

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter

No. 72, July 2007

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

I am writing these lines at the end of the G-8 Summit in Heiligendamm. In order to defeat AIDS and others epidemics in the developing countries, the G-8 countries have committed themselves to 45 billion Euros. This is absolutely necessary. In Kenya alone, where I was once again at the end of May, the number of Aids orphans is over one million. According to tradition, Kenyan women who belong to the social class of the poorest (about 50% of the population) have very little or no access to schooling. Therefore, many stray into prostitution. This contributes to the dramatic increase of the HIV infection and the AIDS death rate. How SOLWODI tries to help in Kenya, is explained on page three.

There, we present, among other initiatives, also a project against human trafficking. Quite a few of the SOLWODI (K) clients from the rural area were, as young women, handed over to traffickers by their own relatives; most of the time with the presumption that in the coastal region the daughter, the sister, the niece, the granddaughter would have a better future. Actually, it is widely known that the majority of these girls will not be employed in housekeeping or cookery; instead they will be forced to prostitute themselves. In fact, because of the poverty in the villages, this is often the only alternative. Moreover, the lure that a foreign sex tourist will marry the girl and offer her a prosperous life further raises their hopes. The ruthless traffickers take advantage of this hope. The number of our Kenyan clients that in the last few years have been sold to brothels in Europe and in the USA has consistently increased.

Angela Merkel, the Federal Chancellor, flew from Heiligendamm direct to Cologne in order to talk with the Bangladeshi Nobel Prize Winner Muhammad Yunus at the Evangelical Church Congress. He is the founder of Grameen Bank, which offers micro credits to the needy in order to set up businesses. This aid to self-help has been offered for many years also by SOLWODI (K)—with your support (p. 4). Thank you very much!

At a lecture at Hamburg Zonta-Club I got to know the psychologist and court consultant Christina Lamertz. On page two she explains, according to her viewpoint, why voluntary prostitution also involves health risks that cannot be underestimated—and that often prostitutes were deeply hurt in their dignity as children. More reassuring is what you can read below about the brothel “Pascha”.

I wish you an exciting summer: with a summer concert in favor of SOLWODI (p. 4), to which you are cordially invited.



Yours, Sr. Lea

Content

That was Pascha!

Page 1

The Sickening Contradictions of Prostitution

By Dr. Christina Lamertz

Page 2

The sensitized Federal Government

Page 2

New Projects in Kenya— and wonderful Grace

By Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann

Page 3

Music for SOLWODI

Page 4

Impressum

Seite 4

That was Pascha!

The large-scale brothel “Pascha” in Cologne with its 141 rooms claims to be the “biggest walk-in center” in Europe. The organizers of the renowned Cologne Cultural Festival “Sommerblut” were very impressed by this. Not only did they want “Pascha” as a performance and exhibition area, but they also wanted to open the actual festival at this “cool location,” although the police had seized underage forced prostitutes there. Thanks to the massive protest, in which SOLWODI participated, the opening program “Wild Nights” was moved to the Theatre. As a result, “Pascha” withdrew from the festival. The discussion that has flared up over “the attempt to misuse a cultural program with the aim to normalize prostitution” gives hope. Anyway, we wonder whether the big brothel will in the future dare to advertise, such as on Cologne taxis, with the slogan: “It’s nice to be Pascha!”



The Sickening Contradictions of Prostitution

By Dr. Christina Lamertz

“Prostitution is prevalently a physical and psychological strain, which is often practiced by particularly vulnerable groups,” says a report by the Federal Government, which was cited in our last newsletter. The psychologist and court consultant, Christina Lamertz from the Hamburg Institute of Forensic Psychology and Mediation, clarifies the background.

