

# »I know how suffering feels like"

Isabelle Müller has made it: She lives in a large House, has a family, is a successful author, and runs a foundation. But her life hasn't always been so rosy. Müller has fought her way up.

was already at the bottom

## If you look at Isabelle Müller,

one would not suspect the peace and quiet that not many people have. But perhaps it is precisely its eventful past, which the 53-year-old from Unterreichenbach-Kapfenhardt. Because Müller knows how it feels not to live in a huge house, not to be surrounded by to be accepted.

She was born and raised as youngest of five children of a Frenchman and a Vietnamese woman in poor Conditions in France. "We slept on the hard floor because we had no beds," she recalls.

The father is unemployed, the mother due to Often excluded because of her Asian origins, her childhood was very hard, says Müller. But that is not the end of enough: For eight years she was sexually abused by her father. The terrible experiences resulted ultimately in several suicide attempts. "But my time hadn't come yet," she says gratefully today.

Later Isabelle Müller came for some time to Germany, where she lived with her older sister. Due to her lack of language skills, she was

sent to secondary school – although she had been the best in her class in France



**In the remote regions of North Vietnam,** the foundation is rebuilding kindergartens and schools, so that the children can receive an education.

Photo: Loan Foundation

But at some point her luck also once lovely: She learned by chance know a wealthy, older woman, who set out to turn the girl's life around. And she succeeded.

Years later, she worked again in Germany, as an interpreter and met her current husband there, with whom she has two adult daughters. During all this time, Müller has never lost sight of one goal: At the age of six, she had promised her mother Dau-Thi-Cuc, known as Loan, that she would one day write down her life story.

"I've always had this thought and tried again and again," she says. However, she didn't really start writing until after the death of Loan ("Phoenix") in 2003.

The life story of the Vietnamese woman, who fled from a forced marriage as a child, repeatedly

war and faced death more than once, is now making waves – in Germany and in Vietnam. »It is a piece of Vietnamese

history that was missing," explains Isabelle Müller the success. »And it is a very honest book.« Until

the biography made it onto the bestseller lists, it was not an easy Way. While searching for a publisher who would publish the book about her mother, it turned out that this often more interested in a biography of Müller herself had more than her mother's. So she also wrote down the events of her own life. Above all, By revealing the sexual abuse, the book caused a stir in 2009. Müller was even

Federal President Joachim Gauck was invited. "I read from the story 150 times. After three years, I realized: 'That's not my thing.'"

She did not want to always talk about the abuse, did not feel like many others felt liberated—neither in writing nor in reading. So she decided on a radical change:

»I have officially announced that I will not more from ›Phoenix Daughter: The Hope was my path'.« Müller wanted to make her mother's story the focus of the

Therefore, in 2015, she sent the book to the Kindle Storyteller Award 2015« from Amazon.



Photo: Rousek

She received more than 1000 submissions the finale. The starting signal for the great success, the book became a bestseller. The Vietnamese translation of »Loan – From the Life of a Phoenix« has achieved a great importance in the country within a very short time. »It is

in every school, in every library," says Müller proudly. "This feels right. Then my mother did not have her life lived for nothing.«

Instead of living off the royalties To make a good living from the sale of the book, the 53-year-old invests every euro into the Loan Foundation, which 2016. The administrative and travel costs for the foundation are borne by Müller and her husband himself. »Every euro should arrive so that the donors can have a good feeling.« The

foundation supports children and Young people in remote regions North Vietnam. »My mother always wanted to do something for the children there, but never money for it.« That's why she Now that. Several times a year Müller flies himself to Vietnam to get an idea of the situation on the ground. »There must be You don't have to be squeamish," she says. The mountain regions in particular are sometimes difficult to reach, and the muddy paths are in danger of slipping.

The foundation is currently taking a lot time in the life of the mother of two.

But she can look forward to the future imagine writing another book or even several.

Possibly a Continuation of one's own biography, because that interests people. »What interests me authentic is that I know how suffering feels like. The strength to survive, is simply there," she smiles.

by Bianca Rousek