



RED NOSES
CLOWNDOCTORS
International



Final Evaluation

Emergency Smile

Greece 2018–2019

RED NOSES Clowndoctors International



Contents

Executive Summary	3
What was the context?	11
What did we do?	16
How did we do it?	19
What difference did it make?	24
What differences will last?	38
Recommendations	46

Publisher & media owner: Non-profit Foundation
RED NOSES Clowndoctors International,
Wattgasse 48, A - 1170 Vienna, FN 233747X,
T: +43 1 318 03 13 - 66, F: +43 1 318 03 13 - 20
E: smile@rednoses.eu, W: www.rednoses.eu
Bank: ERSTE Bank, BIC: GIBAATWWXXX
IBAN: AT89 2011 1822 2424 5903

This report was written by Maggie Rössler, Research and Evaluation Manager at RED NOSES International.

We would like to thank the children and the aid workers who shared their thoughts and their feelings with RED NOSES staff.

RED NOSES International © 2020

Layout: Miriam Ilie

Photos: RED NOSES International, Borut Zivulovic

This publication is copyrighted in its entirety and it may be reproduced by any method without fee or prior permission for education and research purposes, but not for resale. For copying in any other circumstances, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher.

Executive Summary

How and why did we carry out this evaluation?

Scope

This evaluation covers six Emergency Smile missions taken to Greece between November 2018 and July 2019 for a total of 13 weeks.

Objectives

The evaluation aims to:

1. Preserve the learnings and experiences of RED NOSES teams who went on missions
2. Measure the impact of Emergency Smile on stakeholders
3. Provide recommendations which can be used to guide the development of Emergency Smile

Method

The following groups of people participated in the evaluation.

Stakeholders	Data sources	Total participants
Children in crisis	Semi-structured interviews	14 (7f, 7m)
Aid workers	Questionnaires	62 (43f, 19m)
	Focus group discussions	11 (8f, 3m)
	Semi-structured interviews	2 (2f, 0m)
Heads of Mission	Reports	7 (5f, 2m)
Clown artists	Reports	18 (10f, 8m)
		Total = 114 (75f, 39m)

The questions for the interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, and reports were designed to give information about how well RED NOSES is meeting the program objectives (see Annex 1).

The RED NOSES Research and Evaluation Manager led the evaluation, as well as conducting focus group discussions and interviews with aid workers, and interviews with children in crisis.



The interviews and focus group discussions included some participants who had experienced an Emergency Smile mission several months earlier, which allowed for some investigation into the programme's long-term impact. Heads of Mission collected additional data during each mission by distributing questionnaires.

Constraints

The evaluation includes significant participation of aid workers who partnered with RED NOSES and observed the clown visits. There was also some limited inclusion of children's perspectives, but unfortunately no parents or other adults in crisis took part in the evaluation.

While one follow-up visit and two follow-up interviews were conducted 2–3 months after a mission, the participants were restricted to children and aid workers who had experienced the Intensive Smile format. Information on the long-term impact of the other formats in Emergency Smile is still insufficient to draw reliable conclusions.

The sample was determined by convenience and results have not been tested for statistical significance. Therefore, the figures in this evaluation should not be used to generalize to other children and aid workers that the clowns saw or may see in the future. The figures can rather be used to describe the viewpoints of the group that participated in the evaluation, and suggest outlines for further research.

What was the impact of Emergency Smile during the missions?

Outputs

This table shows, in total over the 5 missions, how much/many of each format RED NOSES delivered, and to how many beneficiaries.

Format	How many	Children	Adults	Aid workers
Circus Smile	27 half-days of Circus Smile	583		
Intensive Smile	9 Intensive Smile visits	1035	660	
Parades	32 parades	1934	550	
Shows	15 shows	941	274	22
Humour Relief Workshops	10 Workshops			137
Totalⁱ		4493	1484	159

The main question to answer now is what difference these outputs had on the lives of the beneficiaries.

Happier Children

One of the most consistent and robust results from all the evaluation sources is that the clowns bring joyful emotions to children in the areas they visit. No one responded that the children laughed less or had less fun than usual. Of all the questions in this evaluation, this question found the strongest consensus. It may be concluded that Emergency Smile is successful in increasing pleasurable emotions of children.

More Confident Children

RED NOSES reports include several anecdotes of increased confidence through the formats of Intensive Smile and Circus Smile. In the case of Intensive Smile, these reports were confirmed through interviews with aid workers and children involved in the clowns' visit during a vaccination campaign on Samos. There is less strong evidence for an increase in confidence as a result of Circus Smile.



More Access to Humour, Creativity, and Imagination

Reports from the mission activities leave no doubt that clowns provide opportunities for children to explore humour, creativity, and imagination. The main question, then, is whether the RED NOSES mission creates an *increase* in access to humour, creativity, and imagination. Most aid workers responded that, in fact, the RED NOSES mission was an increase – the children were more creative than usual during the RED NOSES visit.

There were, however, differences in responses according to location. On Lesbos, 100% of surveyed aid workers said that children were more creative than usual during the RED NOSES visit. On Samos, on the other hand, only 50% observed an increase in creativity. The simplest explanation is that, in some locations, there were already other aid organizations offering creative, playful activities to the children in crisis.

Happier Adults

A majority of aid workers agreed that parents also laugh more during the RED NOSES clown visit than usual. In addition, most aid workers also reported observing that the RED NOSES clown visit reduced parents' anxiety, and just over half thought that parents felt more respected than usual. Responses indicate an impact on adults in crisis that is not as strong as the effect on their children, but still present in some cases.

Happier Aid Workers

The majority of all aid workers surveyed said that they laughed and had fun more often than usual during the clown visit, and most also said that they had less stress and frustration than usual.



