

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter
No. 99, March 2014



Dear friends and all other people interested in our work,

Many women in 2013 turned to SOLWODI for help for the first time: 1555 women from 103 countries. As a result, I am especially happy that 2014 began with very encouraging signals that could be decisive for the future of countless women and girls in prostitution. The first came from Augsburg where the police, criminologists, social workers, doctors and other experts came together under the city's initiative to improve the situation of women in prostitution. The result is a legislation proposal that has since been presented to the German parliament. SOLWODI also had a part in shaping the concept (see page 2). The most important insight put forward by the experts was that the fight against prostitution can only be successful when everyone works together. Only with the federal government, states, cities and municipalities working together, can they adopt rules without loopholes that really help women - and not play into the hands of pimps and traffickers.

The second positive signal was set by the European Parliament. MPs voted at the end of February for the adoption of the so-called 'Nordic model' in Europe. EU member states are being asked to curb the demand for prostitution by making the purchase of sexual services a criminal offence, thus turning the focus onto the client and away from the women. This is what SOLWODI has been calling for a long time, for example with the "End prostitution! No female sex slaves in Germany" campaign. Half a year later on 8 March, International Women's Day, this came to a conclusion with almost 19,000 signatures. Together with other supporting organizations, we will soon submit this officially in Berlin. This will be a big moment that I am looking forward to, and an important political signal. Finally, SOLWODI Germany wishes to announce that due to business economic reasons, it had to decide on continuing its future work without a Managing Director. Monika Hartenfels will thus not hold this position for much longer. I hope more than ever in 2014 to count on your invaluable support in all its forms.

Sister Lea Ackermann

Understanding through experience: SOLWODI presents Kenya as a host country in CREATIVA

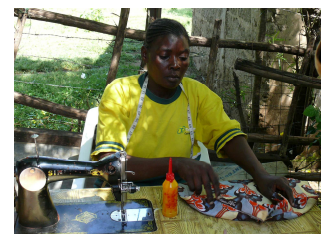
Visitors come close to a diverse array of living environments of Kenyan women.

The countries of Africa are the "losers" of globalization: bitterly poor, plagued by hunger and war and most of all, far away? Think again! Visitors to CREATIVA, the largest trade fair for creative enthusiasts in Europe, could experience Africa authentically from 19 to 23 March in the Dortmund Westfalenhalle. Gudrun Angelis presented in Hall 4 our SOLWODI projects from Kenya sustainably assisting girls and women in distress. The motto was "Understanding through experience" – join in and plunge into the world of women in Kenya. Kenyan seamstresses, trained with the help of SOLWODI, showed fashion from local fabrics, while German designers presented creations from Kenyan materials. There was a lecture themed on the global market for old clothes. In the "River of Requests" visitors could have their picture in the life-size representations of Kenyan blue water carriers made by the artist Marianne Pitzen. The photos on a blog for viewing at solwodiwasserprojekt.wordpress.com. Victims of trafficking marked their lives in artistic engagements. In addition, a symbolic planting and a football project were offered.

"This is the Kenya that I know – wonderful that so many visitors joined in," said Sister Dr Lea Ackermann, who has a particularly special relationship to Kenya where she founded in 1985 a project for women escaping poverty-driven prostitution.

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SOLWODI is **regionally active** through the counselling centres, women's homes and shelters, and lobbying associations. SOLWODI Associations are **networked across the country**. SOLWODI is **nationally and Europe wide engaged** through political work.

Regionally active... in Osnabruck: One Billion Rising

On 14 February, SOLWODI danced - in Osnabruck and many other cities where SOLWODI has counseling centers. The occasion: One Billion Rising. The campaign initiated by U.S. activist Eve Ensler, calls for solidarity with female victims of violence. According to the UN, 35 percent of women will be raped or beaten in the course of their lives. These are a billion women worldwide. One Billion Rising moves women and men around the world to lay down their work to take to the streets and dance. SOLWODI Osnabruck participated in the action with its own information stand. Elsewhere SOLWODI women showed their support by visiting rallies.



... in Trier: Rigoletto production with SOLWODI



Opera director Bruno Berger Gorski expressed his appreciation for SOLWODI in his "Rigoletto" production. Opera goers were amazed by the energetic group of ladies who both cared for girls abused by the Duke and demonstrated loudly. "Opera is always political for me and Verdi in particular has always campaigned for the oppressed," said Berger-Gorski about his motivation for this scene. "I admire Sr. Lea and her team very much and am sure they fight on full of energy." The last performance in Tier played on 21 February.

