

Karlsruhe, 27 April 2016

Emergency Pedagogy Crisis Intervention in Ecuador

On April 16th, 2016 Ecuador was shaken by an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8, one of the worst in the country's history. Many aftershocks followed. The number of dead has now risen to over 650. Especially children find it difficult to process such experiences; they literally lose the ground beneath their feet. To support these traumatised children, an emergency pedagogy team of the Friends of Waldorf Education is traveling to the region of Manabí from the 2nd to 17th of May. This emergency pedagogy mission is taking place in cooperation with "Aktion Deutschland Hilft".

During an earthquake of this kind, many children lose trust in the stability of their environment; their entire worldview can be shaken by such a catastrophe. Till now there have been more than 500 further strong aftershocks, which leave people living in constant fear. Children often have particular difficulties, classifying and overcoming their experiences of fear, destruction, and death: this is how posttraumatic stress reactions can develop. Children can be stabilised with emergency pedagogy methods and thus avoid trauma related disorders.

"As important the treatment of wounds, breaks, and other physical injuries resulting from an earthquake also is—the psychological effects of such catastrophes often continue to stress the affected persons long after the earthquake." With this statement, Manuela Roßbach (executive director of "Aktion Deutschland Hilft") gets to the heart of the matter.

In art and experiential pedagogy workshops, affected children have the possibility to counter against traumatic experiences with new, beautiful experiences. "This allows psychological experiences caused by the trauma to be loosened and the experiences can be more easily processed," explains Bernd Ruf, the mission leader. The otherwise so happy Ecuadorian children should be allowed to laugh again.

Parents and close attachment persons are also often traumatised. They are not or only somewhat able to help their children. Additionally they are often overwhelmed with the trauma related behavioural changes displayed by their children. Advising is being offered to them, which should make it possible for them to better understand posttraumatic reactions.

The volunteer emergency pedagogy team consists of 12 experienced pedagogues and therapists, four of which come from Germany, the rest from South America. Many of the team members already have years of experiences working with traumatised children after catastrophes or humanitarian crises.

Pedagogical First Aid after the Catastrophe

The emergency pedagogy of the Friends of Waldorf Education is based on Waldorf pedagogy methods and related therapy forms. In the context of numerous missions worldwide, many children have already been aided in processing their traumatic experiences and so-called trauma related disorders have been lessened.

A rhythmically designed daily structure, regulated eating and sleeping times, and rest and action phases should give children and adolescents orientation, safety, and stability. Through the activation of the affect person's self-healing powers, the processing process is promoted and supported. With

experiential pedagogy exercises, trust in oneself and one's fellow human beings should be strengthened. In art and experiential pedagogy courses, affected children have the possibility to affect against traumatic experiences with new and beautiful experiences. Movement and clapping games bring joy, dissolve inner torpor, and support physical coordination.

In order to finance their mission, the Friends of Waldorf Education are dependent on donations.

Donations Account:

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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); Gaza (2009-2013), Indonesia (2009), Haiti (2010), Kyrgyzstan (2010), Japan (2011), and Kenya (2012-2013), the Philippines (2013-2015), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014), Nepal (2015), Greece (2015), Slovenia (2015), Kurdistan-Iraq (2013-2016), and Germany (2014-2016).



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.