

# 2 UniCollaboration plenary session: virtual learning goes to camp – online pedagogies in contexts of emergency and crisis

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<https://videos.unileon.es/video/5d78f0948f4208775a8b4567>

Just by way of introduction, here are some of the far flung criteria we have to consider when we go to an emergency setting when trying to figure out how we can bring the university to a camp. A lot of people are going hungry where we work, and providing meals and transport in refugee camps so people can attend class is very much a part of what we need to think about. Equally important is to figure out how to get women into a classroom. Designing and locating a classroom in a vast refugee camp and close to where people fetch water might seem very strange to any university in our regular setting, but to us it is one of the variables that we consider. Fetching water is a woman's job and if women have to fetch water for five or six hours a day and your classroom is not near a water hub then they are not going to come.

So, what I would like to do today is to help you visualise where we work. It is very difficult to imagine if you have never been out there. That is why it is useful to have some visual impressions. What does it look like, what does it mean to live in a refugee camp? Is it as bad as they say or is it as wonderful as they say?

I would also like by way of an introduction to clarify that InZone is not a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). It is an academic centre at the University of Geneva and I think you will know that the university's mission is to continue to be a critical observer of what happens in society. When I speak up and out that

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means that I would like to make sure that the university does not lose that part of its mission. We should be critical observers, but we then should follow up with the kind of research that allows us to create the evidence on which we can base that critique. If we need to be quiet, there's a special academic freedom in those environments, which I will touch on later. This is not about not liking the humanitarian system, but indeed it will be very much about a system that needs changing. We as universities have an obligation to contribute to that. Up until now we have not been part of it, and I think we have been kept out of it for a very long time partly because it is not safe to go there. If you really want to go there you have to fight your way in. We did that and it took many years and it is still a daily battle to go places where we are not welcome. It is going to take more than one university to do that, so I invite all of you in the end if you are not too frightened or too taken aback.

Where does my university see its place or where does virtual exchange see its place – how could we get them started?

I will divide up the talk into transporting you there as a humanist and sharing a five minute video. The video very much speaks to the virtual exchange idea and how students from our university in the Geneva campus are working together with students in Macau and how that could be developed and designed and what Kenya means to the students on both ends.

In the beginning we did not have any funding. This was a strategic initiative of the University of Geneva that I managed to get funding for, but our Rector always said there had to be something in it for our students, otherwise it was not going to be sustainable within the institution. I think that was the best piece of advice I ever got. Now that the funding picture has changed completely, and the university contributes only a fraction of what our donors are contributing, it is still an important reminder. The work really has to support learning at both ends and not just as an humanitarian project. We cannot substitute ourselves as humanitarian actors in the humanitarian system, that is not the role of universities. I think we would very quickly lose that very precious position that universities have as independent impartial scientific observers and actors.

Where does education sit in humanitarian action? Does it have a role, does it have a place? Who determines it, who runs it, and are those the same institutions that actually run education in our own countries?

Here is the humanitarian system showing you a little bit about how it has all been divided up, like a pie that has been sliced up. The main sectors are water, sanitation, and health. Clearly in an emergency that is what should be dealt with first; logistics.

According to this system, each part has been allocated to different organisations. The education sector, not unsurprisingly, is led by UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Higher education however, within the UN system, is the mandate of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation), and there begins the turf war that plays out in the field as much as it does in Geneva or New York. Who is responsible, who is in charge? In many instances UN agencies have actually partnered with large NGOs. The education part is actually a cluster co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children. Save the Children is one of the world's largest NGOs in that sector. I am sure you are familiar with many others. They are big and they are big in education. When you talk about education, 'Save' is not far away.

