Advocacy and support for migrant women and victims of trafficking

30 years of FIZ



### Dear Reader

For 30 years FIZ, the Advocacy and Support Centre for Migrant Women and Victims of Trafficking in Switzerland has been fighting for the rights and dignity of migrant women and against exploitation and violence. It's time for a look back – but also for a glimpse into the future. What did we accomplish during our years of efforts to improve the situation of migrant women in Switzerland? And what must we concentrate on in the future?

Survivors of women trafficking in Switzerland today have better access to short-term residence permits, support and justice than 30 years ago. Thanks also to FIZ's persistent work at political and governmental levels. In countless cases FIZ Makasi, the specialized counselling and support centre for trafficked women has managed to accompany survivors of trafficking into a new and self-determined life. On the other hand we continue to struggle with setbacks: There is a now a very icy wind directed at migrant women in general and sex workers in particular. The debate about a prostitution ban, the tightening of migration policy and scarce resources make our work more difficult. Political and administrative decisions remind us day after day that migrant women who work in precarious sectors of the economy or have been victims of blatant exploitation are not heard by the decision-makers. It is clear that FIZ is needed more than ever, even after 30 years.

The cover of this leaflet shows a demonstration in Zurich in 1996 against the illegalization of women. The slogans on the banners read: "Away with deportation centres", "Nobody comes without good reason. Residence rights for all", "Solidarity with undocumented women migrants" and "The right to remain and work permits for all".

In this leaflet we invite you to take a 30-year journey in words and pictures through the history of FIZ.

In addition, we report on a very topical subject: the demise of brothels in Zurich due to new regulations of sex work, with disastrous consequences for many clients of the FIZ counselling centre for migrant women.

Best wishes from Rebecca Angelini and Susanne Seytter

### Leaflet 56 | 2015

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30 years of FIZ

### Feminist, partisan, tenacious

Go-go girls, prostitution, slave trade, Third World, patriarchy – the FIZ's terminology has changed since 1985. Today we speak of cabaret dancers, sex work, trafficking in women, the North-South divide and gender inequality. But the topics have remained the same. FIZ's basic attitude remains the same: to support migrant women in the fight against exploitation and violence and to stand up for a just migration policy.

The trigger was a 1981 report by Télévision Suisse Romande about the conditions in which a young Filipina worked and lived in a Zurich nightclub. Alarmed by these circumstances, a group of people from aid agencies, religious groups and women's organizations formed; their aim was to become more active in combating the conditions which led to migrant women in this country being exploited in the sex trade, imported as docile wives into Switzerland or to be exploited abroad by Swiss sex tourists. They established FIZ, then named the *Third World Women's Information Centre* in 1985.

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### Political Work





At the heart of the Euro 08 campaign against trafficking in women, a petition demanded better victim protection. 72,000 signatures were gathered.

Most recently, in 2011, FIZ together with The Body Shop in Switzerland directed a petition at the Swiss Federal government and the cantons, which, inter alia, also demanded effective victim protection. On this occasion more than 100,000 people signed.

Petitions were just one of the many political mechanisms on the road to today's reality. Today, at both federal and cantonal level, there are improvements in short-time residence and legal support for victims of human trafficking. Cooperative agreements between all the agencies involved and performance level agreements with FIZ exist in many cantons. The federal government has established the Swiss Coordination Unit against the Trafficking of Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (KSMM) and FIZ established the first cantonal roundtable and has contributed to many more. However, there is still much to do. Cantonal differences are too great. There need to be uniform standards to enable trafficked women everywhere in Switzerland to exercise their rights and to receive the protection they deserve.

WARUM WERDEN
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WINGEN

The management board spread its net wide, including women in the countries from which the exploited migrant women came.

FIZ's aim was to raise public awareness and to lobby politically in favour of migrant women. As a result of the publicity more and more migrant women turned to FIZ for advice. At that time there were no other counselling centres for migrant women in Zurich. The women who contacted FIZ worked in the sex industry, in nightclubs or were lured, under false premises, into Switzerland and had been exploited here in a variety of situations. They did not know their rights in Switzerland and sought advice.

