

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter
No. 86, December 2010

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

This letter is dedicated to the subject "children". Even nowadays children do not have enough protection, neither in our society nor worldwide (see more on page 2). We are very pleased that the German county Rhineland-Palatinate has acknowledged our efforts for children by awarding us with its "Child Protection Award" in December (see below).



Many children who come to our SOLWODI counselling centres with their mothers or who are living in our safe accommodation, have witnessed the maltreatment of their own mother or have even experienced violence themselves (page 2). Such experiences leave deep psychological scars on children. In able to cope, children develop different strategies to survive. Some don't talk about it, they don't want anybody to know, they hide and isolate themselves. Others become aggressive or overanxious or show other forms of behavioural disorders. Often they need professional help and a reliable orientation in order to overcome their experience of violence and to regain normal social, emotional and cognitive behaviour. Losing their social environment as well as language, culture and financial difficulties all make it even more difficult for the children to integrate in their new environment. The colleagues from SOLWODI help by organising extra lessons and tutoring. At the same time they organise out-of-school activities, such as birthday parties or enable the children to participate in school excursions etc. And last but not least, supporting the children also unburdens their mothers, who then have more time for other tasks such as going to the authorities or visiting courses to improve their job chances.

At this point, I would like to say many thanks to all sponsors, guests, helpers, relatives, friends and supporters who attended our anniversary event "25 years for women in distress" on October 8th in the city hall of Boppard. They all contributed to an unforgettable and wonderful evening. On the starting page of our website under "Aktuelles – 25 Jahre SOLWODI", you can find pictures and reports about the event. We were very pleased that in particular two of our new Kenyan projects profited from anniversary contributions (page 3).

I would also like to thank all our present, new and future supporters very much – and I am doing this also on behalf of the women we are helping – for their support. Please note that since October 2010 donations can also be made online through our website.

Benta, one of our SOLGIDI clients in Kenya speaks on behalf of many young women and girls there (page 4). For children and women like them, our efforts are always worthwhile.

Yours, Sister Lea

Presentation of the "Child Protection Award" to Sr. Lea Ackermann by the county of Rhineland-Palatinate

On December 1st, 2010 Sr. Lea Ackermann will receive the above mentioned award for the extraordinary engagement of SOLWODI for children in need due to sex-tourism, enforced prostitution, enforced marriages and trafficking, both in Germany and Africa. The German Child Protection Association, Rhineland-Palatinate Branch (DKSB) honors persons and institutions who engage themselves in an extraordinary manner for the protection of children and youths and their rights, as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations.

The award will be endowed for the first time by the Savings bank association. The president of the Rhineland-Palatinate, Mr. Kurt Beck as well as Prof. Dr. Fritz Köster, Maria von Welser (vice-chair of UNICEF Germany) and others will attend the ceremony.

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 **LOTTO STIFTUNG**
RHEINLAND-PFALZ
- 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.

Recognizing and transferring children's rights into the real life

by Prof. Dr. Birgit Thoma

The rights of children were laid down by the United Nations – rather late in 1989 – in a separate convention on the rights of the child. Meanwhile, all states world-wide – except the USA and Somalia – have committed themselves by signing this convention to protect the rights of children. According to this convention, children have the right to live in a secure environment, without discrimination. They have the right to have access to clean water, food, medical care, education and to participate in the decision-making process concerning their wellbeing. In 2002 two additional protocols were added to the convention, forbidding the participation of underage youths in armed conflicts, trafficking of children, child prostitution and child pornography. This convention applies to all children and youths up to the age of 18, independent of their colour of skin, sex, language, national, ethnical or social origin, religion, political conviction, handicap or any other life-condition. The wellbeing of the child comes first under all circumstances. So, are the rights of children – at least on paper – comprehensively guaranteed? Unfortunately not, since those international rights are not directly applicable in the countries. It depends on the political will and the concrete transfer of those rights into constitutional law to ensure that the rights of the child are not only a declaration of intention, but real rights that can be demanded in court. A short view on the conversion of this convention in Germany shows that further action is required here also. Although the convention was recognized in 1993 and its amendments in 2009, Germany did not commit itself until May 2010 to apply those rights to unaccompanied, under-aged refugees also, who didn't have the same rights as German children before. Improvements are required here in the social-, asylum-, refugee- and family rights. Another aim is to include the protection of children in the constitution. Unfortunately the request to include the rights of the child as unique fundamental rights in the fundamental rights Charta has failed so far on a political level. Children need their own rights to be applicable in court in all countries, world-wide! This is what SOLWODI is fighting for.