Aid workers were also surveyed on whether they experienced an increased ability to cope with stress, and whether they felt their work was easier during the clown visit. Results here were less strong, with around half of the respondents reporting improvements thanks to the clowns. Among just those aid workers who took part in a Humour Relief Workshop, however, the impact was significantly larger. Taking part in the Humour Relief Workshop seems to magnify the short-term positive effects of clown visits for aid workers.



What is the long-term impact of Emergency Smile on **children's emotional well-being**?

Positive Memories

The greatest long-term impact of Emergency Smile Greece, according to various data sources, is the positive memories that the children keep of their time with the clowns. In the follow-up visit to Samos, it was confirmed that children did retain happy memories of the Intensive Smile format. Children who experienced a clown at their vaccination were able to recall the clowns three months later, including specific details about what games and music the clowns played.

New Activities and Games

After the happy memories, the most popular long-term impact mentioned by aid workers and RED NOSES reports is that children got ideas for new games and activities from the clowns, which they were likely to repeat.

Confidence

Some RED NOSES clowns and one aid worker mention that they believe children have increased self-confidence after an Emergency Smile intervention. However, the evidence is not yet conclusive; the effects on confidence through Emergency Smile both during Circus Smile and after the mission as a whole are yet to be fully determined.

What is the long-term impact of Emergency Smile on **supportive environments for children**?

The primary way Emergency Smile Greece aimed to have a long-term effect on the environment for displaced children is by impacting aid workers. Through the cooperation during artistic formats, and especially through the humour workshops, it is hoped that the aid workers will learn new skills to work with others, to manage their own emotions, and to connect with children in crisis. Having better relationships with aid workers who are themselves in better mental condition creates an overall more supportive environment for children.



Strengthened Connections with One Another

The greatest impact of the Humour Relief Workshop, according to the surveys, was the unique opportunity for aid workers to connect with one another. Further research would be needed to confirm whether this improved teamwork is maintained after the mission ends.

Better Interactions with Children

A majority of aid workers agreed that they had acquired new tools to connect emotionally with children, and that they had learned new ways of communicating with children. Drawing from the open responses and focus group discussions, we may conclude that the aid workers are referring to the games and exercises taught during the workshop. Most aid workers described these new games as the main takeaway that they will continue to use in their daily work.



Improved Skills and Understanding in Dealing with Emotions

A consistent number of a little over half the aid workers agreed that they had:

- Learned how to use humour to cope with difficult emotions
- Developed new skills which will allow them to take a step back and reduce their stress levels
- Come to better understand their own emotional needs

Around the same amount agreed that the workshop helped them to better understand the emotional needs of children.



These numbers reveal some ambiguity as to whether the Humour Relief Workshops effectively help aid workers to develop understanding and skills that help them to better manage their emotions and understand the emotions of children.

Overall, the clearest long-term impact on children's environment is through the strengthened connections of aid workers among themselves, and the improved interaction of aid workers with children through the new games and activities they learn.

What are the **key learnings** and recommendations?

Key Learnings

The evaluation provides strong evidence that, during an Emergency Smile mission, the RED NOSES clowns create more happiness for children in crisis and for aid workers, as well as for some adults in crisis. Emergency Smile also seems to make aid workers' jobs easier, as long as they participate in a Humour Relief Workshop.

Regarding the long-term impact, there is still a lot we do not know. Humour Relief Workshops provide an opportunity for the aid workers to strengthen their connections and cooperation with one another, which may improve the environment for children in crisis in the long-term. The evaluation has been able to establish most clearly that Emergency Smile leaves behind positive memories for children, as well as new ideas for activities and games. These findings indicate some success towards reaching the objectives of improving children's emotional well-being (through positive memories) and making environments for children more supportive (through the availability of new activities and games.)

Recommendations

While the flexibility in the planning of Emergency Smile missions makes the mission highly adaptable to changing circumstances, some elements should be more clearly settled in advance, in particular in determining the groups of children who will take part in Circus Smile workshops, and ensuring a safe, child-friendly space for the clowns to work.

The impact of both Circus Smile and Humour Relief Workshops was difficult to determine. Some clowns expressed that they need additional preparation time for delivering these formats. For Circus Smile, clowns must work together with partners set up clear rules and boundaries for the children. There may also need to be some consideration of appropriate methods for different age groups. For Humour Relief Workshops, communication with partners as to the objectives should be clearer, and the methods used may need to be revised to ensure that the participants are learning skills that can eventually transform the environment for children in crisis.

Future monitoring and evaluation efforts need to include further follow-up visits, to continue to clarify the picture of the long-term impact of Emergency Smile.

What was the context?



Where did the clowns go?

In 2018–2019, Emergency Smile Greece included 6 missions in three Regions: North Aegean (a group of islands near Turkey), Central Macedonia (northern Greece mainland), and Attica (southern Greece mainland).

	Dates	Duration	Region	Intervention Area (Municipality)
1	19.11.–30.11.2018	2 weeks	North Aegean	Mytilene, Lesbos
2	12.3.–18.3.2019	1 week	North Aegean	Vathy, Samos
3	31.4.–13.4.2019	2 weeks	North Aegean	Mytilene, Lesbos
4	19.5.–1.6.19	2 weeks	North Aegean	Mytilene, Lesbos
	3.6.–10.6.19	1 week	North Aegean	Vathy, Samos
5	8.7.–17.7.19	1.5 weeks	Central Macedonia	Thessaloniki and surrounding areas
	19.7.–26.7.19	1.5 weeks	Attica	Athens and surrounding areas
6	9.11.–24.11.19	2 weeks	North Aegean	Mytilene, Lesbos

In sum, Emergency Smile Greece interventions included:

- 8 weeks on Lesbos island
- 2 weeks on Samos island
- 1.5 weeks in Thessaloniki and surrounding areas
- 1.5 weeks in Athens and surrounding areas

This totals 10 weeks on Greek islands of the North Aegean, and 3 weeks on the Greece mainland.

