

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter

No. 92, June 2012



Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

“A new start venture“ – this was the motto of the catholic`s day 2012 which just ended in Mannheim. A new start venture, that`s exactly what all those women do, who come in our advice offices daily. Those women who found the way to us, who may be freed themselves from the handcuffs of violence and brutality, the traffickers had forced them in, and those women are in the middle of their own start-up. Our job from SOLWODI is to show them, that such a start-

up can be successful – even if the way is a difficult one and the scares are painfully hurting – SOLWODI is at the side of those women.

And that`s necessary, because the histories of our clients are more dramatic than ever. It`s frightening, that more young women and underage girls are asking for our help, women and girls who experienced and suffered from unbelievable treatment. Women who are deeply traumatized need our company and support for years. Only few of those women have the courage to act as witnesses against those men who treated them so badly. On page 2 you can read what the result of such courage can be.

We are pleased to see the interest and engagement of a young policewoman, who visited our projects in Kenya for 4 weeks (see below).

“What progress has the prostitution law from 2002 produced, if at all?“ that was discussed at the catholic academy of Bavaria. The reason for those discussions was my birthday and the purpose of the meeting was to win further support for SOLWODI. Another successful event was the evening in Kellberg / Passau – see report on page 3. Without the valuable support of the many foundations, our work would not be possible. On behalf of those foundations we report about an interview with Mrs. Bruch from the Globus – Foundation.

I wish you all a sunny holiday time!

Yours, Sister Lea

Report about my journey to Kenya

From A. Grünanger

In March 2012 I flew to West – Kenya, to visit some projects of SOLWODI and to report about them. In Butere, a city near to Uganda, several wells were drilled and we visited 2 of them. The region of Butere is very dusty and dry. During the dry season there is almost no rain and therefore it`s seldom possible to get clean drinking water. To get and carry water home is in Kenya still the job of the women. Girls and women are busy daily for hours, to carry water home for drinking, cooking and laundering. With great cans on their heads, they walk their laborious ways home. As a result of that time consuming caring for water, many girls are unable to visit a school.

In Butere, SOLWODI – with its water project – drilled wells at schools and furnished them with pumps as well. As a result, all have access now to cost-free and clean drinking water. That`s no matter of course in Kenya. And at the end of the classes, the school children can take water home. The children demonstrated to us, they can use the pumps and it`s not difficult to operate them. The director of the school told us about the importance of the pump for the region because otherwise there wouldn`t be running water available. Although one is collecting water during the rainy season, but this is not enough to cover the dry season.

It was very impressing to see, how successful this water project is and how it helps the people in the Butere region. There is a need for many more water projects to help the people in that great country. This experience reminds us how grateful we should be here in Germany, to have access to drinking water any time.

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Should one ask future victims of trafficking, whether they can afford to be freed?

All began in the early morning hours of the 9. April 2011. My pimp had once more beaten and strangled me so heavily, that I was afraid to die. When I managed to escape through the window in that desperate situation, I dialed the emergency telephone number. At that moment I had no idea what the consequences of that call would be.

I knew that pimp already since I was 11 years old. He was my riding coach and he made me to his mistress when I was 14 years old. I dreamt of a future together with that man, who was 35 years older than me. He managed to separate me completely from my friends and my family and to make me a prostitute. When I ran away from my parents at the age of 17, I landed in a brothel. And with the time passing, that kind and caring riding coach turned in a so called " Loverboy " His promises of love and a common future in the beginning were now followed by beatings, rapes and humiliations. There was no way back for me. He was the only person, I had in this world and I didn't want to lose him, because I loved him.

Let's look back at the situation one year ago:

As a result of my "help-call", the police came to the brothel followed by an ambulance, which brought me to the emergency department of a hospital for treatment. The criminal police had also been informed. Several interrogations followed and my injuries were examined in the pathology and one was taking care of me around the clock. They tried to separate me on purpose from the brothel and my pimp so that I couldn't retreat. At that time I myself didn't realize what was going on. I was racked as far as my body and my soul were concerned. The following weeks were the hell for me and my relatives. I was interrogated by the criminal police for about 70 hours. In each interrogation old injuries were touched again. Legal proceedings followed next. With my first statements in court I impressed all with my personality, my intelligence and my good memory, so that the plaintiff

fully accepted my statements and my credibility. I was interrogated for almost 20 hours during 6 days in court. Those were legal proceedings which one hadn't seen before. Also the public was highly interested in that case. TV, radio stations and newspapers repeatedly reported about my case. What it meant to me, to be interrogated by the court again and again, I can't express with words. I was sitting there in the court and had to reveal even most intimate details of my life. I had to tell exactly about all the rag- es, beatings and humiliations.

