



Sybille Fezer
Executive Director for Programmes &
Strategic Development at *medica mondiale*

Short Biography

Sybille Fezer was born on December 3, 1969, in Heidenheim and grew up in the Swabian Jura region. Her professional career began with an apprenticeship at the local newspaper (Heidenheimer Zeitung/Südwestpresse Ulm). This was followed by a period abroad in Brazil, where she was active from 1992 to 1998 in a range of educational and cultural projects. These included directing the youth centre of the Favela Peinha in Monte Azul, initiating work with girls and boys and setting up women's self-help groups. Back in Germany, Sybille Fezer worked as an independent journalist, which enabled her to finance her Social Work studies in Heidenheim from 1998 to 2001. Her professional biography also includes training as a systemic counsellor and further training in conflict and peace research.

In 1999 Sybille Fezer saw TV images of thousands of people fleeing from Kosovo and heard of the murders and rapes taking place there. NATO fighter jets flying over her apartment only served to increase her feelings of unease and strengthen her resolve to do something useful. Her chance came in 2001 when she saw a job advert from *medica mondiale* for its project in Kosovo. This was the start of her work at the women's rights organisation, which has since also taken her to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia as well as Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq – the latter in her previous role of Regional Project Officer. In November 2016 she assumed the position of Executive Director for Programmes & Strategic Development at *medica mondiale*.

For Sybille Fezer, the aspects of her work which she particularly appreciates are the challenges of devising and developing new concepts and strategies for each new project country. Here there are always important focal questions: How can we reach out to women who have experienced sexualised violence? What specific access strategies do we need to develop because the issue is a taboo? How do we want to shape the cooperation with our local project partners?

In Kosovo, for example, the organisation refitted a van to operate as a mobile clinic so staff members could offer gynaecological examinations in the villages. They were trained to recognise symptoms of sexualised violence and provide counselling to the women. In Afghanistan a different approach was needed: here, an advice centre was established in the 'Women's Garden' in Kabul. Staff members also visited prisons to counsel women accused or convicted of 'moral crimes'. In Liberia communities of solidarity were set up in small villages, with members acting as points of contact for women who have experienced violence.

medica mondiale develops specific concepts for each of its [project regions](#) (Afghanistan, Middle East, Southeastern Europe, West Africa, Central Africa). These comprise stress- and trauma-sensitive counselling for women and girls, helping them gain access to medical care, legal advice and income-generating measures. Additionally, *medica mondiale* provides training for police, judicial and healthcare staff. It also works to bring about societal and political changes in favour of women – worldwide.