I will use the word refugee a little bit loosely now, to basically cover all forcibly displaced persons, whether they are asylum seekers or migrants in general, not including economic migrants, although climate migrants might ultimately end up in that category. Europe has been a little more exposed to those kinds of discussions in 2015 when what is termed the refugee crisis broke out. Looking at the density or the ratio between refugees and any kind of refugee and host country population, Europe is doing really well. You look at Lebanon, every third person is a refugee, and that gives you a sense of the ratio between refugees and host country citizens. The country that is hosting the largest number of refugees today is Turkey, with 2.3 million refugees far outpacing Kenya which used to be the leading country and is still way up there. However, if you look at the density of refugees and you look at it on a world map, refugees are mostly found in countries that neighbour a conflict-affected country. Those countries

are mostly developing countries themselves and have a very hard time seeing to the needs of their own populations, such as Jordan or Lebanon. They have been at the receiving end of successive waves of Palestinian Iraqi refugees. Even Iraq is a refugee receiving country where Syrian refugees are found in fairly large numbers. The same is actually true for the North of Africa and Africa in general. They have a fairly large movement of refugees. So that gives you an idea of where education actually has to happen. Are not the countries themselves also equally affected? Is their education system strong enough to withstand the assault of second, third, and fourth shifts in populations for example? They do not even have enough teachers for their own population.

There is also a lot of tension between the humanitarian system and the development world. When you look at governments, budgets, they are usually very separate; there is the humanitarian budget and then there is the development budget. The two up until now have not really met yet and there is a big movement now called humanitarian development nexus. It has been going on for about a decade to try and see how humanitarian intervention can kick start development action. That puts a lot more responsibility on us. It also gives us a lot more justification at higher education institutes to start at the humanitarian intervention level, rather than waiting until the crisis is over. When you look at some of these crises, we are going into the ninth year. It is going on a decade and some refugees are in refugee camps for generations, and then the kids are born there and have never known anything else. Some of these so-called crises are really protracted crises. There is not much point waiting until you actually start an intervention. Clearly when you go and try and find money, you are going to have to come up with all these arguments. Why do you want to go there? What are you going to bring to solve the problem? Where do you fit into this particular system?

I will drill down a little more now into education in general, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention which is the United Nations High Commission for Refugees mandate, the only mandate they have is to protect refugees, though you would not know this when you look at what they do. Expansion of mandates in humanitarian contexts is quite current. There's often a turf war between the agencies, but every host country has the obligation to provide

primary and secondary education to refugees on their territory when they sign that convention. Some of the world's largest refugee hosting countries have not signed that convention but fortunately they still more or less abide by these rules. In a way interventions at the primary and secondary level have indeed characterised education emergencies as we know it. For the past 25 years this field has really grown.

The biggest organisation in that particular sector is the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). If there's anything that you want to know about education in emergencies, INEE has an incredible number of resources for you to dig into especially for teacher training. They have a special group called Teachers in Crisis and Conflict with wonderful material all freely downloadable. It is a wonderful website, full of resources. Over the years INEE also developed what are called minimum standards for education in emergencies. Anyone who is ever going to attempt working in a refugee context or in a crisis context has an obligation to understand those minimum standards. They are not intuitive. It took me a long time to understand all of them and to make sure that whatever programming you do meets those minimum standards in education and emergencies. It starts from data protection to protection of children. There's a whole range of standards we need to abide by. For instance, the university has just offered 30,000 dollars or euros, and being excited to do something in that sector is all very well, but you have not thought about what is going to happen when that money runs out. You may have hundreds of children or youth for whom you have raised the hope for an education. What you have not thought about is whether it is sustainable and how to make it sustainable. Indeed, you have already infringed on one of the key humanitarian principles which is to do no harm.

Understanding humanitarian principles is your first obligation. It is being impartial, neutral; to do no harm. There are several principles which you can find on the website. For instance, the International Committee of the Red Cross is a trustee of the Geneva Conventions. Understanding those humanitarian principles is our first obligation. Every day our team needs to ask itself "are we sure we are not doing more harm?". It should not constrain or interfere with your enthusiasm

to do something but in this field you really need to think long term, think about where your funding is coming from, and whether you can actually sustain a four year university programme in a refugee camp if you only have funding for one year. Just hoping that a donor is probably coming back is not good enough. The donor may have a totally different policy next year. It may be a big donor with whom you may not be able to negotiate being re-funded, so having a back-up solution is all part of education in emergencies, as you get into the field.

