



Dr. Monika Hauser
Founder and Executive Member of the Board
medica mondiale e.V.

Short Biography

Monika Hauser was born in 1959 in Switzerland, where she grew up; as a child of parents from South Tyrol she is an Italian citizen. She has led a very international life: secondary schooling in Switzerland; extended stays in Israel and Sri Lanka; medical studies in Innsbruck, Austria, which she completed successfully in 1984; State Examination in Bologna, Italy; licence to practice medicine in Germany; assistant doctor in Essen, Germany; with further training and Facharzt (specialist) certification in gynaecology. She then settled in Cologne.

At the end of 1992, Monika Hauser sees media reports about the mass rape of Bosnian women during the Bosnian war. She travels straight into the war-torn area to help. In April 1993, together with about 20 local female psychologists and doctors, she opens the women's therapy centre *Medica Zenica* in the town of Zenica. This start is made possible by both private and public donors. An office is set up in Cologne for the charity *medica mondiale*.

Responding to the Kosovo war, the women's rights organisation then goes on to set up further women's therapy centres in 1999, in both Kosovo and Albania. After the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, 2001 sees the beginning of projects in that country offering medical and psychological treatment for women and girls. Additionally, legal assistance for female prisoners is offered and campaigns are organised against the practice of forced marriage for girls under the age of majority. *medica mondiale* has also been working in south-east Liberia since 2006 and its Grant Program expands the organisation's scope of action to cover many more countries, with one of the focal areas being the Great Lakes region of Africa.

The work of *medica mondiale* is based on interdisciplinary and innovative approaches: traumatised women receive integrated assistance including medical, psychosocial and legal support, all with the aim of strengthening their personal resources and enabling them to live a self-determined life. Right from the beginning, Monika Hauser and her colleagues developed specialist standards for trauma-sensitive treatment of women locally. With human rights and public awareness work she can fight against sexualised wartime violence and promote sustainable gender equality worldwide.

The public became aware of Monika Hauser's commitment to support women in war and crisis areas very early on and she has been honoured many times: examples include the "Woman of the Year" award in 1993 from the German ARD-Tagesthemen current affairs show and in 2008 the "Right Livelihood Award" – also known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize". In November 2012, Monika Hauser was awarded the State Prize by the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia to honour her outstanding humanitarian work in war regions and other crisis areas. In May 2013, she received the North-South Prize 2012 of the Council of Europe.

The first biography about Monika Hauser was written by Erica Fischer, appearing in 1997 with the title "Am Anfang war die Wut" (It all began with anger). A second biography was published in 2008: "Nicht aufhören anzufangen" (Never ceasing to begin) from Chantal Louis.