

Emergency Pedagogy Against the Despair

Unimaginable Destruction after the Strongest Hurricane in 9 Years

On October 29th, only a few weeks after the destructive hurricane Matthew, a team from the emergency pedagogy department of the Friends of Waldorf Education travelled to Haiti. The maximal wind speed and torrential downpour ravaged entire regions of the bitterly poor country, trees were uprooted and houses destroyed. With support from Aktion Deutschland Hilft, additional donations, and in cooperation with local partner organisations, a ten person team was able to work with teachers and children for two weeks on location.

On January 12th, 2010 the improvised island country was hit by a category 7 earthquake. After 6 years many still have unprocessed memories of this catastrophe and suffer from the results. Now the psychological wounds have once again been opened, the people were retraumatised. What's more, further problems for the people were caused by the destruction of agriculture and nature. Many farmers have lost their harvest and with it their only source of income and now don't know how they should continue. In order to process these experiences and to stabilise affected persons, psycho-social support is of utmost importance.

On, in part very adventurous routes, our volunteer colleagues were able to also reach remote regions, which were especially hard hit by the hurricane. Emergency pedagogy seminars in schools, which now function as emergency shelters, gave teachers trauma pedagogical foundational knowledge and emergency pedagogy methods. The offerings for the children and adolescents gave them safety, structure, and continuity and made it possible for them to build-up new trust in themselves and the environment. The work also helped the teachers; they reported having new energy and fresh ideas for the school day and also in dealing with traumatised children.

In addition to pedagogical first aid, the team also brought medical care to Haiti: check-ups, wound care, and chronic pain had to be treated. Also individual care for especially strongly affected persons was made possible by this mission. One of these especially traumatised children is the 13 year old Ed: Only 5% of his vision is intake, he has a jaw malposition, and a previously operated cleft-lip-and-palate. His mother died in the earthquake of 2010. He lives now with relatives out of necessity, who are overwhelmed with the care of the disabled boy and provided badly rather than well for him. Ed hardly speaks at all, since the hurricane he hasn't spoken a single word to adults. In addition, he could hardly sleep due to the traumatic stress. After a massage by our emergency pedagogue, he could finally find some relaxation and then slept for a few hours. Through the attention and emergency pedagogy exercise he spoke again for the first time since the storm after five days.

Sometimes though, just the attention or little activities are enough for children to experience self-efficacy. This can be the initial ignition which activates their self-healing powers.

In order to finance missions like this one, we are dependent on donations. Every little bit helps us to support children in need.

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*The **Friends of Waldorf Education** are worldwide sponsors of a free education system. Since 1971 they have advocated for Waldorf education and the freedom of education systems. Since 1993 the office in Karlsruhe has organized and supervised international volunteer services worldwide and has to date made it possible for over 7,000 people to complete a social service in over 350 projects in more than 60 countries. Now around 600 young people annually take part in the programme. Since the summer of 2011 it has also been possible to complete a 12-month civil service in anthroposophic institutions in Germany through the association.*

Since 2006 the Friends of Waldorf Education have been active in the area of emergency pedagogy. Following the outbreak of a war or a natural disaster, they worked with psychologically traumatized children and adolescents in Lebanon (2006), China (2008 and 2013); Indonesia (2009), Haiti (2010), Kyrgyzstan (2010), Japan (2011), and Kenya (2012-2013), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014), Greece (2015), Slovenia (2015), Nepal (2015-2016), Ecuador (2016), Gaza (2009-2016) the Philippines (2013-2016), Germany (2014-2016), Paris (2016), Brussels (2016), and Kurdistan-Iraq (2013-2016).



Freunde der Erziehungskunst is a member of **Germany's Relief Coalition**, a union of German relief organisations that can provide rapid and effective aid in the case of large catastrophes and emergency situations abroad.