

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

In July two colleagues and I visited SOLWODI in Mombasa, Kenya. The aim of the journey was to adapt the accounting system to our German system to optimise the cooperation and our information exchange. The report on page 2 makes me remember my feelings and impressions I had when I first met with Kenyan women 25 years ago when I started my activities in Kenya.

Both the article and the travel report clearly show that help in Kenya is urgently needed. But this help can only be meaningful and beneficial if the women are able to earn a living for themselves and their children in dignity and not as prostitutes (see page 2). And here the success of every single woman counts. Here in Germany our colleagues in the SOLWODI counselling centres also encounter many challenges when doing their daily work. For almost 2 years now we have been supporting a woman who is still waiting for a decision on her application for a residence permit – currently she has only a short term residence permit. This means that she can't open a bank account and also can't claim social welfare benefits. The continuous stress caused by her fear of deportation – had lead to psychological problems and also has a negative impact on the mother-child-relationship.

One ray of hope has come – especially for Sinti and Roma women – with the signing of the cooperation agreement between SOLWODI and the Culture and Advice Centre for Sinti and Roma (founded by the musician Django Reinhardt). The aim of the agreement is to offer advice to this minority group of disadvantaged people, advice offered to women in difficult life situations (see page 3).

I am looking forward to our jubilee event on 8th October 2010, to celebrate together with you and to have an opportunity to say many thanks to at least some of those people who have supported us.

As an exception, 2 new books will be presented in this newsletter. I am very happy that our jubilee publication entitled "In Freiheit leben, das war lange nur ein Traum" (To live in freedom was for a long time just a dream) is available since August via Koesel publishers. A short presentation of the book can be found on page 3. The other book with the title "Knastmauke" (prison madness), written by Sybille Plogstedt, deals with traumata caused by trafficking as a result of having been imprisoned for political reasons (see page 4).

I'm very grateful for the prizes I was awarded over the passed months. In June I was very much pleased to be awarded the Itzel-prize. Also being awarded with the Bavarian Order of Merit at the end of July was a highlight in my diary. Agnes Mailu, the leader of the SOLGIDI project received the Shalom prize 2010 from the University of Eichstätt (see page 4).

We say many, many thanks for your support and we would very much appreciate it if you would continue to support us in the future.

Yours, Sister Lea



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Sending the newsletter by mail or e-mail

Up till now we were able to send our newsletters with reduced postal charges. But in future, 19% VAT will be added. This means considerable extra costs for us. For that reason we ask all who have an e-mail account to register on our homepage under the following link, to receive the newsletter in future as an e-mail:

www.solwodi.de/36Ohtml

This enables us, to delete you from our mail distribution list and to send you the newsletter per e-mail. If you should have any questions concerning that change, please contact Mrs. Albrecht (Albrecht@solwodi.de). Many thanks for your support.

It`s time for Africa

Report about a journey to Kenya

In July 2010, Sr. Lea visited SOLWODI in Kenya together with the SOLWODI-assistants Oanh Tran and Jacqueline Kotte . The comprehensive report about that journey can be found under www.solwodi.de/Materialien or it can be ordered in printed form from SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. for 3.50 Euro, this price includes the mailing costs.

Meeting Violet

From Jacqueline Kotte

I was meeting Grace, a Kenyan woman, for a streetwork activity. In the past, Grace had earned her living for herself and her children as a prostitute. Today Grace is working as social worker for SOLWODI in Kenya. Together we visited night-bars in Mombasa and tried to talk to women and girls who work as prostitutes. Grace calls the women she looks after her "girls". When we entered the " Saba Saba ", a club along the long distance road to Nairobi, I immediately realized what she meant by the term " my girls ". All the girls know Grace and they are happy about her visits. I was very touched to see with how lovingly she takes care of those girls – even if it`s only for a very short time she offers a little bit of family atmosphere , stands up for their rights and tries to organize alternative ways to earn their living

The next place we visited was the nightclub "Casablanca". There are so many prostitutes in Mombasa that one tends to believe there are no other jobs for Kenyan women. Then we saw Violet. She was sitting for a long time in a corner without dancing or talking to anybody. Grace invited her for a drink at our table and she asked her to tell us why she was here. I will never forget meeting Violet.



Violet had been married twice. Both marriages failed and as a result, she

is taking care of her 3 daughters on her own. The oldest is 15 years old and the youngest 1 year and 3 months. Violet hates prostitution, but she has no other alternative to earn the money needed for her family and for the schoolfees for her daughters. She is a trained secretary and she had worked in that job, but then she lost that job. After looking for work for a long time without success, she finally gave up and started working as a prostitute. Under no circumstances does she want the same future for her daughters. To earn the money needed for school, school materials and school meals, she accepts to work as a prostitute, hoping that the girls – with a good education – will have a better life in future.