### The name reflects the aim

FIZ changed its name from the Third World Women's Information Centre (1985) to the Women's Information Centre for women from Africa, Asia and Latin America (1996) to the Women's Information Centre for women from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe (2000) to the current FIZ Advocacy and Support for Migrant Women and Victims of Trafficking (2008). These name changes reflect FIZ's history. In its early days FIZ concentrated on gender relations and the exploitation of women in the so called "Third World"; later on FIZ devoted itself increasingly to providing concrete advice and support to migrant women in Switzerland in all walks of life who had turned to FIZ for support with issues such as: trafficking in women, domestic violence, questions about sex work, residency status, and more. With increasing globalisation the target groups widened. Trafficking in women and women migration in various forms run like a thread throughout this story.

### Focus on sex work, cabaret, right of residence

The experience gained in advising migrant women has been incorporated into the basic attitudes of FIZ. In the early days of FIZ, sex work, marriage migration and cabaret work were all seen as trafficking in women and most migrant women were seen as victims. Over the years, attitudes and analyses have drawn finer distinctions. The reality, as we have learned, is rather different: not all sex workers are victims and not all marriage migrants are oppressed. In practice, it has become clear that we need different approaches for different situations. Today, the focus of FIZ's counselling is on issues surrounding sex work, cabaret work and residence permits. Migrant women are strong players who choose from among all their possible options to enable a better life for their families and themselves. We are committed to ensuring that they can exercise the rights to which they are entitled.

### Focus on trafficking in women

Trafficked women are advised and supported by FIZ Makasi. Not least because of FIZ's political work there exists today in the Swiss Penal Code practical legislation against human trafficking. Also, thanks largely to the FIZ's lobbying, the government is serious about the issue of human trafficking, and is willing to give short-term residence permits for survivors of trafficking for the duration of the legal proceedings in their cases. FIZ has had an impact: today there exist cooperative bodies for dealing with human trafficking in 17 cantons. But, despite intense political work, much still lies in disarray: for years we have been demanding a right of residence for all victims of trafficking - not just those who are willing to cooperate with law enforcement and investigative authorities. Together with many other NGOs we have demanded a decent migration law in this country: instead, domestic legislation regarding foreigners has been continually made more re-

### Squaring the circle

21 women currently work in FIZ. Structural changes have turned what was once a grass-roots project into a specialized body with a management board and managing director. FIZ is widely anchored - in NGO networks at home and abroad, and in government and civil society contexts in Switzerland. We have become more professional. But we have remained feminist and partisan on behalf of migrants.

Policy restrictions make political work, the counselling of migrant sex workers and victim protection for survivors of trafficking more necessary than ever. The challenges have increased. The profile and prominence of FIZ has led to more inquiries from the public and from the media. At the same time finances have become much tighter. Squaring the circle is not a simple matter. But we are working on it.

Shelley Berlowitz



15 years of FIZ: a look back

# "I am proud to be a part of FIZ"

Toy Srismorn Meyer comes from Bangkok. In 1993 she migrated to Switzerland and studied social work in Lucerne. In the 1990s she worked for FIZ as a translator, as well as freelancing at German courses that FIZ offered at the time. In 2001 she began working as a counsellor. Toy was head of the counselling services for migrant women. She wrote this piece 2015, shortly before she retired.

When I started at FIZ, we advised migrant women on all spheres of life: from sex work to working in cabarets, from questions concerning the right of residence to divorce, domestic violence, etc. Over time, we have specialized more in counselling female sex workers and cabaret dancers. These have always been key issues for FIZ and were topics that were not focussed upon elsewhere. We have, however, never rejected any woman. If a migrant woman came to us with a problem that could not be properly dealt with by any other counselling service, we gave her advice.

The political environment is now much more difficult than it was in 2001. Cabaret owners have become more unscrupulous and blame the women for the fact that they themselves refuse to pay wages: "She didn't turn up", "She was a bad worker", "She is too fat" is what they say. FIZ has always fought for the right of the women to the finish. Now the short term resident permit called "Cabaret Dancer Status" is being abolished and we have to prepare ourselves for new migration paths. For the women will continue to come. But how? Via EU states, because they can no longer enter from non-member countries? As illegalised women? New strategies are now needed.