Networked nationwide ... in Augsburg: A law for women in prostitution

Network arrives at an overall concept to improve the lives of prostitutes

A bill arising out of the direction of the Crime Prevention Council of Augsburg shows how the situation of women in prostitution can be radically improved. The concept is the result of months of project work carried out in cooperation with SOLWODI and is now before the Bavarian State Parliament and German Federal Parliament. It focuses primarily on cooperation amongst communities, cities, states and federal authorities. The goal: new, specific laws at the federal and state levels that give cities and towns the necessary funds in hand to remedy the problems created by the Prostitution Act of 2002.

Engaged nationally and Europe wide ... in Sachen: "Germany without prostitution"

The "End prostitution! No female slavery in Germany" campaign ended after half a year on 8 March with almost 19,000 signatures. With "End prostitution!" SOLWODI calls for a ban on the purchase of sexual services modeled after Sweden. "Not everyone has responded to the request to sign the petition," said Sister Lea Ackermann. "I hope we will eventually reach the 20,000 figure." Currently, SOLWODI is collaborating with other like-minded organizations and will submit the signatures and petition together in Berlin to the German Parliament.

... in Strasbourg: European Parliament votes for prostitution free Europe

A Europe without prostitution - this vision is to become a reality according to the will of Parliament. On February 26, the parliamentarians voted for the adoption of the so-called "Nordic model" in Europe: The EU countries will curb the demand for prostitution by outlawing the purchase of sexual services. Parliament emphasized that with the adoption of the resolution, not only forced prostitution but any sexual service for a fee is a violation of human dignity. Although this resolution is not binding - that is dependent on the member states that are not forced to implement it - it is nonetheless a strong signal. Most recently, Ireland and France have already proceeded with similar initiatives at national level against prostitution.

... in Brussels: Integrations project for migrant women in distress

SOLWODI's assistance and integration measures for clients needing special protection have, for some years, been supported by the EU Solidarity Funds. The European Refugee Fund (ERF) funds three projects across Germany. The project "Improved opportunities for integration of vulnerable migrant women through psychosocial counseling, language and vocational skills" takes place in all German SOLWODI counseling centers with a time frame of three years. A one-year pilot project is currently underway in Berlin where SOLWODI promotes the integration of clients with new and creative offers. In Munich, SOLWODI cooperates with Amnesty International and provides information, through the mobile „information bus," directly to refugee women. -Finally, the European Integration Fund (EIF) funds the "Basic knowledge about the German labor market system and job opportunities for migrant women" project. SOLWODI is very grateful that its clients can benefit from this support.

Europäischer Integrationsfonds (EIF)
Europäischer Flüchtlingsfonds (EFF)



Being a woman in...Kenya

By Elizabeth Nyambura Shako, recorded by Debora Höly

When I look back to my childhood, I remember sleeping with a hungry belly on the cold floor and the fight to be able to obtain an education. My mother died of cancer when I was a child and my father was killed when he fell off his bicycle on the way to work. I was just 16 years old and already an orphan. As the second oldest of five sisters, I had to assume responsibilities early. We were many times sent from one relative to another and it was not an easy time. Nevertheless, I had luck as my aunt saw to it that I could go to school.

Not many children in Kenya have this luck. While officially 90 percent of children in Kenya attend elementary school, 50 percent of Kenyans are younger than 15. The state schools cannot handle this number of children. Classes are so overcrowded that the teachers no longer have an overview whether all children regularly appear or are loitering on the streets. In particular, young girls must look after their younger siblings from early on. Many of them will be married at 14 years old and have children of their own whom they cannot care for. A vicious circle from which there is no escape.

The burden of responsibility lies on the shoulders of the woman. Women in Kenya can independently construct their lives and must do so as it is the women in Kenya who see to it that daily life proceeds in all its forms. Women look after the children, send them to school and manage the home. The fetching of drinking water is often such a big

problem and takes a lot of time that even the children, mostly the girls, who have to chip in. There is no time left for school.

Even that is not enough. Many women make a living for their families. I am exactly in this situation. The irresponsibility which I see in many men in my home country upsets me deeply. Many of them contribute hardly anything to their families' needs.

Combining family and work? That means for most women simply leaving the kids at home and unattended to in order to go to work. And unsurprisingly it is exactly this problem that leads women into prostitution: the hope for fast money. The market for sex tourism in Kenya carries on as before although prostitution is forbidden. Western tourists take women and children for themselves because they can. The UN children's organization, UNICEF, estimates that 10 000 to 30 000 children in Kenya are involved in the commercial sex industry. I my-



Elisabeth, Sister Lea, Faith

self have four children for whom I need to care. I have looked after my daughter alone since I separated from my husband. Then I adopted a child and in the last year, I took in the two children of my late sister. I alone see to it that they are cared for and that they are well.

I can do all this because I have a stable income. For that I have to thank my aunt who saw to it that I could go to school and get a driver's license. This is not a matter of course for women in Kenya. Yet, because of this driver's license, I could apply to SOLWODI Kenya. I have worked for the organization since 1999, initially as a driver. Later, at the evening school, I received further training to be a social worker. I am grateful to all who have supported. Today I can support, together with SOLWODI, the children who would be otherwise left behind. This is the beginning of the fight against injustice and poverty, under which women suffer the most.

