

2012/2013

OUR VOICES

ems women's network



ENGLISH

20 YEARS OUR VOICES – JUBILEE ISSUE

SISTERS CARRYING ON



Evangelical Mission in Solidarity

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Dear women,
dear sisters in the women's network,

we have a reason to celebrate! Since 1992 OUR VOICES has been published – for 20 years with a total of 30 issues. From the very beginning, at the women's pre-conference in Jerusalem 1991, it was conceived as an international publication and was initially published in English, later on in German too and since 2006 it is also available in Indonesian.

Thank you very much for all greetings and blessings we have received! The editorial board remembers many of the people who have accompanied us. Alongside the song **Sister, carry on** there are reports sharing from women in the network for you to read and "listen to".

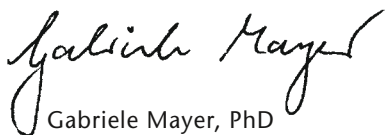
And what else can be expected in this jubilee issue?

In the chapter **Sisters sharing the way** there are reports from women from different periods of time. In the chapter **Sisters carrying on** the members of EMS Women's Advisory Board commemorate the beginnings of OUR VOICES and also one or two of the struggles they experienced. Under **Sisters living their dreams** we have come across women in Palestine, Indonesia, Tanzania and Suriname who have realised their dreams of healing and justice in our world – overcoming all kinds of opposition and stumbling blocks. Last but not least the jubilee of OUR VOICES is part of the 40 years-long history of EMS now with a new name "Evangelical Mission in Solidarity". The chapter **Sisters standing in solidarity** shows us daily examples how solidarity can glow in the worldwide EMS women's network.

The coloured double sheet in the middle of the publication with its liturgy elements can be taken out and used in groups.

Without the continuous and reliable solidarity of our liaison women – over so many years now – it would not have been possible for us to keep in touch, to exchange and to share. Since 1992 Wid Aryawiaya from Indonesia, and since 2002 Yoko Sugimori from Japan and Wadia Badr from Lebanon have been working in this network and we say thank you to them as representatives of all the other sisters who fill our women's network with energy and life.

May the Holy Spirit stay with us and work on beyond our thinking.



Gabriele Mayer, PhD
EMS Women and Gender Desk
August 2012



Donations supporting OUR VOICES continue to be very welcome!

Words of Greeting from the EMS fellowship

Wadia Badr, president of the Women's Fellowship, The Helping Hand of the National Evangelical Church of Beirut (NECB) and liaison woman of the international women's network

Peace be with you in the name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

On behalf of our Women's Fellowship, The Helping Hand of NECB, I greet you and hope that Our Voices will continue to be heard and appreciated through our solidarity in Christ, in whom there is neither male nor female, neither German nor Indonesian nor Korean or Lebanese; for all are one in Him.

For the last ten years I have been serving as the liaison person between our Women's Fellowship and the Women and Gender Desk at EMS. I have seen the development that took place in the publication, Our Voices, and the efforts exerted to make it look more attractive in form and content. For this I congratulate you and ask God to bless your work for many more years to come. I also want to thank you for connecting 28 women's fellowships around the world to each other through this Magazine. We have truly felt that we all speak with one mind and one spirit, and therefore, through the Holy Spirit, with one voice indeed!!

The goal and mission of our Fellowship, as our name indicates (the Helping Hand), is to extend a hand, in fellowship and solidarity to all those in need. Just last week, and in commemoration of Mother's Day around the Middle East, we held a function that raised almost 2000 US dollars that will be used to implement those goals.

In addition, and in preparation for the opening soon of the Home for Assisted Living that the NECB will be running, our Women's Fellowship intends to take over all the social activities and any other voluntary work that shall be needed. This shall take up a very major part of our energies and time in the coming few years. We look forward to inviting you all to visit the new Center whenever you come to Lebanon.

In the hope of celebrating together another twenty years of God's good grace and gifts to us all, I remain, very sincerely yours, Wadia J Badr. ☺



Women of the „Helping Hand“, third woman from the left, in the back: Wadi'a Badr



Yoko Sugimori, chairperson of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of "National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies" (NFKWS), United Church of Christ in Japan (KYODAN), liaison woman of the international EMS women's network. She was project coordinator of the EMS bible project for Japan from 2009 to 2011.

Tremendous challenges after March 11, 2011

A personal note

"More than ten years passed by since I have become contact person for EMS and the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies.

Getting older and weaker I have been eager to pass on my responsibility in the Ecumenical Relations Committee/NFKWS to a younger member but, unfortunately, our organization couldn't provide any other person. Now I even have to tackle with more responsibilities not only for NFKWS, Kyodan but also for the National Christian Council in Japan. This is one reality of Christians in minority situation in Japan. We do not have enough volunteer workers.

Last week I returned from Sendai and Ishinomaki where I supported youth volunteer work groups from US during the one year memorial of the disaster, March 11th 2011. So please understand our church's situation and my personal situation.

Congratulations

We would like to express our great thanks for all the support

and prayer that you have provided for us after the disaster which hit Tohoku on March 11th, 2011. We are facing tremendous challenges in the churches and society. But we trust God may give us the necessary strength and courage for the difficult mission that lies ahead.

May God bless our church and Christian witness in Japanese society at this difficult time for the nation.

We wish you a blessed 20 years anniversary of OUR VOICES.

With much appreciation for your fellowship in Christ." ㄹ

Dr. Meehyun Chung is a pastor of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). She is head of the Women and Gender Division at mission 21, protestant mission Basel, Switzerland..

"Congratulations on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Women's Letter "OUR VOICES"!"

