

# SOLWODI

Solidarity with  
women in distress

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Solidarität mit  
Frauen in Not

**Newsletter**  
No. 101, September 2014



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

Even if it probably appears otherwise, for those who work with women who wish to leave prostitution, the work is at times lighter than political work in cities, municipalities and in Berlin. Working with these women is often difficult – their protection from their pimps and human traffickers must be precisely planned, while the stories the women tell often accompany the SOLWODI employee's home after work. Yet sometimes there is success to savour – a completed language course, a long-term residence permit, a traineeship or the very first independent home. And that brings joy not just for the women, but also for the people by their side.

This confidence that comes with this work is much urgently needed at the moment. Because what I hear coming out of Berlin leaves me far from hopeful. Big campaigns have been driven by SOLWODI and Emma, with thousands of resolute signatories demanding an end to the purchase of sexual services in Germany. Yet the responsible minister for women's affairs in Berlin, Manuela Schwesig, does not want to hear these voices when the new Prostitution Act is up for negotiation. Neither SOLWODI nor other critical voices has been invited to the hearing in Berlin as experts to contribute to the massive new law to regulate prostitution in Germany. The CDU demands, as SOLWODI has for years, a minimum age of 21 years for prostitutes, and penalty for those who knowingly engage in intercourse with women in forced prostitution. These rules would be an important step for the women. For SOLWODI, that is however only a step along the way towards a bigger goal: a Europe without prostitution, where the purchase of sexual services is forbidden.

In the coming weeks, the new law will enter a heated phase, and we are going to join in. Our campaign "End prostitution! No enslaved women in Germany" will be re-launched and for that, we need you! Please help us once again, now, that it is about everything: mobilize your friends, acquaintances and colleagues, ask for new flyers from the SOLWODI headquarters in Boppard-Hirzenach and help us to obtain more than the 20,000 signatures we now have, so that the politicians in Berlin will not be able to ignore the voices of SOLWODI during this heated autumn.

If you donate, I can assure you that your help is well used. SOLWODI's completed evaluation for 2013 reveals that administrative costs sit at 9%, far below what the DZI Seal of Approval regards as appropriate (20%) and what is considered justified (30%). We give everything for women in distress and you help us to continue.

*Sister Lea Ackermann*

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## Sister Lea Ackermann receives the Augsburg Peace Prize

The outstanding commitment of SOLWODI and Sister Lea have been honored by the two large denominations of Christianity. "We pay tribute to her tireless fight for peace and human dignity against sexual exploitation and the degradation committed to women and girls," said the regional bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria and Upper Churches in the parish of Augsburg, Michael Grabow. Sister Lea will accept the award on 22 November in the Golden Hall of the Augsburg City Hall. "With the Augsburg Peace Prize, my work as a Catholic nun is recognized by two denominations and for this, I am particularly pleased," said Sister Lea who has always been concerned herself with issues of religious plurality and cooperation. "SOLWODI is there for all women, regardless of their faith or origin. The prize honors this aspect of our work. And I understand it as a tribute to the women themselves, for whom we are engaged, for them dignity is infinitely precious and much longed-for." The Augsburg Peace Prize remembers the Peace of Augsburg from 1555, where the basic conditions for a peaceful and sustainable permanent coexistence of Lutheranism and Catholicism were created. This tradition honors every three years the people who work for a tolerant and peaceful coexistence amongst cultures and religions. Past winners include other important politicians such as Mihail Gorbachev (2005) and Dr Richard Von Weizsäcker (1994). The prize money amounting to EUR 12,500 will benefit the work of SOLWODI.

SOLWODI is regionally active through the counseling centres, women's homes and shelters. SOLWODI Associations are networked across the country and through political and practical work, not only nationally, but also Europe wide engaged. Read for yourself!

**Regionally active... in Koblenz: Awareness raising in schools**

SOLWODI Koblenz is once again back in school. Employees clarify issues on forced marriage and honor killings in the form of interactive lectures, so that victims or their classmates and teachers know where to go in time for help. Five classes have already registered for the coming school year. In addition, a project week is planned around the management of topics such as equality, cultural sensitivity and forced marriages. Interested schools may contact the Koblenz counseling centre. SOLWODI thanks the Globe Foundation for the support of this project with EUR 17,000 which has also enabled other SOLWODI counseling centers to participate in the project.



**... in Koblenz: Summer festival for SOLWODI Association Shelter Koblenz**

Thanks to dedicated volunteers, the summer festival of SOLWODI Association held on 23 August in the Oberwerth sport school was a great success. The Mini-Maxi Singers and Django Reinhardt were among those who provided entertainment. SOLWODI would like to express its gratitude for the festival and donations (the exact amount of which was not certain at the time of editing).