Map of Impact in Greece 2018–2019



What is it like there?

Physical Conditions

UNHCR estimates that there are 88,750 refugees and migrants in Greece, including 63,500 in the mainland and 25,250 on the islands, although island reception centres are only built to host 5,400 people.ⁱⁱ

On the reception centres on the islands, physical conditions for the migrants are extremely harsh. The facilities are severely overcrowded and pose numerous risks to the physical health of the migrants, such as inadequate access to sanitation. Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence is difficult. In mainland Greece, the physical conditions for migrants are overall less severe.

Throughout the year, RED NOSES clown teams experienced how migrants are exposed to the range of elements. In November, December, and April, the ground under the migrants' tents was muddy in the heavy rains, with rubbish and excrement streaming down the street. Then in May, June and July, the clowns experienced the pounding heat, with precious few shady places for children to meet outside.

Threats to Mental Health

The threats to the mental health of displaced children are well-documented. For example, a recent study showed that over 73 % of people surveyed in Samos screened positive for anxiety disorder – in some sites in Samos it was as high as 100%.ⁱⁱⁱ It is also widely known that access to mental health services for displaced children is limited to non-existent. To add to this common understanding, the RED NOSES clowns can contribute their experience interacting on a personal level with the displaced children.

Several themes were emphasized across all the mission reports:

- Lack of Meaningful Social Inclusion
- Difficulty Interacting with Others
- Unsupportive Environments

All these psychological pressures compound the inhumane physical conditions described above.

Lack of Meaningful Social Inclusion

RED NOSES reports consistently point out that the children in crisis act in a way that suggests a lack of personal attention, lack of friendly physical contact (holding hands, hugs), and lack of acceptance, appreciation, and celebration. One RED NOSES Head of Mission described the situation on Lesbos :



I observed that children in all the places where we worked lack a lot of love and sympathy – they were continuously running for me (and everyone else) to hug them and hold their hands. There was one child (around 3 years old) from Angola who came to me every day to hug him, and he was never satisfied by only holding his hand, he would cry nonstop until I hugged him, and then he would relax and be quiet.

RED NOSES Head of Mission

Displaced children struggle with a threefold trauma: the traumatic experiences they experienced before their flight, the flight itself, and the readjustment to a new culture, language, and environment.^{iv} The clowns experienced what may be symptoms of these struggles.

Difficulty interacting with others

A common challenge faced by RED NOSES teams is that the children in crisis have trouble focusing and display aggressive behaviour.

Unsupportive Environment (in some areas)

Some of the intervention areas included facilities that offer a range of activities for children, but other areas lacked a supportive environment for children. Children in the latter areas are deprived of their right to play, and have insufficient opportunities for creative expression. In such areas, the children struggle with boredom and a lack of autonomy.

A representative from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) described the situation for displaced children on Samos:



They cannot do anything, they don't have money. Anything they would like, their only opportunity is to ask. To get some food they have to stand in a queue for three hours, three times a day, to get something that is not very good.

Médecins Sans Frontières representative, Samos

According to the MSF representative and confirmed by RED NOSES reports, the boredom and lack of direction is particularly difficult for minors. Annex 2 includes more specific details of each visited region, drawing particularly on the reports of the RED NOSES teams.

Is Emergency Smile a **Good Fit** for these Contexts?

The threats to the mental health of displaced children in Greece outlined above indicate a need for interventions that target an increase to their emotional well-being and improvements to their environments. In particular, the lack of meaningful social inclusion and the deprivation in some areas of a child's right to play show a need for the authentic connection and creative activities offered by clowns.

Some areas, however, already offer a range of creative activities for children, including clown interventions and workshops to learn circus skills that are similar to Circus Smile. An over-supply of clown interventions could potentially reduce the impact of Emergency Smile on these children. Further investigation into the amount and quality of creative activities provided for displaced children in Greece would be needed to fully understand this situation.

The recommendations section includes some suggestions for dealing with this situation, such as more coordination with organizations that conduct similar activities in Greece, and a shift to a longer-term, more systematic style of intervention.



What did we do?

Formats

The RED NOSES Emergency Smile Greece missions included following formats:



Circus Smile

In the classic Circus Smile format, clowns work with one group of children for 3–5 half-days, teaching them how to perform various circus skills such as spinning plates, juggling balls or scarves, and acrobatics. At the end of the workshop, the children star in their own show, demonstrating their skills to their families and friends.

To adapt to the contexts and schedules at hand, in which it was sometimes impossible to work with the same children multiple days in a row, a revised format which has been dubbed “Circus Smile Light” was developed. In the light version, the clowns work with a group of children for one half-day only. At the end of the workshop, the children demonstrate the skills for one another in an informal show.



Intensive Smile

Intensive Smile involves clowns accompanying children before, during, and/or after an invasive medical procedure. Eight Intensive Smile visits during the Emergency Smile Greece missions were conducted during vaccination campaigns of MSF on Lesbos and Samos. One more visit was conducted during normal clinic hours, while children were seeking medical attention for a variety of reasons.

Parades

Parades are interactive, moving clown performances involving music, call and response, and improvisation. They can be used to bring humour and creativity to large numbers of children and adults, and they are also a way to gather audiences for a show or a Circus Smile workshop.



Shows

RED NOSES clowns construct a unique clown show of circa 30–45 minutes during the preparatory week before the mission.