The situation for sex workers has also become harder. Since the new prostitution regulation (PGVO) came into force in Zurich, there is a lot of unrest. Even though women are informed officially with fact sheets, this is not enough. It takes a lot of time to explain the new procedures to them, as they are very complicated and can be costly.



I am very proud that I can be part of FIZ. I have learned a lot, formerly as a translator, later as a freelancer and finally as a counsellor. FIZ does not only provide advice but we also call for changes in policy. We make society aware and sensitise it to the situation of migrant women. It is valuable work. For me, it is important that the women know and feel that we are there for them, not as an authority. We are on their side. There are no prejudices and no power games in our work.

I look forward to retirement next year. After 15 years of FIZ work, I can look back with satisfaction: FIZ counselling does a lot. The women we support become more confident. They look for new paths. Ultimately, it is always the women themselves who decide what they want to do. We support them on the path to making their own decisions.



### **Prevention project CHAME**

In 1992 FIZ began with the formation of CHAME (Centro de Apoio à Mulher humanitario), a prevention and information project on women trafficking and sex tourism in north-eastern Brazil. After a two-year pilot phase, headed by FIZ employee Jacqueline Leite, CHAME established itself 1997 as an independent NGO in Bahia. The NGO carries out awareness raising, information and training activities on women trafficking and sex tourism.

CHAME demonstrates against the trafficking in women in Salvador. ©CHAME



Also in other countries of origin of its clients, FIZ cooperates with private organisations and authorities. These partnerships are very important in order to prepare women who opt for migration for the realities of Switzerland. They also help to develop joint perspectives in order to protect victims of trafficking and to create a safety net when they (have to) return to their country of origin. For women migration has global causes and effects and international cooperation and solidarity is essential in order to fight for the rights of migrant women.

### Daily routine in FIZ

### A busy working day

Lina Rasheed studied law in Sudan and lived for several years in various countries including Ethiopia and East Germany. 17 years ago she came to Switzerland, and 5 months ago she came to FIZ. In 2014 she completed a Master's degree in Advanced Studies in Children's Rights. At FIZ she works as Makasi counsellor. For this leaflet, she has recorded a typical busy working day. In the morning, Lina had emergency duty, in the afternoon a hearing was on the agenda.



- 9.00 Teleconference with a client, her attendant, and the client's lawyer in Hungary. The client's children are in the country of origin and are at great risk from criminals because their mother has given evidence here in Switzerland against these people. We discuss how the children can be placed safely. FIZ Makasi attempts to bring the children to Switzerland; until now the authorities have stood in the way of this.
- 9.30 Telephone call from a client who is returning to her native country Thailand with the repatriation grant from the Swiss Confederation. Her flight was delayed and she missed the connection in Bangkok. I calm her down and reassure her that there is a contact person locally. This person actually calls in while we are still talking together.
- 9.45 Message from the police: Three victims of human trafficking have been identified. I coordinate further pro-

- ceedings with the police and public prosecutor and make an appointment for an initial meeting with the clients and interpreters. I organise safe accommodation, initial medical care and support for the women.
- 10.55 An email from ASTRA (Anti Sex Trafficking Action) Serbia: They have a potential case of human trafficking and are asking for support. I pass the details on to the Swiss Coordination Unit against the Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (KSMM). The case is already being investigated. I inform ASTRA about the current state of affairs.
- 11.17 I get a double espresso from the coffee machine in the kitchen.
- 11.20 A representative of an aid organisation calls: a young woman seeking asylum was severely exploited in Italy and identified as a victim of human trafficking. Now, in

accordance with the Dublin Treaty, the intention is to deport her back to Italy where she is in great danger. What can be done? Unfortunately there is no possibility of the woman staying here if the Swiss authorities say they are not responsible for her application for asylum. I contact a victim support organisation in the Italian city concerned, and arrange help locally.

- 11.58 Telephone call from a client. She has been working in a company on trial and can now do an internship there. She is exultant. I put her on loudspeaker so that my colleague can listen in, and we both rejoice with her.
- 12.05 Emergency: A client has not turned up at an outside appointment and cannot be found. It is not clear whether she is once again in the power of the human traffickers. I make a statement to the police and public prosecutor's office.
- 13.00 Instant soup for lunch, half of which lands on my jacket. My colleagues and I laugh about this.