Developmental psychology acknowledges the importance of tenderness and loving awareness for the development of children, particularly in their early stages. A baby enjoys the loving touch of the parents, reacts to them with smiles and contentment and makes demands on them as well. At the same time, a baby is already able to give out its own messages of displeasure, when he/she wants to be left alone. His/her signals are unequivocal and unmistakable. In a good parent-child relationship, the young child experiences the loving touch of the parent as authentic esteem, and can therefore open up to this love unconditionally and trustingly. This basic trust in parental love, as well as the certainty that the parents would not do anything to hurt the natural dignity of their child, build the foundation pillars of personality development. Therefore, for the parents it is important not only to learn to distinguish the child's signals, but also to respect in a special way the child's need to have his/her own private sphere. What is therefore necessary is that a child in the early stages is allowed to experience that his/her own sensitivity can be distinguished from the needs of the parents for physical closeness, and that this is totally acceptable. Children normally have an intuitive feeling that establishes closeness and whether a boundary is necessary. If one observes children, meeting for the first time, one notices how cautiously physical boundaries are tested and another child's touch is unequivocally allowed or disallowed. The conditions for such an awareness and confident behavior is a healthy autonomous development, in which the child controls the inflow of loving touch and is not helplessly exposed to parents' or other people's needs. One's own body is strictly connected to one's own identity and self-esteem. For this reason, the physique plays a prevalent role in many mental illnesses. Women with eating disorders often report experiencing a reduced capacity to feel, and people with dependent syndromes report having numbed senses; depressed patients experience social and physical isolation.

Their childhood was perhaps marked by changes of home residence, permanent breaking up of relationships (such as divorce or separation), parental

indifference or disregard of the child's needs (e.g. through maltreatment, neglect). Young adults with such a developmental history, show often a tendency to seek physical closeness with people who are distant and manipulative. This encroaching behavior either will not be recognized as such or will be misinterpreted as seemingly loving behavior.

A “voluntary” prostitute finds herself in a similar contradictory position. She is in a situation that on the one hand compels the highest possible physical intimacy, but on the other hand demands emotional distance and no involvement. At the same time she must have control over potential safety risks (sexually transmitted diseases, violence, etc.), as well as over the development of the requested “sexual services.” Alone the idea of the „passionate and gratified lady of the night“ therefore seems absurd. At any rate, this imposed situation of constant emotional dilemma in the sense of “controlled surrender” represents a massive psychological overload for the person concerned and often induces prostitutes to drugs or alcohol abuse or other self-destructing behaviour.

Babies and toddlers often try to protect themselves through internal – depressive - withdrawal from recurring, often uncontrollable, emotional injuries. At the same time, they can on the surface appear to the untrained observer to be outgoing and psychologically stable. In similar ways, taking drugs and a tunnel vision on easy money-making creates an illusion, which makes the humiliating situation of the prostitute - and to be precise also of their clients - appear as though it were a situation of self-determination and wholeness.

Similarly, drug taking and the tunnel vision regarding the so-easily made money creates an almost lurid illusion which shifts the situation, degrading as it is for the prostitute and strictly speaking also for her customer, into a deceptively light of self-determination and integrity. Once the threshold has been crossed, it's easier to do it a second time. With each repetition the new experience becomes more like reality to the point of absurdity, where self-denial is perceived as normal and a life away from prostitution is no longer conceivable. The scales have shifted.

New Projects in Kenya—and wonderful Grace

By Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann

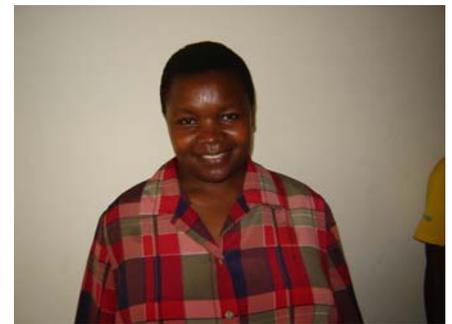
SOLWODI KENYA enjoys great recognition and is, therefore, entrusted by international institutions with projects and programs: only in 2006 four new ones (see box below). Sr. Lea obtained this information at the end of May from the site.

Since its foundation in 1985, the goal of SOLWODI (K)—now an independent society as well as a registered non governmental organization (NGO)—, has been to offer alternatives to women and girls who, because of poverty, are forced into prostitution. The contributions for special projects, which come from other organizations, pursue as well this aim. With their own particular focuses, they represent a meaningful addition to the foundation program of SOLWODI (K), which includes a separate

HIV/Aids project since 2005. This thanks to the initiative of Grace Adiambo. This courageous woman is herself HIV-positive, yet she doesn't hide behind this issue, instead she faces it and helps others to do so. As we came to know her, it became immediately clear to us: we'll hire her!

