

“Why do these people come from Germany to help our children?” Emergency Pedagogy in Northern Iraq from the Perspective of a Local Colleague

Last weekend, the 13th mission of the Friends of Waldorf Education in Northern Iraq came to an end. In the refugee camps, local professionals have been continuously trained and further educated since 2016. Special attention was given to ensuring that the colleagues became independently able to carry out the work and deeply dove into the principles and methods of trauma pedagogy work.

One of these local colleagues is Hameed Jirido Murad. He has been working for the Friends of Waldorf Education for two years in Iraq.

At that time, he observed how an international team together with local volunteers offered games, art, and creative activities for the many children wandering about the camp. He wondered: “why do these people come from Germany to help our children?”.

When there were coordination difficulties between the German workers and the local camp management, Hameed offered his help and assisted as a translator. It became quickly apparent, that with his human warmth, curiosity, and openness, he had more to offer than just helpful English skills.

Now, Hameed helps everyday to build a bit of a safe place for the children.

He delights in the social surroundings, which have sprung up through the work in teams and with the people around the child protection centre in the refugee camp. In trainings covering emergency and trauma pedagogy, which are regularly run during missions by German and international pedagogues, therapists, and medically trained persons, he has learned in addition to methods and specialist knowledge, how important especially patience and calm are for the work with affected children. Only in this way, can one give them the necessary room to be able to “open up their hearts again” he tells us. But he hasn’t learned everything yet; the work with the mission teams is always a new win. He uses his new knowledge in the work with the children and is steadily increasing his pedagogical finesse.

When Hameed is not working in the child protection centre in the refugee camp, he often invites children to his tent or looks for them with their families, in order to paint together with them. He is again and again amazed at the many painted pictures, in which the children tell their stories, thoughts, and dreams. Thanks to training in simple art therapy methods, he knows how to deliberately guide the painting and can better understand the pictures.

Hameed says, that he is thankful for the work, because with it allows him to provide his family with warm food. He doesn’t want to get rich, he emphasises, but he wants to provide well for his family and have everything necessary for a dignified life. The work with the Friends of Waldorf Education is not only a source of income for Hameed, but above all also gives him the opportunity to create a healing environment for children in a difficult living situation, in which he himself lives, by allowing them to experience joy.

Donations Account

GLS Bank Bochum BLZ 430 609 67 Account 800 800 700
IBAN DE06 4306 0967 0800 8007 00
BIC GENODEM1GLS Keyword "Notfallpädagogik"

Press Contact:

Reta Lüscher-Rieger
Press and Public Relations for Emergency Pedagogy
Tel.: 0721-354806 140
Fax: 0721-354806 180
E-Mail: r.luescher-rieger@freunde-waldorf.de
Website: www.freunde-waldorf.de

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 (2015-2017), Ecuador (2016), Gaza (2009-2016) the Philippines (2013-2016), Germany (2014-2016), Paris (2016), Brussels (2016,) Haiti (2016), and Kurdistan-Iraq (since 2013).



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.