The other network is a network that we co-created, with the support of various donors over the years, called the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium. It is led with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We have about 23 or 24 members now. It mostly brings together higher education institutions, but the majority of members are NGOs engaged in tertiary education.

*Global Health video presented about Kakuma Refugee Camp at this point.*

The postscript to the project presented in the video is that the two winning projects are ongoing. One of them is geo-mapping snakes and scorpions in the Kakuma Camp. The first initiative has already been implemented and landed us a mention in the Global Education Report of UNESCO of which we are very proud. Basically, the students locally designed an information session for parents to help them chart the safest way through the camp to school avoiding the areas with a preponderance of snakes and scorpions.

The second project is being followed up with the International Rescue Committee who is responsible for health in the camp. The camp has basic medical training available. In that course what we learnt was that there was no funding for prevention. Epidemiological prevention is not funded in the camp. Basically, you have to catch malaria to get to enter the health system. Preventing malaria is not part of the humanitarian approach. So, students designed an approach. We delivered some microscopes up there. I think they have mapped about ten malaria larvae breeding sites. They have put it on a virtual map, and they have delivered it to the health system. They are interacting with the UNHCR database to try and see how that mapping can now become part of a prevention approach

in the camp to prevent malaria, unfortunately one of the most prevalent diseases when you go to the camp.

I think starting from the video and seeing what comes after is part of our approach. We are not in it for the short semester or less than a semester but really looking at building a community that hopefully becomes independent and more self-sufficient, looking first and foremost at the contextualised needs. What we have in Geneva is irrelevant. What they need is where we start. Then we go and see what we have that matches and how we adapt what we do. This health course is one of the interesting initiatives because the Master's students write their master's thesis on these changes. I hope I have given you a taste of what a virtual exchange can look like with the low level technology that we are trying to use. WhatsApp remains the one thing that is accessible to all refugees wherever they are. I think this is true for you as well in your implementations.

Having given you a bit of a visual image of where we work leads me to the long term impact, the long term change we want to see is: *inclusive and equitable quality education for sustainable development*.

It is very important to have your long term goals because we do get tired and frustrated. You bang your head against the walls every single day. There are incredible restrictions on everything you want to do. The first answer is usually no, then you need to backtrack and find out if there is another way that you can still do it. So, it is good for the team to also have this long term goal in mind. The roads to that long term goal can unfortunately be very windy; strewn with lots of obstacles. The problems that we encounter are fragility and conflict, low resources, and then language and cultural issues. There was one where all the students were speaking French and then there was no interpretation at that point. There is not a single course that we offer that is not at least bilingual. We make sure that we respect language when we get there, but again it is not straight forward.

The solutions that we implement are through working with pedagogy. We do not offer a course on conflict resolution, but we have developed and adopted a

pedagogical approach that forces and obliges students to work together in a non-conflictual way. It is incidental learning but not in your face. The medium has to be the message. People have to learn through that medium. I will give you a couple of examples of the outcomes that we see – indigenous knowledge.

Design solutions come from the ground up rather than from the North to the South. They are worked out together between the two. We have got learners who are empowered, and people develop livelihood skills. In one project, all 15 students in the course were immediately taken on as incentive-based volunteers by the International Rescue Committee. They had the skills that were needed in the camp and off they went. They did not have an academic degree, that was not part of what we needed as objectives. That is not the be all and end all of higher education. Ultimately the entire team is really building for sustainable development. It is a big agenda and obviously not one that we are able to implement very quickly.