Violet told me how terrible it is for her to have sex with so many men. It is especially disgusting for her when her clients touch her breasts, since she is still breastfeeding her youngest daughter. When telling me this, her voice started trembling and tears were in her eyes. During my work for SOLWODI I have heard many similar stories. But it`s something special to hear such a story from an affected person sitting opposite. Violet is 30 years old, as I am as well. But her life-situation is difficult to imagine. The only difference between us is that I had the luck to be born in Germany and not in Kenya. I realized how desperate her situation is when she was asked me if I could find a husband for her in Germany. She is convinced that this could be the solution for all her problems. I was told that many Kenyan women hope to find a rich man from abroad one day who could offer them a better life. But many of those women also end in prostitution or are mistreated. I told her that it`s more important to take

over responsibility for herself and her children. Violet wanted me to meet her daughters and to see how she is living. For that reason she invited me for the following day to her home.

The next day, when I entered the small room, I realized that together with Violet`s 4 person family the room is also home for Violet`s sister and her little daughter. There was only 1 mattress on the floor, which was not big enough for all of them. Therefore some of them had to sleep on the floor.

On a small gas-stove in the corner of the room – the only cooking facility – Violet was preparing Ugali (a mash of cornflower) This was served with vegetables and meat. Violet invited me to eat with them so I sat with them on the floor. Then we all got a small bowl with vegetables and meat. The Ugali was placed on 2 plates in the middle and each person then took Ugali with their fingers and put it then in the bowl. This meal was very tasty and it was better than meals in many hotels.

Later I went for a walk with Violet so we had the opportunity to talk undisturbed and we discussed options open for Violet. Violet would love to have her own stand where she could sell Chapati (unleavened bread) and tea. To open such a shop she would need around 150 Euro. A few days later I gave her that money. Grace, whom I met later, was very happy about the fact that Violet would have a chance for a change to a better life. Realizing that I could help at least one woman to start a better life made me feeling really good. I know that Violet will be successful. That`s a first small but important step for her.

SOLWODI and Django Reinhardt sign a cooperation agreement

Django Reinhardt's Culture and Counselling Office for Sinti and Roma (supported by Django Reinhardt's Music friends e. V.) and Sr. Lea from SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. signed a co-operation agreement on 24th June 2010 in Koblenz. This agreement is on offering special advice (as the result of the cooperation of the 2 agencies) especially for Sinti and Roma women, who have run into distress or violence situations.



Django Reinhardt knows what problems many Sinti and Roma are faced with and he expects a great demand for counselling. Even today, many Sinti and Roma have to fight against prejudice and racial discrimination. Many women of those minority groups don't dare to contact state or other authorities, because they have language problems. They have problems to write a letter or to fill in a request form and sometimes even to

make a telephone call to those agencies which could help them. Discrimination of these minority groups can be found all over Europe. Many of them believe that its no worse living abroad than in their home countries. The Roma minority in Romania for example experiences discrimination. As a result, they can't find work there and many Roma then come to Germany. The women often come from patriarchal families and grew up in extreme poverty. In many cases, Roma as well as members of other minority groups have been driven out of the Kosovo. Today, many of those people living here in Germany are threatened with deportation back to a country where they are also not welcome.

Since March 2010, a counsellor /social worker from SOLWODI works one day a week in Django

Reinhardt's Culture and Counselling Office for Sinti and Roma in Koblenz. Sinti and Roma women can discuss, free of charge and anonymously, new perspectives and develop options for a new way of life that makes use of their knowledge, capabilities and charisma for a better future. A further aim of the project is to take advantage of a mutual exchange of knowledge and experience. That way, we can steadily improve the cooperation and advice we offer. In addition we try to make the public more aware of the situation of the Sinti and Roma. More information about the Culture and Counselling Office of Django Reinhardt can be found on the following homepage: www.beratungsbüro-djangoreinhardt.de

Jubilee-event in 2010 – 25 Years SOLWODI

On 8th October 2010 at 7 pm our main jubilee-event – 25 years SOLWODI – will be celebrated in the city-hall of Boppard, thank to the support of Lotto-Rheinland-Pfalz. After an official, colourful event opening, Django Reinhardt and his band will entertain the guests. You are heartily invited to join us. Tickets can be ordered via telephone or e-mail in the SOLWODI office in Boppard. During the evening, the new book: "In Freiheit leben, das war lange nur ein Traum – Mutige Frauen erzählen von ihrer Flucht aus Gewalt und moderner Sklaverei" (To live in freedom was for a long time just a dream – courageous women tell how they escaped violence and modern slavery) will be presented; the book is published by Kösel publishers (see below).

