

Understanding and supporting the needs of refugee and asylum seeking children in the Early Years

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Today's session is intended to raise awareness of the effect of the global refugee crisis on children and families by considering:

- the impact of life in warzones/transit camps on children's development, wellbeing and education
- the implications on practice for practitioners and how to better prepare children for transition to the setting

Alison and Janet

Information gained from first-hand experience and interviews/discussions



Children's lives in war zones

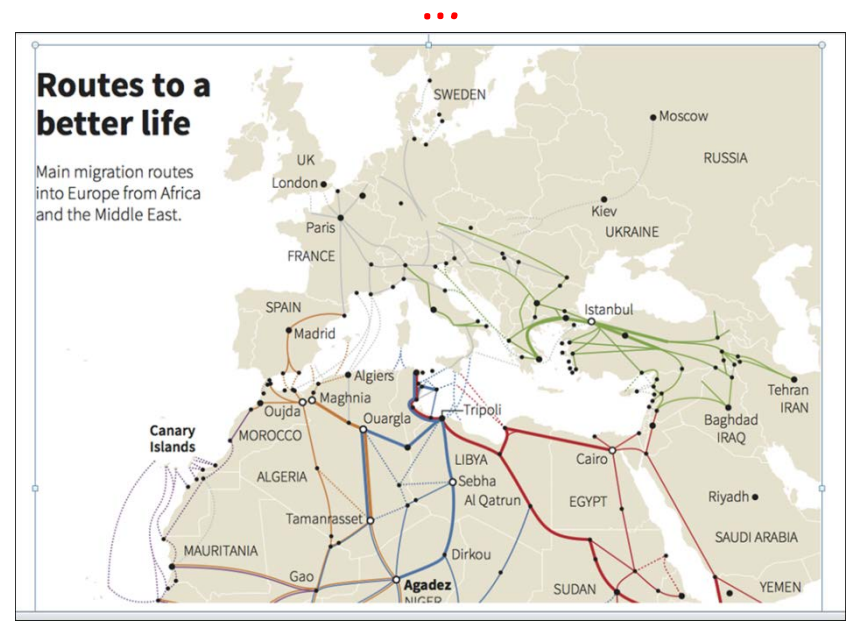


What have they experienced and what are the implications for children's physical, emotional and cognitive development?

Their journeys: refugees embark on journeys because they fear for their lives



Emotions/Feelings/
experiences: fear, panic,
shock, fatigue,
malnutrition, shock, panic,
loss, exhaustion, violence,

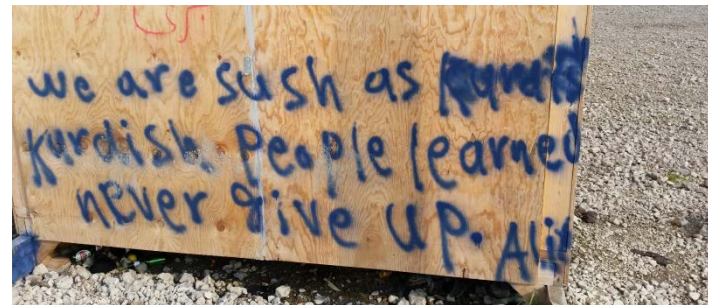




Many children and their families will be coping with:

- Loss of close family
- Loss of other family members
- Separation from family
- Bereavement
- Suffering violence against themselves
- Witnessing killing and other atrocities
- Experiencing fear and uncertainty during flight
- Parents may be unable to respond to their children's emotional needs

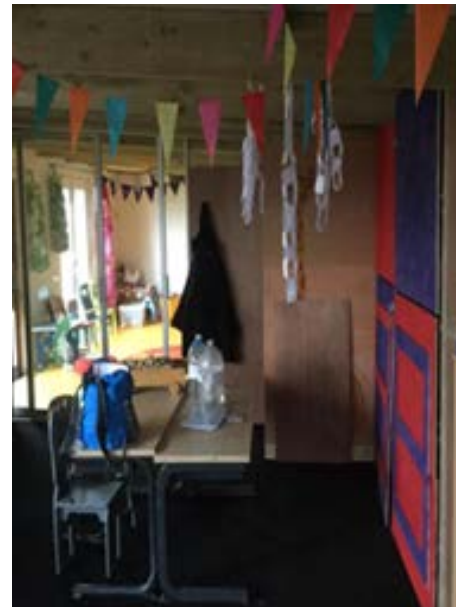
Some of these feelings clearly seen
as you walk through the camp



Where facilities are set up there are many challenges:

- Many of the children have been out of provision for several months/ years
- Attendance is sporadic
- Stability of teaching team/volunteers
- Curriculum - focus on language and maths
- Resources
- Behaviour

Early Years and School



So what could you expect ?

We also know that prolonged periods of stress can have detrimental effects on a child's ability to reason and think rationally and some children may lack self-regulation strategies, resorting to "fight or flight" responses in the face of perceived threat.

Much higher incidence (around 40 per cent) of other, mental health difficulties, such as depression and anxiety, for children and adolescents who have experienced war-related trauma.

So what can you do?

Don't make assumptions - each child is an individual

Prepare other children and families at the setting

Finding out key information such as the child's name, first language and current home circumstances

Focus on building resilience and positive behaviours

Find out about their cultures

Activities such as circle time, autobiographical and life story writing, music drama and play

Revisit/review behaviour bullying policies

**COMMUNICATE - COMMUNICATE
- COMMUNICATE**

Backed up by existing and ongoing research

Whilst Whitmarsh (2011) states that:
'Although mothers initially felt welcomed when they arrived at the setting, there was **no follow on from this** and no mother was aware of any resources in their home language',
'... there was little understanding of their culture ... [for example] in many cultures autonomy and decision making amongst children is the least desirable attribute'

Questions or comments



<http://www.insideebiz.com>