So, what goes into our theory of change is resilience in communities that we are trying to build: there are ‘pedagogy and learning’ outcomes. I still have to use the old fashioned, condescending, and patronising term of Psycho-social Support (PS), but Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has not really made the rounds yet. That is a big, big part of what we do with people who have really been through a lot of trauma and are continuing to go through a lot of trauma because the camp is not a safe place to be. The ‘local knowledge production’ is crucial to us. ‘Social inclusion and development’ is equally important to us but we are only just now beginning to build our inclusion pillar. That will include disability, people’s different sexual orientations, and so on.

We want to be that critical observer out there – implementing humanitarian ethics – and see if the humanitarian system is doing what it is supposed to be doing and where its faults, difficulties, and issues are. There are unfortunately many.

We are very focused on ‘refugee empowerment’; we do not have implementing partners which is the normal way of operating in those settings. You team up



with an NGO who will then implement what you are designing. From the very beginning we said that we would not want to have any implementing partners. We are entirely refugee managed where we are. That is the model we have developed under the radar for a long, long time and eventually it did win direct recognition and now we have been able to show it in daylight and say: “we are refugee managed – this is how we do it”, but for a long time it was not accepted. When you go with an NGO you get into all sorts of issues of corruption and then you no longer run your own agenda. Somebody else is running your agenda for money.

We have been the subject of two theses, one Master’s at Cambridge, one at SOAS University of London. Cambridge looked at the way we operate on the ground and adopted the theory of tempered radicals as a theoretical framework; meaning these are kinds of radicals in disguise, with the ability to be a chameleon.

Finally a word on ‘social change’. These are the really big agendas. I will focus on a few of them; translation and interpretation. What really drove me into this agenda among other things was that for me this was the last frontier of learning. Understanding how people learn in those circumstances and in those contexts from a research perspective really was a main motivator and continues to be a main motivator. What can we as academic institutions and research communities do to understand learning in those contexts and how we might contribute to improving the ways in which learning happens in those areas?

We have put a lot of emphasis lately on social and emotional learning. We had an applied arts programme because it is part of our community outreach. Every course and every subject matter that we treat in camp also becomes content for our applied arts practitioners who we train. We then go out to the community and run programmes for example on children’s rights; we go to a primary school and use arts to bring children’s rights to that part of the community. Students have a civic engagement obligation as part of every single thing that we do, and they need to go out, they need to transmit their learning. We do not want to have an elitist system in the camp where only a few have access to higher education and get a degree. Higher education really needs to build that community and

so everyone has to contribute to it. This is really part of the social/emotional learning work.

We have recently started on a pilot project that surprised us with the rapid success that we had. We started it in Kenya and used sports, starting a running programme in one of the camps. We are just at the end now. I have just received the rest of the data on the pilot. This was the first time we worked with primary school children. We had 20 elite runners identified in the camp who would be the role models for 25 girls and 25 boys. The only thing we tracked was school attendance and school performance. We wanted to see how the regular sports programme would impact those two factors. Children would come to school three times a week in the morning which would mean they would immediately have to have had food for breakfast, etc. At the end of the pilot we now have the data superficially showing us: (1) compared to the rest of the primary school, children in the two schools that we were working with attended school more regularly; and (2) attending school regularly meant performance went up. By introducing and strengthening our social and emotional learning pillar, we automatically had found another way of improving learning and learning outcomes without even doing anything about the school itself.

However, what we did with the teachers was because we are also members of Coursera for refugees. We are one of the smaller programs, but we want to be one with the highest retention and completion rates. Every refugee learner can sign up for just about every course on Coursera and get a verified certificate without charge. We have developed a programme and one of the series of courses we are offering is a specialisation offered by the University of Colorado on social and emotional learning. There is not much out there on SEL yet. I am sure there will be, the more research we have. All teachers need to be involved in that series. It was arranged with Colorado that when they finished that series, they could obtain university credit.