I see OUR VOICES as a means of communication for world wide networking. In northeast Asia, especially in Korea, people say that best communication is the language of heart. I wish that OUR VOICES can convey such a "language of heart", breaking up structures due to social environment and hereby opening up worldwide horizons.

Furthermore, I wish that OUR VOICES can give the voiceless a voice offering a platform for them.

May OUR VOICES continue to question gender stereotypes and make its contribution that the numerous facets of life from different corners of the world become known.

May God accompany and quicken your ways with wisdom!" ㄹ





Rebecca F.A. Abladey, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) at the Redemption Church in Accra, liaison women for the international EMS women's network

"May all the glory, honour and praise be to our ever-living and almighty God, who has blessed us to reach this far. With a grateful heart, I send this greetings; thanking God for the pioneers who by the mercies of God introduced this programme. May the good Lord bless all their efforts which I know will not be in vain.

In the celebration of these twenty years, may the peace of God rule over the boarders of all nations. May women, men, children and the marginalized find peace, joy and love in daily living so that the purpose of God will be achieved.

OUR VOICES, the publication that has informed the global network and exposed us to many people and places of importance. OUR VOICES gives me the opportunity to pray and share with others

even though I do not know them.

Long live OUR VOICES and the EMS in planning and execution of programmes to enhance mission work to embrace all persons in the image of God.

Happy anniversary and God bless EMS and OUR VOCIES". ≡

Rev. In Kum-Ran, general secretary of the women's association of PROK, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and liaison woman of the international EMS women's network
In solidarity with the survivors of human rights violations

"Dear Sisters in Christ!

Warm greetings to you from the NCWA-PROK National Church Women's Association of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea.

Congratulations on the 20th Anniversary of OUR VOICES!

We pray that God's great love and blessings be with the EMS fellowship and wish you all a great year 2012." ≡



The staff of NCWA-PROK. The letters on the photo mean "Congratulations" in Korean language.



During the "Regular Rally on Wednesday" of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery (Comfort Women).

We are in solidarity with this council.

We sincerely hope the human rights of these women will be recognized. Please pray for them, they need your encouragement.



Synthia Sobha Rani,
general secretary of the
women's fellowship of the
Church of South India and
liaison woman of the in-
ternational EMS women's
network since 2008, BA in
Christian Studies

"Very warm and loving greetings from the Women's Fellowship of the Church of South India!

It is an immense pleasure to me as a liaison woman to share my greetings to you on the eve of the newly constituted EMS (Evangelical Mission in Solidarity) recalling its founding year 40 years ago.

I would like to share that the Women's Fellowship Church of South India stands in solidarity with others as it has been sensitive to the changes in the society and has been doing many activities individually and also by the support from EMS. At this juncture, I thank the EMS for the kind concern, co-operation and encouragement that it is sharing towards the C.S.I. Women's Fellowship through their prayers and financial support.

Women's Fellowship has been one of the effective bodies of the Church of South India which works towards a meaningful ministry among the needy, poor, oppressed and the marginalized women and children. Some of the activities done by the Women's Fellowship are bringing the concerns on the issues that are hap-

pening in the day to day life of women and children like violence, trafficking, child abuse, gender discrimination etc. So we would like to bring out a number of Issues Based Bible Studies that will help our women to understand their responsibility towards the above concerns.

Awareness, Care and Counseling for the HIV and AIDS people and their families.

I just want to share an example: A mother from the Girls' school in Dharward was identified with HIV and AIDS. Her three daughters are studying in the High school. Her husband died with HIV and AIDS. She and her youngest son are HIV positive.

In such cases the Women's Fellowship of Karnataka Northern Diocese supports children's education by providing fees, study material and school uniform. The Diocese gave sewing machines. They have arranged training in tailoring to brush up the skills of the women, the above mentioned mother is also participating in this programme.

Further activities are family counseling, training Bible women in leadership, empowerment of women to become economically independent through entrepreneurial skills training programmes, re-reading and understanding the Bible from women's perspective, prison ministry is done by bringing awareness on prisoners and their family problems.

We thank God for enabling us to do God's mission in a fruitful way in solidarity with the poor, needy and the marginalized. The motto of the Women's Fellowship Church of South India is 'Arise and Shine'". ☺

Elizabeth C.B. Aduama, pastor
of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana,
Asombo District, ecumenical co-worker at
Protestant Church of the Palatinate from
2004 to 2011

"I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the EMS Women and Gender Desk for their tireless effort in bringing the Magazine "OUR VOICES " this far.

20 years of existence is no mean achievement. Also as I recollect the good days we worked together sharing experiences from our own backgrounds and cultures, I feel so proud for such great opportunities. So I say a big thank you to all!" ☺



Fighting to be heard



Susanne Käser, retired pastor, Protestant Church of the Palatinate, 1988 – 2001 regional representative of the Women's Fellowship in this church and member of the EMS Women's Advisory Board, 1990 – 1998 one of the two deputies of the EMS synod president, then president of EMS Synod, member of the Mission Council.

After four years of cooperation with the "Eglise protestante Méthodiste en Côte d'Ivoire" in West Africa I was glad to participate in EMS Synod and Mission Council as a delegate of the Protestant Church of the Palatinate. I understood and still understand the congregation of Jesus Christ as "living together in oikumenia", in the worldwide house of God.

EMS inspires the work in the congregation

In my local parish work and later in the women's fellowship there were plentiful opportunities to bring in EMS experiences. Ecumenical co-workers at the Protestant Church of the Palatinate were invited to the congregation. In the Sunday announcements at the end of church services I included short messages and information from partner churches. Partnership relations were intensified by visits and donations were collected.