I was psychical totally exhausted. During that time I lost 17 kg of weight and I needed again and again a doctor's help. If I hadn't had such a strong social background, I would probably not have survived that time. But the result was not impressive! At the end of December 2011 my pimp was sent to jail for 9 years and he could be lucky, that he wasn't locked away for the rest of his life. But what really was a sensation, was that the court ruled that I should get a compensation of 1 million Euro. Wrongly some people now believe I am a millionaire. But that's not the case and I will not see one cent of that million. With the court's ruling, for the public the case appeared to be finished and to be put on file. But for me it's not finished yet - even not today. After the verdict had been spoken, everybody was happy with the result of the legal proceedings - except me. I dropped into a deep hole of depression, sadness and loneliness. For me it was not so easy to cope with all that. My family was continuously looking for therapeutically help, but in vain. Still today I am in an endless dispute with the revenue office, the

owner of the brothel and a lawyer of a pimp of that brothel. The owner of the brothel threatened to claim compensation from me, since the brothel had been closed, although a contract - the pimp had made in my name - was still valid until 2015 and I therefore had to pay him rent. Although I was able to get an agreement with the revenue office, I still have to pay 5000 Euro sales tax for the income of the other women during my absence. At the moment I should pay back another 50.000 Euro, which a client had paid to my pimp for buying me. Although during the legal proceedings it was proved, that this attempt to buy me was against my will and my pimp got the money, I am now being accused to pay. I find it unbelievable, that according to our law I am required to pay back that money, because it has wandered through my hands.

When I look back today what happened since I made that emergency call, I really doubt that our legal system is just. Without the great assistance of my family and of friends I wouldn't have been able to cope with all the problems. If my family wouldn't have paid all the financial claims, I would be totally ruined.

But which other victim has such a strong social background and such financial possibilities? I guess none! Maybe our government should order the policemen to check the financial capabilities of a victim first, before they offer help. It almost seems to be a possibility. But that would mean that in future only those victims would get help if they can afford it financially - Sad but true!

K.L.M.

Expert discussion on the subjects trafficking and enforced prostitution – the situation in Germany 10 years after the prostitution law had been passed.

Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann, Prof. Dr. Ursula Männle (member of the Bavarian parliament) and Klaus Bayerl, chief of the criminal police in Augsburg, discussed above subjects on 7. March in the catholic academy in Munich. The discussion was chaired by Andrea Kammhuber from the Bavarian Broadcasting Cooperation.



10 years after prostitution has become legal in Germany, it's obvious, that the "market" is 60 times bigger than in Sweden, where prostitution is forbidden. The aim of the law, when it was passed in 2002, was, that prostitutes should at least have a medical and social insurance, thereby making prostitution a normal profession. Thereby the pimps became employers, authorized to give orders to their prostitutes. As a result, the work of the police be-

came more difficult, since the "market" moved in the "wellness-business". Beside the change of the legal situation, we can see an increasing poverty in those countries where prostitutes are being recruited. Traffickers lure there women with the false promise to get them a better paid job under fair working conditions. Now the policemen can only take action, if they suspect a crime is being committed. 75% of all prostitutes are

today less than 21 years old. Against this background our work is gaining tremendous importance. In 2011, 1772 women from 108 countries were asking SOLWODI for help for the first time. Those were women from Eastern Europe, South America, Africa and Asia. It was frightening to see, how many children were among them, the youngest only 13 years old. Those women and children need SOLWODI.

Birthday party for Sr. Lea

"The invitation was really something special for us and we seldom experienced such a harmonious evening ". That's the comment of a person participating in that event on 20th April 2012 in the guesthouse Kellberg / Passau.