- 13.15 On my way to a hearing, I talk on the phone to the caregiver in the shelter about "restyling" a client who needs a disguise because she is in great danger. The client is very fond of her hairstyle, even though she realises that she will have to change it.
- 13.25 I meet a client in front of the Zurich cantonal police department and accompany her to the hearing as a person of trust. It is very difficult. The woman can hardly bear to talk about her exploitation once again. I assist her as best I can.
- 18.00 End of hearing. I accompany the client to her accommodation. We sit in front of the house on a little wall and are both silent. She smokes a cigarette and I drink a take-away espresso. Then we say good-bye. My working day is over.

### Public recognition



FIZ Makasi, the specialized counseling and support center for trafficked women has been supporting survivors of women trafficking for 10 years. Its success lies in the fact that it does not only counsel victims but that it works in a specialized and networked manner and passes on its knowledge. In 2006 Makasi was awarded a prize by the city of Zurich for promoting equality. In 1999, the entire FIZ organisation had already received the equality prize which had been created in 1997. In 2007 FIZ was awarded the Ida Somazzi-prize and in 2009 it was one of the CSS Foundation prize-winners. In 2010 FIZ was awarded the AGAVA price at

the 9th Swiss Conference on overcoming violence and abuse of power.

This public recognition reinforces our work and is immensely important both on a financial as well as at a conceptual level. In 2014 32.5 per cent of our income came from private donors - from individuals, foundations, companies and churches. Our members, sponsoring organisations and public subsidies made up 12.5 per cent of our income (55 per cent was income from our services, payed for by the Swiss Confederation, cantons and cities). FIZ is grateful for any contribution and any support – for more details please also read the interview with our fundraiser Lucia Tozzi on page 8.

Awarding of the equality prize to FIZ Makasi in the Town Hall of Zurich. © FIZ



Fundraising for FIZ

## Members make us independent and strong!

Lucia Tozzi, FIZ fund raiser since March 2012, is a former Swiss Socialist Party councilwoman and political activist for Secondas Plus, Zurich.

A mother of two, she studied economics in Lucerne. We asked Lucia about her work with FIZ.



### FIZ: What does a FIZ fundraiser do?

**Lucia:** She ensures that the organization is financially secure. In numbers, that means she tries to round up 700,000 Swiss francs every year!

This also entails tending to member and donator relationships, responding to inquiries, writing thank you letters and invoices. In four mailings per year and regular publications we keep our members informed about our work. The return flow on the mailings must then be analyzed.

In addition, I write funding appeals to private foundations, to public agencies and to church communities. I strive to engage new organizations to support FIZ and to maintain those who already support us. This requires very precise reporting. Thus, a great part of my duties lies in compiling individual reports to comply with the requirements of each funding institution. Furthermore, I would like to concentrate more on large donators and to this end, I am organizing a special event for the first time.

### FIZ Makasi and the housing shelter project

FIZ Makasi, the specialized counselling and support centre for trafficked women, launched in 2004, specializes in the care and counselling of women trafficking victims. In 2011, the Makasi housing shelter project was opened. The safe apartment offers victims of women trafficking an anonymous location, where they find a protected, guided and stabilizing place to live during the first months after escaping violence and exploitation. The counsellors support the women in attaining their independence and self-determination.

In 2014, a total of 20 women found asylum in the shelter. They came from Hungary, Thailand, Romania, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Slovakia, Nigeria, Poland, Macedonia and Ghana.

The shelter provided these women with a safe haven where they could find rest, gather new strength, consider their situation, experience everyday practicalities and establish a social environment. They also need this time to consider whether to testify against the perpetrators.

Shelter life is also an enormous challenge for these women. They have to surmount language barriers,

cultural misunderstandings and difficult personal circumstances.

Counsellors are in the shelter from Monday to Friday.

At other times there is a telephone stand-by duty.



A room in the Makasi shelter. ©FIZ



And finally, I organize singular events for fundraising, presenting FIZ in lectures and talks to introduce our work and generate funds.

