

ALLIE CLARE: RECODING A PATH TO CHANGE

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Alexandra (Allie) Clare, alumna, has set up a charity to help war-affected people learn coding skills and offer them scope to get work.

I first travelled to Iraq in 2014 where I witnessed millions of Iraqis fleeing Mosul in the wake of ISIS, compounding an already dire humanitarian crisis. At the time, only 3 per cent of displaced youth had access to education, while real employment opportunities were scarce. I then returned to the country and set to work interviewing over 400 youth to understand what skills they dreamed of learning. All but 2 per cent responded “technology”. That gave me the idea to start a non-profit venture called Re:Coded with a simple mission: to prepare conflict-affected youth to become the technology leaders of tomorrow.

How does Re:Coded work? With a number of experts on our books, we run immersive coding and start-up courses in Iraq, Turkey and Yemen. Not only does this give them the technical skills they need to find work as a software developer, it is also provides a platform for future leaders. Since Re:Coded launched, we've trained more than 300 children and youth in coding skills who have gone on to work as developers and tech entrepreneurs in their communities. We are now looking further afield in other conflict-affected countries, such as Syria.



All of this is, of course, far removed from my time with Herbert Smith Freehills, but, even though I no longer work as a lawyer, the skills I picked up with the firm come into use every day, not least being able to think critically and writing clearly.

I joined Herbert Smith Freehills in 2011, in my last semester of law school, joining the Litigation team as a paralegal. Before joining the firm, I had worked at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which confirmed my interest in working as a litigator but also reaffirmed my longer-term goal to work for a humanitarian organisation. Joining Herbert Smith Freehills enabled me to consolidate that experience by working on corporate cases and understanding the ins/outs of working with wonderful partners at a big firm.

After leaving Herbert Smith Freehills in 2012, I went to work for the New South Wales Department of Public Prosecutions. I then moved to New York in 2013, where I transitioned into working in international advocacy, first at the UN with the Special Representative for the Security General for Children and Armed Conflict and then Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group. In those roles, I was primarily advocating member states on the UN Security Council and reporting on various conflict situations around the world.

All of these roles gave me the determination and confidence to set up Re:Coded, which I co-founded with Marcello Bonatto. We now have a team of about 12 people. I'm now driving some of this knowledge into Thrive Humanitarian Innovation, a consultancy that helps other organisations leverage technology to protect and provide education in times of crisis.

I moved to Istanbul a year ago when we were starting to launch and scale our programmes in Turkey. It's an incredible city to be based with a vibrant technology and start-up community; it is very cosmopolitan but also filled with lot of history. It's also a gateway to both the Middle East and Europe so it's an incredible base from which to travel the world. I love to travel and spend about half of my time on the road between the U.S., the Middle East, Europe or back in Australia to see family.

Outside of work, I have started to make my own jewellery at the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul with some incredible artisans. I love to explore new neighbourhoods - scoping out the best wine bars or coffee shops. I am also a very keen cook.

* *We are always looking for collaborators and others with good ideas or to help impart their skills. We need mentors to our students, for example. We have also launched our own digital agency creating mobile applications and websites for clients worldwide where some of our graduates now work. If anyone from the Herbert Smith Freehills community is ever looking to develop a website or app, please do contact me at ali@re-coded.com.*