The charity concert of the Mainzer Hofsänger (the court-singers from Mainz) in favour of our 25th Anniversary, which was held in the Bartholomäus church in Boppard-Hirzenach on 4th June 2010, was a great success. 350 guests, among them Horst Eckel, soccer world champion in 1954, filled the church to the last seat. As a result of the generous support we got from the Lotto Rheinland-Pfalz foundation, we raised 5,000.- Euro that evening. Herbert Piel, who initiated the 3rd international Harley-Davidson-world heritage tour through the upper middle Rhine valley, had the brilliant idea to organize a spontaneous collection for SOLWODI, and collected 300.- Euro.

SOLWODI's Jubilee book "In Freiheit leben, das war lange nur ein Traum" (To live in freedom was for a long time just a dream)

The touching report from Dr. Lea Ackermann, Mary Kreutzer and Alicia Allgäuer tries to answer the question what has SOLWODI achieved in the last 25 years for these women. It describes the path followed by women and girls how they finally reached freedom with SOLWODI's support. They escaped from enforced prostitution and enforced marriages, political suppression or extreme poverty. To enable women to live in dignity and independently - that's what Sr. Lea and her organization SOLWODI is fighting for. 25 years` combatting trafficking and violence – the history of SOLWODI's fight – is documented in this book with impressive colour pictures. Information about the countries from which affected women originate, offers further useful, additional background knowledge.

The book with 208 pages and 16 colour pictures costs 17.99 Euro

To order the book, refer to ISBN No.978-3-466-30878-J in the book series:

Sachbuch/Politik, Gesellschaft. The book is available since 23. August 2010



The second book is entitled:

"Knastmauke – Das Schicksal von politischen Häftlingen der DDR nach der deutschen Wiedervereinigung"
(Prison scars -The fate of former political prisoners in the former East German Republic after the German reunification)

from Sybille Plogstedt.

This is a book for all those interested in the German reunification and who don't know why former highranking East German officials are holding again high level positions in today's Germany as opposed to those who fought for the reunification. What happened to the approximate 200.000 who were political prisoners in the former East German Republic?



Sybille Plogstedt has spoken to 25 former prisoners and discovered that those former heroes are now living in poverty. In Eastern Germany they were forced to suffer unemployment, imprisonment and psychological torture. Today, almost half of them has to live off less than 1,000 Euro a month, with women receiving even less. About 13% of the former political prisoners receive HartzIV (social welfare benefits) In addition to the low income many of them suffer from psychological traumata, which lead in some cases to suicide attempts, shown by a study produced in Essen, for which 802 ex-prisoners were interviewed. Those fighters for the German reunification had dreamt of another outcome of the peaceful revolution in Germany in 1989. After 1989 they no longer had the power to make their ideas come true. Plogstedt draws the following conclusion: The ex-prisoners' poverty is the result of their traumata.

This book has 470 pages and costs 32.90 Euro in Germany.

To order quote ISBN no. 978-3-8379-2094-9

The book will be available in September 2010

Sr. Lea Ackermann was awarded the Itzel –Prize and the Bavarian Service medal



On 2th June 2010 Sr. Lea Ackermann was awarded the Itzel-Prize 2010 in the "August-Pieper House" of the episcopal academy of the Diocese of Aachen. Julius Itzel (1905 – 1974)was a businessman who decided in his last years when suffering from illness to put his money in a social-charitable foundation, to support weak members of the society. During the awarding ceremony Sr. Lea said that this man should be an example for all the rich people of today. She called the 50.000 Euro – prize money – a gift of heaven, which just comes in these crisis ridden days. Among others, the head of the foundation Mr. Frank Oliver Schultz, the dean of the Aachen cathedral Monsignore Helmut Poque´ and the lord mayor of Aachen, Mr. Marcel Philipp were present. Prof. Michael Rutz, chief-editor of the newspaper "Rheinischer Merkur" and member of the foundation council had an interview with Sr. Lea, outlining her Life and how she had founded SOLWODI. In that interview Sr. Leas motto, ruling her life, became quite clear: "We are all Gods children with abilities and charisma, which need to be developed and used" On 29th July 2010, the Bavarian Premier, Mr. Horst Seehofer, awarded Sr. Lea the Bavarian Order of Merit. The ceremony took place in the Munich residence. Following the ceremony there was a reception for the guests in the Comite´Hof.

Prize for Agnes Mailu, from SOLGIDI Kenya: The Shalom Prize 2010

On 19th June 2010 the committee for justice and peace of the catholic university Eichstätt-Ingolstadt awarded Mrs. Agnes Mailu from Mombasa the Shalom-Prize 2010. (see also newsletter no. 83 and www.solwodi.de)

The Shalom – Prize is an idealistic and financial human rights prize, honouring her merits for the project SOLGIDI – Solidarity for girls in distress.

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