

Earlier this year, Misch mit! featured an interview with the team behind the theatre project aimed at supporting women living in Berlin as refugees. The project, funded by SOS Kinderdorf and set up by trained theatre professionals Linda Ebbers and Jana Anajregrub, was designed to offer female refugees a space to express what they had gone through and what they are dealing with, through the power of theatre. The project has since come to an end so Misch mit! thought it would be a good time to sit down with Linda and assess how the project went.

"It was an experience," starts Linda as we sit down for a chat and a coffee in Moabit. "I realised it's not enough just to have an idea, or a good space for the project, a lot more is involved for a project to come together and be a success."

Over the course of three months, Linda and Jana worked with a number of women from Syria, Afghanistan and Iran. Using a form of theatre that originated out of Brazil called Theatre of the Oppressed, which uses the body and sound to express emotions, the initial idea would be that the same group of women would be free to meet every week and ideally work towards putting a performance on at the end of the project. But it wasn't long into it that Linda realised this may not be as easy to arrange as she had hoped.

"Our first challenge was trying to find women to take part through the hostels but it wasn't easy to reach the women."

"Then the challenge became about getting the same women to come back each week. We realised quite quickly that for many of these women, their reality is hard. Many live in camps and have issues with housing. Others have their own problems with asylum applications or trying to find a place for their child in a kindergarden. So we realised early on it wouldn't be possible to get the same women to come every week."

So it went from a plan to have a three month performance plan to simply trying to make each week work with the women who were able to come.

The other challenge was the language barrier, as during each session not all women would be able to understand what to do.

Despite these challenges, Linda and Jana were able to create a positive space where women seemed to let go and enjoy themselves. Linda says: "Many women surprised themselves by how they acted in the sessions. Many behaved differently to how they would in their daily lives and they gave us a lot of positive feedback."

There are no plans as of yet to begin a second round of the project, but if it was to happen, Linda knows what she would do differently. "Firstly, I would open it up to non-refugees as well. I think this would be good for integration. I would also think about arranging childcare, so that the women can enjoy the sessions without worrying too much about what their children are up to. As well as getting people in who spoke more languages, I would also think about opening up the age range as it didn't feel right for it to be women between the ages of 18 and 26 years old. And we would need to think harder about how we would let the women know in the first place that this is happening."

Linda adds: "Overall though I think this has been a success for the women who have taken part. You could see that when the women were there, they felt comfortable, and they really took the opportunity to do something they hadn't done before."