All the kids go to school, the teachers get professional development, and the elite athletes have to be enrolled in education. We are not a sports organisation, so it all has to fit together. Until the big surprise came one morning when I was

running with the elites. We did the rounds and of the 20-year olds, 50% had not finished primary school, which was a big surprise and we made sure they had to provide evidence they were going to school and/or were involved in higher education courses. The intricacy of planning and ultimately what you want to achieve is important, but the social emotional pillar has become really important for us and we are testing different ways in which we are culturally appropriate with running in Kenya. We have a Kenyan coach, so we integrate refugees with Kenyans this way. Similarly, for the applied arts, music, dance, and story-telling in Africa, it is a no-brainer. We do not really want to export anything that we would do in Geneva because it is probably not going to work.

I think this is more at the theoretical level for us taking a very careful look at development theory and making sure of the parameters/criteria that we use to identify partners. Not all courses that we offer are offered by the University of Geneva. When we partner with another university, we first need to ensure that academic credit can be guaranteed and secondly that we share a world view. If their world view does not fit, then no matter what the name recognition of that university is, we would rather go someplace else. It is a big factor in who we partner with.

We do quite a bit of research in the camps themselves. The focus is really on human rights and human rights violations. It is a big pillar of our work and I will show you some examples later. For us we do not want to substitute ‘Human Rights Watch’ or any other NGOs that have this agenda, but nevertheless as a university we have an obligation to contribute because we work with these students on a day-to-day basis. We are at the receiving end of a lot of narratives and I looked carefully yesterday at some of the problematic examples that were mentioned, I could tell that we had those every day. Managing lots of conversations is a huge part of what all of us in our team do on a daily basis.

We are entirely refugee managed, which has been hugely important, and we are going one step further by starting to work with the Refugee Study Centre at Oxford. We are now looking at how our refugee management model, refugees setting up their own community-based organisation, is becoming more and

more independent of us. One of the things you need to understand is that you also need to have an exit strategy. You cannot really substitute yourself financially or otherwise for their own agency, especially with higher education that would be the norm. The logical conclusion is that they become independent actors with the competency to run their own campus, the University of Geneva Campus in the Kakuma Refugee Camp for example, which brings in other investors because they are developing livelihood opportunities based on what they have learnt.

Based on my own research, most of my academic career I have looked at the development of complex skills. The more complex they are, the more interesting. How does the brain cope with it? How do people develop these skills over time? How much time does it take? What are the ingredients? What is the optimal learning environment in order to do that? These questions led me from very early on to a theory developed by two Japanese researchers on adaptive expertise. The meaning of this is, yes you can have your routine plumber come in and fix your routine toilet. However, if your toilet is somewhat old fashioned and perhaps not necessarily produced any more, you need a plumber who can analyse the situation and come up with a solution that may not be in any textbook anymore. This ability to adapt is not something you can graft on after someone has become an expert. It really has to come right from the very beginning. People need to become familiar with uncertainty, with fuzziness, and with not using only the readymade solution. Let them struggle. Trial and error is a huge part of that learning process. This theory is really at the foundation of all that we do; recognising how learning happens and should happen and really optimising how the outcomes are going to be.

Routine experts, also called artisans, use their existing expertise to solve a problem. The adaptive experts are really the virtuosos. For them every problem is an invitation to explore and find new solutions.

A big part of learning is really about connections, because everything happens in a big feedback environment. We more or less use the six constructs of the Connected Learning Alliance, a huge McArthur Foundation funded project

initiated by UC Irvine. That agenda was very instructive and useful when looking at connections, so we developed a collaborative learning ecosystem. The students at the centre collaborate with peers. We cannot always be in the field. The lecturer plays a very minimal role. The course coordinator really oversees the whole environment and checks for humanitarian compatibility and acceptability. We have online tutors that we train, and onsite facilitators who are basically there all the time. They are alumni of courses we have run and we train them regularly with materials available on our public website that you can use. That is the ecosystem we have designed for all learning in the camp.

