

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

Again and again we are reporting about immigrants – women and children – who are being treated like merchandise. But now, it seems, the message is also arriving in the homecountries of those women and children. SOLWODI has recently been invited to Slovakia, Romania, the Czech Republic and also Ukraine. It is very important, that countries, from where the immigrants come, realize, that a society is getting brutalized, if it doesn't protect its members. We were happy about those invitations and we have answered them positively. Now the question arises: How do we continue? We see us confronted with new problems.

Old and patriarchal traditions make the life of women in many countries very difficult or almost impossible. For instance do we again and again get in contact with women, who have become victims of enforced marriages. It's difficult to report about such cases, since those women are threatened to be killed, if their identity becomes known. For that reason we can only report very generally about that problem. We also hear of new forms of poverty, when, for example, young women of only 12 years age are being sold by their parents to work as prostitutes

On the other hand, we experience much financial and material support and help from honorary members.

We also say many thanks for the support being initiated through charity activities and also to the guests attending those activities. I would like to mention just a few of those activities, which took place during the last months. The soccer-team "Lotto-Elf" organized a charity soccer game, a concert was given in castle Schleissheim, another concert was given by the "Rheinische Philharmonie" and the dancing group "Danza Vosolvia" performed at one of those events. Special thanks go also to all those people, who buy our books, who read them and who recommend them to other people. Also at the recent

"Catholics Meeting" meeting in Osnabrück, we experienced a lot of support and encouragement. I hope, you will enjoy it, reading this letter



Yours, Sr. Lea

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Official opening of the new SOLWODI Advice Office in Berlin



Mabel Mariotti, Ulrike Gottlob, Margit Forster

Organized by and in the rooms of the representatives of the German country Rheinland-Pfalz in Berlin, the new and 12th SOLWODI office was opened in Berlin on 14. April – 300 guests were present. Sister Lea Ackermann, Prof. Dr. Fritz Köster and the Prof. for law Dr. Birgit Thoma stressed in their lectures the importance of the engagement for women in distress. Sister Margit Forster, who is heading the new office, explained, that the new job, which had been taken up already, is a mutual enrichment. It's a new

commandment, to change from a "need approach" to a "human rights approach", that means, that instead of considering help as our main effort, we should now aim for ensuring human rights. The programme gained through a contribution of the musician Virginia

Mukweshwa with her group and the comedian Gerlinde Kempendorff and her son.

Contacts to abroad

Journey to Slovakia: Challenge for a dialogue between Christians and Muslims. From 31. April until 4. May, Benedikta Böckelmann attended a conference in Nitra/ Slovakia for European coordinators for the subjects Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. Main lecturers were the Prof. for Islamic belief Marcus Solo (from Rome) and the dean of the contact office for world religions Petrus Bsteh (from Vienna)

This meeting was prepared and organized by nuns and monks from Steyl. Such a meeting takes place every 2 – 3 years. This year`s meeting centered around the dialogue with Muslims, chances for such a dialogue and challenges. During that meeting Benedikta Böckelmann could report about the crime, which affects women and children as a result of trafficking. The nuns of Steyl have nominated this problem as one of the main tasks to be taken on by their order.

Journey to Romania: Following an invitation of PRO DEMNITATAE FEMEII (This stands for 10 nuns from 6 different orders, fighting against trafficking in their home-countries), which belongs to the social commission of the archbishopric of Bucharest, Sister Lea Ackermann, Sister Benedikta Böckelmann and Sister Veronika Schreiner travelled to Romania. Romania is not only a country from where women are being trafficked to other countries, no it`s also a country to which women are being trafficked from even poorer countries, to be forced into prostitution. The nuns in Romania are looking for ways, how they can help. They are trying to inform women and girls about the trafficking problem and for that purpose they go to schools to protect girls from harm and misery. Those girls however live under such miserable conditions, that they can`t imagine that it could get even worse. On the other hand the nuns are looking for possibilities to give advice to young women who turn up in Romania as victims of trafficking and to help them. The nuns have opened already an office in Bucharest, where such women can go to when needing help. There is also a lady lawyer available to give advice. We are still searching for a way, how the cooperation could be improved in the future.

Journey to the Czech Republic: Following an invitation of Prof. Rethmann, sister Lea Ackermann was travelling to Prague from 20. – 21. May, to give a lecture to a student community at the university there. It was a privilege for her to explain to professors and students the crime against women and children by reducing them to a mere merchandise. The lecture of Sister Ackermann raised embarrassment and indignation. Mrs. Hana Knoppova, assistant of Prof. Rethmann, briefed Sister Ackermann about the situation in Prague. There was agreement, that it`s most important, that also the countries from which the victims of trafficking come deal with that crime that affects their women and children. Those lectures were attended by many people. The students were interested and asked many questions. The students with whom Sister Ackermann met in the evening, assured her, that they would keep their eyes open in the future when walking through the city and that they intended to further the attention for that problem among their friends and relatives.

Trafficking and enforced marriages in Koblenz and its environment

From Sister Dagmar Plum



This was the title of an information- meeting, which was held on the 14th of May in the city church of Koblenz. Sister Dagmar Plum, who initiated that meeting, was last year allowed to join the police for a day, when it carried out a country wide search. In Neuwied, the police found in a flat, which was used as a brothel, an underage girl from Romania, who was forced to work as a prostitute. “I can still see her anxious eyes and hear her garbled voice. Her whole body was trembling. Later on I asked myself: How does such a young girl, when it`s coming to Germany, get into a city like Neuwied?

What did they do with her?” Those questions were the reason to invite 4 experts, representing different fields. In lectures, seminars and workshops I realized again and again, that people participating in those events always thought, those crimes always happen only far away and then only in big cities, but not outside our own front door.

