

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

As you know, we try to inform you in our circular letters about our work and also about crimes committed to women and children in our country. Occasionally we also call upon you for political action. Recently we received calls from old friends, telling us, they didn't want to get this letter any longer because they were no longer able to donate money. Therefore I want to say clearly, that this circular letter doesn't cost you anything. For us it's important, that you get our information and that you pass it on to your friends and people you know.



I have been to a lot of events, where I could inform about the so important work of SOLWODI. There were 2 events which made me especially happy; the 10 years' jubilee of our Braunschweig advice office and the 15th anniversary of our international shelter-house in Koblenz (see also page 4) But also sad things happened. Sr. Leoni Beving, who has been a colleague for long years and who founded and was in charge of SOLWODI Duisburg, got seriously ill and had for that reason to retire from active service. I am very grateful for the job she has done in Duisburg for a long time and in a very efficient way. We are lucky, that we found with Helga Tauch a good successor for Sr. Leoni.

In October two of our female soccer players from Mombasa visited us. Those 2 young women had been invited by the soccer association Rhineland e.V. to Koblenz, to attend a course there to acquire a coach licence. Their newly acquired abilities as well as the donated soccer balls and team-dresses will be most welcome in the Kenyan soccer-project "Shining Friends" (see page 2)

In June a SOLWODI colleague visited Vietnam and she reports about a woman, who is being supported by a SOLWODI project for women, who are willing to return to their home countries (see also page 2).

Our SOLWODI colleague from Augsburg reports about her job and how women are being betrayed with lies to accept dubious job offers in Germany. Unfortunately also here can be seen, how difficult it is, to prosecute people involved in such criminal offences.

Advent has started and soon we will have Christmas. It's a time to reflect but also to rest. Often I think that at the time when Jesus was born, it was similar to today. Many women and children in this world are not being well received and find no home. It must always be our aim, that this unjust situation is overcome. I say many thanks to all those who supported us in 2009, either through donations or active help. I wish you all a merry Christmas and that God may bless you in the year to come.

Yours, Sister Lea

The German Carmaker Audi donated a duty-car for Sr. Lea Ackermann



for the 4th time, with the highest German award for design.

On 2. October a new Audi A-3 was handed over to Sr. Lea Ackermann in Ingolstadt. This car has got everything necessary to carry her fast, reliably and most important safely to the various places where her presence is required. Meanwhile she got so accustomed to the great comfort of that car, that she wouldn't like to miss it anymore. She used it already on some long journeys, travelling without stress and saving fuel at the same time. For that generous support of her work, which gives her more flexibility, Sr. Lea Ackermann says many, many thanks to the carmaker. She was pleased to hear, that in Feb. 2010 the A-3 will be awarded,

Content

**Audi donated a duty-car
for Sr. Lea Ackermann**
Page 1

A visit from Kenya
Page 2

**Report about a visit to
Lien, who had returned
to Vietnam**
Page 2

**The odyssey of Marya
from Romania**
From Soni Unterreithmeier
Page 3

Reports about events
Page 4

18.000 signatures
Page 4

Imprint
Page 4



- Ein starker Partner im Land -

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

A visit from Kenya

The soccer project "Shining Friends" was started by SOLWODI Kenya 5 years ago. The 26 young women, who play very successfully soccer in Mombasa, come from very poor families. Most of them are orphans, taking care of their sisters and brothers and earning the money for their living themselves. SOLWODI advises and supports those girls and makes sure they get an education and job-training, which should enable them in the future to have a better life. Two of those girls were recently invited by the soccer-association Rhineland e.V. to come to Koblenz to attend a course there to become soccer coaches.



Emilly, 21 years old, who is participating in training in Mombasa to become a car mechanic and Fatuma, 23 years old, who will soon finish her training to become a hotel-manager, appeared both to be very quiet and shy. But contrary to that first impression, they managed to impress during their 3 weeks` stay. Before the course started in Koblenz, they were invited by the soccer-association Rhineland to a one day excursion to Trier, including a visit of a training course. After the training with the women team of TUS Issel, Emilly and

Fatuma were very happy and they asked, if they couldn`t participate in a game as guest-players. When playing, what they fully enjoyed, they lost all their initial shyness. So, in the following weeks, everything in the life of the 2 women from Kenya centred mainly on soccer. The president of the soccer-association Rhineland, Walter Desch and his colleagues organized – beside the daily training – visits to soccer games of the first and regional women`s league. At the end of the course, the 2 women received in a solemn ceremony, which was

also attended by Sr. Lea Ackermann, their coach certificates from the German soccer association. Equipped with new team dresses and presents for the other girls of the "Shining Friends" at home, the young women flew back to Kenya. Their but also our thanks go to the president of the soccer-association Rhineland, Walter Desch and his colleagues, who enabled Emilly and Fatuma to gather many new experiences. They certainly will not forget the good time they could spend in Germany.

Report about a visit to Lien, who had returned to Vietnam

From Oanh Tran

During my last journey to Vietnam I visited a young woman, who benefited there from the SOLWODI project for people willing to return to their home countries.

