

10 years of FIZ Makasi



Dear Readers FIZ advocates for the protection and rights of women migrants to Switzerland who have been affected by violence and exploitation. To this end, we run two advice centres: a counselling centre for migrant women and FIZ Makasi, a specialist intervention centre for those affected by trafficking in women. This year FIZ Makasi can look back on ten years of work.

On 25 November 2004, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we started the project “FIZ Makasi, Counselling and Support for Victims of Trafficking in Women”. We called our project Makasi, a name suggested to us by a then client from the Congo: “Makasi means STRONG in my language”, she told us. Right up to today this has been and remains our principle, our goal. To help women to rediscover their own strength and power.

In 2005 Makasi was already supporting 116 women from every corner of the world. Today the advisers deal with about 200 cases per year. They speak nine languages, supplemented by a further six languages by means of the Makasi Interpreters Network. The counselling program has developed into a veritable victim protection program, from which those affected experience security and support from the first moment on. And, which has today become a treasure trove of specialised knowledge in relation to recruiting and exploitation mechanisms, coercion methods used by human traffickers and pimps, the plight of survivors, forms and effects of trauma, counselling methods and intervention strategies.

In 2011 we added to the Makasi housing network with our own sheltered housing project. Six places are available. Over the course of a year between twenty and thirty women are accommodated there. In this newsletter we will give you a glance into the history and counselling activities of FIZ Makasi.

FIZ Makasi – a successful project

The counselling and intervention centre FIZ Makasi has been supporting those affected by trafficking in women for ten years. Its success is based on the fact that it not only counsels survivors but also advocates for their rights by political lobbying, awareness raising and training of professionals.

Makasi counsellors inform survivors of trafficking in women about their rights and the support systems available to them in Switzerland and offer them psychosocial counselling and crisis intervention. They ensure medical support and psychotherapy, organise safe accommodation and financial aid. Survivors who are prepared to give testimony in court, are accompanied through the court hearings by FIZ Makasi. As part of this work FIZ Makasi cooperates with specialist legal teams. At FIZ Makasi, survivors can also find support for the necessary preparations in case they return to their home country.

Short-term residence permit only in case of testimony in court

At the time Makasi was founded, trafficked women often stayed in Switzerland for a short time only. Perpetrators were not pursued. In Switzerland victims of trafficking in women are given a 30-day recovery and respite period in which to decide whether they are ready to testify against the perpetrators. During this period they may reside legally in Switzerland. It is only if women are prepared to testify in court that they receive a residence permit for the duration of the trial. Today more and more women decide to testify against perpetrators and stay during the legal proceedings. The amount of time they spend in the Makasi program has risen correspondingly.

Networking and awareness

Continually raising public awareness and educating public agencies is an important part of victim protection. The lack of visibility and tremendous fear of the women – not only of revenge by the traffickers but of societal stigmatisation – is a huge hurdle standing in the way of survivors seeking help. Therefore the FIZ public affairs and education team works closely with the specialised Makasi advisers and trains social workers, relief organisations, approaches the police, strengthens the network of migrant organisations, clergy, doctors, lawyers, hospitals and many other stakeholders.

The challenge of federalism

To do this FIZ has to bring the knowledge it has gained through practical experience to bear in many different cantonal task forces combating trafficking in women and, along with various cantonal authorities, to develop measures

and cooperation mechanisms. For Switzerland is federally organised. The 26 Swiss cantons each have their own rules on the prosecution of perpetrators and victim protection. This doesn't make it any easier to raise awareness. All cantons are subject to national legislation but this does not regulate every single issue. For example, there are no Swiss national standards for victim protection. In addition, the individual cantons deal differently with implementing national legislation. It would be ideal – regardless of federalism – if national and cantonal authorities could commit to financing a supra-cantonal intervention centre. The need has been shown, as has the requirement for specialisation and it would make sense to look for synergies. However, this has not yet happened. FIZ has managed, though, to negotiate contracts with several cantons. These cantons finance our counselling services on the basis of the victim assistance law on a case-by-case basis and contribute a small lump sum to our budget. The collaboration works well.

Outlook

From its inception Makasi has been a success story. In particular this is due to the specialised counselling and support tied to intensive awareness raising and education and to



FIZ's political lobbying work. Raising awareness and train those public authorities which refer victims of trafficking to FIZ Makasi to recognise victims, would have been futile without a support system to back it up. A support system without this awareness raising would have meant empty waiting-rooms. A victim support program, which didn't attempt to bring the gaps and hurdles in victim protection to the public authorities and politicians, would not have been very sustainable. The combination of all three measures has led to FIZ Makasi being able to make concrete improvements in survivor's desperate situations.