Enforced marriages and the consequences

From Dorothee Helou

SOLWODI supports all over Germany women from abroad who run into distress. By doing so we get in touch with foreign cultures, learn about problems, which can develop from the clash of the foreign with our German culture or which have been "imported", problems that can be caused by radical trends, which can be found, in different forms, in all cultures

An organization like SOLWODI naturally concentrates on sex-specific problems as for example circumcision, maltreatment, enslavement, exclusion from the society, enforced marriages or threatening a woman to kill her, because she is accused of violating the honour code of her family etc.

In traditional patriarchal societies, for instance in the middle east or in North Africa, it can well be, that it is considered normal, that a woman has to accept maltreatment of her husband. Even her own family will send her back to her husband, when – after having been beaten badly and hurt - she fled to her parents. If her husband drives her out of the house then, her father has to take her back, which leads to a loss of honour for that father, since society feels he couldn't bring her up properly (the mother has no influence on decisions on matters which don't concern her household). In such cases the daughter is frequently married for a second time, since she

is considered as a troublemaker in the household of her parents, causing also additional costs, which her parents often can't afford. A marriage with a country-fellow, living in Germany, is considered by the family as a great luck, because such a son in law must be successful. Often the daughter is expected to support her family then. Possible deficiencies of that new husband, for example violence, being unemployed or already of old age are not being looked at. If also such a second marriage should fail, the honour of the family at home is really in danger and it happens, that such a daughter is being told, that as a twice divorced woman, she must also expect to be killed.

If it actually happens (we recently had such a case) that a woman, as a result of psychological pressure, maltreatment, rape and beating had to be treated in hospital, she then can expect help from SOLWODI. This woman would have preferred to commit suicide than to continue

such a miserable life with daily sufferings. In such cases SOLWODI will provide a safe home, out of the reach of her husband or other relatives. In such cases SOLWODI has to talk to the German authorities dealing with foreigners and proof of the violence and the threats to kill that woman has to be provided to the German authorities. German language courses have to be organized for such a woman as well as legal advice, for instance ,if there is still a daughter, out of the first marriage of that woman, living with the family of that woman and one must expect that this little daughter could suffer the same way her mother did.

Many SOLWODI colleagues are closely cooperating in such cases. As a result of our long experience for such problems, we will intensively support such women in distress and we are trying to find the best possible solution for each woman.

“ Lilja4-ever “ in a production of Simon Solberg at the National Theatre in Mannheim

Lilja, a young girl, is being left back alone by her mother, who is departing with a new partner to another country, which is promising a better future life. Without money but with the vague promise she could follow her mother lateron, Lilja stays back alone and finally ends on the street. She has only one good friend, that is Volodja, who has fled his father, because this man has been beating him badly. In order to survive, Lilja works in a nightclub, until she falls in love with Andrej, who promises to her a job, a good living and great happiness at his side in a foreign country. Now Lilja is leaving her good friend Volodja. But the dream of real love and a better life, as promised, doesn't come true.

The production is based on the equally named film of the Swedish film director Lucas Moodysson, who was born in 1968. Initially it should have been a film about God's charity, said Moodysson, but then reality changed the concept completely. It became a film about 2 children, Lilja and Volodja, living in a country, that in former times belonged to the Soviet Union and which is now completely down. It became a film about the desire to be somewhere else, to leave everything behind, about to be left back alone, a film about rich people who believe they can buy everything, about poor people who are forced to sell everything they have (except their heart), about things that happen far away and about things that happen in the street we are living in.

Further performances on 22. June and 13. July

Also see: www.nationaltheater-mannheim.de

SOLWODI at the 97th Catholics Meeting in Osnabrück

Sister Anna Mayrhofer

Under the motto. "Pay attention for a moment – have an eye for the distress of other people" SOLWODI invited guests to the catholic meeting to confess their solidarity with victims of violence and exploitation, by offering their eyes for a picture to be taken there.



Around 1000 women, men and also children were willing, when asked by our colleagues in their orange coloured safety vests, to have a picture taken of their eyes. At this occasion we were also able to talk to those people about the problems and the distress of our clients.

In a sunny Osnabrück, where it's normally raining a lot, this catholic meeting was really an event, where one talked about people, that normally are living at the fringe of our society with nobody taking notice of their needs. At our

info-stand, located between the castle and the townhall, there was a lot of activity. Some people came twice to us to have a look at the cases which were displayed at the walls of our tent.

When Sister Lea Ackermann talked on Saturday 24. May 08 about psalm 18, her interpretation reflected SOLWODI's work for women and girls from abroad. Sister Anna Mayrhofer staged in the so called ritual centre a workshop under the headline: "Solidarity with women in distress".

At this catholic meeting the manifold distress of people has been an often addressed subject, addressed not only by SOLWODI.

On our homepage www.solwodi.de you can see the pictures with the eyes of those people attending our info-stand and who were willing to have a picture taken.



Soccer-game for SOLWODI



On 8th May 2008 the team "Lotto-Elf" played against a team from Mittelrhein in Kamp-Bornhofen. In good weather and in front of spectators in good mood, highly motivated stars played against a team recruited from players from villages left and right of the river Rhein. It was a real happy event. Former well known stars such as Wolfgang Overrath, Bernd Hölzenbein, Stefan Kuntz and Dariusz Wosz were playing in the "Lotto Elf"-team. There were many goals, 16 for the Lotto Elf- team and the Mittelrhein-team finally managed to score 1 honour goal. That event, organized by the sporting club Bornhofen and sponsored by Lotto Rheinland-Pfalz raised 8000,- EURO, of which half, that

is 4000.- EURO were donated to SOLWODI, the other half was going to a parents` initiative supporting children suffering from cancer. We say many, many thanks to all who contributed to that event.

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