Currently, she accompanies 60 clients in Mombassa, Mtuhapa, Watamu und Malindi: 30 of whom are in a so-called antiviral program; they receive regular medication, which prevent or postpone the outbreak of Aids. Grace explained

to me that the HIV medication provokes extreme hunger—and this among people, who already don't have enough to eat. Therefore, SOLWODI saw the necessity to start in addition a nutrition program. Among other things 100 kilos grain, mostly oat flakes and rice, will be distributed once a month.



Grace Adiambo

Grace, the power-woman, spares no effort in order to raise medicines and foodstuff: she turns to pharmacies, welfare institutions and business companies. She reaches out to hospitals as well, in order to urge them to take care of her clients free of charge—this is provided for the poor, but only theoretically. She also accompanies the dying and ensures that the dead are buried with decorum.

What is also important is the raising of awareness and public opinion work. She shows herself to be a competent public relations person with the media. With her street rounds she informs prostitutes as to how to protect themselves from HIV and encourages women who are already infected to fight against the disease instead of giving up. Furthermore, she rescues HIV-infected children and finds proper homes for them. A 14 year old, who started working as a prostitute so as to provide for her younger brothers and sisters after their mother's AIDS-death, received help, thanks

HIV/AIDS. Last year, SOLWODI (K) succeeded in taking part in an international program from FAMILY HEALTH INTERNATIONAL (FHI) for HIV/Aids's prevention, treatment and care.

School projects: Since June 2006 with financial aid from the International Labour Organization (ILO) teachers and parents have been informed about and made aware of the sexual exploitation of children. In school a trustworthy person is made available to students as a reference person.

Human trafficking: Since October 2006 the project "Trafficking in Persons" (TIP), financed also by the American Embassy in Nairobi, pursues the reintegration and rehabilitation of girls and women who had become victims of human trafficking. Besides the support and possible repatriation to the home country, there is also personal assistance to building up an independent life. Furthermore, TIP operates in the area of prevention among other initiatives, with an information centre on human trafficking, that was set up by SOLWODI. Absolutely urgent is safe accommodation ("Rescue centre") for the victims of human trafficking in Mombassa. The catholic diocese made a building in Mombassa available to SOLWODI. Religious sisters help with the care and administration of the house, SOLWODI takes over the counselling.

Child prostitution: SOLWODI (K) is implementing organisation of a cooperation project between RESPECT/ECPAT Austria, SAVE THE CHILDREN Sweden and UNICEF, for the "implementation of a codex of behaviour to protect Children from sexual exploitation by sex tourists in Kenya." This goal should be reached through intensive training of leaders and their co-workers, so that they will be able to recognize the exploitation of children by sex tourists, and will not tolerate or support it any longer. Within the framework of this project, to date twelve trainers have been qualified for the training courses, in which up to now personnel from ten hotels have taken part.

to Grace, from SOLGIDI, our relief organization for girls, founded in 2002. In addition, Grace has managed to get her clients out of isolation and encourages self-help and solidarity, which is SOLWODI's policy.

When I was in Kenya at the end of May, Grace gathered together 40 HIV infected and Aids women from five self-help groups from Mombassa. I found out that each group had its own bank account. Each woman could in good times save something and pay a small sum into this account, then benefit from it in difficult times.



International projects are always limited in time, but our work is not, just as the need of Kenyan women and girls is not limited either. All the more reason why I am grateful that the base programme of

SOLWODI (K) - and with it Grace's wonderful work - will be financed also in 2007 through donations from organizations other than SOLWODI Germany, such as Misereor, Missio, the German committee of the World Day of Prayer for Women, the association "Children in the Middle" and the catholic parish communities of Renningen.



Complete report from the journey in our homepage:

www.solwodi.de

To obtain a printing format contact: 06741-2232 or

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Mechthild Kiendl

Music for SOLWODI

On 29th July in the Maximilian Oratory at the New Castle Schleißheim in Munich, Mechthild Kiendl (soprano) and Peter Fraser (tenor) will sing sacred arias and duets from Bach, Haendel and Franck in a benefit concert. Michael Pfeiffer will accompany them on the organ. Instead of an entrance fee, donations for SOLWODI will be collected.

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