There is still much to do. The identification of victims in Switzerland is inadequate. The fact that people can be trafficked for the purpose of exploitation also in other areas than sex work – for example in the hotel and restaurant industry, in private households, in agriculture or in construction – is still not recognised often enough. And victims of human trafficking who are going through the asylum system often remain undetected. Clear standards for protection and support in all Swiss cantons are needed. And the improvement of residency legislation protection remains a long-term task.

Susanne Seytter



Interview with Makasi counsellors
from the very start

Digging up resources

Eva Danzl has been with FIZ since 1996. She worked on the concept for the FIZ Makasi intervention centre and headed Makasi for a long time. Ten years ago Sara Donath was appointed as the first counsellor specifically for Makasi. Today she runs the FIZ shelter.

Interview: Shelley Berlowitz

**Looking back over the past ten years –
what comes to mind first?**

Eva Danzl: The huge workload! We started with nothing. In spite of having had survivors of trafficking in our counselling centre prior to the opening of FIZ Makasi, we didn't have a network to collaborate within. When the Zurich police and public prosecutor were handling a large case of women trafficking in 2003, FIZ had already established the first round table of Switzerland in Zurich and the criminal prosecution authorities contacted us to accompany the women. In the following years FIZ Makasi has built a network of shelters, lawyers, specialised services and aids and day-to-day care. It has been learning by doing.

Sara Donath: While we were busy counselling the women we continually had to invent special interventions: There were no structures or processes to fall back on. In those days far fewer victims were being identified than today. That is why I still had a lot of time to invest in our clients, because I didn't have so many other cases to take care of. Today success has caught up with us; the awareness-raising has taken effect. Today half of our cases are allotted to us by the police. And the grand total has increased considerably since the early days.

**How many women does one Makasi
counsellor deal with?**

Eva Danzl: There is no direct answer to that. I counsel many women, but they include older cases that aren't as work intensive. Critical interventions require about twenty to thirty hours of work per month at the outset. Minor or disabled clients require more time. But then there are cases

that require no work at all for months, until the criminal proceedings start up again, for instance with the question of compensation for the survivor.

Sara Donath: In the past a counsellor was able to handle all interventions in a case by herself. But after a certain time that was not possible anymore and we introduced “stand-ins”. We started a network of social workers, social pedagogues, a doctor, and also interpreters who were present during talks with trafficking survivors and showed a deeper understanding for these women. They can be deployed flexibly and assist us. For example they accompany women to appointments at the doctor or help them out with everyday tasks.

Eva Danzl: When we started assisting alleged victims of women trafficking after police raids, the large amount of stand-ins that know how we work proved to be important. Within four months we Makasi counsellors had to hold initial interviews with a total of 80 women, get through to them and react to crises during large police raids in four cantons. It was an immense effort and we were glad to be able to fall back on a network of stand-ins.

What part do you play during raids?

Sara Donath: In the past few years we have established a good working relationship with the police anti-trafficking units in various cantons, particularly in Zurich. But we have different roles. The police are responsible for investigating the case and for prosecuting offenders. We support victims. The cooperation is good, but we don't let ourselves be exploited for the purposes of the police. There has been a slow cultural change; prejudice was removed on both sides.

Eva Danzl: Raids must be carried out with concern for the victims. For instance, alleged victims of women trafficking may never be brought into the same room as the offenders, that is, persons involved in the trafficking. This also includes female “colleagues” who exercised violence and control by following the orders of their manipulative pimps. The police are becoming more and more aware of this and call upon us to enable the initial contact to the women. In cooperation with the respective police force we develop a scenario so that we are not surprised by an onsite infrastructure that would further complicate our task which is already difficult in this constellation.

Sara Donath: The women must develop trust in us in a very short period. They are confronted with us on police territory and, depending on the police experiences they had in their country, it is difficult for them to trust us. But it works out every so often and that is touching.

Many women have experienced severe and unbearable violence and tell their stories to you. What does this do to you personally?

Eva Danzl: The case discussion, intervention and analysis between the counsellors and in the case supervision are very important. When I notice that a woman's story gets to me I must seek assistance: individual counselling, individual case supervision or a therapeutic session. A Makasi counsellor always goes through a procedure with herself. Being prepared for that is a prerequisite to be able to work in this area at all for many years.

Sara Donath: In principle it's like this for me: I am opposite a human being, a woman. And if I let myself become involved with her, then the fact that she is a victim is only a part of the story that she brings into the discussion. I have a general interest in this woman, in her life, and I feel like digging up her resources. That frees energy and it is nothing negative. What really wears you out are not the experiences with the women, but the bureaucratic stumbling blocks that sometimes prevent good interventions.