Two examples I would like to share: in June 1988 I was invited to the Women Ministers Association of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and several return visits followed from Korea to Palatinate. In 1991 I participated in a partnership visit to the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and made contacts with the women's fellowship there. When visitors came in mixed groups from Korea and Ghana to the Palatinate we, i.e. the women of the women's fellowship, arranged one-day meetings just for the women. We experienced both familiarity and strangeness at the same time, but – despite the language barriers – much openness and spontaneity.

Jerusalem Forum 1991

During the international EMS Forum in Jerusalem in 1991 we, the EMS women, formulated a series of recommendations. The positive experiences we had made during the women's pre-conference in Nazareth encouraged us to stand up for these requests self-confidently and decidedly. The "common witness" – which was the theme of the conference – was also the concern to be brought forward in a specific EMS women's letter. Our request was motivated

by the need for EMS women to be able to stay in contact with each other beyond our personal meetings and partnership visits which cannot take place too often. After an intensive period of preparation, the first issue of OUR VOICES was published in 1992.

Fighting to be heard 1994

Three years later we faced quite a critical situation with regard to the EMS women's networking. During a Mission Council meeting in 1994 in Frankfurt/Main the future of the Women's Advisory Board was on the agenda. This discussion afflicted me so deeply that afterwards I wrote a letter to the chairperson of the Mission Council.

On the agenda of the Mission Council meeting in Frankfurt: "Hearing of the Women's Advisory Board" – and what a discussion it was! Suddenly the question came up as to whether this board was at all legal and who it had been approved by. At that time I was deeply disappointed, hurt, sad and angry at the same time. The other members of the women's board felt the same. Once again women had to justify in front of a committee their wish to work together to shape their own future.

Taking the recommendations seriously

- EMS women set to work and they were successful: The recommendations of the Forum in Jerusalem contain all the points which the women delegates at that time had introduced! Today I still look back in gratitude to the women's pre-conference of all the partner and member churches in Nazareth. We made the most of the opportunity of getting to know each other, exchanging and sharing our ideas to prepare our concerns for the Forum.
- Not all of the recommendations have been fulfilled or implemented. But in addition to the visitors' programmes, "OUR VOICES", the Newsletter of the EMS women's voices was established as a means of staying in contact. I assume that also in the EMS – as anywhere – women must personally see to it that their petitions are not forgotten.

OUR VOICES was at that time of threefold importance for me:

- In addition to group visits and consultations, women in the EMS Fellowship should be responsible and have the means for promoting and maintaining contacts on a regular basis.
- EMS women choose their own topics and organize networking among themselves.
- Women's voices want to and should be heard within EMS.

In the meantime 20 years have passed and many changes have taken place in the EMS. The most important change it seems to me is apparent in the new name: EMS – Evangelical Mission in Solidarity.

OUR VOICES has experienced positive changes. I am grateful that it has now been published for 20 years and I always look forward to the next issue. Sincere greetings "in solidarity" to all the liaison women of the network and God's blessing for all of you. ☺

Deliberating and decision-making with global perspectives



Gertrud Hahn, chairperson of the Women's Fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg from 1992 to 2000, highly committed member of the editorial board of OUR VOICES from 2002 to 2010

As the president of the Women's Fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg I was member of many different committees, often in the role of the chair person. Usually we experienced time pressure, too many topics on the agenda, tensions and stress.

The deliberations of the EMS Women's Advisory Board were completely different. This was partly due to the soothing and discreet leadership of Rev. Luise Plock. And it was also due to the attention that we women paid to each other. We were together for a whole day, we had time, we listened to each other, we listened to inspiring news from women from the various EMS churches and organizations here in southwest Germany but above all from the worldwide women's network. Who had been abroad and had

news from our distant sisters? Who had participated in a conference and could report on it? What had the EMS Mission Council deliberated on and adopted? Had women and their concerns been taken into account and not forgotten?

We are "not alone in the world", we are not "the centre of the world" but as women we are "half of the world": this perspective and the expanse of knowledge and commitment have inspired me and thus encouraged me to participate in the work of the editorial board of OUR VOICES during the first years of my retirement. Here we were able to gather and forward texts and photos, passing on the spirituality and experience of women from all over the world. ☺



Schneller Schools stimulate participation in the EMS Advisory Board




Dr. Gudrun Grashof, retired teacher, delegate of the Evangelical Society for the Schneller Schools (EVS) in the EMS Advisory Board from 1990 to 2005.

During a multipliers' journey under the leadership of Rev. Ulrich Kadelbach I visited the Schneller School in Jordan and - being a teacher - was deeply impressed by their pedagogical work. In 1990 Rev. Kadelbach, the former EMS Liaison Secretary Middle East, asked me if I would like to become a member of the Advisory Board as the delegate of the EVS. Gladly I agreed.

On the Advisory Board I represented the two Schneller Schools in Jordan and in Lebanon. I visited the schools several times: In 1995 the Theodor-Schneller-School in Amman together with the Schneller Board and in 2003 the two schools in Jordan and in Lebanon. We were guests at the inauguration of the first residential home for girls on the compound of the Johann Ludwig Schneller School. This event was overshadowed by the outbreak of the Iraq war.

One year earlier, in April 2002, 37 women from all EMS member and partner churches came together in Beirut in Lebanon, the country of World Day

of Prayer 2003. The motto was "Holy Spirit move us – women overcoming violence".

At the same time the Johann Ludwig-Schneller School celebrated its 50th jubilee in Lebanon, where we women took part in the festivities. After all these years I still feel connected with the Advisory Board through OUR VOICES. 



School Building of the Schneller School in Lebanon/ girls at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School

Global encounters lead to political involvement



Dorothea Gertig, retired pastor, from 1991 – 2000 general secretary of the women's fellowship of the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck (EKKW), during retirement from 2000-2011 president of the women's fellowship of Gustav-Adolf-Werk of EKKW.

