

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter

No. 83, March 2010

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

it's almost unbelievable, but SOLWODI is celebrating this year its 25th birthday. My thanks go to all those who are fighting with me and who have been fighting with me and who have supported SOLWODI in those 25 years. My very special thanks go to all those honorary members, since without their help the steady growing of SOLWODI would have been impossible.

What it means, when a job is being done on a honorary basis, was shown again by our contact office "Ostalb", where all its workers are honorary members. In cooperation with youth-centres, the "one-world-shop", the city and committed men and women, they installed in a house, which is protected as a historical monument, for 5 weekends a warehouse, calling this campaign a "grip of luck".

There was an appeal to donate cake and items to sell. As a result of the enormous support of the population, 16.500 Euro could be raised. We very much hope that the many honorary supporters will continue to help us in the future and that we can encourage additional supporters to help us (see page 2).

But there were not only reasons to celebrate. In February headlines in all the media were reporting about great police raids. I felt concerned, that, according to our information, only one SOLWODI advice office was affected by those raids. If the police was only interested in discovering trafficked women and deporting them thereafter, I consider this an action that could be improved. In our cooperation agreement a different procedure had been laid out for such cases. Because after a deportation of those women, their traffickers remain unknown and unpunished and can so – in the worst case – provide new women for that market.

The market for new faces is also a big one in South Africa. South Africa is a destination country for prostitutes as well as a turntable for the further transport of those women to other countries. Looking at this year's soccer championship in South Africa, one shouldn't forget, that happiness and also misfortune will be seen there. Whilst the soccer players will be giving their best under the floodlights of the stadiums, prostitutes will be used behind the scenes by soccer - fans, pimps, corrupt authorities a merchandise to earn much money. One can only hope, that the fans will be informed by advisers about the enforced prostitution there. A report on page 3 gives an impression of the cruel fate; victims in prostitution are often being exposed.

For the still New Year I wish all of us hope and new courage for our fight for more justice for women in distress. It's a glimmer of hope, that, as a result of our article about "fla-trate-brothels" in July 2009, signatures were collected in Wuppertal-Vohwinckel against the brothel there, which was then closed, following a police raid. Also the presentation of the "Shalom" –award to the SOLGIDI – project in Kenya and a discussion with the federal minister for justice make us hoping (see page 4).

Yours, Sister Lea



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- 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.

Attention: Wrong account number on the money-transfer-forms, which were attached to the last circular letter

Unfortunately was on the money-transfer-forms of the Landesbank Saar, which were attached to the last circular letter, the shown account number wrong- the last digit was missing. The correct account number reads: 2000 9999.

In the meantime, the bank realized the mistake and corrected it and it also organized the money-transfer to the correct bank-account. But until the bank had realized the mistake, donations were returned – which was a great disappointment for us. We ask you to excuse that mistake and we are sorry for the inconveniences you may have had.

Many thanks for your understanding.

Chances for people – Honorary commitment in the social field

From Peter Bretscher

Although I had a high workload – mostly in the management of a great enterprise – I was happy with my life. But 2 heart-attacks forced me to think about, what I had achieved so far. I realized, what a miracle it had been, that many well timed coincidences had enabled me to survive. Why did this happen to me? I realized God had presented me some extra time. Intentions I had then in my old job, which I continued for some more years, I made to become true, when I turned into private life, that is, to commit myself for other people, who are not as well off as myself. That's how a new and interesting part of my new life started.

One of some organizations in which I am working as an honorary member is SOLWODI. What do I get for that? Well, it's quite a lot. I continue to be in the middle of life, I can move things and I can offer my capabilities, my knowledge, my life's experience and my networks. I get to know interesting people, learn a lot about those people and their life situation and also about political, economic and cultural correlations, which I hadn't known in my life so far. I improve my judgement and, most important, I get the feeling to do something reasonable and to pass on some of the luck I experienced in my life so far. The extent of my commitment I can adjust to the situation as it is (without the extreme pressure I was under when working in my job) For me it's important, that the honorary job doesn't negatively interfere with my private life, that is hobbies, the life with my wife, the 5 children and the 12 grandchildren.

What's the aim of my commitment? People should get a better chance for a life in dignity. They should be able to develop their talents and capabilities and they should experience solidarity in emergency situations. I experience again and again, that those people then offer their contribution – also in the field of honorary work – for a better common future.