Humour Relief Workshops

Humour Relief Workshops are held with aid workers who are active in the intervention areas. They last 1–3 hours and include games, awareness exercises, communication exercises, and explanations of the importance of humour in crisis situation.



Partners

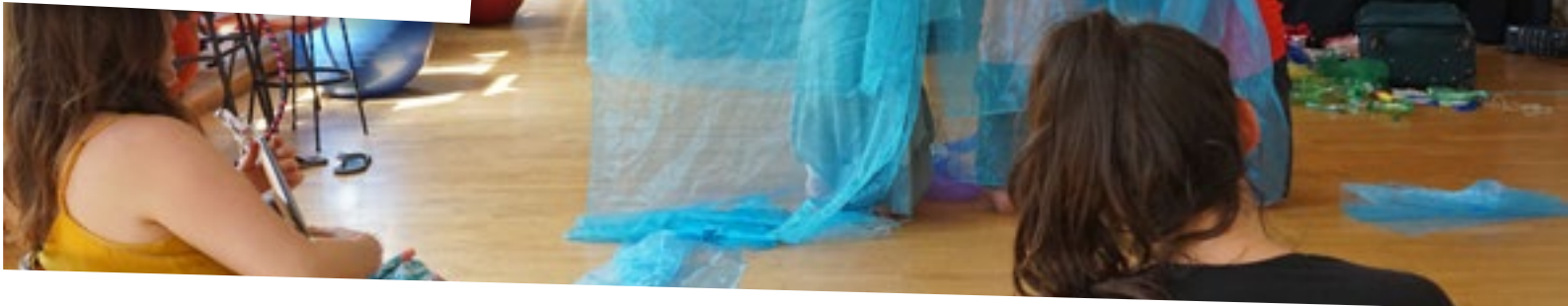
RED NOSES worked with the cooperation of the following partners:

- **Medicins Sans Frontieres:** Lesbos, Samos
- **Still I Rise:** Lesbos, Samos
- **Light without Borders:** Lesbos, Samos
- **One Happy Family:** Lesbos, Samos
- **Refugees for Refugees:** Lesbos, Samos
- **Refugee Support Platform:** Lesbos
- **Better Days:** Lesbos
- **Moria Camp:** Lesbos
- **Kara Tepe Camp:** Lesbos
- **School of Peace:** Lesbos
- **IOM:** Central Macedonia, Attica

The partner cooperation, broken down by mission, was as follows:

Dates	Region	Partners
14.11.–3.12.2018	Lesbos	Doctors without Borders (MSF); Refugees 4 Refugees; Refugee Support Platform; Better Days
12.3.–18.3.2019	Samos	Doctors without Borders (MSF)
31.4.–13.4.2019	Lesbos	Light without Borders; Doctors without Borders (MSF); Moria Camp; Refugees 4 Refugees
19.5.–10.6.19	Lesbos and Samos	Refugees 4 Refugees; Doctors without Borders (MSF); One Happy Family; Kara Tepe Camp; School of Peace; Still I Rise
8.7.–26.7.19	Thessaloniki and Athens	IOM

How did we do it?



How were the missions **planned?**

Schedules

Missions are usually divided into weekly units. One to two weeks are usually spent working in one region. In some areas, there was one Circus Smile workshop planned with one partner in one location working with one group of children for an entire week. In other areas, the team visited a different location or worked with a different group of children every day.

According to clowns, heads of missions, and aid workers, it is not optimal to visit too many partners in short period of time; there is a danger the mission can become “shallow” or “*smoke-bomby*”. An aid worker added that, “***Children took time to get fully involved and work together.***”

Missions where clowns meet with many different partners are helpful as a pilot to figure out where to work, but the impact is limited. As one Head of Mission noted:

“ ***Challenges were connected with how to stay up to this very creative schedule, meet everybody but not be shallow. Also we need to find a way to leave a deep mark/knowledge/tools they can really use in their work, in such a short while.***”

RED NOSES Head of Mission

Flexible Planning and Improvisation

Improvisation is essential to the clown’s art, it has also been the defining trait of how the Emergency Smile program is scheduled and implemented. While the International Office provides a team in advance with the general framework of which partners and target groups the

clowns will reach each day, the Head of Mission usually arranges the precise times, durations, and specific spaces day by day during the mission. Which format the clowns will deliver also often changes in response to the conditions on the ground.

The trips to Samos were exceptions to this rule; the details to both trips to Samos were relatively fixed in advance. In the case of the March mission to Samos, the Intensive Smile format was planned to coordinate with MSF's vaccination campaign, so there was no need to make any adjustments (although the date of the Humour Workshop was still adjusted by the Head of Mission on the ground). During the May mission to Samos, a competent contact with a local NGO assisted the Head of Mission before departure to fix all the times, dates, and spaces, so that there was little need for adjustment on site.



One advantage of this flexibility is that it leaves room for the Head of Mission to network on site and thereby create new opportunities. For example, new partnerships formed by the Head of Mission provided access into Moria Camp for the first time in April, and a Head of Mission's meeting with One Happy Family in Lesbos led to a fruitful partnership.

The downside of the flexibility is that it puts a large burden on the Heads of Mission, in addition to their other responsibilities. Also, sometimes the team finds on the ground that there are no suitable options available, particularly regarding an appropriate space to work or a set group of children to work with, which can lead to cancelled activities or holding activities in unsafe or otherwise non-child-friendly conditions.

Preparation Week

A preparation week for the clowns and Head of Mission is held in Vienna the week before the team departs on their mission. The week includes a general debrief and introduction to the mission, time to create and rehearse the show, a short introduction to the other formats which will be delivered during the mission, and psychosocial training to prepare the team for the emotional challenges of the mission.