You will find some of our public goods on the website. You can freely use them. Our donors do require that we create public goods that do not hide behind the walls of usernames and passwords.

So how do we develop a course? We do the context analysis first. We look at the language needs. We look at the available capacity, what is already out there. Then, and this may not surprise you, as we come from humanitarian communication and interpreting, we immediately start interpreter training. None of our courses are monolingual and we do not want learners to wait for two years until they have a good level of English to access the course. We immediately create the capacity to run the bilingual course. That gives learners at least half a year or a year to simultaneously improve skills in other languages, for example English or French. All the learning materials are translated by the refugees themselves. They are revised by experts in the language, volunteers who help us revise material. Then the tutors are selected and trained, and we create mixed language groups, mixing speakers of the main course language that are strong and with those who are not. Then we implement the course obviously after which comes the research part. Every course has a research component to it. I have shared with you some of the results from 'One Health' for example. We train the researchers in mostly participatory research methods so that we can have ongoing data collection in the field, but our research questions are also informed by them and revised with their help. Data is analysed and we follow up with the community, going back and actively making them benefit from the results.

We connect with physical locations. At one camp we microfinance a refugee café where the refugees get their meals. In some cases, families survive because every class meeting comes with a meal and transport, which in turn helps the café survive.

Interest-powered is really important; an engineering course we ran resulted in a solar powered mosque; a trash truck with a sensor that signals whether the truck is empty or full. If empty, it should not be let out of the camp, as there were constant complaints that the truck did not pick up the trash. The refugees were the immediate victims. They had trash piling up, so they designed a sensor that was both a sound and light sensor so that the truck could no longer leave the camp. If it is full it is fine but if not, it sounds the alarm.

In terms of infrastructure, for example, Innocent, from Kakuma, is an IT expert who did an entire energy analysis of our learning environment and recommended the best possible information technology solutions for the new hub. Again, it does not come from Geneva, it comes from the ground up, they have the skills to do this.

We are production and human rights centred. The courses, for example in our human rights core, are another example of how the sequence plays out. In Kakuma, we run ‘Introduction to human rights’, ‘Applied human rights’, and ‘Children’s rights’. The ‘Applied human rights’ component comes after the ‘Human rights’ core and it is a collaboration between the law clinics of the University of Geneva and the Legal Aid Clinic of Kenyatta University, Kenya.

The students from Kenyatta also go to camp and work together. They design a project and then follow up with the project. Ultimately, one of the findings was that traditional forms of administration of juvenile justice in the camp were not very well known and the elders needed to be trained, so we developed elder training in three languages, English, French, and Swahili. All translations were done by refugees and they published a book which has just recently been distributed to all the elders. You can really see the whole sequence through.

The virtual exchanges are part of the production of human rights. Virtual and physical exchanges are part of the research component and the rest is physical, going to camp and delivering. We do this in different ways. We really try to optimise WhatsApp because it is fail-proof in the camp. We rely heavily on it. We wish there could perhaps be another tool, but for right now that is it. We are training our tutors and our facilitators to make sure they understand our pedagogy and they use WhatsApp to implement that pedagogy very carefully.

The local knowledge production, for instance analysis of malaria larvae, leads to students developing their own peaceful planet; they share purpose. Elsewhere, you see local projects leading to the publications on human rights with a shared purpose.

We also have introductory videos from the students in Geneva that go to camp and work with students, with a scripted welcome. We also have issues with things being shared outside of the learning environment, so we have a learning ethics document that every single learner has to sign. We follow up very successfully with people who violate the learning ethics agreement or flout it. There is no second chance with, for instance, plagiarism – it is out. Sometimes you have to be rather forceful, but if we lose that then we lose all our ability to operate in the camps, so it is also for our own operations to remain sustainable for all.

We are also peer supported; an example is an engineering session in the Azraq refugee camp where we work. Engineering is a big thing in the Middle-East, and we see a lot of women there wanting to study engineering.