Review of the situation of sex trade in the city of Zurich

Despite the fact that sex work is considered a legal trade in Switzerland, sex workers are being stigmatised and discriminated against. In 2013 the city of Zurich implemented a new Prostitution Decree (PVG0). This has caused the situation for sex workers in Zurich to become extremely precarious. We reported on this topic in our last Newsletter. In collaboration with other NGOs in Zurich, FIZ drew up a report of the situation of sex work in the city of Zurich and presented it to the media in December 2013. In an appeal more than 200 sex workers called for rights and legal work opportunities instead of the present repression and bureaucracy.

Experiences made by advice centres and contact points for sex workers were analysed for the review. Sonja (real name withheld) reports: "Wanting to go shopping, I walked along Langstrasse towards Militärstrasse. Two police officers, one male and one female, approached me by car and checked my identification documents. I was taken to the police station based on suspected prostitution. I was walking alone, neither in company of a man nor dressed questionably. At the police station a 7-day-expulsion order was imposed on me. Since I disagreed, I refused to sign the paper. I left the police station and wanted to continue my shopping when a group of five police officers stopped me and checked my identification documents again. I had to revisit the police station a second time, this time by foot. A further 7-day-expulsion and a fine of 1,400 Swiss Francs were imposed on me."

The limited space is becoming more and more expensive. The working conditions in outdoor and indoor sexwork have deteriorated. The women are isolated, their social network is breaking apart and solidarity among the sex workers is diminishing. Most sex workers in Zurich are migrants. They have been working as sex workers for years and have paid rent, health insurance, taxes and social insurance. Many of them are single mothers and have been carrying responsibility for their children, have been behaving properly and been working independently. Now they are losing their jobs. Landlords terminate their room leases, indoor sex workers receive less and less permits. "The atmosphere in district 4 has become one of insecurity and fear, as I have never experienced it before", a social worker who has been working in this area for 15 years reports.

In the Swiss Parliament there are two postulates pending: one demands a report from the Federal Council, investigating if consumers of sex work in Switzerland should be punished (as in Sweden) or whether prostitution should be entirely prohibited. The other takes the opposite direction and calls for an improvement of the legal situation of sex workers. Political processes take long in Switzerland – therefore we don't expect a decision within the near future. But FIZ lobbies for the the decriminalisation of sex workers and the reinforcement of their rights.



FIZ News

Swiss Best Practice in Romania

At the end of February FIZ participated in a two-day workshop in Bucharest about victim identification, reintegration and protection. The event took place within the scope of a Swiss-Romanian cooperation project and was organised by the Romanian National Agency against Trafficking in Persons. FIZ and the Zurich city police presented their collaboration in the field of victim identification as best practice.

Survivors of trafficking in asylum procedures

Upon invitation of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) Bern, FIZ held a speech within the scope of the event "The Transfer of Human Trafficking Victims according to the Dublin Regulation" in February. FIZ stressed the lack of victim protection in the context of asylum procedures, as well as the lacking collaboration of asylum offices with specialised victim advisory centres and NGOs.

OSCE Conference: joint struggle against human trafficking

FIZ participated in a conference against human trafficking, organised by Austria and Switzerland, as well as the European Council and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) in Vienna. The participants identified the collaboration of governmental and non-governmental offices as a key element for the struggle against human trafficking. We consider this an important conclusion and we want to encourage further and more consistent collaboration of Swiss authorities with various actors on different levels.

Networking encounter with victim representatives

The lawyers representing Makasi clients in court are important protagonists within the struggle against human trafficking and valuable networking partners of FIZ. In spring 2013 we organised a networking meeting with lawyers. Two lawyers presented papers and provided the opportunity for discussion and exchange of

experiences. The papers dealt with the stumbling blocks that emerged from the new code of criminal procedure for cases of women trafficking and with the conditions under which survivors may file lawsuits at the European Court of Human Rights in cases where Switzerland has refused their rights.

Translators without Borders (TWB)

Within the scope of TWB more than 2000 translators from all over the world translate texts published by Non-Profit Organisations free of charge. In doing so they give the NPOs the opportunity to spend more money for their work in the field of human rights and humanitarianism. FIZ recently joined TWB and the translation of this Newsletter is one of the first results of this new collaboration. We would like to thank Jean Maples, Dr. (des) Meritxell Piel and Heike Schwarz, M.A. for showing their solidarity by translating this Newsletter into English.



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