The UN convention on the rights of the child states the following basic rights:

1. The right to be treated equally and to be protected from discrimination regardless of religion, origin and sex;
2. The right of having a name and nationality;
3. The right of wellbeing and health;
4. The right to receive education and vocational training;
5. The right for leisure time, playing and recovery;
- 6- The right of access to information, of expressing the own opinion, of being heard and the right of assembly;
7. The right of privacy and of an upbringing free from violence in the sense of equal rights and peace;
8. The right to receive immediate help in case of emergencies or catastrophes, the right to be protected from cruelty, neglect, exploitation and persecution;
9. The right to have a family, parental care and a safe home;
10. The right of assistance in case of a disability.

More than a children's story

(recounted by K.K., SOLWODI Bad-Kissingen)

My name is Lan and I am 5 years old. I have a little brother called Minh, who is 3 years old. We used to live in a small flat together with mum and dad. I used to go to the kindergarten. I liked Ms. Meier very much, because she often played with me.



Ms. Meier talked to my mum, because I used to cry a lot. But my mum doesn't speak German and she cried too. I believe this is because of dad. I don't know why he shouts so loud, beats her and pulls her hair. I am sure she must have done something wrong. He also beat me last night although I didn't do anything. I am very scared, especially when dad has a knife in his hand. I am not allowed to cry, because then dad gets angry and beats me more.

Mom picked me up at the kindergarten, together with another woman. Minh was also in the car. Then we

drove a long distance with this women. I was crying and wanted to go back home. Now we are living in another town, in a big house, where only women and their children are allowed to live. Dad stayed at home alone. Mom says that this is good and that it is not my fault. But I still feel guilty, because I cried at night. Here, everybody is very friendly and I can go to the kindergarten again, together with Minh. He is not afraid. Mum is going to school now, so that she can learn German. The best thing here is that there is always somebody willing to talk to me. Even at night there is

somebody here. I draw a lot: Mom and dad in bed and the blood and where dad was hurting me. I'm allowed to draw everything – even very bad things – says Monika. I'm allowed to just call her Monika, because that's easier for me. She tells me, when mum can speak German properly, we will look for another flat. Mom is sewing in a shop. I often think of dad and what I might have done wrong. In the evening, when it gets dark, I become afraid. Then I keep on crying. But mum and Monika tell me they won't leave me alone.

Our new projects

COGICHI – Improved access to water in Kenya

Water is life! In the Western Province of Kenya and partly also in Mombasa, the lack of water is a serious problem. Many girls are forced to walk long distances for water and can therefore not go to school. With the project COGICHI (Concerns for the Girl Child) this problem shall be overcome. The main goals of COGICHI are:

- Providing schools and municipalities with water by building wells, installing water tanks and attaching gutters at the roofs of schoolhouses to collect the rainwater.
- Raising people's awareness on the careful use of water
- Helping girls, so that this type of child labour does not stop them from going to school, because education is most important for them.

We would like to thank Mr. Dr. Galliker and the Academia Engelberg foundation for the great support they are giving this project in its first year. In order to continue with this project in the future, we would like to gain other supporters for it as well. If you would like to support COGICHI or have any questions concerning this project, please do not hesitate to contact us.



The water tank on the picture has been donated by the Ministry of Education for the schools in Busia. Unfortunately this tank is very small and can therefore not hold much water. The water is mainly used by teachers and for cooking school meals. Rainfall is seasonal.