Letters from EMS – this is like receiving news from the family. In general they are “only” fundraising letters – however these letters are special because of the strong feeling of solidarity I have with EMS. And I am always curious about the project chosen each time – convinced that it will again be an important project, close to the people and their needs.

My relationship with EMS began during 1991 – 2000 when I was member of the EMS-Women's Advisory Board as general secretary of the women's fellowship in Kurhessen-Waldeck. The cooperation with the women from other churches in south-west Germany, planning the programmes for the women's fellowship, and last but not least the journeys and encounters with ecumenical partners were inspiring for me and for my own work.

Two encounters I especially like to recall:

The first one was when the women's fellowship of my church hosted three women from South Korea. At that time we, the German women, were still filled with the opening of the Berlin Wall and the Korean sisters did not cease to ask us again and again: How did it happen? What did you do? What can we do? So many questions and hopes united us! We lit all the candles I had in my house and began to dream. It was unforgettable. Unfortunately, the hopes of our sisters still have not been fulfilled.

The second case was the time when our women's fellowship was working on the problem of the trade with second-hand clothes. There were informative lectures dealing with the fact that well-meant donations for the poor were actually destroying the clothes markets in African countries and fostering the impoverishment particularly of women. During the visit of the EMS Women's Advisory Board to South Africa in 1994 we met Reverend Renate Cochrane of the Moravian Church. She told us about her plans to open tailors' workshops for women in the villages of Transkei. But the seed money was lacking to buy cloth and to start with the work. For us in Kurhessen-Waldeck it was a wonderful chance not to get stuck in the analysis of the project, but to be able to cooperate unbureaucratically. So we raised money in order to improve the prospects for the women in our partner church.

It was such a good idea of Luise Plock and other women to start up “OUR VOICES”. For us former colleagues this enables us to see how the work is growing and how it is still characterized by the struggle for justice and spiritual growth.

My wish for the third decade of “OUR VOICES”: May solidarity continue to grow. ☺



Continuing the tradition of mission work – "Keep the fire burning"

Interview with Maria Schlenker



Maria Schlenker, diaconal minister, born in 1931, worked for Basel Mission (BM) in Cameroon (1960-72) and in South Sudan (1975-85). She was one of the founders of the Christian Women Fellowship of both Presbyterian Churches. From 1986-94 she worked in leading committees of BM and Basel Mission German Branch (BMDZ) and accompanied the partner church in Sudan, the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS)

Question:

WHAT WAS THE FOCUS OF YOUR WORK ON THE EMS ADVISORY BOARD?

"I was the person in the BMDZ responsible for the liaison with women in Africa. At that time I was also a member of the women's commission of Basel Mission in Basel, Switzerland. During this period we experienced the growing self-reliance of organized women's movements in the African churches – and simultaneously the interest of African sisters to work together within the frame of EMS church partnerships."

Question:

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE COOPERATION BETWEEN BMDZ AND EMS?

With the assistance of the Advisory Board of EMS, a valuable exchange of information was possible. Precise agreements were reached regarding work and contacts with the women's fellowships of churches in Germany and abroad. Women's delegations from partner churches of BM and EMS were regular guests at Basel Mission German Branch and EMS. This encouraged us to continue deepening our bonds."

Question:

WHAT WISHES AND VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE DO YOU HAVE FOR WOMEN AND THE WORLDWIDE MISSION?

"I sincerely hope that direct contacts between women across the continents will be pursued and through joint projects and activities women will continue learning from each other. South-South-relations also need special attention and promotion. And I wish that the concerns of women in other countries and continents will increasingly be heard and supported as a matter of course at the grassroots of our women's church associations. The World Day of Prayer alone cannot fulfill this immense task. We must find new ways. " ☺

The questions were asked by Gabriele Mayer.



India – struggling for the ordination of women pastors

Rev. Dr. Ivaleen Hemavathi Amanna, from 1992 to 1998 she was General Secretary of the Women's Fellowship of the Church of South India (CSI). During this time she wrote a play aimed at evoking the "correct" responses from the Bible, in terms of theological and cultural reflections. With this play she hoped that readers would be enabled to realize the misconception concerning the role of the women in general and in the church in particular, along with the oppression of women in a larger context.



I myself was not aware of women's liberation as for me the women's position was per tradition what it was like.

In 1978, however, when my colleagues in other dioceses were ordained, one of the senior co-workers in our Diocese was shedding tears saying that equally trained, on a par with male pastors, she was not considered for ordination. As I was a fresh candidate just having finished the theological studies and having served only for two years I did understand her feelings. In my family, I was treated like a male child as my parents got first two female children. The third of nine children I entered a Theological College at 17, passing my examination after four years as a Bachelor of Theology. Then I took over various tasks: the spiritual welfare at a Methodist Hospital, work in a Children's Home, organizing and leading women's groups in her church, five years dedicated to the "Kinderhothilfe". In addition, I went on studying part-time, finishing as a BA of Divinity and MA of Sociology.

One day the Pastor of the local church requested me to preach and lead the worship service on a Sunday. I conducted the service and pronounced the benediction. One of the congregation members came and asked me why I pronounced the benediction when the Presbyterian was there?

Thereafter I faced similar insulting experiences which enlightened me to do something to show the identity of women not only in the church but also in the society.

When our Diocesan Council considered the ordination of women, there were insulting remarks by the male pastors: "Why ordaining women? They are expected to be in the kitchen..." "If at all consider their ordination, don't ordain them as presbyters, ordain them only as deaconess."

Finally I wrote the play "The woman you gave me" which was published in 1994 as a special issue of OUR VOICES. I wanted to say to the people of all gender that women are equal on all levels, i.e. in work, in ministry, in administration.

