



# SOLWODI in Germany

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In Germany today, there are approximately 7000 women from Ghana. Compared to the number of immigrants to Germany from Asian countries they are relatively few but for a country with such a small population as Ghana, their number is surprisingly high. Among the African women living in Germany, the women from Ghana are the biggest group. Until this summer, i.e. until the change of the laws of political asylum, traffickers could bring women into Germany relatively easily through asylum applications and then directing them from their business quarters to the respective bars for prostitution. Once in the country the women are exploited and completely dependent. Some are married to German men in order to provide them with permanent residence, independent from the result of their application for asylum. For this the women from Ghana have to pay high prices. Often they are forced to pay a lifelong allowance to their husbands, whom they have only met once at their wedding ceremony.

man language and culture, with residence permits, with the law applying to foreigners, with partnerships and matrimony.

SOLWODI provides support and assistance to women who find themselves outside the boundaries of law and who have very slim chances of fighting on their own. The center also provides counselling to these women.

Their counselling work involves fighting the daily racism to which their clients are exposed. Many foreign women are always asked humiliating questions such as "How much did you cost?". There is an assumption that as women from Asia and Africa, they would respond



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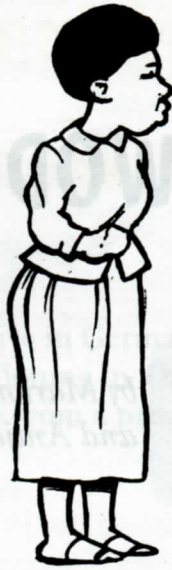
Women's organizations in Ghana are aware of the problems of emigration and trafficking of people. They are trying to fight this by campaigning against it, and by organizing small women's groups and cooperatives even if their financial resources are limited.

SOLWODI (Solidarity with Women in Distress) is a center in Germany that helps foreign women who encounter problems with the Ger-



positively to sexual advances at any time; they would be humble, submissive, faithful, demanding, friendly and contented. This kind of racial prejudice continues to exist in the minds of many people.

In good faith and without any sense of guilt, men (or their mothers) continually turn to us: in the face of shocking reports in the media they want to "save" a woman i.e. marry such a poor, charming creature. It is frightening how these "well-meaning, good natured rescuers" have accepted the trade with foreign women through marriage agencies and dealers who profit from the deplorable situation of these women. It is likewise unfortunate that many individuals use this trade to indulge in their own personal racism and sexism.



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upon them by their husbands, as they have to depend on them at least in the first four years of their marriage due to the residence permit laws. In terms of medical treatment, foreign women are underprivileged: very often symptoms of illness are not taken seriously, and the women are suspected of simulation. In the case of pregnancy foreign black women are advised to abort, true to the racist prejudice.

SOLWODI's counselling work includes talking not only to women in problematic marriages but also prostitutes and AIDs patients. A lot of urgent work still needs to be done and support financial or otherwise is welcome.

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In 1992 SOLWODI advised and counselled 103 women. More than half of them had problems with their residence permits, almost

all were burdened by social problems. It is an expression of daily racism if foreign women compared to German women have problems in searching for lodgings, finding kindergarten places for their children, or just being exposed to violence in their marriages. They have to allow themselves to be called "black monkey", and endure all humiliations imposed



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