Water backpack "Paul"

Not only the lack of water but also its bad quality are a problem for the people in Kenya. The water backpack "Paul", which has been developed at the University of Kassel/ Germany, neutralizes contaminated water and filters out bacteria and pathogenic germs (for more information, please refer to www.uni-kassel.de/fb14/siwawi). Prof. Dr. Franz-Bernd Frechen from the University of Kassel and Dr. Kambiz Ghawami from World University Service, Deutsches Komitee e.V. gave a very impressive demonstration of the backpack's efficiency on stage during the celebration of our 25th anniversary. We are very happy that they decided to donate one water backpack which Sr. Lea will be taking with her on her next journey to Kenya.



Prof. Dr. Franz-Bernd Frechen with the water backpack "Paul"
© Peter Seydel

SOLWODI Ladies Soccer Association – SOLASA

During the celebration of our anniversary, SOLWODI received soccer balls as a gift from Dr. Ghawami and a treasure box containing t-shirts from the German soccer association. The box was handed over by Nils Wiechmann and Norbert Weise, both board members of the soccer association Rhineland. Soon, these gifts will all be in Kenya.

The female soccer players of SOLWODI Kenya are really enjoying the sport. While playing soccer, they forget the terrible things they had to experience in the past and they develop self-confidence and courage again. Many of them are already playing in the national women's league in Kenya. With the success they are having they are a great promotion for SOLWODI. But the costs for journeys to awaygames, food and equipment cannot be covered for long. This is why a new project has been developed to solve this financial problem; its name is SOLASA (SOLWODI Ladies Soccer Association); 4 female mechanics who have a driving license, are sharing a Tuk-Tuk as taxi drivers for one week each. They can earn their living with this and a small part of their turnovers will go to SOLASA

to cover the soccer team's costs. The project has already proven to be successful and soon a second Tuk Tuk will be bought to extend it. The money for this has been donated by Prof. Ursula Männle, member of the state parliament of Bavaria.



The soccer association Rhineland-Palatinate with support from Lotto Rhineland-Palatinate invited two girls from SOLWODI Kenya to Koblenz to train for an international soccer coach license again this year. The girls were very impressed by the training and the new playing techniques they learned during this course. Happy and contented they returned to Mombasa and showed the other girls what they had learned. One of these girls is also a member of the Tuk Tuk project.

The situation of children of prostitutes in Africa



Benta is 20 years old and has been with SOLGIDI since the beginning. She gained her university-entrance diploma in 2006 and is now studying social sciences. When Sr. Lea visited Kenya in December 2009 Benta held an impressive speech about the situation of the children of prostitutes during the Christmas celebrations.

Benta's speech: "We appreciate what SOLGIDI has done for us. It has made us feel like other girls in society who still have both of their parents. By being supported in going to school we are able to work hard and achieve our goals in life. As the children of commercial sex workers, we do face a lot of challenges. Some of our loving and caring mothers prepare and sell traditional beer. They involve us in this business by letting us serve the men who come for beer and at times sending us to go and collect money which is owed to them by these male customers. This puts us in the danger of being abused by the men when we go to collect the money. Some of us have been sexually abused in the process. The same parents at times come home with their sex customers and we are sent away from the house as they continue with their business. This is very frustrating for us, and at times these men turn to us when they are through with our mothers as they feel that we are to be used by them. When we go to school sometimes our concentration is poor because of the stress and experience we go through with our parents. But all in all with the support that we get from SOLGIDI we are able to overcome the challenges and perform our level best at school. THANK YOU"

How are students touched emotionally by the subject of human trafficking?

During workshops dealing with the subject "human trafficking" which were organized at schools in Berlin, the students were asked to express their thoughts in a haiku. Haiku is a poetic form used in Japan. Each verse consists of 3 word groups, each with 5 – 7 – 5 syllables. Here are some translated examples:

The sky black
Shades cover violence
Open your eyes

Enforcement of prostitution
State must act
Give more support

Help the abused
Relieve their fate
Women in chains

Enforcement of prostitution
Such unjust cruelty
All in secrecy

Enforced prostitution
Break silence, act
Change the situation

Enforcement of prostitution
Stealing women's liberty
And destroying life

Donating online

In the past many people asked us why SOLWODI has no possibility to donate online. This is why we have now added the function to our website. Since October 2010 this service is available on the welcome page of our website www.solwodi.de. In order to donate, please click on the button "Spende" right above the button "Aktuelles". If you include your address we will be happy to send you a donation receipt.

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