may play football – with one condition: the girls and women must at the same time attend education and training courses that SOLWODI Kenya arranges,” explains Sr. Lea Ackermann. This way, football both compensates and acts as an incentive.



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