

# SOLWODI

Solidarity with  
women in distress

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Solidarität mit  
Frauen in Not

**Newsletter**  
No. 97, September 2013



**Dear friends and all other people interested in our work,**

Put an end to indifference – just as the new Pope Franziskus called for on his first Papal trip. It did not lead him to a head of state but to the refugee island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean.

“Who is responsible?” he asked amongst the crowds of refugees who are trying to escape the hunger, thirst and poverty in Africa. “We all respond so: Not I. I have nothing to do with it.” And then he asked for forgiveness for all those created such tragedies as a result of their decisions on global levels.

What is valid for refugees is valid also for women we meet: political decisions, the legalisation of prostitution, have dramatic consequences for the lives of the individual. Hence we need people who puts an end to indifference. This newsletter talks about these individuals: volunteers who organise Streetwork, who grapple on stage with the destiny of forced prostitutes, who pester politicians with petitions.

And this is also urgently needed as we once again at a hearing with the Legal Affairs Committee of the Bundestag have found: On 24 June, just before the summer break, many experts - including Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann – expressed criticisms about the draft law to combat human trafficking and on prostitution monitoring sites. Three days later, the law was rushed through despite all the criticism in the last mammoth sittings of Parliament, without due consideration and adoption of the numerous sound suggestions. Punters in Germany continue to go unpunished victims receive no unconditional right of residence and no right to compensation or lost wages.

Other countries show that there is another way: Ireland could soon follow the Swedish model and make the purchase of sexual services punishable. That punishes the clients and not the women! This is the right way! For that, SOLWODI will start soon a large scale campaign. When ever more people end the indifference, we will make it – together!

*Yours Sister Lea - Yours Monika Hartenfels*

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## When rage and courage move the world

*Volunteers start Project “Marisha” and offer Streetwork on the kerb crawling streets of Münster*

“Why is it so? Does anyone here help? What do these people need?” - These were the questions from Elisa and Joseph, two students of the Catholic Theology in Münster in Westphalia. They now head over to where in the past, only clients, women and angry residents were. On Siemensstraße - the kerb crawling area of the city. They have offered the women there, since April, regular help – coffee, condoms, but most of all, a friendly word and an open ear.

When we for the first time a year ago encountered the kerb crawling district, the women coming out of the bushes and beckon to us, I found it simply creepy,” explained Joseph, who had already known of the area from the start of his studies. “We had discussed earlier the entire evening and then spontaneously decided to see it for ourselves. After our site survey, there was only silence.”

Elisa and Joseph began to build a network of experts: from the AIDS assistance over the city of Münster and the health authorities right up to the police. It may sound easy to walk around the streets and speak with the women but it is not. Hence Elisa established contact with SOLWODI's working circle Münster-Hiltrup and to SOLWODI North Rhine Westphalia.

“Streetwork is not without its dangers. There are also problems with the women – violence, pregnancy, illnesses, residence rights – which could easily overwhelm a layperson. But Elisa and Joseph are strong, smart and vigilant,” says Helga Tauch from SOLWODI's Duisburg counselling centre, who manages the work and has much experience with Streetwork. In the meantime Elisa and Joseph have over 15 comrades-in-arms, who help in the background. They feel secure in teams of men and women. And, says Joseph: “I am happy to show the women that men can also be different.”

*\*Names have been changed for protection*

**SOLWODI** is **regionally active** through the counselling centers, 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 Koblenz – Association collects signatures**

More than 400 signatures – that is the preliminary result of an engaged action from SOLWODI's Koblenz Shelter. Margarete Busley and Lisa Monnerjahn were present and agitated during the political debate about the outcome of legalising prostitution. So they went out and distributed a Soni Unterreithmeier (SOLWODI Augsburg) designed signature petition to patrons and friends. Their goal: A petition to the German Parliament with the demand to change the Prostitution Act from 2002. The core requirements include: forbidding pimps and brothel owners to have authority, re-introduction of mandatory health care, no prostitution for women under 21 years of age, criminalization of suitors who associate with prostitutes, etc. The feedback of the signatories were overwhelmingly positive: "We usually ran through open doors. Amazingly, we found that some contemporaries are still not be fancy, the depressing and shameful development in Germany. "

### **Nationally networked... in Thüringen – SOLWODI helps in building a state wide counselling network**

The Thüringen Ministry for Social Affairs asked SOLWODI Germany for support and expertise. The goal: to build a counselling and housing network for women who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. SOLWODI's director Monika Hartenfels travelled to Erfurt for the kick off meeting and podium discussion. The return visit of the representative of the Thüringen Ministry, Mrs. Johanna Arenhövel, took place at the beginning of July in Bonn.

### **... in Rhineland-Palatinate – Sr. Lea is a guest of Minister Alt**

Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann and representatives of SOLWODI's Rhineland Palatinate counselling centre were guests of Irene Alt, the state's Minister for Integration, Family, Children, Youth and Women. Sr. Lea reported about SOLWODI's work, the financial situation and concrete problems. Minister Alt affirmed the support in a few points.