As a theologically trained woman and experienced pastor and according to the scriptures I say that women are not only equal but they are called to serve the ministry of the Lord Jesus' teaching also confirms that women are called to do his ministry. History of the Church also proves this. ☺

Brazil – Expanding our relations

Heloisa Gralow Dalferth, pastor of the Lutheran Church in Brazil, in voluntary service at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg

Photo: Camila Wild



Women from the Brazil congregation in Stuttgart, Germany

As a member of the EMS Women's Advisory Board I have the privilege of having a small part in its development. In my opinion, OUR VOICES not only offers interesting reports about important projects and the participation of women in world-wide ecumenism, but above all stimulates its readers to actively take part in like-minded projects.

It is my dream that the EMS network will encourage Brazilian and Latin American women to participate far more – from reflecting ideas of the liberation theology to practical diaconal work. This would be a gain for all sides.

For the continuation and further development of the international EMS women's network I pray for God's blessing. ☺

Ghana – Visiting prisoners

Rev. Regina Lawmann, former general secretary of the women's fellowship of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. She was participant in the women's consultation in Tanzania in 1995.

"Dear Sisters in Christ!

To God alone be the glory, thanksgiving and praise as we celebrate 40 years anniversary of EMS fellowship and 20 years OUR VOICES.

May Jesus Christ empower the EMS fellowship to make our voices heard, to bring love, unity and peace to the conflict areas, to bring healing to the sick and physically challenged, to bring comfort to those who mourn and hope to the hopeless.

Our voices should be heard singing praises to our Lord, proclaiming liberty and salvation to unbelievers and to make the light of Jesus shine in the dark world.

Some of our women are engaged in the Prison Ministry of Ghana, founded by the Presbyterian Church. Every Tuesday we go to the prison to teach inmates how to read the Bible and transform their lives. On Sundays, we go in groups to preach at the female prison, male prison and also the senior correction center where the inmates are mostly school boys in prison. We teach them to accept Jesus Christ to transform their live for salvation.

We send them clothing, soap, food, etc. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus said, I was in prison and you visited me. Some of the women also visit the psychiatric hospitals, orphanages, schools for the mentally retarded and send them gifts.

Women, well done, congratulations on the 40th anniversary of EMS and the 20th anniversary of OUR VOICES. God richly bless you". ☺

Photo: Gabriele Mayer



Market woman in Kumasi

India – being supported

Faustine Furtado, M.A., B.Ed., voluntary ecumenical co-worker in Stuttgart from 1992 to 1997, 1997 to 2004 responsibilities as Bishop's "amma" in the Church of South India (CSI)



"Greetings from Mangalore!"

I am happy to hear that OUR VOICES, the International Women's Network is celebrating 20 years of connecting Christian women in 28 churches and mission societies.

I am sure OUR VOICES, through its enlightening and empowering articles, has enriched many women all over the world. The insights and sharing of experiences helped me in carrying out my responsibilities as Bishop's wife from the years 1997-2004.

I congratulate all those who were responsible for the great task of framing the network.

Still today, I participate in CSI Women's Fellowship groups conducting meditations and reflections". ☺

I still remember the efforts and fruitful contributions of Ms. Luise Plock, specially in its formative years, during our stay in Stuttgart from 1992-1997.

Korea – Overcoming weariness

OH Hyun Sun, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, teaching Christian Education at Honam Theological University and Seminary

For me, OUR VOICES is a window to see women's lives in different places of the world and a mirror to reflect my ministry in the Korean church and seminary. My work which is focused on the ideas of gender, poverty, and diversity in various ways in Korea, sometimes makes me hard and being tired but many stories of women, ministries, local churches, and projects from EMS and OUR VOICES have always said to me that "Hyun Sun! You will be okay. You are not alone." Thank you so much for being with me! ☺



Photos: private

OH Hyun Sun in conversation with migrant women in Asia (above)

OH Hyun Sun with staff of the multicultural camp of Gwangju Seed School



Tanzania – Rehema Mwakalo, a valiant healer



I had already heard quite a lot about Rehema Mwakalo. We met her in Tanzania in 2010 where she showed us her project Huruma in Matema on Lake Nyassa, a project supporting AIDS orphans and their families.

When Rehema Mwakalo was in Germany this spring I had the opportunity to ask her questions about her life during a six-hour-train-trip.

She is a valiant woman and I suppose that she would not have achieved so much without her determination.

Rehema Mwakalo was born, baptized and raised in Rungwe in a Moravian congregation. She was trained as a nurse in the Lutheran church and worked there for 23 years. The beginnings of her project are strongly connected with her own family: within a period of three years she lost five relatives and then had to care for twelve children. At that time she still worked as a nurse in Matema and had three children of her own. Her husband – they had lived in separation for some years – was a doctor in Matema. They got together again; he cared for their own children and she was able to start with the project for AIDS orphans.

In Isoko she has a second project focussing on another field of work: it deals with naturopathy and its applications.

Starting with the medicinal plant *Artemisia* which stabilizes the immune system and helps against malaria, she also has plants for other complaints. She started up gardens for herbs and produces tea, ointments and oils. To learn more about it she participated in seminars in Nairobi, Arusha and Dar es Salaam and is also supported by a woman pharmacist in Germany.

Church leaders and management board of the hospital have appointed her to forward her knowledge to people in positions of responsibility in the church, like pastors and chairwomen of women's fellowships.

Unfortunately, her work is rejected by some people in and beyond the church. She is accused of being a herb witch. When she told me which herbs help for which disease I said to her full of admiration: You are a 'Mganga wa kienyeji', a traditional healer. She did not like to hear this because it is exactly what she is being accused of.