Here is a graph [see video recording] that allows you to visualise how we go from the beginning to the end of a project. The needs analysis first looks at the way the project builds capacity, followed by the launch phase, and how the multilingual aspect gets implemented. Our learning materials focus on the public good. The introduction to humanitarian interpreting has now been localised in English (simplified), French, Italian (which is very much needed), and Arabic is coming soon. You basically have a translator for every refugee that goes out.

We also have learning pathways; we are not just about building communities. We do not wish to own any of the degrees. We go and begin to develop memoranda of understanding with the universities; in Kenya, Kenyatta University, and in Jordan, Yarmouk University and the German Jordanian University. We negotiate for credits attached to all the courses that we offer. This becomes part of the local armoury. We say we work in collaboration with the University of Geneva, but the programme is not part of the university; it does not go through the university's legal system at all so local campuses can benefit from capacity building, which is exactly what we want. Ultimately, they need to sustain the programme. It is difficult for countries to take on that responsibility.

We come up with some innovations, like bundling our 'One health' course with our basic medical training course and the engineering course, offering a certificate of open studies in medical engineering. We are developing tools for the camp; maybe they could be subject to reverse innovation or could be useful elsewhere one day, but the main focus is having tools that can be maintained. We have all seen those computers and water fountains that cost millions and a year later nothing is working because they cannot be maintained.

I will finish up by thanking the whole team. Obviously, there are many donors by now who have been supporting our work. I think the biggest donors we have are the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, the Swiss Government and the Canton of Geneva's Solidarity Service in Geneva, and we have been experimenting with public-private partnerships. With Hewlett-Packard, we have a big partnership in the Middle-East, and with Raspberry Pi and Pi-Top for our engineering development.

### Q&A

**Q. I did many years' work in Reuse Fadallas and I have a question about sustainability. There are some times when we stop because of an escalation of violence. So, when there is escalation, we have to just wait for that escalation to subside. So, I wondered in terms of security and safety concerns, how is it in the field in the refugee camps?**



It is a very pertinent question indeed and obviously you have some background. The security situation varies from camp to camp, as do the standard operating procedures, but our entire team is obliged to become zealots about security, so there are courses that we take. What do you do when you are kidnapped? It is not intuitive, believe me. It goes from that to cultural awareness to awareness of crisis, and identifying landmines. It runs the whole gamut. All our certificates are up to date. It is good that you have to do them every two or three years, because you can forget, and there are new ways of doing.

In one of the camps in Kenya, on the Somali border, we went in at the same time as in Kakuma, which is the other large refugee camp on the border of South Sudan. We started, we did exactly the same thing, and then came Westgate: a big terrorist attack in Nairobi. Two days later, no higher education for refugees; obviously, Al Shebab was all over the place. We know Al Shebab was in the camp, we had no illusions. The job can be particularly dangerous.

When we design programming, we make it very incremental. I can stop after four weeks and then I can pick up again if for any reason we will not be allowed in. In Dadaab camp there are only armed convoys; 25 United Nations vehicles, police up front, police in the back, military in the middle, and you are with your radio contacts and four security guards when you are out there. However, it is not as bad as Afghanistan, but you have to start teaching in that environment, running your programme, and be ready to stop at any moment.

I remember there was also that incident in Garrissa where 200 students were killed in a terrorist attack. I was on my way to the camp to deliver final exams. In the end, the final exams got truncated and I had to go back to Geneva with recordings that were incomplete and that is par for the course, just being able to interrupt but not giving up and letting interruptions happen. We then enlisted Kenyatta University because they had contacts with the government; you can work the political circuit and get back in again.

