

Kurdistan-Iraq

Achieving inner calm after the flight

Emergency pedagogic help at the Kurdish refugee camp Domiz



For quite a while now the war-like conditions in Syria have been at the emergency pedagogues' center of attention. The peoples' sorrow is just as overwhelming as their need for psychosocial help and stabilization. Unfortunately, the security situation in Syria, makes it impossible to work directly in the country; however, the emergency pedagogic team is involved in many relief actions in the context of this crisis. Following up on this year's fall-assignment in Beirut, eleven emergency pedagogues [1] worked at the refugee camp Domiz in Kurdistan-Iraq from November 30th until December 13th. The team helped young Syrian refugees to process their experiences and trained local employees in emergency- and trauma-pedagogic concepts.

Shelter

The situation at the Domiz refugee camp is a complex one: At present 40.000 people live there, the majority of which are Syrian Kurds who had to flee their land due to war. However, there are also Iraqi Kurds who had sought refuge in Syria in the years past and are now returning to their country. The last group of refugees is made up of a small minority of internally displaced Iraqi refugees. Though the solidarity is strong amongst the Kurdish population, misery does show itself in various situations. One of the outer indicators is the housing situation of the refugees in Domiz. Though the internal consequences are not as obviously to be seen, they can clearly be understood as soon as people start to confide their stories. The terror they had to live through is still part of their daily emotional life.

This is especially true for children and adolescents, thus the main aim of this assignment was to provide the young refugees with as much support as possible in processing the events that had led to them fleeing their homes, but also in mastering their daily life at the refugee camp. In pursuing this goal, the emergency pedagogues worked at two schools and in two Child Friendly Spaces where they introduced various methods to the local employees and got them acquainted with the principles of emergency- and trauma-pedagogic work. The methods covered a wide range of approaches, for example form drawing, plasticizing, eurhythmy, and experiential education. Some of the methods were totally unknown to the local curriculum; however children and teacher quickly picked up on them.

Sustainability



The inclusion of educators and teachers is an important aspect of the emergency- and trauma-pedagogic work with children and adolescents. This aspect is important because it grants the continuation of our efforts at the camp. In the case of our assignment in Domiz, many educators and teachers even attended the workshops in their leisure time in order to learn more new methods. This part of our work was rounded off by a seminar which the camp's teachers, educators and social workers were invited to. In the end, about 2100 children and adolescents as well as 100 teachers profited from this assignment.

Friends of Waldorf Education to become “implementing partner” at UNHCR

Thanks to the successful course of the project, the UNHCR gave the Friends a grant for 2014 which enables the Friends to continue their long standing work in the region. The Gawilan refugee camp, which now is in its formation process, is only 2 hours away from Domiz. Due to the continuing stream of refugees, about 30.000 people will be placed in this new camp. As of March 2014 the Friends of Waldorf education are planning to implement a Child Protection Center with trauma-pedagogic orientation. This Center will provide space for three groups, which will be divided into toddlers, school children and adolescents. The Friends will seek and train local personnel to enable them to administrate the center on their own. The role model for the new center in Gawilan is the emergency pedagogic project at the Kenyan refugee camp Kakuma at which this model has been implemented two years ago and which has shown as continual growth ever since.

In addition, the Friends will accompany and assist the foundation of a school at the Gawilan camp. This includes the trauma-pedagogic training of the school's teachers and the integration of trauma-pedagogic methods in the school-curriculum. The goal is it to create a so called “Child Friendly School”, which focuses on the needs of traumatized children. This will not only ensure a solid scholarly education, but also be the general advantage to the children's entire development.

The assignment at the Domiz refugee camp was carried out in close cooperation with UNICEF, UNHCR and the Kurdish Department of Education. It was funded through the German Relief Coalition. We would like to thank all parties involved, for this exceedingly successful collaboration!

Malte Landgraff

[1] The team was made up off: Bernd Ruf (managing director), Malte Landgraff (team leader), Jorge Schaffer (curative educator), Moises Elosua (experiential educator), Franziska König (physicist), Dimitri Vinogradov (eurhythmist), Julia Sommer (art therapist), Fiona Bay (nurse), Merle Marks (waldorf educator), Jule Meyer (educator), and Zoe Marie Besand (educator).