Clowns often stressed the importance of the psychosocial training with an external specialist and some suggested that there could be more time spent on this. Some also asked for more time preparing for the formats besides the show, in particular, Humour Relief Workshops and Circus Smile.

How did the **teams** work together ?



Most clowns were enthusiastic about how well they worked together with the rest of their team, and said they felt like a strong, supportive group. Clowns also expressed ample appreciation to the respective Head of Missions, and the support they provided through organizing all the logistics, as well as providing emotional support and encouragement.

Sometimes there was confusion around roles and responsibilities, particularly regarding the position of artistic responsible. In one mission the clowns were not told before departure who the artistic responsible would be; in another mission the artistic responsible took on too much authority, trying to make all the decisions; in a third mission, the artistic responsible left too many decisions up to the group, so that they sometimes felt *“lost in ideas”*. There was also one instance of confusion within the team as to who their contact person was in the office.



What were some **common challenges**?

Unclear Expectations of Humour Relief Workshops

In focus group discussions, aid workers noted that the communication before the Humour Relief Workshop could be improved. Some participants did not know what to expect would happen during the workshop. As one aid worker said in a focus group discussion:

“ *The name [“Humour Workshop”] is a little misleading. [The volunteers think] they are just going to come and laugh for 2 hours. The way that it was communicated to volunteers – the general perception of volunteers was not the intention of the workshop. It was not communicated appropriately. When you show up, [it would be good] for it to feel more formal, more educational, to feel – not serious – but formal.*

Aid worker



In surveys, some wrote that they expected “*to laugh and to play*” and “*to have fun and not to think*”, while others said they expected that the clowns would teach them simple games to use with young children. Some expected to learn useful tools, but others were ambivalent or thought they would probably not learn any useful tools.

Nearly half the survey respondents said that before the workshop they were not looking forward to it or were just neutral. This lack of excitement does not appear to be related to a lack of time, as only a few said they thought they were too busy for it. Their ambivalence about attending the workshop may rather be connected to unclear expectations.

Other challenges during implementation

Several challenges came up in nearly every mission:

- **Difficult weather conditions:** Wind and rain during the winter, and heat during the spring and summer.
- **Language:** Several missions did not have access to a competent translator. While language is unimportant while the artists are in their clown characters, the team does need to use language to communicate with children during the Circus Smile format.
- **Large groups of children:** Sometimes the group is too large for the effective delivery of Circus Smile and shows
- **Discipline:** During Circus Smile, clowns sometimes had difficulty getting props back from the children and managing the group. This is of course related to the size of the group sometimes being too large
- **Lack of water for children:** The partner does not always offer water for the children to drink during Circus Smile. In the Mainland Greece mission, the team handled this by buying cups and offering water to the children.



What **difference** did it make?

The impact of Emergency Smile was measured against its objectives and expected outcomes. The data used to measure impact is taken from RED NOSES reports; interviews with children who received an Intensive Smile intervention and a Circus Smile Light workshop; as well as interviews, surveys, and a focus group discussion with aid workers who witnessed their work.

The objectives of Emergency Smile are:

Objectives

1. Displaced children have greater emotional well-being
2. Environment for displaced children is more supportive

Expected Outcomes

1. Children enjoy more positive emotions
2. Children feel more confident
3. Children have more opportunities to explore their humour, creativity, and imagination
4. Adults enjoy more positive emotions
5. Adults reconnect to their emotions
6. Aid workers enjoy more positive emotions

This section looks at the expected outcomes, while the long-term objectives are considered in the next section.

More Pleasurable Emotions for Children in Crisis

One of the most consistent and robust results from all the evaluation sources is that the clowns bring joyful emotions to children in the areas they visit. According to RED NOSES reports and interviews with aid workers who witnessed their work, in each of the formats – shows, parades, Intensive Smile, and Circus Smile – clowns inspire the children to smile and laugh.

Shows and parades are designed to evoke laughter through the art form of interactive clowning.

In Intensive Smile, this effect on emotions occurs primarily through a **shift in focus**, from the scary medical situation to something light-hearted. One clown who worked with MSF in Samos gives an example:

“ I saw a couple of kids that were quite scared just before the vaccination. As they sat down on the chair I put small blue sun glasses on them and the red nose and they started to laugh just in the moment when the needle went into their arm. And they did not cry.

RED NOSES clown, Samos

In Circus Smile, the happiness is often reached as the result of **satisfaction after achieving something difficult**. A clown told a story from a workshop in Lesbos:

“ During the Circus Smile Workshop, kids were so happy to show when they learned something. One of the biggest emotions was when we did the game with a parachute establishing very strict rules, were they had to do three rounds around the centre together and at the end to bring the ball into the centre. Suddenly they worked together very concentrated and effectively and ambitious. And just in some more moments they got it! And wow, what a celebration!!

RED NOSES clown, Lesbos

Another clown shared his experience with Circus Smile in mainland Greece:

“ From the beginning of attempting to spin plates, some children were getting frustrated and giving up, or cheating, or reacting by knocking over someone else’s plate But through encouragement, patience, and humor, many times the children stuck with the activity and they were elated when they FINALLY managed to spin the plate by themselves.

RED NOSES clown, mainland Greece

Another way that Circus Smile leads to pleasurable emotions is through the **experience of teamwork and cooperation**. One Head of Mission describes how the clowns led an exercise in which children in mainland Greece had to get a balloon into the centre of a parachute:

“ *When we started... they strongly brandished the parachute, everybody individually. But the clowns kept on repeating, “We are a team, it is teamwork – we can make it to put the balloon in the centre hole.” And then they understood, and tried to cooperate, regardless of nationality, age. And they made it. And then you should have seen it: They were so happy! They high-fived their peers, they smiled and laughed.*

RED NOSES Head of Mission



In surveys given to aid workers, nearly all confirmed that, during clown visits, children laughed more and had fun more than usual. No one responded that the children laughed less or had less fun than usual. In clown reports, 100% of the clowns agreed. Of all the questions in this evaluation, this question found the strongest consensus. It may be concluded that **Emergency Smile is successful in increasing pleasurable emotions of children**.