The young Vietnamese woman Lien (the name was changed) lives together with her parents, siblings and her 2 daughters in a small fishermen`s village near Dong Hoi. When the father of her oldest daughter was killed in an accident, the family, which is very poor, faced great financial problems. Since Lien`s father was unemployed and had an alcohol problem, the only income came from selling breakfast – which had been prepared by Lien`s family – to villagers plus what Lien earned, when working in the harbour and what the brother earned as a fisherman. But since fishing in this region of Vietnam depends on the moon-cycle, neither Lien nor her brother had a continuous employment and income. So the family decided to sell a plot of land to earn money to enable Lien to travel to Germany. After she arrived in Germany, Lien sold – to-



gether with other Vietnamese-, cigarettes in the streets of Berlin, knowing that this was illegal. But the great poverty of her family and the stories she had heard, that she could earn a lot of money when selling cigarettes, made her neglect that this was illegal. Lien felt very lonely in that strange country, especially since she didn`t neither speak nor understand German. Her only contacts were those to other Vietnamese, with whom she shared a small room, thus trying to save money. And she quickly realized, that an income of 500,- Euro per month, which had been promised to her, was much less worth here than in Vietnam, where she had lived before. When in her home village a great family could live of 2 Euro per day, this was in Germany just enough to buy 2 cups of coffee. So Lien lived very thrifty, being afraid she couldn`t save enough money for her family at home. Being so lonely, Lien fell in love with one of the men, she shared the room with. Although she became pregnant, Lien had to continue to sell cigarettes day after day on the Berlin streets. One

day she was caught and then arrested by the police to be deported. When in prison, Lien heard for the first time of SOLWODI and Lien today gratefully remembers the help and support she received from SOLWODI members during that difficult time in prison. Although being pregnant, Lien was deported to Vietnam and gave there birth to her second child. As a result of the stress she had suffered in prison, the daughter was a "premature birth child", which needed special treatment at the time of my visit. The father of Lien`s second daughter was married to another woman, when he had that relation with Lien. Since he was also deported to Vietnam, he returned to his own family and ended the contact to Lien; he never asked for Lien`s and his daughter. The costs for treating the little girl were 3 Euro per day. Since the income from selling breakfast and working in the harbour was not sufficient to feed the family and at the same time pay for the treatment of the little girl, Lien`s father was not very fond of his granddaughter. His disappointment, that his daughter had re-

turned with a further child, costing money, instead of bringing home money, what he had hoped for, was clearly to be seen. Since Lien was badly suffering under her father's refusal she was considering to allow her daughter to be adopted, if the financial situation of her family shouldn't improve soon. Lien had applied for help under the SOLWODI project for people returning to their home countries, hoping to get a small credit to open her own shop. Her idea was, to buy

shares of 2 fishing boats, hoping thereby to be able to buy caught fish then with discount. Together with 2 workers she planned to sort the catch and sell it with some profit to local firms. After I returned from Vietnam, Lien's application had been approved and she got for her planned project a credit of 5.000,- Euro. Lien got the credit and she was also allowed to use a part of that money to buy the necessary milk for her little daughter. She is highly motivated and has started her



project in the meantime. And the little daughter could return home from hospital. Her family can now look ahead optimistically.

The odyssey of Marya from Romania

From Soni Unterreithmeier

End of July I received a telephone call from Sr. K., a nun from Baden-Württemberg. The police had asked her to give shelter to Marya, a young woman from Bulgaria. The police had met her in a small city, where she was running around crying. She didn't speak German. With the help of an interpreter the police had learnt, that the woman had been working in a bistro, but she hadn't been paid for her work there. She had been molested sexually and she wanted to return immediately to her husband and her 2 little daughters, one of them would be seriously ill. Sr. K. said that the police had tried hard to find a possibility for her to travel back by bus. But the passport of the woman didn't allow a transfer through Serbia. Now Sr. K. was asking for support to allow a return by air.

I was calling the police, when the officer told me, that they considered the case as settled. When I enquired about the dubious entry into Germany, the unclear arrangements to employ Marya, the refusal to pay her, he answered, they didn't suspect a professional smuggling and therefore didn't see a need for further enquiries. For me however there were a lot of open questions. To apply for help from the IOM (International Organization for Migration) I was driving to the place where Marya was living. Sr. K. had asked a German friend with Bulgarian background to translate the conversation. Marya was slim, very pale, she almost didn't eat and slept badly – said the woman taking care of Marya – and only wanted to get home as soon as possible. Marya was nervous. Very excited she told us the following story: A cousin of her, who was working in Germany, had told her of the good opportunities to earn money in Germany; in the service-field for instance one could earn 800.- Euro per month. Marya however didn't believe that the cousin was working in that field. In a private minibus she had travelled together with some other men and women, whom she didn't know, via Romania and Hungary to Germany. Here one had taken her to a Turkish bistro (working hours from 10:00 in the