Peace can grow only in a just world



Sister Lea Ackermann spoke as part of the Lent sermon in St Paul's Cathedral in Münster/Westphalia. The pews in the cathedral of Münster were well filled, as Sister Ackermann was there on March 19. Her subject was "Justice as the basis for a peaceful world." "Creation is a gift from God - a gift that is given to all people alike. God is hence essential to justice," said Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann about the motivation for her presentation topic. "Only when we are working on justice, is peace possible."

The women who call on SOLWODI for help, have a share in a just world – that has been Sister Lea's motivation since the beginning of her work for women in need. "In a globalized economy, there are a few people who live in the fullness of creation, and many who lack the basic necessities. Many women sell their bodies out of necessity. In a just world this would be impossible," said Sr. Lea in her presentation. Therefore SOLWODI strongly supports women on the road to economic independence beyond prostitution. "Independent women are confident and can stand for their rights," said Sr. Lea. "This creates satisfaction - a very personal form of peace." Aside from Sister Lea, other speakers included Bundestag President Norbert Lammert and retired federal judge, Prof. Paul Kirchhof.

SOLWODI – Partner in Network**Why cities like Augsburg support SOLWODI**

Due to the liberal legislation the sex market is booming in Germany - there are more brothels, more women working in prostitution, and so more demand for advice. To ensure skilled care of the women, more and more cities are engaged in cooperation with SOLWODI. Collaboration is for SOLWODI important financially - because good consulting work costs money: accommodation costs for affected women, salaries for professionals, office space, and material. Money has already been received from the respective city coffers by the counseling centers in Braunschweig, Osnabruck, Aalen, Aachen, Duisburg, Mainz, Ludwigshafen and Augsburg. There, at the initiative of Social Department Head, Max Weinkamm, the city in 2013 sponsored the office for SOLWODI and part of the personnel costs. We asked Max Weinkamm asked why he supports SOLWODI.



M. Weinkamm

How does SOLWODI support the counseling of women in prostitution in Augsburg?

SOLWODI Augsburg especially looks after women who are victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution. For this area we have no other support. We have in Soni Unterreithmeier, an incredibly competent and invaluable character. I have great respect for the work of SOLWODI and I felt it a disgrace that we supported previous the purely voluntary commitment of Ms. Unterreithmeier alone. This had to change!

And how?

Through cooperation and financing. We have in Augsburg found exceptionally engaged people from different areas who have decided to improve the world of prostitutes. Each individual is an expert in his/her own area and brings additionally to other committees the movement to reform the prostitution legislation. SOLWODI is an important foundation stone of this network. More important is the financial support and I am proud to have been able to ensure their budget for 2014.

Why do you personally support SOLWODI so intensely? What is your motivation?

In an earlier life, I was a representative in Kolping for a campaign against human trafficking in Bavaria. As a former member of the central committee, I had the chance to get to know Sister Lea Ackermann personally. Thereafter about six years ago, came the first meeting with Soni Unterreithmeier at a local meeting in Kolpinghaus Augsburg. I can only take my hat off to the two women. And I am annoyed with my fellow males who as clients with demands are the cause of the problem.

Book recommendation: Freedom for Linh

They are called Linh, Mychau, Lanah or Margy and none of them is older than 10 years. These young girls are tied to a cruel destiny. They are all victims of a network of human traffickers and brothel owners who offer them to western tourists. The authors describe the risky rescue operation of the International Justice Mission in Svay Pak, a centre of the sex industry and human trafficking in Cambodia. They tell the true stories of young girls who may never be children and the stories of courageous people who risked their own lives to give these children the chance of a new beginning.

“Freedom for Linh” by Gary A. Haugen and Gregg Hunter, Brunnen Verlag, Price: €9.99

**Contact:**

SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. / Propsteistraße 2 / D-56154 Boppard-Hirzenach

Tel: 0049 – (0)6741 – 2232 / Fax: 0049 – (0)6741 – 2310

Email: info@solwodi.de <http://www.solwodi.de>

Bank Accounts

Volksbank Koblenz Mittelrhein e.G.

Acc.-No. 656565 1000

Sorting Code 570 900 00

BIC GENODE51KOB

IBAN DE68 5709 0000 6565 6510 00

Landesbank Saar, Saarbrücken

Acc.-No. 2000 9999

Sorting Code 590 500 00

BIC SALADE55XXX

IBAN DE84 5905 0000 0020 0099 99

Kreissparkasse Rhein-Hunsrück

Acc.-No. 11 270 00

Sorting Code 560 517 90

BIC MALADE51SIM

IBAN DE02 5605 1790 0001 1270 00