More Confidence for Children in Crisis

Confidence through Intensive Smile

RED NOSES reports include many anecdotes of children who gained more confidence through Intensive Smile. In one example, a clown in Lesbos played a game with children in which she pretended to give them injections, which reduced their fear when they had to go to the doctor to get the real one. In Samos, a clown described how some children came back to the MSF tent the day after the vaccination and *“wanted to go through the whole (scary) process again!”*

Children who received the Intensive Smile intervention shared similar stories. One girl recalled with laughter how, while she was waiting for the vaccination, a clown made eye contact with her and told her **“You are strong!”** while flexing his muscles. Her memory of the vaccination, three months later, was not of a frightening or painful needle, but rather of a cheerful acknowledgement of her own strength.

While invasive medical interventions can make children feel disempowered, these anecdotes suggest that the clowns’ playful interactions gave the children the confidence to **embrace and even enjoy their vaccinations.**





Confidence through Circus Smile

The other format that aims to increase children's confidence is Circus Smile. There are many anecdotes in the RED NOSES reports of children who received acknowledgement of their unique skills. RED NOSES reports also include many observations that **the children are proud to show what they have learned** in the final performance. One clown shared the experience:



While I was working with some kids on juggling balls, after some rehearsal kids were coming one by one to me how they can do it and getting a positive feedback was so motivating for me to go on. I saw shy girls getting more courageous and kind of proud when they achieved these little big successes. Especially the girls and boys who participated in our show, I saw them very happy and proud to have the possibility to be celebrated.

RED NOSES clown

Aid workers, however, did not give strong agreement that Circus Smile creates an increase in confidence. Of the aid workers who observed a Circus Smile (or Circus Smile Light) workshop, over a third claim that there was no change to children's confidence. One respondent, a translator in Samos, felt that the children were actually less confident during the clown's visit than they usually are. In interviews and focus group discussions, aid workers did not independently mention confidence as one of the changes in children they observed. It is worth looking further into whether higher confidence is indeed an effect of Circus Smile.

More Access for Children to Humour, Creativity, and Imagination

Clowns obviously provide opportunities for children to explore humour, creativity, and imagination. RED NOSES clowns are interactive during the shows and parades, giving opportunities for the children to also exercise their own creativity and imagination. For example, a clown relates from a show in Lesbos:



We included some kids to perform with us. They did so juggling with scarves and later everybody puts those scarves on their head and kind of disappears. It was hilarious moment because they really tried to do their best (not being seen) and later on act that they appeared from nowhere. I loved that.

RED NOSES clown, Lesbos

The circus skills practiced during the workshop can also be springboards for creativity, as the children go beyond what they learn to experiment with trick of their own. Humour, creativity, and imagination are central to the RED NOSES mission.

The main question, then, is whether the RED NOSES mission creates an *increase* in access to humour, creativity, and imagination. Do the children lack such opportunities, which the RED NOSES mission then serves to remedy? Or do the children have plenty of opportunities to be creative, and the RED NOSES mission is more or less business as usual?

When asked the children were more creative than usual during the RED NOSES visit, there were **differences in responses according to location.**

Location	More Creative
Lesbos	100 % (7/7)
Hotels on the mainland	81 % (13/16)
Camps in Central Macedonia	63 % (5/8)
Samos	50 % (4/8)

On Samos one aid worker actually responded that the children had less chances to be creative during the RED NOSES visit.

The simplest explanation is that, in some locations, there were already other aid organizations offering creative, playful activities to the children in crisis. Other clowns and circus organizations also visit Lesbos, Samos, and the Malakasa camp in Athens⁶; in at least two cases, another clown organization was there at the same time as the RED NOSES mission.



More Pleasurable Emotions for Adults

One key point of contact between clowns and adults are the parades. Many RED NOSES reports describe the parents who follow the parade and express their happiness and appreciation through smiles, hugs, thumbs up, putting their hand over their heart, and over course, saying ‘thank you’. A clown describes a parade on Lesbos:

“ We had a lot of positive reactions especially from the parents. I was really surprised how positively and playfully they reacted; young and old. A lot of them were following us, giving us the thumb up and saying: “Thank you very much. Thank you!”

RED NOSES clown, Lesbos

Through its flexible, interactive nature, the parades also offer chances for individual interactions with adults. A clown describes a transformative interaction that occurred on Lesbos:

“ At the beginning of the mission we met on Lesbos a heavily traumatized African. He sat with his social worker and a doctor on a bench. He could hardly hold his cup in his hand. He was visibly in very bad physical and psychological condition. We were in plain clothes... The caretaker explained that we were clowns and here for a visit. The man stared at us and didn’t understand. I said, “ We are clowns with red noses.” I got my red nose out of the pants pocket and put it on. The man immediately started to laugh. Not a smile, no, a realy laugh. His whole body began to move. More and more. ... Then we started to play a song on the kazoo. He laughed for five minutes and thanked us. The doctor had to go to the side and wipe tears out of her eyes. She said, “I have never seen this man smiling since the day he arrived here.”

RED NOSES clown, Lesbos

A Head of Mission describes another moving situation which took place on a parade through the Olive Grove on Lesbos:

“ During the parade in Olive Grove in the morning, we ran into an old woman, who was walking very slowly, and seemed very tired. [One clown] started to dance and sing with here, and suddenly all her face expressions turned from passive and sad into pure happines and joy.