### FIZ: What are your greatest challenges?

Lucia: Doubtlessly, one challenge is attaining non-specified donations for FIZ. Especially larger foundations generally want to support specific projects. It's easier to attain funds for an aid organization supporting projects in a foreign country, as there you can donate to a specific project and/or cause. We also have such projects, but on a much smaller scale. FIZ work focuses predominantly on counselling, guidance and crisis intervention. For such activities, drumming up funds is more difficult.

Another decided challenge is finding more FIZ members. Without the support of our 700 members, we couldn't do what we do. We need them – and we need more of them! The more members we have, the less dependent we would be on public funding, putting us in a position for more secure long-term planning.

### What are your fundraising wishes?

More member contributions to count on. If each person that reads this could canvass ten new members, we would be in a completely different league — independent and strong! It pleases me to no end when people who find our work important, support FIZ with creative fundraising campaigns such as benefit events, auctions, markets and collections. I am always eager and open for original ideas and prepared for all kinds of collaboration.

### Cabaret Dancer Status



Since its founding, the circumstances of cabaret dancers in Switzerland has been a FIZ concern. The Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies probe on this issue, commissioned by FIZ in 2006, provided scientifically founded insights for the first time. The study results revealed social injustices and abuses long known to FIZ through their experience in counselling and supporting dancers.

FIZ was a key contributor to generating the model work contract in 2003, which constitutes a valid evidence of employment for cabaret dancers. The contract regulates work hours, gross monthly salaries, social benefits and other guaranteed benefits such as accommodations, meals and transportation costs. It forbids prostitution and incitement to consume alcohol at the workplace. Employment and migration offices may only approve hiring when the contract complies with the model. But many cantons completely or partially neglect to control whether such contracts are upheld. Many dancers are subject to irregular salary deductions, unjust dismissal or salary retention. They are often victims of violence and are coerced into alcohol consumption and sexual services. FIZ has consistently demanded intensified control in cabarets and effective sanctions be exercised.

Instead, the Swiss Federal Council decided in 2014, based on an expert recommendation, to rescind the Cabaret Dancer Status as of January 1, 2016. We protested repealing this Status, as it would deny women from non-EU-member states their only opportunity to work legally in Switzerland. The Cabaret Dancer Status gave the dancers a legal status and the right to take work disputes to court. Rescinding the Cabaret Status will illegalize these women, rendering them vulnerable and without the right of defense.

And this is common also among sex workers who come to FIZ for counselling. They have fewer and fewer oppor-



tunities to work legally, and are being forced into illegality.

Over the last years, the social climate has become much harsher — evidence of which are the articles by Toy Meyer on page 5 and on the demise of brothels in Zurich on page 10.

Title leaf of the study "Cabaret Dancer Working and Living Conditions in Switzerland", published 2006

### Case study

### Demise of brothels in Zurich

Melissa\* wanted to follow the rules and have her brothel officially approved. A waste of time and money.

\*Details and names have been changed. Melissa has been living in Switzerland for 15 years, and has been a sex worker here for nearly the same amount of time. She runs a small brothel in a 3-room apartment in downtown Zurich. Another woman works for her part-time, whereby Melissa receives a 40 per cent cut of her returns for rent, administration costs such as rental, laundry and tools of the trade, as well as for paid announcements in Internet portals to attract new customers. And what is most important, Melissa grapples with the complicated, bureaucratic procedures to gain official approval according to the Prostitution Business Law (PGVO) of 2013 for commercial sex businesses in Zurich.

### Even the smallest brothels must have zoning approval

The new official regulation obligates brothel owners to ensure good working conditions for their employees. This is an issue that we NGOs fully agree with and believe to be important and correct. The new regulation applies to brothels with three or more sex workers. The city council correctly wanted to protect small, independent sex businesses from insurmountable bureaucratic hurdles, and excluded them from compulsory approval. At the end of 2012, the city police sent out a letter of notification to all brothels in Zurich known to them. Melissa also received the letter. Although her small brothel was exempt from the approval procedure, Zurich's zoning laws threw stones in her path. Even brothels in flats, with one or two sex workers are obligated to submit a zoning application for sex businesses. And sex businesses are forbidden in zones that are over 50 per cent residential. This discriminating stipulation applies only to sex businesses.