Ministerin Alt (left), Dr. Heine-Wiedemann (3.v.r.)

### **Nationwide engaged ... in Berlin – Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann as an Expert at the Parliament**

A development took place shortly before the parliament's summer break. The theme: the implementation of the 5 April 2011 directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and Council in preventing and combating human trafficking and the protection of its victims through the Federal Government. On 24 June, Sr. Lea, spoke as an expert in a public hearing of the Legal Committee of the German Parliament. "When the law remains so, we in Germany will lose the chance, that the EU with their directive has opened, to give victims of human trafficking more rights, so Sr. Lea.

SOLWODI demanded, among other things, better options in the prosecution of offenders, particularly the admission of evidence aside from victim statements, the levy of property of the offender, a criminal prosecution of suitors who operate knowingly with prostitutes, the assurance of an unconditional right of residence for victims regardless of the testimony from victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution from third countries.

But none of this was taken into account - just three days later, the law was more or less unchanged by the Bundestag. "I do not understand that our proposals and the experiences of other victims and human rights organizations are hardly represented in the current law," said Sr. Lea. The law on combating trafficking in human beings is also from the same business law regulations on the monitoring of prostitution sites, a summary, that SOLWODI opposes. "Prostitution and its associated human trafficking is incompatible with the dignity of humans, even in the law abiding brothels," said Sr. Lea. SOLWODI will work for a new discussion of the law in the new legislative period. The plan is a major campaign under the slogan "The purchase of sex is a criminal offense". It is encouraging that other countries in Europe have put it forward. In Sweden, the purchase of sexual services is prohibited, Ireland and France it is being discussed. And Lodewijk Asscher, mayor of Amsterdam, recently described the legalization of prostitution as a "national mistake". - Please support our campaign with your signatures, if possible by 30.09.2013. The signature lists you can download, print and send completed by hand to the head office in Boppard-Hirzenach on our website (<http://www.solwodi.de/697.0.html?&L=0%2Fclickenc%3D%24%24>).

### **... in Brussels: Network for a Europe without Prostitution**

At the end of May, Beatrice Mariotti of SOLWODI Berlin visited a seminar in Brussels in which experts from all over Europe met with NGOs and members of the European Parliament to establish a new network. The goal: the European struggle for greater dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity and justice. SOLWODI was one of four organizations that created the base for discussion with presentations. In her presentation Mariotti found clear words against the legalization of prostitution - a position that "Together for a Europe without prostitution" also supported the other three lecture organizations and Pierrette Pepe of the European Women's Lobby with their project.

Sr. Irmtrud Schreiner (SOLWODI Munich) represented SOLWODI at the EU Platform Against Trafficking in Brussels. Aside from Slovakia, all EU countries were represented. The objective of the exchange was to establish a forum to work directly with the EU against human trafficking.

## Being a woman in ... Russia

by Natalia Lazareva

"Hallo Natalia, privet. How are you? Are you still looking for a language partner? I would like build a language tandem together with you. Many greetings, Martin\*" Great idea such language tandems, so I thought to myself. I improve my German and someone else learns my language, Russian. And I was pleased with this response to my advert on the website of the university, where I was studying in Bonn.

We arranged to meet one of the next evenings. It was cold, I wear jeans and a jacket, nothing eye-catching. Martin hugged me as a greeting – that was uncomfortable but I did not want to be unfriendly and keep my mouth. "How good do you speak Russian?" I wanted to know. Martin's surprising answer: "Only Privet – Hallo" and then "You have a nice scarf. Are your curls real?" His hand felt my hair, and glided over my back – no chance that it was an accident. This language exchange ended for me before it had even begun. I left.

One could forget my encounter as an isolated case. But that is precisely not so! My friend in Berlin, who was also searching for a language exchange partner experienced the same thing: "Hey, why do you not wear a mini skirt? I thought all Russian women wear stuff like that," complained the young German man. And another man said to her shortly afterwards: "Russian women are like pizza. You can simply choose and order her as if from a catalogue." "Russian" - that means more or less everything east of Germany. Why do the people think of us this way?

Women from eastern Europe are thought of in these parts as commod-

ity. They make up a huge part of the women who are forced into prostitution, enslaved in brothels. After the breakup of the Eastern Bloc network of organised crime was able to develop. According to the European Commission, Russia and Ukraine make up, amongst non EU countries, the countries from which the majority of the victims originate. And the UN also name Russia, my country, as one of the most important, when not the most important, country for organised human trafficking and sexual slavery. However, those who search in Russia for an official statistic will not succeed. No organisation currently exists in Russia that looks out for the victims of women trafficking. Oleg Melnikov of the Russian human rights organisation 'Alternativa' is one of the few, who fights against human trafficking and sexual slavery. "We try to contact the perpetrators, as if we were interested women," reporting about his current strategy. "So we try to understand their methods and then give them up to the police. But many simply have too much worry," says Oleg, who himself has often been threatened.