Some particularly pious people think that this knowledge comes from the devil and do not want to have anything to do with her. For this reason some people do not sit next to her in church and one woman even vomited in front of her to get rid of all the "evil".

There are also differences among women in the fellowships. Some invite her and apply her knowledge while others reject the traditional naturopathy.

At the beginning her husband too - being a doctor - was completely against this work until she managed to cure his stomach problems secretly with a special tea.

It is very important for Rehema Mwakalo that she can invoke the Bible as the basis for her work. The labels on the handicraft products of her projects have a quotation from Ezekiel 47, 12b (NRSV, 1989): "Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing". ☞





Sis-ter, don't lose the dream, Sis-ter, don't lose the dream,



Luise Plock

Sikia, sikia, sikia kilio
Kilio cha yatima
Sikia, sikia, sikia kilio
Kilio cha yatima
Sikia e Baba
Sikia e Mama
Mjomba na Shanazi
Msikie yatima

...
Chakula hajashiba
Usiku hajalala
Mbu na viroboto
Wanamnyanyasa
Amefaulu shule
Amekosa ada
Mali ya urithi
Ndugu waligawana

...
Msaidieni
Bila kuhesabu
Mtoto wa nani
Wala kufikiri
Atalipa nini
Mungu amesema
Atawafidia

*Listen, listen, listen to the cry
An orphan boy's cry
Listen, listen, listen to the cry
An orphan girl's cry
Listen, father
Listen, mother
Aunty and uncle
Listen to the orphans*

...
*She doesn't have enough food
She cannot sleep at night
Because of mosquitoes and flea
They distress her
She passed the school test
But she cannot pay the school fees
The property of her heritage
Was split among her relatives*

...
*Help them
Without calculating
Who is that child
Without considering
What will she pay
God said
I will give you plenty.*

Extract from the song of Huruma Project Group, written by Rehema Mwakalo to call attention to AIDS orphans, translated from Kiswahili into German by Luise Plock, from German into English by Ann-Kathrin Schlieszus

Portrait by Luise Plock, pastor of the Moravian Church, worked in Tanzania for 16 years altogether and was secretary of the EMS women's desk from 1989 to 2001



Photos: Luise Plock

Choir singing songs about the AIDS pandemic and bringing these songs to stage.

Palestine – Cedar Duaybis, a voice of hope



*Cedar Duaybis during the reunion
in April 2012*

met Cedar Duaybis for the first time in Cyprus in 1989 at a conference for women from Germany and the Middle East.

Cedar and the other women from Palestine told us about the frequent house searches carried out by the Israeli army. They reported about curfews and detentions of family members etc. How little did I know about the situation of Palestinians up till then!

Later Cedar came to Germany on a visit and I accompanied her. In her quiet and modest manner she talked about the misery in the daily lives of Palestinians on the West Bank and in Israel and her listeners were touched – as was my family too when I took her to visit them. Being directly affected she modified and broadened our view of the situation in Israel and Palestine.

However I also recall an embarrassing encounter. During a big event of the Schneller Schools in Hospitalhof in Stuttgart a pious Christian woman from Swabia went up to Cedar and proudly told her that for years she had been supporting an organization buying land for Jewish Israelis. Cedar listened and was taken aback –she knew from experience the other side of the story and that Palestinian people are often forced to sell their land. People knew very little about the situation in Palestine.

During the Jerusalem Forum in 1991 we visited Cedar's mother who was living in a Christian district of the city. We heard about her worries that she might soon be forced to move away because more and more Israel people were moving in and driving out the Arab population. At that time I received a brass vase which I still keep in honour of Cedar and her mother.

In May 2012 I participated in a study trip to Palestine and Israel. During the past 21 years we had lost contact. But I managed to find Cedar's e-mail address and we arranged a meeting in Jerusalem. I was looking forward to seeing her again after such a long time.

We had lunch together and she told me about her activities during the two last decades. From the very beginning she has belonged to the Community Sabeel working for a liberation theology within the Palestinian context. This



Sis-ter, don't lose the dream, Sis-ter,

Community delegated her to the working group preparing and writing the Kairos Palestine Document. As a teacher she checked and edited all publications. Cedar was also willing to speak spontaneously in our group about the Kairos Palestine Document as she often gives lectures at home and abroad.

It was very moving for me to hear also about her personal fate. She and her husband and their four children went through hard times in Nablus and in Ramallah during the first and second Intifada. Since 1990 she has been a widow.

Her house in Ramallah was destroyed during the second Intifada by the Israeli army. Today she lives in Jerusalem where living expenses are much higher than in Ramallah. Her sons live with their families in Canada and USA. One of her sons was so deeply traumatized that he can no longer live in Palestine and neither wants to. Cedar stays in touch with her grandchildren via internet and skype. She would much rather have them close to her. Her two daughters live in Jerusalem and Ramallah. One is a social worker in the "Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling" in Ramallah. She especially dedicates her work to women in the villages who suffer from the occupation and have been displaced. The other daughter followed in her footsteps and works in Sabeel too.

Cedar said: "My hope and the aim of my work is that we in Israel and Palestine can live and dwell together again as we used to during my childhood in Haifa. As a Christian family we had Muslim and Jewish neighbours and lived peacefully together. Later I had deep doubts of belief when reading the Bible in the way it was interpreted by the missionaries. Only after my work in Sabeel and through the liberation theology I learned to read the Bible with other eyes and today I feel strengthened in my faith.

My children grew up in a time full of violent experiences. My husband and I have tried to educate them to become non-violent individuals. I am thankful that we succeeded in this".