RED NOSES Head of Mission, Lesbos

A majority of the aid workers agreed that parents laugh more during the RED NOSES clown visit than usual. In addition, most aid workers reported observing that the RED NOSES clown visit reduced parents’ anxiety, and about half thought that the parents felt more respected than usual. The agreement here was not as strong as when they were asked about the children, but there is evidence that, at least in some cases, there is a real impact on adults as well as children.

Adults Reconnect to their Emotions

Clowns create a safe environment for people reconnect to all their emotions. RED NOSES reports suggest that this reconnection was achieved with some adults. One such story is told by a clown from an Intensive Smile intervention during a vaccination on Lesbos:

THE POWER OF CLOWNING

It was windy and cold, and we just came in the clinic. Immediately we heard crying from the observation tent. ... In the tent was an Arabic mother with a daughter around 8 years old. She was crying; she just came from vaccination. Her mother was trying to give her tea to drink, but the girl was too upset to drink it.

We came, started to play the ukulele and sing gently. ... The girl stopped crying, watching us. Her mother was smiling. ... Mother and daughter were having fun and mother gave the daughter every few minutes tea to drink. And she was drinking it. After a while of music and magic, [one clown] started to play a romantic song and [another clown] started to be very touched by it. He started to be too pathetic and dramatic and it was very funny. ... He was loudly and funnily crying because of all the drama...

The girl and her mother were laughing and in one moment, mother's laughter turned into crying. The girl didn't notice that because she was so into the game, but in one moment [the clown] and the mother were both crying... It was a moment where the time stopped and we were all in the bubble of emotions. We created a safe place where laughter and crying can be combined, where happiness and sadness can be together. Because that is life. It was beautiful.

After some time ... mother's crying became laughter again. It was a cathartic moment that is hard to explain. After that, we were singing a song about their beautiful names... . In the end, I asked the mother if I can hug her and we hugged very strongly.

According to the RED NOSES Head of this mission, “A psychologist from MSF had observed the whole episode, and he told them later that what had just happened was extraordinary therapeutic work. He was astounded at having witnessed it.”



Another reconnection to emotions occurred during a parade through Moria camp in Lesbos:



When we did the parade through Moria camp and we had a call and answer song.

... [One clown] was singing loudly ‘la la la la’ to which the kids responded ‘na na na na na’, again and again, louder and louder. Until at one point ... they were shouting so strong, that it sounded like a liberation, as if it was a scream, a shout to be heard at last. ... It was moving and beautiful and everyone around could feel. Truly a precious moment.

RED NOSES Head of Mission and clown reports, Lesbos

The evidence does not suggest that such moments occurred on every mission, or with a large amount of people. Yet when such interactions did occur, they left a strong impression on the RED NOSES team, and were recounted as one of the most memorable and meaningful experiences of the entire mission.

More Pleasurable Emotions for Aid Workers



Reduced Stress during the Clown Visit

Most aid workers surveyed said that they laughed and had fun more often than usual during the clown visit, and that they had less stress and frustration. A representative from MSF on Samos explained in an interview that the **clowns completely changed the atmosphere** during their vaccination, which had positive effects on their team as well. The representative described the difference as a “lightness”:

“*Light, it was more light. And funny. We danced, also us! The mood was totally different with the children but also with us. Like a game.*”

MSF representative, Samos

Increased Ability to Cope with Stress

Around half of aid workers said that they felt more able to cope with the emotional difficulties and that they used humour to cope with their stress more often when the clowns were there. It seems clowns did well at reducing stress, but had **less success offering new ways to cope with stress**.

Improved Work Conditions, with Some Exceptions

Slightly over half of aid workers found that their work with children was smoother, easier, and more successful while the clowns were there. One reason given is that clowns occupy the attention of the children, which **frees up time for the aid workers**. For example, one aid worker from Refugees for Refugees on Lesbos said that during the clown visit she was able to give more assistance to the vulnerable children who need one to one support. Volunteers with Refugees for Refugees on Samos also reported that RED NOSES offered valuable help during an Eid celebration – while the clowns occupied the children, the volunteers were able to set up the activities.

There were some exceptions, though. Aid workers from IOM in mainland Greece said that they felt more overwhelmed than usual during the clown visit. An MSF representative on Lesbos also shared some extra burdens brought by the clown visit:

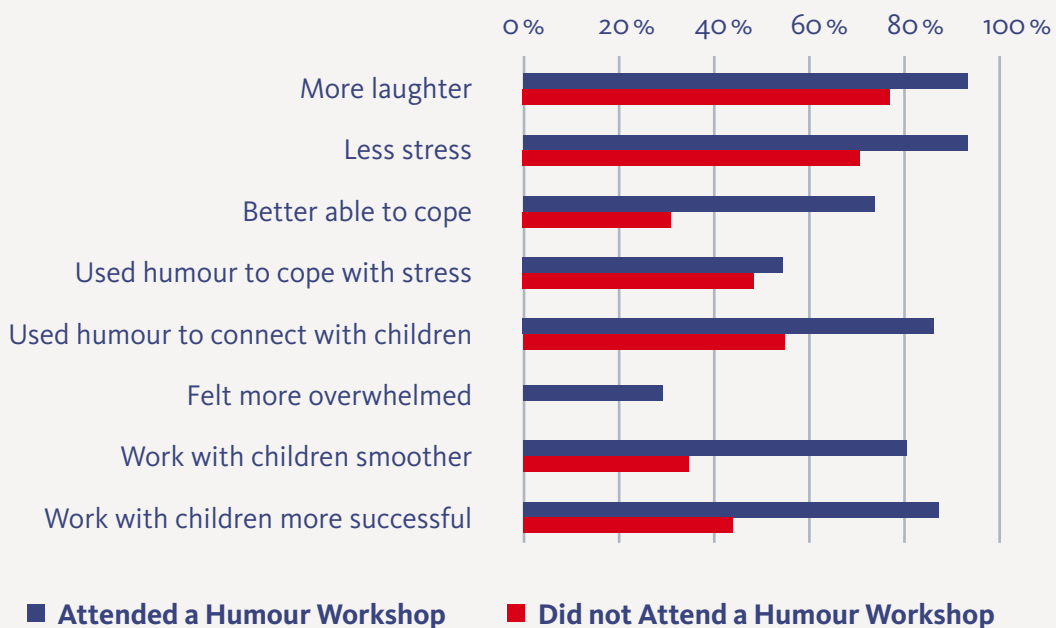
” We lost time. We have a lot of children, put a lot of effort in the management of the clinic. At the moment you have 5 or 6 clowns coming in and running around and children running behind them, it becomes a bit of a mess. The staff would not like it anymore, it makes things more complicated than they are already. ... If there are too many it is disruptive.
MSF representative, Lesbos