### The international network



International networking is vital to FIZ – we can only advocate the rights of migrant women together with partners from around the world. International cooperation also empowers our voice on the national level. The most important network, co-founded by FIZ in 1994, is the *Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women* (GAATW). This feminist network encompasses over 100 NGOs and many partners and alliances from every corner of the world. All of whom advocate the rights of women migrants and join the fight against women trafficking. GAATW is based in Bangkok and FIZ regularly participates in workgroups and conferences there.

FIZ is also a member of the biannual La Strada
International (LSI), an NGO platform of the European
Network Against Trafficking in Human Beings. We
also work together with the Coordination Circle Against
Trafficking in Human Beings KOK in Germany, the
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) based in Brussels, the Chris-



Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women summit in Rio 2009, with Carminha Pereira (standing in the middle) representing FIZ © FIZ

tian Organization Against Trafficking in Human Beings (COATNET) and the European NGOs Platform against Trafficking, Exploitation and Slavery (ENPATES). We regularly participate in international conferences sponsored by various UN organizations, the OSCE and other NGOs such as the Union of Counselling Centers for Sex Workers BUFAS,

### Running a costly gauntlet

The zoning approval procedure is highly complex and for Melissa it was a costly gauntlet she had to run without success. Melissa's salon is in a residential zone with over 80 per cent private homes. She can provide documents, however, that prove her sex business has been installed in the apartment since the early 1990s. Thus, Melissa can appeal to the vested rights guarantee, the only way to circumvent the 50 per cent zoning law. Melissa had to hire an architect to prepare blueprints for the zoning appeal, a venture that cost her several thousand Swiss francs. The appeal was submitted and based on the vested rights guarantee, in the end approved by the construction authorities. Melissa was relieved; her investment had paid off. But the decision's publication in the local paper triggered a wave of protest from neighbors. Several neighbors appealed the decision, demanding it be reversed. Now, in addition to the architect, Melissa needed a lawyer to represent her cause. The plaintiff was being represented by a renowned zoning specialist and it quickly became evident, that the proceedings could cost Melissa a fortune. Should she lose the case, the costs for her lawyer, the plaintiff's lawyer and the court costs as well, could run to several ten thousand Swiss francs. Money that Melissa simply could not raise. Melissa decided to withdraw her zoning appeal and agreed to close down her salon.

### An independent existence in ashes

Melissa has been running her brothel inconspicuously and discreetly for years. She paid her pension insurance and taxes conscientiously and punctually. Until now, she has never had any disputes with her neighbors. Even the property owner has known her profession since the day she rented the apartment and he also supported her zoning appeal. Melissa is satisfied in her profession. As a small-business-woman, she has built up an independent existence over the years. No small feat for a migrant women in Switzerland. Business is good; Melissa is even able to support her family in her homeland. Her youngest daughter is still in school. Melissa relies on her income. She would like to continue working independently. She does not know yet how she will support her family in the future. It is likely that she will have to get herself employed by a larger brothel, where someone else will determine the conditions under which she is to render her sexual services. She will have little negotiating power in her employment because of the few opportunities for legal sex workers in Zurich to work independently.

The city regulation generates more dependency on lawyers, architects, civil servants and large brothel managers and owners instead of supporting the rights of sex workers such as Melissa, making it possible for her to pay her own way independently and legally.

Rebecca Angelini

### The national network

FIZ is an active member of *ProKoRe*, a Swiss NGO network defending the rights of sex workers. We are also in close communication with the *NGO coordination post Beijing* and the *NGO platform for the Human rights*.

We also bring our expert knowledge to a myriad of work groups on all levels, be it cantonal, national or regional. One example are the roundtables against human trafficking in the cantons of Aargau, Basel, Bern, Fribourg, Lucerne, Schwyz, Solothurn, St. Gallen, Thurgovia und Zurich. In addition, we are a consulting member of the Swiss Coordination Unit against the Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (KSMM) as well as varying KSMM work groups. We are further represented in associated work groups addressing questions on the return of victims of women trafficking or of erotic business.



At the 2011 ProKoRe annual meeting hosted by FIZ ©FIZ



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