And why did I choose SOLWODI? At the beginning there was quite a practical reason: SOLWODI is next to my house. But the goals SOLWODI is aiming for are comparable with those of Amnesty International, where I am a member as well. In addition, in my great family there are my contacts available to abroad (also to the Arabic and Muslim world). So I got curious. Right from the beginning I knew, that SOLWODI is not a men's domain. But also men can commit themselves for SOLWODI. With their knowledge

and capabilities they can usefully support the SOLWODI staff. Do you speak foreign languages? Can you work as a craftsman? Can you establish contacts to lawyers, interpreters, doctors, state authorities, other organizations, to the media, to businessmen and clubs? Maybe you can help to transport furniture from one place to another or provide a store-room or to find a flat for somebody or help in finding a job for somebody or a place to train? If you can do things like that, then come to SOLWODI. Especially since SOLWODI's clients have very often had very bad experiences with men. It's so important, that those women experience: There are men, for whom human dignity is not only a word, no, who commit themselves for humanity and who really live according to the Christian command:

"You should love the person next to you like yourself!"

SOLWODI – Working-groups in Braunschweig and Helmstedt

From Katharina Potthoff

"I am trying to achieve, that we don't close our eyes, when girls and women are being badly treated, abused and are being humiliated".

The four women working in the SOLWODI advice office in Braunschweig get practical and emotional support from honorary supporters of the working-group Braunschweig and the re-established group in Helmstedt. Beside sensitizing the public and acquiring information about the subjects "Trafficking", "Enforced prostitution" and "Violence against women", the honorary workers also have to learn how to treat women who were affected by above subjects.

"Too many people are closing their eyes, but they have to experience, that there is much misery in their next neighbourhood. That's a problem, where men and women cannot only

close their eyes or walk away; they have to do something, even if it's only little" says one of the honorary workers.



Another one says, that's an important part of the work, to point out the drama and also the extent and the consequences of trafficking: *"I would like*

to help those women and their children in their difficult situation. When one of the SOLWODI – staff called me and told me: 'Here is a child that needs teaching'; I knew immediately, that I would help there". A further and important goal is to meet other so called supporters and learn what goals and perspectives they have got. The supporters often feel anger and hatred that organizations like SOLWODI are needed at all, that is, that men treat women so badly. One of the honorary workers says: *"After all one has learned and seen in the working group, one really appreciates how well we are off."* But the meetings help to gain new perspectives. From

the helpless question: "What can I do?" emerges the motivation and the answer: "I will do something!"

The SOLWODI working groups are open groups and new honorary workers are most welcome at any time.

Further information is available in the SOLWODI advice office in Braunschweig.

Sold, kidnapped and abused

From Rüdiger Wala

As a child, Nadia (the name has been changed) got in the hands of pimps. She was abused, beaten and forced to work as a prostitute. The report makes cruelly clear, that trafficker consider women as merchandise.

What should a young girl of 12 years do? Go to school, meet friends, have hobbies and grow up in a loving family. Nadia went to hell. She was sold – by her own mother to an "uncle".

Nadia was born in a small Romanian village and she has never seen a school. Even today she can't read and write. But she knows what men can do with girls and women. Nadia deeply breathes and strokes shortly over her arm. Her arms are covered with small round scars. They stem from burning cigarettes. Nadia starts talking. "I thought, I would get love", she says. But there was almost no day that she was not abused. "Once by even 4 men at the same time" Her hands form fists now and her knuckles are getting white. She is young and men are paying well for her and her mother is earning this way a few Lei and Bani as well. "That's the only thing she always wanted – money". Most of the money goes to the pimp. That's how it was going for many years. If she tried to refuse, they threatened to kill her family. But Nadia loves her family, even when it sold her. "There was nobody else, I could go to".

With 14 years she was getting pregnant "They told me, if you refuse to have an abortion, we will kill your family". Nadia had an abortion.

At the age of 18 Nadia came to Germany – with other girls, who had also been bought by her pimp. A part of them was sold to other pimps. "That's how it was: a pimp came and said I want to have that girl and then the bargaining started". Nadia remained with her pimp. She was earning good money when she was working. "I have bought everything for him, a car, furniture; I paid for the refurbishing of the flat and many other things". She was also sending money to her

family. If Nadia couldn't work, she was beaten with a belt – not in the face – because this would have been bad for the business.

Nadia did everything. She was working in brothels but also in so called open houses – partly in houses in noble city areas, where she had to rent a room and – keeping the door open – wait for clients. "I also did it in buses", she explained. In a small mobile home, standing on a car park next to a street, she was waiting for clients. The model to exploit those women is always the same. Bus or room she had to rent for excessive rates. A bus, for example, cost 210 Euro. A client visiting her at the car park had to pay 30 Euro. So, to pay for the bus, she needed at least 7 clients.

She was travelling around in the republic, getting to Gelsenkirchen, Düsseldorf and later on to Hannover. Clients always want to see new faces. For Nadia nothing changed. She was losing weight until she was down to 35 kilogram.

Then she met Peter (the name was changed). He was working in that milieu already for a long time, supervising open houses and driving women to their clients and he did other things, he doesn't want to remember anymore. Initially he was a car mechanic, but that milieu of almost naked women, money, alcohol and drugs had fascinated him. However only for a short time. "The attraction had disappeared quickly, however I stayed in that milieu", he said.