**... in Augsburg: Mobile outreach work**

According to police in Augsburg, around 700 women work in prostitution, 85% of them coming from abroad. Many of them have no understanding of either German or their rights and are hence especially helpless and vulnerable. That should now change. The Augsburg city council unanimously endorsed the start in 2015 of mobile outreach prevention work. Two social workers, one from SOLWODI and the other from the health department, each working part time, will be hired for this. They will visit the women in their surroundings, advise them and accompany them to the health department, doctors or authorities, as well as help them with leaving prostitution altogether.

**... in Neuwied: Promotional materials for SOLWODI**

The advertising producer of the company APA from Neuwied has promised SOLWODI its support to the value of EUR 9,000. The company will provide SOLWODI with different advertising materials and thus contribute to its advocacy and awareness raising efforts.

**Networked nationwide ... in Bavaria: A prize for SOLWODI**

The Bavarian Minister for labor, social, family and integration affairs invited guests on 30 June to the first Bavarian social reception. SOLWODI was one of two organizations who were honored in the Golden Hall of the Augsburg Townhall for their special social engagement. Soni Unterreithmeier, as a representative from SOLWODI, was accorded appreciative praise from the Bavarian social minister, Emilia Müller.

**...in Ulm: podium discussion “Is it possible to stop human trafficking?”**

On 14 July, a podium discussion took place in Ulm around the topic of human trafficking. A SOLWODI colleague participated. After brief presentations from Soni Unterreithmeier (SOLWODI Augsburg), the politicians Ekin Deligöz, Hilde Mattheis and Karin Absteiger were asked about the plans of their parties, in particular the current revision of the liberal Prostitution Act from 2002. The need for information amongst the politicians was great, such as the relationship between human trafficking and prostitution.



**... in Berlin: first World Day Against Human Trafficking**

On the occasion of the World Day Against Human Trafficking on 30 July, the Belarusian Embassy held an event called “Fighting human trafficking: experiences and examples from practice.” In addition to contributions from the International Organization for Migration, the Foreign Office, the KOK and the Republic of Belarus, there was time for conversations with participants and organizers. SOLWODI was, among the guests of this event, the only non-governmental organization that has direct contact with victims of trafficking.

**Nationally and Europe-wide engaged ... in Berlin: SOLWODI was not invited to the hearing in the ministry for family, social, women and youth affairs**

In preparation for the new Prostitution Act, a hearing on regulating the prostitution industry was held on 12 June at the Federal Ministry for Women, Seniors, Family and Youth Affairs. Minister Manuela Schwesig (SPD) had invited 34 experts, including the Union for Erotic and Sexual Services which represents the interests of brothel operators and self-employed women in sex work, the Association of Erotic Businesses and the Catholic Women’s Social Services, which had recently expressed opposition to a law against prostitution. Those not invited included counseling centers and experts who were critical of prostitution. SOLWODI has protested to the ministry against its exclusion.

## Being a woman in ... India

by Karthika Iyengar

"I write for the women who cannot speak, for all those who have no voice, because they are afraid, because we have been taught to respect fear more than ourselves. We have been taught that silence saves us, but it does not." *Audre Lorde, author*

Fear is a constant companion for women in India. Young girls are afraid to walk on the streets, young women are afraid of sexual assault. The fear is constantly present and it is accompanied by a suffocating silence. Even little girls have been taught that they should not raise their voices as a woman, even not when they have been wronged.

I remember how I, as a young girl, could no longer walk on the street after sunset or wear figure hugging dresses. As a college student, I had to commute with public transport. That was a frightening experience for me. There were always the sexist jokes, molestation, harassment and humiliation from many men. The worst was that they did not stop when I screamed. Many people sat all around but they did not help. In order to avoid the stress, I began to drive my own car to college. I had a lot of luck in that I could afford my own car. Many others cannot.

Every day I read in the newspapers about rapes, sexual exploitation of girls, physical and emotional abuse, and dowry murders. I am left speechless and often in tears. I ask myself: "What kind of world is this?" I have an eight year old daughter. Everyday I'm afraid when she goes to school and am relieved when she is back home. But the fear of women in India is not only fear of violence, but also fear of the future. The gender roles are very clearly defined in India.

Boys are expected to be armed with bravery and a fighting spirit, while girls should be obedient and docile. This expectation of women complicates their participation in social, political and economic life enormously. A woman who wants to build a career is demotivated. And thus many Indian women hold a fear of an uncertain future. The differences between women and men in the labor force are large. In many places female bosses are largely absent and in the world of technology, women are underrepresented. In many cases women are forced after the wedding, to stay home and take care of the family and the husband. My grandmother was a housewife and so was my mother even though both are well educated. It was simply the understanding of Indian society that the woman stays at home.