The invitation came from the catholic women association in the episcopate of Passau and of SOLWODI. The highlight of that event was a lecture given by Sr. Lea on the subject: "Set today marks for tomorrow - work with courage and solidarity for the future ". Students of the academy for social pedagogy presented the dramatic stories of 3 women, who had become victims of trafficking and enforced prostitution and who had found help with SOLWODI. The more than 140 people listening were really touched, also by a gesture, when at the end of each story a rose

was broken and then thrown away careless. Also touching was the accompanying music with a song newly composed by Marianne Stockinger. This song was followed by greetings and words of appreciation from representatives of the district and the city of Passau and of the head of the women association in the diocese of Passau, who presented Sr. Lea with a cheque worth of 750 Euro, 10 Euro for each year of Sr. Lea's life. SOLWODI Passau congratulated Sr. Lea with a candle and a "dream-cushion", in which the quotation of Martin Luther King was embroidered:

"I have a dream", symbolizing courage and hope, that Sr. Lea's dreams will come true, that women, who had lost their liberty and dignity will get help from SOLWODI.



A Special Invitation

The conference of English / Irish bishops had invited SOLWODI to Rome, to report there on 8th May 2012 about the crime of trafficking in Germany.

Sr. Veronika Schreiner, head of the Munich advice office, represented SOLWODI at that conference. She summarizes the results as follows: Record thoroughly what's happening in the field and to what extent and try to take action as soon as possible. The result of the conference, which was "not only a day but a journey", was summarized by Bishop Patrick Lynch with the words: "We are together on that way."

Lilja – SOLWODI's project in Oberhausen

On 31th March 2012 project Lilja in Oberhausen, which had been sponsored by "Aktion Mensch" ended. Unfortunately our requests for further financial support were rejected by the country and the city of Oberhausen as well. But we are pleased to report, that the health department of the city of Oberhausen made a room available, which can be used by SOLWODI to advise women. This enables us, to be further available for prostitutes – however only for about 10 hours per week - trying to get in contact with women, who have problems. At that point we would like to say many thanks to the equal rights office of the city of Oberhausen and to the Zonta club Oberhausen as well for their support for our work. SOLWODI can be contacted now in Oberhausen in the health office Oberhausen, room 0.36, Tannenbergr. 11-13, D-46042 Oberhausen, Tel. 0208 – 825-2157, e-mail: oberhausen@solwodi.de

**Foundations and donors for SOLWODI – today:
The Globus – Foundation**

Donations – great or small amounts, personal availability or engagement – SOLWODI couldn't work without them. Without that kind of support SOLWODI couldn't help women in distress. For that reason we will present in this and in the following circular letters such persons, who are supporting SOLWODI in the various ways. Today we will have a word with Graciela Bruch, head of the Globus - Foundation, a voluntary social work foundation of the warehouse and construction firm group Globus (www.globus-stiftung.de) which started supporting SOLWODI this year.



SOLWODI: What's the aim of the Globus – Foundation in general?

Graciela Bruch: Internationally we engage us for the poorest of the poor. For example, in Somalia the Globus-Foundation runs clinic – buses, which drive from village to village to provide basic medical care. In Sri Lanka we support a home for children.

Here in Germany we concentrate on the support and sponsoring of children and youngsters, whose parents are unable to provide the conditions for a protected and safe childhood and youth. With our support we try to contribute that also those children get a fair start into life.

What was the reason for that engagement?

A personal experience of my husband and myself. We had employed a young man, who was highly motivated and willing to fulfill all given tasks perfectly. But he only succeeded seldom in doing so – nobody had shown him as a child how to organize himself and how to accomplish smaller and also greater tasks. This young man- who tried to perform perfectly but who was seldom successful – touched us very much. When looking into the reasons for that, we discovered that many young people got no support at home and also no appreciation for what they did, because their parents, for various reasons, were unable to give support or appreciation. Those children almost never learn that a good training will be the first step into a self determined life. And that's what we try to change with our foundation.

Why do you consider SOLWODI's work as important?

Many women that are being supported by SOLWODI never had a protected youth, they didn't get an education and never got a chance to develop their capabilities and possibilities. That is, I think, very cruel. And that fate is being continued, if those women have children then themselves. For that reason it is so important for them to find somebody like SOLWODI, who helps them to become good mothers, who are able to provide their children better conditions for a start into life than they had themselves. And here, I think, SOLWODI does an excellent job.

What of SOLWODI's work is impressing you most?

Sr. Lea, I am impressed by your positive attitude in general. Your approach to all problems is so positive, inspire of all the sad fates you are daily confronted with. One has the impression, that even in very difficult cases, you think: "We will find also here a solution". And you invest all your energy into SOLWODI, you are able to concentrate your energy and you are fighting for SOLWODI, not losing your optimism and not getting tired. And that's really the attitude to change things!

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