morning until 04:00 next morning). She was wondering, how one could earn so much money in such a small bistro. In the evening the front doors were closed, but the men were entering through the rear doors. Her husband had called her 2 days ago excitedly and told her, that one of the 2 daughters had got ill and that she should come back. For that reason she had asked the owner of the bistro to pay her. But she got neither the money for the return journey nor any bank-details (so that her husband could have transferred money to her). They shouted at her, when a further man entered the bistro. Since Marya understood a little bit of Turkish, she understood, that the men had agreed on a deal with her. At that moment she was seized by anxiety and panic. She managed to escape and to stop a police car. Marya was very excited and she was crying again and again. If she had known, that it was planned to make her work as a prostitute, she would have never come to Germany. She was outraged about the owner of the bistro and planned to report him to the police. Sr. K. made a telephone call to the police office. Based on the above facts, the criminal police got involved and an appointment was agreed upon with an officer and an interpreter for the following morning. Next morning Marya made a com-

prehensive statement. The police took her in a car to go and see the bistro. At that moment Marya discovered her female cousin together with the same man who had accompanied her from Romania. Both were entering a supermarket. A police officer was following them, requesting additional police assistance. Sr. K. explained, that then those two had been brought to the police headquarter for further enquiries. IOM organized Marya's return flight. Totally shocked from what had happened, she said, she would never again accept such offers from western countries.

The Bulgarian police interpreter was deeply impressed by SOLWODI. She was telling us, that she had recently translated what an underage girl in Augsburg had said. In this specific case, she would have needed SOLWODI urgently. Although I am intensively cooperating with the local criminal police, this case had really shocked me.

When I asked the criminal police of Baden-Württemberg 2 weeks later, what they had found out, I was told, they were investigating, whether this was a case of illegal employment. But the owner of the bistro insisted that the woman had neither lived in his bistro nor worked for him. This statement could be confirmed by another woman from Bulgaria.

Reports about events

15 years international shelter house in Koblenz

On 28. October 2009 SOLWODI Koblenz was celebrating, in the parish-rooms of Herz Jesu, its 15th anniversary. At that occasion many supporters and cooperation partners got together to celebrate.

In her opening address Elfriede Jakobi, who is in charge of the SOLWODI advice office and shelter house Koblenz, looked back at what had been achieved in the last 15 years. More than 150 women and their children had found a safe shelter and help in her house. There were more than 1060 initial contacts to women looking for help, not included in this figure were all the telephone and personal conversations. Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann emphasized in her speech SOLWODI's philosophy: "Encourage women to be brave, thereby giving them a better chance for the future" Representatives of various organizations emphasized in their statements the importance of the job being done by SOLWODI in Koblenz.



Also students of the high school in Lahnstein participated in the event, staging a presentation to the subject "Enforced prostitution and trafficking". In a staged discussion they presented the results of their interviews, which represented the usual opinion of many people. Musical support was provided by Mrs. Hentschel (cello) and Mr. Lindemann (piano)

In the afternoon the public was invited to hear a lecture with the title:

"Prostitution, so what – they do it all voluntarily". The speaker was Mrs. Hauschildt-Schön (speaking for the initiative of citizens from Marburg against brothels)

Outside of the parish-hall, life-size dolls drew wittily the attention of the people to the afternoon event.

In conclusion – it was a very successful event. Our thanks go to all those who participated.

10 years SOLWODI advice office in Braunschweig

At the occasion to commemorate 10 years SOLWODI advice office Braunschweig, Sr. Paula Fiebag, who is in charge of that office, could welcome a full house in the Dominican cloister St. Albertus Magnus. Among the guests of honour was also the founder of SOLWODI Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann, who reminded in her speech of the fate of prostitutes in Kenya, where SOLWODI was initiated in 1985. For the diocese Hildesheim bishop Norbert Trelle expressed thanks to the members of SOLWODI. He said: "You transfer the message of Jesus in our present time "



The good cooperation with the authorities and the police were expressed by Dr. Sabine Pflingsten-Würzburg, head of the city's health-office and Winfried Kessler, representing the police-station Braunschweig. Provost Thomas Hofer reminded of the good cooperation with the protestant women's help and provost Reinhard Heine was pleased to see, that the very sensible work for women got this day the full attention of the public. When Sr. Paula Fiebag looked back at the last 10 years of SOLWODI Braunschweig, she reminded the audience of many, very depressive emergency situations clients were in. SOLWODI Braunschweig had contacts with 687 women from 118 countries, mainly in Eastern Europe. Between 2001 and 2009 86 women, some of them with their children, found a temporary shelter in a protective flat. At the end of the ceremony, Waltraud Liekefett from the ecumenical forum for Christian women, Sr. Gerhardis Heise and Bishop Norbert Trelle together blessed the audience.

18.000 signatures, claiming a reform of the prostitution law and protesting against flatrate-brothels.

6500 women signed SOLWODI's request for a humane reform of the prostitution law. The action committee against flatrate-brothels founded by women from Fellbach and joined by SOLWODI, collected more than 11.000 signatures for a ban of sex-flatrate and for a change of the prostitution law. In total there were more than 18.000 signatures (for more see: "Aktuelles", www.solwodi.de).

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