

Karlsruhe, May 29th, 2015

Together with UNICEF for traumatised children

For the fifth time, an emergency pedagogy team of the Friends of Waldorf Education is travelling to northern Iraq in order to psychosocially support traumatised children. The mission will be taking place from the 29th of May until the 12th of June and is embedded in a long-term joint project with UNICEF.

Since the beginning of April, the Friends of Waldorf Education could set up a continual presence in the region of Dohuk thanks to the current cooperation with UNICEF. This cooperation with UNICEF is a milestone for emergency pedagogy, and makes ongoing relief for traumatised refugee children in the camp possible. A project coordinator and nine local pedagogues could be appointed, who further implement the emergency pedagogical work in the refugee camp schools also between missions of the German team. Many of the local co-workers are themselves refugees and live in the refugee camps around Dohuk.

The main focus of the renewed mission of the German experts in the crisis region is therefore the further and continuing education of the local colleagues. To this end, German and Iraqi colleagues will together design pedagogical and therapeutic offerings for traumatised children in several UNICEF schools.

The living and working conditions in the refugee camps are difficult even months after the first big waves of refuge. Despite the lessons of the UNICEF schools in the refugee camps taking place in containers instead of tents, there is often neither electricity nor running water. Many of the teachers are due to their own experiences of displacement and fleeing also themselves very traumatised.

In addition to continuing education for the local Iraqi team, the teachers of the UNICEF schools will also receive basic training in trauma pedagogy. They will be taught about the progression and effects of traumatisation and also the basics of pedagogical trauma work. With this we will give them a tool to understand the traumatisation of their students and how to support them in their processing of awful events. At the same time, the pedagogues learn how to recognize their own traumatisation and how to stabilize themselves with help from rhythmic exercises and relaxation techniques.

Emergency Pedagogy: pedagogical first aid

After violent events, emotional wounds come in addition to outer wounds; most weigh heavily on the soul. Many of the affected lose their inner balance and become sick with post-traumatic stress disorders. The Friends of Waldorf Education work with Waldorf pedagogical methods and related forms of therapy, in order to support the processing of terrible experiences. At the same time the self healing power of those affected should be activated. Thereby help experiential pedagogical exercises to strengthen trust in one's self and one's fellow human beings. Movement games dissolve inner torpor. Painting therapy exercises create non-verbal expression opportunities, through which distance from the terrible experiences can be created.

Emergency pedagogy of the Friends of Waldorf Education has been active in the autonomous region of Kurdistan in Iraq since 2013. In the scope of countless operations worldwide many children have

already been helped to process their traumatic experiences and so called trauma related disorders have been lessened.

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*The **Friends of Waldorf Education** is worldwide sponsors of a free education system. Since 1971 they advocate for Waldorf education and the freedom of education systems. Since 1993 the office in Karlsruhe organizes and supervises international volunteer services worldwide. Since summer 2011 it is possible to complete a 12-month civil service in anthroposophic institutions through the association.*

Since 2006 the Friends of Waldorf Education are 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), Kurdistan-Iraq (2013-2015), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014), and Nepal (2015).



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.