The trafficking of women from eastern Europe is called today "Natasha

Trafficking". A good friend from Azerbaijan advised me shortly before a trip to Turkey: "You should use your complete name there – Natalia." Natalia and absolutely not the short form Natasha. Even on holiday, when I wear no high heels or make up, I am for many men in the west a Natasha.

Last summer as I went for a walk with a friend after a theatre play, a man overheard our Russian conversation. A few minutes later he came nearer and said something chilling: "Do you want to earn money? I can pay well! My car is over there." Had we spoken in accented free German, would he have spoken to us this way? And how Russian women, who have successful careers, are good mothers and dress elegantly be freed from these prejudices?

Recently I posted another advert – I wanted to learn Spanish. And once again I had another answer from Martin\*. Clearly he had forgotten me, my name and my email address. This time he wrote, that he took a course in Russian. What that had brought him, I would rather not know.

\*Name changed

## SOLWODI in Movement: A new start in Bonn, relocation in Berlin and Augsburg

SOLWODI managed three relocations in the previous months. First, there was the opening of the new office in Bonn, headed by director Monika Hartenfels. "In Bonn, we are now getting close to many other humanitarian and human rights organizations to the EU institutions in Germany and in important official posts," said Monika Hartenfels. "I'm sure that we can develop SOLWODI's network even closer, stronger and better." Monika Hartenfels is supported by two employees in Bonn.

Already in mid-June, the counseling center SOLWODI Berlin moved from the Monastery of the Sisters of Mary in Lankwitz to Neukölln in the premises of the parish of St. Edward. "There, we are closer to urban affairs and potential clients," said Margaret Forster.

Finally, there was another move in Augsburg. SOLWODI colleague Soni Unterreithmeier had managed much of the work over the years from her own home. After Rita Hieble, the much needed colleague arrived, a proper office was indispensable. On 26 July, 70 guests came to the inauguration. Max Weinkamm, social coordinator of the city of Augsburg made a special gift: He declared himself ready to pay for the costs of the new office space and a part of the costs of the new staff member. "We were pleased from the heart about it," said Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann. Low fixed costs are a major concern, and that counts as much money for the affected women of SOLWODI. "I hope other cities take on Augsburg as an example!"



Back: Max Weinkamm, Helmut Sporer, Klaus Bayerl  
Front: Rita Hieble, Sr. Lea Ackermann, Barbara Emrich, Soni Unterreithmeier

**“Martha's Story” - Volunteers develop educational film**

The story could happen to many: a young girl gets to know over Facebook a considerably older man, and escapes with his help from a parental home fraught with problems. She realised much too late that this man is violent and imposes a life on her that she never wanted. Yet the 15 year old believes in the greatest happiness: “What do you know about love?” she retorts to her girlfriends. “Martha's Story” is a touching theatre-film project with many facets: online friendships, drugs, prostitution, violence. The actor and director Veronika Maruhn, who has already many times worked on the theme of forced prostitution, developed it together with Sr. Annette Hemming of SOLWODI's Münster-Hiltrup/MSCWelthaus working circle. We spoke with the director:

**What appeals to a director about the theme of forced prostitution?**

Veronika Maruhn: I am myself a woman and I have always been interested in women's issues. When I think about people, which is simply the case for actors, then I find myself being drawn towards biographical work, always. Which conditions lead to that one person comes to a certain situation? I have read a great deal about the subject, also the life stories of the affected. Because it was clear to me: it is always about cravings. All these women left their homes because they had cravings and hope. That really interests me.

**You developed the piece together with the group? What was important for you?**

We wanted to portray a situation which could affect anyone, where destiny breaks, like the unemployment of the father. Each circles only around himself has no other regard for the other. And there inside lives this girl with her problems. The actors developed in the improvised scene the first ideas and from there I then finished writing the final scenes. That was important for us, that Martha never presented herself, only as a voice because she is much stronger in the imagination. The viewers should imagine Martha for themselves. “I am yet much stronger, that cannot happen to me!” But that is exactly what we did not want, rather, that was what Sr. Annette found important, the message for all: be careful, be alert, look out for what happens to you – nip things in the bud!

**How have the other actors taken the work on the play?**

Consistent response from participants was: consternation, given the insight into the complexity of situations. It's not easy to make a judgment. Each character - father, mother, Martha - is trapped somehow. This creates confusion. And I hope that this makes for tolerance. I hope that the piece still reaches the heart and touches many people like us.

Veronika Maruhn dedicated "Martha's story" to the memory of Sr. Leonie Beving who worked for many years, until her death in 2009, for SOLWODI Duisburg. The film and the play are also especially suitable for educational purposes. Interested individuals can obtain the full movie and / or accompanying materials, from mid-October through SOLWODI in Boppard-Hirzenach.

**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](mailto: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