This situation has, however, changed a little over time. In my case, my education was as good as my brother's and I also had the opportunity to exercise a profession. I am married and my husband is one of the few men who think that a woman should have a career. That is why I am now working as a German translator in an IT company. My husband is a tower of strength for me. But not all women enjoy as much freedom as I do. In my view, the new generation of educated women has even better opportunities. They are

free to express their opinions compared to their mothers' or grandmothers' generations. This is an encouraging sign. I too have had more freedom than my mother or my grandmother. I am now in a position to make all important decisions (such as which house to buy, or how and where to save money). My mother and grandmother did not have such freedom. In all major cities in India one can see that the women have become more independent today. They are not afraid to go out with a man or to enjoy a beer alone in the pub. Today some men also accept and support it when women are career-oriented. However, the proportion of men who accept this change of roles is very low. Is it beautiful to be a woman in India? Although the women in India have traveled a long way in this century, real freedom - freedom to make their own decisions, freedom to choose a life partner or to make a career - for most women and girls in India is still a dream. I dream of a future in which gender equality is not only preached but also practiced. The liberation of women in India is still far off. Nevertheless, I look hopefully to the future and am confident that India will be a better place - even for women. A better place for my daughter who will be a woman in India in the not too distant future.



### Inauguration of the SOLWODI counseling service and federal office in Bonn

On 26 November, the new premises of the SOLWODI counseling service and federal office open in Bonn. In the morning, interested parties may visit the premises in Berliner Freiheit 16 in Bonn and take the opportunity to speak personally with the staff. The opening ceremony starts at 5:30pm with a guided tour of the exhibition "SOLWODI in Germany, Bonn and Kenya" in the Bonn Women's Museum. There the visitors will receive an insight into the work of SOLWODI. The official ceremony with Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann will take place at 6pm. The CantArte Vokalensemble will give a benefit concert "Daughters of Eve - a musical journey into the Renaissance" at 7pm. For more information, see the events calendar under [www.solwodi.de](http://www.solwodi.de)

**Collect donations - how? Ideas for successful fundraising**

Walking with the donation box into the pedestrian zone requires courage and a high readiness to experience frustration. Between café and shopping, few passersby allow themselves to be engaged in a serious conversation. Some 600,000 non-profit associations and 15,000 foundations mobilize themselves each year across Germany to collect donations. SOLWODI is only one of many organizations but there is a difference. SOLWODI has particularly creative volunteer helpers. We introduce two activities here.

**"Taking Flight" inspires generosity for women**



Anne le Duc, Monika Wahl

For her SOLWODI fundraising in Munich, the native from Brittany, Anne le Duc, took an idea from her studies in the United States. "I learned the art of quilting - resulting, for example, in unique blankets. Many quilt groups there do so-called charity quilts that are raffled to raise awareness about social projects and provide financial support," said Anne le Duc, who has been quilting for 20 years. "I display on good craft markets. I wanted to get involved socially and raise awareness around uncomfortable topics. And so I combined everything: in a group of nine women, we made a charity quilt, which we raffle at markets and festivals and collect donations for SOLWODI".

The project, which has consumed around 300 working hours, is themed "Taking Flight": on the one hand, it encourages creativity, on the other hand it is to take flight, as women do, breaking free from violence and coercive situations. The form of action is chosen wisely: for a raffle prize draw with the quilt as top prize would have involved complex legal rules. "Better for supporters to donate directly for SOLWODI, and thus participate independently of this campaign," recommended Laura Viebig, press and PR consultant who has advised SOLWODI voluntarily on this activity. "Besides, people usually donate more if they can freely determine the amount than if they buy such the lot for a certain price." The winner - and the final donation amount – will be determined at SOLWODI Munich on 20 November. But there is more to come, according to le Duc: "My collaborator Monika Wahl and I are thinking already of a follow-up project!" Information about the project: [www.solwodi.de](http://www.solwodi.de) Information about quilting: [www.anneleeduc.de](http://www.anneleeduc.de)

**Step by step for SOLWODI**

As another example of how to combine fundraising, fun and social interaction, the church "livingroom" showed it in Mainz on the first Sunday in July. For three years, the associated football club has been supporting social projects in Mainz with the so-called Charity Run. SOLWODI had earlier introduced its work during a youth service - and promptly received a commitment on the proceeds of the third charity run. The principle is simple: "Every runner looks for as many sponsors per lap - friends, acquaintances, colleagues or spectators, who commit a fixed amount of money per round," explain the organizers of FC living room. "Then in one hour, the runners run as many rounds as they want, no matter how fast, whether backward, forward, sideways or in other creative ways." While spectators and runners refreshed themselves, took part in the colorful supporting program or informed themselves about the work of SOLWODI, the figures were added together: EUR 3,500 were raised by 30 runners in this year. The funds are now used in SOLWODI Mainz to support the needs of beneficiaries.



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**Bank Accounts**

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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  
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