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2025

NEWS FROM THE WORK OF EMERGENCY PEDAGOGY



Freunde der
Erziehungskunst
Rudolf Steiners

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From the work of the EMERGENCY PEDAGOGY

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Dear readers,

2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Rudolf Steiner, whose work provides a firm foundation for our work and continues to inspire and give us strength in emergency pedagogy. In the face of world events, Steiner spoke of hope, which can be understood as a creative power, and encourages us to remain active despite all obstacles. Hope is not to be understood as something passive, but as a precondition for action. We need this energy and love of action in our work so that we can support children and young people to find a healthy future despite war and crises.

So today I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people around the world who have volunteered their expertise and time to us for many years by travelling to wherever there is a need. Or, by regularly sitting down in front of their computers in the evenings to support colleagues in many different regions and countries through online meetings and discussions. Thanks to all the people who join us in carrying a spark of hope to places where it may no longer exist, or only very faintly.

The opportunity to help and the chance to do something meaningful - these are the aspects that, in turn, help us to process and integrate what we have experienced. But above all, it is the people we work with who keep motivating us to keep going and not lose hope. In this issue, for example, we talk about Faten from Syria, who, at the end of her training in December, said, full of optimism, "Now I feel stronger to take up the tasks on site again." We also recently reported on our website about Ivan, who fled Sinjar as a child from the militias of the so-called Islamic State (IS) and lost his father in the process. Ten years later, he describes his time in our Child Friendly Space in a refugee camp in northern Iraq as "like being cradled on my father's lap". And our colleagues in Lebanon summarised their work for us as follows: "When the children start coming to us in the Child Friendly Space, they

often speak the language of aggression. When they leave after six months of regular visits, they leave in friendship."

But it would be wrong to think that our work is all about giving. We can always learn a lot from the encounters - we learn from the people, and together with them. Irina, one of our volunteer colleagues, says that working with people in a wide variety of contexts is possible for her because she can immediately recognise how the encounters and joint activities have direct and positive impacts on the children.

We may not be able to achieve as much as we would like in every assignment. But we take the encounters home with us and can, for example, remind people who don't have the luxury of travelling by drawing attention to these situations.

With this in mind, we look forward to the coming period with gratitude and hope, knowing that we can continue to support children and young people where it is needed, and where we have been summoned, thanks to the active support of our volunteer experts and our donors.



*With heartfelt thanks
for your support of our
emergency educational
work.*

Fiona Bay

Training for educators from Syria in the week of political upheaval

6th February marked the second anniversary of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Since then, the Friends of Waldorf Education's emergency education programme has been supporting people in both countries with regular workshops for children and young people as well as training courses with adults in Turkey. Further training sessions with Syrian and Turkish educators will also take place this year in Gaziantep and Istanbul.

In December 2024, an international team of trauma and emergency educators travelled to Gaziantep for a second gathering of several days with their colleagues from Syria. The first meeting in person took place in May 2024, while the previous meetings were held exclusively online, as it had not been possible to travel to Syria. Nevertheless, the regular get-togethers created a bond between the participants and the team and the joy of meeting in person was great.

The main focus of this second meeting was to further deepen the practical sessions on music, move-

ment and art. However, the training for the teachers from Syria took place during the week in which everything changed there. The political upheaval resonated subliminally throughout the week. Many of the participants could hardly sleep, the news was constantly checked and there was a lot of discussion during the breaks. Despite the excitement and restlessness, tiredness, turmoil and hope on the part of the Syrian educators, they worked together constructively on content.

Faten Alabdullah from Aziz works as a social worker for an aid organisation that is active in Syria, among other places. She said that the online meetings had been a great enrichment for her. However, coming together in person in May and December was even more important for her. Since then, she feels confident and well "equipped" in her work with children and parents. For Faten, this second training course came at just the right time. "We are going back to a new Syria, there are many challenges waiting for us."