Since our first encounter in 1989 the situation of the people in Palestine has been continuously deteriorating. It is a wonder that there are women like Cedar Duaybis who have not given up and are a voice of hope. ☺

Luise Plock, EMS Women's Desk from 1989 to 2001

KAIROS PALESTINE 2009

A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering
www.kairospalestine.ps



Source:
<http://www.frauennetzwerknahost.de/aktuelles.html>



don't lose the dream,

Halmahera – Practising solidarity as a church leader

Jerda Djawa, pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, Indonesia (GMIH), MA in Women Studies, is the first female deputy of the GMIH church president. Before that she worked as a lecturer at the Theological Seminary and was head of the women's desk at PGI, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia in Jakarta. She writes on the topic of solidarity:



Photo: Gabriele Mayer

Jerda Djawa (on the right) during the women's workshop in Makassar.

In my position as the first female deputy of the church president I am glad to have the opportunity to set up and put into practice actions of solidarity among women and for women.

I support women by giving them space and opportunities. I try to encourage them to take over leading roles in church services and bible study groups or to participate in church committees.

In cooperation with the women's fellowship we as the church leaders support women in developing their self-esteem and provide them with specially selected material.

We were able to give financial assistance to a woman who needs regular detoxification of the blood. During a working meeting with my colleagues in the church management board I made the proposal that a church collection be allocated for this woman. Agreement was reached and we collected 11 million Indonesian rupiahs.

In my position of seniority I am often forced to correct and advise women, above all young women. Many can accept this but there are also many others who stay resentful in their hearts. But I think that the responsibility which was entrusted to me obliges me to address misbehavior.

We support the sale of products hand-made by women (also by men and young people). We opened a small shop for these products which is called "Maratana Handicraft". "Maratana Handicraft" started in the garage of a family and has gradually expanded. Since opening the shop the quality of products has also been improved.

Another type of solidarity is the intercession for women. I have a list filled with names of women needing special intercession. There are many concerns such as difficulties among colleagues in their congregations or marital and partner problems.

In my view solidarity takes the most diverse forms for people in positions of authority. ☸



Coming back after ten years to Suriname

Anneli Vollprecht lived in Suriname from 1997 to 2002. At that time her husband Reverend Frieder Vollprecht worked there for the Moravian church in Paramaribo. Ten years later she is back again as a qualified nurse.

Suriname is a tropical country on the north coast of South America situated between Guiana and French Guiana. Its population with about 500.000 people has its origins in Ghana, India, Indonesia, China, Brazil, Haiti, Netherlands and other countries. But of course there are also indigenous people living in different Indian tribes. The capital city is Paramaribo and the country is only sparsely populated except for a relatively small coastal strip. 4/5 of the area is rain forest.

Ten years ago we returned to Germany with our family of four children. When I arrived in Suriname in February 2012 I felt as if I had never been away. The big difference now is that I am here on my own for six months. Two to three days a week I work in a nursing home.

After some time of reflection I did not accept the initial request to work as deputy director and nursing supervisor of the nursing home. Not having a work permit and therefore working on a voluntary basis, I did not feel that such a senior position was suitable in that situation. I am here in the first place for the inhabitants of the nursing home and I go around from room to room in all four departments of the home. Elderly people need someone who has time for them and can talk to them. I also do gymnastics with some of the people.

In the meantime the senior nursing staff have asked me to help them to improve both the organization of the daily routine and particularly with the documentation of the work. This is a challenging task and I am glad that this request comes directly from the staff members.

On the other days of the week I support an elderly lady on behalf of the diaconal service to help her in the mornings to get ready before she goes out to her appointments.

Apart from that I am involved in a variety of musical activities and I have many opportunities to go out with friends. Being on my own there is often a seat free in a car which is wonderful.

Finally I would like to tell you about a short incident which took place this morning. I was visiting one of the elderly inhabitants in his room. He was about to read the daily watchwords from the Moravian textbook in the Surinam language, Sranan Tongo. He was very upset because his eyes are so bad. I asked him if I should read the

texts to him and he gladly agreed. The song text were words from Zinzendorf: "Yesus na mi sei waka dei fu dei", "Jesus, still lead on". I spontaneously sang this verse as I sometimes do to myself instead of reading it. Suddenly the old man had tears in his eyes, took my hands and asked me where I had learnt to sing so beautifully in Surinamese. He asked me to repeat everything. Again he took my hands and said: "Sister, you must never leave Suriname." Is there a nicer way of saying 'thank you'? ☺



Church building of the Moravian Church in Paramaribo, Anneli Vollprecht in conversation with her colleague.

Indonesia – life stories from Tanzania inspire women in Makassar

Gabriele Mayer, EMS Women and Gender Desk since 2001

The women writers' workshop has become a historical milestone in the Southern Province of the Moravian Church in Tanzania. Together with their Tanzanian colleagues Ms Kategile and Bishop Mwakafwila. Luise Plock and Dorothea Margenfeld from Germany had guided women in various workshops to recall and write down their life stories. The result was not only individual and printed biographies but also a "real book". During a visit of German women to Tanzania these books were handed over and signed by the female authors. "During this ceremony we could feel the pride and joy of the Tanzanian sisters. They were enchanted by the appreciation of their life stories through publication and interest in Germany" said one woman from the visitors' group.

In OUR VOICES 2006/07 we reported on these writers' workshops. OUR VOICES is published in three languages: English, German and Indonesian. Two years later this report about the diverse women's biographies from Tanzania evoked an astonishing reaction during a women's conference in Makassar/South Sulawesi in Indonesia: In Makassar the delegates of the women fellowships from the nine Indonesian EMS churches had gathered in order to try and find a new relationship between "Adat" and gospel for them as Christian women. "Adat" can be understood as the demands and obligations which have developed from the patriarchal, cultural traditions and which are partly very restrictive for women.

