

Annual report 2019

SOLWODI Berlin e.V. - specialist advice centre Berlin

Facts and figures

In 2019 the specialist advice centre SOLWODI Berlin counselled a total of 346 women from 67 countries. Among those were 259 women who made contact with the centre for the first time. 70% of the clients who received advice were African. As in previous years most women came from Nigeria, followed by Cameroon, Guinea and Kenya. 155 clients with 88 children, 87% of which came from African countries, received long-term counselling.

Compared to the previous year, it transpired that the number of victims of human trafficking, assisted by SOLWODI Berlin, has increased. In addition, many young women and some minors were - again among those affected.

Psychosocial counselling

Most women who were trafficked are severely traumatised and do not talk to outsiders about their experience. At the same time, however, it can be seen that the willingness to speak about their experience in the safety of a specialist advice centre is increasing. However, talking about experienced violence takes a lot of trust. Establishing and maintaining this is a long process which requires high professionalism and self-reflection on the part of the counsellors.

In 2019, an important part of the work was once again to educate women about their rights. Not everyone affected by human trafficking is aware that what they have experienced is a violation of human rights and is therefore relevant to an asylum procedure.

Moreover it transpired again, that supporting and accompanying severely traumatised women is very time-consuming. In many cases, the accompaniment to the authorities is imperative, because the women initially need to orientate themselves within their new environment as well as becoming familiar with the bureaucratic process in Germany. This process of orientation is usually particularly challenging for illiterate women. Another obstacle is the fact that responsibilities within the authorities are often not clearly defined, which means that women are sent from one authority to the next. This experience can be particularly difficult for a traumatised person because they can feel thrown back into a situation in which they are at the mercy of someone else again. In such situations, the Berlin counselling centre tries to reach a quick clarification while, at the same time, consistently supporting and maintaining the autonomy of these women

In 2019, a stricter implementation of the right to asylum and residency was already evident, which showed that this also affects victims of human trafficking. It is becoming increasingly difficult for them to obtain a residency status and thus sustainable protection, although there is a great risk of re-victimisation when they return to their country of origin. Other women choose not to testify to the police because they are justifiably afraid of the consequences, especially for their family members in the country of origin. In these cases, SOLWODI Berlin naturally interceded for these women and their rights as well.

Integration projects

Integration projects are also helpful in stabilising women. In 2019, a regular dance course was offered in the Berlin counselling centre, which the participants praised because they were able to switch off and relax to some extent for the first time in a long time.

Celebrating together, like at Christmas 2019, is also always characterised by a positive response.

Public relations and networking

Networking and public relations work is an important part of the assignment. Educating people about trafficking in human beings and sensitising society at various levels to the emergency situations of the clients of the specialist advice centre is fundamental. Thanks to the good networking and cooperation with a wide variety of authorities and advice centres, women were again able to receive the fastest and best possible support in 2019. In order to maintain and improve this cooperation continuously, a large number of workshops, lectures, information events and interviews took place in 2019, which also intensified the daily work.

Of particular importance was the exhibition opening and panel discussion on "Women and Flight" by the Berlin Senate Department for integration, work and social affairs, during which the coordinator of the Berlin advice centre was able to point out important problem areas for those affected by human trafficking.

As in previous years, the training course *"Trafficking in human beings - identifying and dealing with those affected"* sensitised the specialised staff in the relevant provision centres to identifying those affected in order to refer them to advice centres.

Cooperation in various specialist committees and networks was also continued (e.g. Bund Länder AG Menschenhandel, KOK, AK Frauenhandel, AG Flucht des Erzbistums Berlins, AG Flucht des Netzwerk Frauen in Neukölln, Refugee Council, AK SOLWODI Berlin). In addition, employees of SOLWODI Berlin took part in work meetings to adapt and redesign the cooperation agreement between the LKA Berlin and the local

specialist advice centres for victims of human trafficking.

It also emerged again that many other advice centres, specialist staff and private individuals contacted SOLWODI Berlin to refer women who were, at the least, suspected of having been trafficked.

Here again it was shown clearly how important the public relations and networking of the past eleven years has been, as it was the only way that successful cooperation could come about.

Gratitude

We would like to thank all supporters of SOLWODI Berlin for the great cooperation, whether financial, through public and church donations, associations, individual donors or through active voluntary support: Every help and personal commitment have enriched and contributed to the work. We would like to expressly thank you also for this, on behalf of the women who work in the centre. The work would not be possible without the multitude of support.