**Q. I wanted to say thank you for introducing me to the concept of SEL. I had not heard of that before. I might be completely naïve, but I was reading**

**through this and it made me think; I am making a comment and I am hoping you can spin off it. I can see how this could be really relevant as a trainer of teachers through virtual exchange. It is also relevant to the university of Baltimore where we have a lot of displaced people as well, whose families move around quite a lot and English as a second language teachers that I work with often talk about how they wish they had more training on how to deal with these traumas in children. I am thinking in our own exchanges sometimes the students have trouble with their own stress, and they do not know what they are coming with and I see this as a really useful tool or as a topic for content within a virtual exchange. So, turning the question back to you. Based on what you have seen here, can you see ideas where we might bring your work more into virtual exchange teacher training focused for co-exchanges?**

SEL is a field that is beginning to come into its own. There is not much training out there. I know that the one course that we have identified, the University of Colorado, is very American oriented. It might suit Baltimore quite well. It has things like: “Go to the local library and pick up ‘this’”. These are things that we obviously cannot do in a camp. I think it has allowed us to finally move away from what I consider a very patronising concept of psychosocial support. It is always almost like the white superior syndrome. We are coming in and we are telling you, like WHO telling you what resilience is. We do not really believe that that is the way to go so I think that you might wish to think about that when you are researching it. There is quite a bit of material out there now.

We are just validating some of the measures that are being developed for SEL; you will soon find information on the INEE website. You can access and measure social and emotional learning skills that are appropriate to your context but take it with a grain of salt. These measures are not standardised yet. It is going to take a while; I think we are slowly going in the right direction. We are very active in INEE and in the most recent meeting in Helsinki I really noticed that the moment we stopped talking about psychosocial support, people all of a sudden had a very different approach. The traumatising was no longer seen as something negative or something that you have to fix. There is this constant need to fix a problem to make them fit this framework, but how can you motivate and get people to

develop these coping mechanisms that are appropriate to their own persona? I think that is where the African context has taught us a lot, such as the moment I saw a refugee dance me a story as one of the coping skills that they were showing us. Another one was playing imaginary soccer with us. There was no soccer ball in the room, yet he said: “OK close your eyes. Let’s all think there’s a soccer ball in the room and let’s all start to play soccer”. After ten minutes we were all exhausted. We were all chasing this thought about the relief that it had provided. That is not in the WHO manual. The SEL approach allows people to dip into their own resources that they often underestimate. Giving them a few skills to find those resources in themselves and have them validated by ‘One Voice’ is important.

**Q. You had a number of slides that showed the cognitive neuroscience investigations that you have also been using which I presume from an emerging scientific perspective is what is going on in these settings. So how can we as an academic research community get involved in various ways and do a good job of incorporating science research or neural science assessments you showed if we want to iteratively improve interventions we are engaged in. That was a connection I did not hear in your talk and if we have time, I would love to hear you talk about incorporating that basic and neural scientific research into improving the interventions that we care about.**

I think we’ll have to go offline about that in detail but quickly as a response the slides were not from interventions in a refugee camp, but they were from the long term research that we did on the complex cognitive skills and the values were from professional multilinguals. It is basically evidence that we want to create about the importance of letting people learn in their own language. If it is an English only approach it is extremely difficult to fight, and it is very neo-colonial. We are really alone in pursuing this line of thinking, but I always evoke our background in Switzerland where we are multilingual as a country. Our DNA is humanitarian communication; we do not do anything unless it is multilingual. Our hope is that we can make progress by using neuroscience evidence about the importance of brain plasticity in multilinguals and de-bunking some of the myths about English. That is really where universities can work together

hopefully and share their research results. We are not going to be able to bring an MRI scanner into the camp and we cannot get the refugees out because their host country does not allow them back in. What we can do is look at scientific evidence that is comparable and allows us to create an argument in favour of impacting policies. Impacting policy changes on the English only education is very important. Unfortunately, refugees are the product of the human internment system. For them too, the only thing they have in mind is needing to learn English because: “that gets me on the boat and then on I go”. If we can break that then we can make progress, and no one can do it alone, so generating interest is about possible collaboration.



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