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Emergency Pedagogical Crisis Intervention in Nepal

The severe earthquake that struck on April 25th brought death and destruction to Nepal. An experience, that leaves above all children with deep psychological wounds. In order to support children in processing their experiences, an emergency pedagogical team from the Friends of Waldorf Education is travelling to Nepal from the 9th to the 23rd of May.

“Such a catastrophe shakes a child’s world view and can lead to post traumatic stress disorder” explains Bernd Ruf, mission leader and acting director of the Friends of Waldorf Education. “The child essentially loses the floor beneath his feet and his trust in stability. The child must immediately process fear, injury, death, and the destruction of his environment. With emergency pedagogical methods we can stabilize the children and prevent post traumatic disorders.”

The emergency pedagogical crisis intervention is taking place in cooperation with “Aktion Deutschland Hilft” and long term regional partner “Shanti.” The “Shanti” Leper relief organisation helps run not only a clinic in Kathmandu but also an inclusion Waldorf school with preschool in Budhanikhanta. A place where children with and without disabilities can learn and play together. The earthquake also affected “Shanti”: The school was completely destroyed and the clinic is primarily taking care of injured people who could not find a place in regular hospitals.

The emergency pedagogical team is building on these existing structures: on the premises of the school and in the already existing facilities of “Shanti” in Kathmandu children of all ages can receive emergency pedagogical help. The teachers and volunteers, who work in the institution, have also been affected by the catastrophe. They too have been traumatised and need support. In workshops and training seminars, they have the opportunity to learn the basics of psychotraumatology and emergency pedagogy, so that they can later independently use these methods.

Parents, who are often overwhelmed by the behavioural changes of their children in such an exceptional situation, are being offered advisement. A deep understanding of post traumatic reactions of children can help them gain new insights into the inner world of their children.

The volunteer emergency pedagogical team is made up of twelve experienced pedagogues and therapists. Many of them already have years of experience working with traumatised children after catastrophes or humanitarian crises. A doctor is accompanying the team.

Pedagogical First Aid after the Catastrophe

The emergency pedagogy of the Friends of Waldorf Education is based on Waldorf pedagogical methods and applied forms of therapy. A daily schedule based on children’s natural rhythms, regulated eating and sleep times, and periods of rest and activation, serve to give children and youths a new orientation, a sense of security, and stability. Through the activation of the affected persons’ self-healing power the coping process is supported. Trust in one’s self and humanity are strengthened through experiential pedagogical exercises. In art and experiential pedagogical courses

affected children have the opportunity to counter traumatic ordeals with new aesthetic experiences. Movement and clapping games bring joy, dissolve inner torpor, and support physical coordination. In

the scope of countless operations worldwide many children have already been helped to process their traumatic experiences and post traumatic stress disorders have been lessened.

To finance their operations, the Friends of Waldorf Education is reliant on support from donations.

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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), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014).



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.