Nadia and Peter discovered a mutual affection. Peter accepted now special rides and supervisions, only to be close to Nadia. At least for 10 times they tried to escape that milieu, but every time they failed. Nadia returned to her pimp. "Since I had been a

child, I knew nothing else" she described her attachment. Her anxiety to meet something new and unknown was much too great. Only when Nadia got pregnant, she and Peter this time managed to escape from the milieu. About the concrete circumstances, Peter doesn't want to talk. He only says: "I know so much about people in that milieu that they won't touch us".

One look back: Have there been clients that treated you some how well? Nadia is only shaking her head. "There are no friendly ones" she says. Peter says it more clearly: "There are 3 sorts of clients: perverts, arseholes and big arseholes – do I have to say more?" But he continues: "Nadia has been strangled and beaten, it's all a matter of power. For the clients those women are only a piece of flesh – not more".

Nadia says: "At night, remembrances are returning, I have bad nightmares". She is dreaming again and again, that her daughter is being kidnapped. "Then I have to get up and look if everything is alright". She knows, without her daughter she wouldn't have managed to escape.

"I just want to live in peace, with Peter and with our daughter" Nadia says. "I also want to learn to write and read when the daughter is a little bit older and maybe also go to school and get a job-training". Also Peter is hoping to find a job. When he is applying for a job and people hear what he has done in the past, hope for an employment vanishes. But, we are not giving up. They want to live a normal life. But to reach that goal, it's still a long way to go.

Handing in of collected signatures and discussions in the federal ministry for justice

From Prof. Dr. Birgit Thoma

On 27. Nov. 2009, Prof. Dr. Birgit Thoma together with the SOLWODI staff members Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann, Sr. Margit Forster (from Berlin) Soni Unterreithmeier (from Augsburg) went to the federal ministry for justice to hand in signatures, that had been collected. We were handing over a list with 18.000 signatures to the minister for justice Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger. In the preliminary stages of a campaign concerning the prostitution law, SOLWODI had asked the citizens to support a SOLWODI request to change that law. From SOLWODI's point of view, prostitution can legally not be considered as a "sexual service", since it doesn't constitute a working relation, based on a job training or employees' rights and there are also no protecting rights for prostitutes. Therefore prostitution requires a new evaluation how it's to be seen in society – at present it's offending the equal rights law and the dignity of women.



Prof. Dr. B. Thoma, S. Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, Dr. Lea Ackermann

In a professional discussion with the minister, the consequences of the present prostitution law, as far as an evaluation and reform of the present law is concerned, were discussed. The minister declared that she is prepared to support a legal research on that subject and to initiate a discussion on the negative consequences of the present law as far as criminal prosecution of traffickers is concerned.

You can find more about the SOLWODI campaign and also about the above professional discussion under www.solwodi.de.

"Shalom-award" for the SOLGIDI project in Mombasa/ Kenya

The "Shalom-award" is being presented since 1981 by the Shalom-committee for justness and peace at the catholic university at Eichstätt-Ingolstadt to persons or projects; who or which commit themselves for human rights. The goal of that committee, which consists solely of honorary members, is to contribute to world-wide peace and the protection of human rights. The award comes with 10.000 Euro, money that is raised by donations.

This year's Shalom –award will be presented on 19. June 2010 to the project SOLGIDI (SOLidarity with GIRls in DIstress). Sr. Lea brought that good news to the head of that project – Agnes Mailu - when she visited Kenya in December 2009. Working for SOLWODI, both women had realized that the daughters of prostitutes badly need attention and help. The children, especially the daughters of women, forced by poverty to work as prostitutes, are exposed to many dangers, as a result of their mother's "profession" and they have to cope with many challenges. As a result of lacking education, they are in danger to go the same way as their mothers. To enable those daughters of prostitutes to start a better life, the project SOLGIDI was founded in 2002. Those girls are now given the chance to go to school and university later on or respectively get a job-training. Occasionally, psychological support is required, if girls had been traumatized. This became quite clear, when Sr. Lea listened to a lecture of a girl during a Christmas celebration of SOLGIDI. The young woman explained that many young girls are being sent on the street by their mothers, when they expect their clients. But there on the street, those girls are often exposed to sexual abuse and raping, often committed by the clients of their mothers. At the end of the lecture, the young woman expressed thanks – also on behalf of the many children, whose mothers are prostitutes, alone raising their children – for the help they received from SOLGIDI, enabling them to master the many challenges and to give their best at school.

The comprehensive report about the visit of Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann to SOLGIDI and SOLWODI in Kenya, in December 2009, can be found under www.solwodi.de/materialien (German) or it can be requested in printed form from SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. for 3,50 Euro, this includes the costs for mailing.

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