Fiona Bay



UKRAINE:

Three Years of Promoting Resilience

Among the many crises that have worried us in recent years, dominated the news, and caused great uncertainty, the war in Ukraine plays a special role. Since 1945, it is the first major military conflict to rage more or less on our doorstep in Europe. The war has been simmering since 2014. The Friends of the Art of Education became active in Ukraine when the situation escalated significantly with the major invasion in 2022, resulting in many deaths and great stress among the population. Waldorf educator and therapist Minka Straube and anthroposophical physician Martin Straube have traveled to Ukraine many times since then for the Friends of Emergency Education program. On the third anniversary of the major invasion, they report on their work.

We have already held 40 seminars on-site with the Friends over the past three years. Eleven of them were in Poland, where many people initially fled from Ukraine at the beginning of the invasion. In addition to several five-day seminars at various locations in Ukraine, we have so far conducted four advanced training courses on trauma education, each with eight modules: one in Krakow, Poland, two near Lviv, and one in Odessa. Participants in-

cluded teachers, psychologists, art therapists, and dedicated volunteers who work with children, relatives of killed soldiers, or those injured in combat.

Psychotraumatology, an understanding of the traumatic process, and knowledge of what can be achieved with educational measures for traumatized children, adolescents, or adults are even less widespread in Ukraine than they are here. We are trying to change this through our local offerings.

The advanced training course in trauma education includes not only content-based input on psychotraumatology, but also many methodological and practical exercises. The combination of content-based input on psychotraumatology and trauma education with the practice of experiential education, meaningful games for different age groups, and conversation techniques has proven very successful. Art therapists, eurythmists, and specialists teaching relaxation techniques participated in five of the eight seminar units.

In the beginning, we met people who were very committed and confident that the war would soon end – many firmly believed in Ukraine's victory. Over time, the participants became increasingly exhausted, war-weary, and desperate. Many had suffered casualties in their families or circles of friends, and their confidence in victory was dwindling. But for the participants, the regular meetings became a safe place. Many described it as "recharging their batteries" in the modules. Never before in our many years of international work in emergency and trauma education have we experienced such rapid absorption of the content and practical elements by the participants and their immediate application in their workplaces. Furthermore, strong social bonds with mutual help and support quickly developed





among the participants in the training groups. The meetings became sources of strength that strengthened resilience.

In the many feedbacks from participants, we read about the transformations they underwent through the course. One participant writes: "The course has changed me: It has made me more sensitive, responsive, attentive, and respectful, but at the same time more resilient in the face of the challenges of work and life. I'm learning to see opportunities in my weaknesses and to view difficulties as challenges that can be solved by changing something about myself or a situation. I'm also trying to believe in small steps now and not devalue them, but rather acknowledge them."

Life in Ukraine has deteriorated significantly for most people; as a result, many are losing their motivation and zest for life, becoming depressed and increasingly anxious. During the training courses, the participants experienced the opposite. So we

"I'm learning to see opportunities in my weaknesses and to view difficulties as challenges that can be solved..."

always ask ourselves: Who is actually learning from whom here? What we encounter in these encounters is a tremendous gift that makes us ever more humble.

This year, we will accompany another continuing education group, supervise the previous participants, and train a group of previous graduates to become instructors - our goal is to make ourselves redundant. We don't know how the war will continue. But we do know that there are people who can build inner peace in the midst of war and will pass this ability on. We thank them and express our unconditional appreciation!

Minka and Martin Straube

WEST BANK:

Empowering educators

Pupils in the West Bank repeatedly experience their schools being attacked by radical Israeli settlers, or the military suddenly turning up at school. They are stopped at checkpoints on their way to school and sometimes cannot get through. In September 2024, an emergency and trauma pedagogy team visited the Hope Flower School in Bethlehem for the first time. A second training session in January 2025 was primarily intended to strengthen the teachers on site.

At the end of the first visit last year, the teachers expressed the wish that a trauma and emergency pedagogy team would come back and continue working with the teachers in particular. We were able to keep our promise and were in Bethlehem from 27th to 31st January, but unfortunately our arrival was delayed due to hours of waiting at the checkpoint. In addition, the teachers from a school in Hebron were unable to take part, as the journeys from one town to another often involve many hours of waiting at the checkpoints and cannot be planned in advance.