Thus the Indonesian women were looking for precedents to follow in the world-wide EMS fellowship and came across the report in OUR VOICES on the writers' workshops in Tanzania. Suddenly, a woman asked: Why don't we have such a biography workshop and compare how we manage our lives in the light of the gospel and the restrictions of "Adat"?". A second woman asked: "Can we start right away before we are too old?"

Some hours later women were sitting, fully concentrated, in the conference room writing their life experiences – an appraisal of their aspirations and trials, successes and blessings. They called their letters: "God's love letter of my life".



Women leaders during the obligatory group picture at the end of the workshop in Makassar.

Photo: Gabriele Mayer

In joint remembrance of the Day of Independence in Tanzania

As ecumenical worker Rev. Luise Plock was in the Southern and Southwestern Province of the Moravian Church in Tanzania for a total of sixteen years. From 1989 till 2001 she was Secretary of the Women's Desk at EMS.

Colonial history between Europe and Africa left grave marks in the relationships between former colonial powers and their exploited African colonies.

The fact that mission history was not excluded but even played its own part is highlighted in some books like "Frauen in den deutschen Kolonien" (edited by Bechhaus-Gerst; Leutner, 2009).

In spite of these historical imbalances close bonds can survive over decades as the following example shows: In 2010 a group of German women made a trip to Tanzania. One of the women, Ulrike Beck, had a green plastic mug in her luggage. She had received this mug in 1961 when she lived in Tanzania and went to school there. It was a gift from the government to all school children to celebrate an important day: December 9th, 1961 – The Day of Independence in Tanzania. Ulrike had to leave the country shortly after that, but she - eight years old - took the mug with her to Germany as a souvenir and in remembrance of her Tanzanian school friends.

Now, after almost 50 years, the mug returns and there was a "big hello" among the women: Yes, they remembered and were so astonished and moved that a European child had kept this mug as a souvenir. ☺



Photo: Luise Plock

School children in Tanzania received this green mug in 1961 on the Day of Independence.



Ghana and Palatinate in Germany: Intercultural mutual learning during the Bible Project

Elizabeth C.B. Aduama, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Akosombo District, ecumenical co-worker in the Protestant Church of the Palatinate from 2004 to 2011



My work in the Protestant Church of the Palatinate in Germany, as ecumenical co-worker from March 2004 to June 2011, which brought me also into contact with EMS, opened up further opportunities for me to meet, interact and to learn more about other countries and cultures, which has broadened my horizon not only geographically but also spiritually.

As part of my experiences, I learnt there is a great variety of cultures even within the same country and therefore to be able to appreciate others, is to learn to listen, appreciate, share, learn and to accept others just as they are. I was respected as a Ghanaian and I was listened to. What was more interesting, was when someone would ask, "and Elizabeth, how would it have been in your country or culture?" during a discussion. I can recollect going for a programme in my lady's suit, and someone coming up to say, "but Elizabeth, you look European. I was expecting to see you dressed Ghanaian". Such comments opened up ways for interaction leading to respect for one another.



One impressive learning moment, still fresh on my mind, is the "International Bible Reading Workshop" held at Neustadt in the Palatinate to end the Bible Sharing Project. What for me was very interesting and challenging, was how cultures formed a greater part in the understanding and sharing of the gospel. For example, in trying to act the farewell scene between Naomi, Ruth and Orpah from different cultural backgrounds, was a variety of lessons to include humility, love, respect, women's concern for each other, and also glaring, was the plight of women in different cultures concerning widowhood.

I want to say, back home, it has been easy to understand a few things which I previously could not understand. The simple reason being that I make the effort to research. That is to say, asking, seeking and knocking. (Matt. 7:7)



Thank you for all the good opportunities and pray God's blessings for all as we celebrate "OUR VOICES"! ☺

Scenes during the Bible Workshop in Neustadt/Weinstraße in April 2011.

Indonesia: Bible reading for beginners

Women's Fellowship of the Christian Church in South Sulawesi (GKSS)

Yulianus Lamarang from GKSS sent us a report from Pendeta Kamanneng on a special programme of the women's fellowship supporting disadvantaged persons.

In 2011, the women's fellowship of the GKSS started a programme of Bible reading for beginners. Teaching materials published by the Indonesian Bible Society begin with an alphabet learning method – developed in the church district Selayar – which makes reading of Bible stories possible. The programme is open to everybody, from school children to elderly people, who do not know letters and numbers.

We hope with the continuation of this programme that more and more participants learning to read and write will simultaneously get to know the Bibles and thus learn to love the Word of God more and more. ☺



Photo: Barbel Wuthe

Indonesian Bible passage on Isaiah 42



Stand in soli- dari - ty,

Prayer from Indonesia

O God, open our eyes so that we can see
the smiles and tears of our neighbours.
Open our ears so that we can hear the call
of friendship.
Sharpen our senses so that we can perceive
the stirrings of violence,
And open our mouths so that we can stand up to it.
Strengthen our arms so that we can link arms
with our neighbours.
Strengthen our legs so that we can carry them.
Give us a pure heart
so that we can realize our value.
Give us a wide heart

so that we can understand
the diversity of the creation.
Give us a big heart so that we can accept
our differences.
Give us the desire
to seek connections with others.
We are your creations.
We are also the product of your hands.
End all conflicts in your way.
Let your power be visible.
So that we can see how beautiful are the
colours of the rainbow.
And how valuable our lives are. Amen.

*Jerda Djawa, pastor in Tobelo, Halmahera, Indonesia
From: Ecumenical Prayers "Become a wise and understanding people...",
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The Liaison Women of the International Women's Network



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