At the beginning, the teacher Khaled asked us: "How can we give when we have nothing left?" He and other teachers talked about the feeling of hopelessness, the feeling of no longer being free and being haunted by persistent fears. Many reported that they suffer from sleeping and eating disorders,

some told of their depression and anxiety attacks. So, where do we find the strength to offer the children security and deal with their traumas sensitively?

Over the next few days, we focussed our joint work deepening the methods of emergency and trauma pedagogy with the teachers - on the one hand through theoretical impulses on psychotraumatology and pedagogy, and on the other, through art workshops, movement and age-appropriate play. They had already received their first impulses in September and were therefore familiar with our approach.

When the participants were asked what they would like to see in the future, the answer was: more training sessions. They would like these to last even longer and other teachers from other schools should be invited. They would like to share with them what they experienced as empowering.

The work in the West Bank is possible thanks to the support of Aktion Deutschland Hilft.

Fiona Bay/Larissa Küllmar



Australia: **Online-training in trauma and emergency pedagogy**

In September 2024, a group of Australian Waldorf teachers travelled to Europe to seek new inspiration for their teaching. In Karlsruhe, they visited the Parzival Centre and learned about trauma and emergency pedagogy for the first time. They inquired about training opportunities, and in response, Raphaela Logemann, coordinator of the emergency pedagogy team, organized an online training course. Partners from South Africa, Brazil, Kenya, the Netherlands, the Philippines, and Lebanon introduced the Australian group to the theory and practice of emergency and trauma pedagogy and presented projects from their work. The collaboration continues. Our experienced colleague from Lebanon is already planning the next step: to establish a kindergarten in Beirut. To deepen their understanding of the basics, our Lebanese colleague will stay in touch with the participants from the online training programme.

Turkey: **Project Management Training for Colleagues from Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey**

One focus of the Emergency Pedagogy Department is long-term support. This has led to

the formation of an independent organization in Iraq, while in Lebanon and Turkey, elements of emergency and trauma pedagogy have been integrated into existing facilities. These organizations face the question of how to finance their projects. Obtaining support requires knowledge of the administrative aspects of humanitarian aid and development cooperation. General knowledge of project management is also required. Lina Bäuerle, Emergency Pedagogy Coordinator, proposed the idea of bringing these teams together for a project management training. In November 2024, members of the emergency pedagogy team met with colleagues from Turkey, Iraq, and Lebanon to work intensively on these topics. It was especially important for the participants to see that others had the same questions. At the end, they knew they belonged to a group with the same goals and knowledge.

Kenya: **Protecting Children and Young People with Disabilities**

The Emergency and Trauma Pedagogy team has been collaborating with Waldorf Kakuma for twelve years. In the refugee town of Kakuma in northern Kenya, educators work with children and young people in child protection centres. At the beginning of the year, two colleagues from the Netherlands, both special educa-

tion teachers, travelled there and joined the work for two months. Children and young people with disabilities are often exposed to traumatic situations. Some may have difficulty expressing themselves, leading to misunderstandings during communication. Physical impairments may prevent those affected from escaping an unpleasant or even threatening situation. The goal is, therefore, to create a safe space for the affected children and young people. At the end of February, the two colleagues went to work with colleagues from Kakuma for a week in Mukuru kwa Njenga, 800 kilometres away. A trauma and emergency pedagogy team has already visited this part of Nairobi's slum twice to train and support local educators. This time, the focus was on "children and young people with disabilities."



Contact

Freunde der Erziehungskunst
Rudolf Steiners e.V.
(Friends of Waldorf Education)
Emergency Pedagogy Department

Parzivalstr. 2b
76139 Karlsruhe
Germany

Donation Service Emergency Pedagogy

Phone +49 (0)721 20111-132
Fax +49 (0)721 20111-180
nfp.spenden@freunde-waldorf.de

Donations Account

GLS Gemeinschaftsbank eG
IBAN: DE06 4306 0967 0800 8007 00
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