The representative went on to suggest that the clowns should stay in the waiting area, rather than moving to different areas, as that would have been less disruptive.

Difference Made by Humour Workshops

An observation survey was given to both aid workers who attended and those who did not attend a humour workshop, which can help illuminate what differences were only from the interactions with the clowns, and which were increased by the humour workshop .

Impact of Emergency Smile on Aid Workers



The increased ability to cope with emotional difficulties of their work was over twice as widespread among those who attended a humour workshop, suggesting that the workshop did make aid workers **better able to deal with stress**. Interestingly, it seems that the workshop did not encourage aid workers use humour to this end; whether or not an aid worker had attended a workshop made little difference as to whether or not they were using humour to cope with stress. The workshops did, however, make aid workers more likely to use humour to connect with children.

Attending a humour workshop also doubled the likelihood that an aid worker found their work smoother to carry out and ultimately more successful. One explanation is that the humour workshops **improved the partnership and cooperation between** RED NOSES and aid workers. During a focus group discussion, a representative of MSF emphasized that the humour workshop gave her a new understanding of the work of RED NOSES clowns, and increased her respect for the psychological benefits brought by clowning. If aid workers understand and respect the clown's work, it may make it more likely that they can find ways to cooperate that make their own jobs easier .



The one point where Humour Workshops seem to have a negative effect is on how overwhelmed the aid workers felt. This effect is due largely to the IOM aid workers on mainland Greece who felt that the clowns made their jobs more overwhelming. Indeed the RED NOSES reports verify that the IOM representatives **did not have enough time** to join the humour workshops, and half of the participants would even leave each time. Since they did not find a way to integrate the humour workshops into their schedules, this seems to have left them feeling more overwhelmed than usual.

Gender Differences



In several areas, it was reported that the **girls were shy and initially more reluctant** to engage in activities.

The data on children who benefitted from the missions were not disaggregated by gender or ethnicity, so it is difficult to tell how inclusive the interventions were. It is clear, though, that all the hotels with unaccompanied minors only hosted boys, so there may ultimately be a larger number of boys who benefitted from the project. This imbalance may also be a mirror of the gender breakdown of unaccompanied minors; the data available from the UNHCR does not include how many boys and girls are among the refugees and migrants in Greece.

Negative Effects

The main negative effect brought up both by RED NOSES and aid workers, is that **children are often sad when the clowns leave**:

” *When after two weeks in Lesbos some child waved and cried “tomorrow tomorrow” and we knew we’re not coming and they stay was strong picture.*

RED NOSES clown

One clown shared the difficult story of walking away from the children, who were left crying behind barbed wire. An aid worker confirmed that the children ask for the clowns after they leave.

What differences will last?



Emotional Well-Being of Children

Positive Memories

The greatest long-term impact of Emergency Smile Greece identified by all participants was the positive memories that the children keep of their time with the clowns. One clown reported that the leader of the Kara Tepe Camp on Lesbos said to them:

” You give those children good pictures that they need for their future life! They saw too many bad things.

RED NOSES clown, Lesbos

Another clown mentioned the value of positive memories of Circus Smile in particular.

” I think they will remember short but irreplaceable moments when all audience were looking just at them, or clapping just for them.

RED NOSES clown, Lesbos

The Intensive Smile format was also emphasized in reports as providing positive memories in circumstances that would otherwise be remembered as stressful or anxious. As one clown who took part in Intensive Smile on Samos explained:



I think “good pictures” will stay with them. That there is always a place or fun and playfulness. This will stay for children and for parents as well. They saw that their children are still children that laugh, play as they should. Even if there is pain and fear. That they are brave and strong as well! And that in even such bad conditions we can have fun and we can laugh, be happy and enjoy beautiful and funny moments of our life.

RED NOSES clown, Samos



In the follow-up visit to Samos, it was **confirmed that children did retain happy memories** of the Intensive Smile format. Children who experienced a clown at their vaccination were able to recall the clowns three months later, including specific details about what games and music the clowns played. The memory of the clowns transformed the experience of the vaccinations, so that children who said they had seen clowns talked about the vaccination as a happy experience. One also remembered specifically how the clown had encouraged her to be brave and strong. The children also remembered with pleasure the juice boxes they received from MSF after the vaccination.



One volunteer Project Coordinator from Refugees for Refugees on Lesbos thought that the positive memories could also support the formation of new coping strategies:

“ I believe that the kids will be able to build some good memories with the clowns and that this interaction might give them more/different resources to deal with their thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Refugees for Refugees Project Coordinator, Lesbos

A Head of Mission also expressed the idea that positive memories could have a transformative effect.

“ What I think will stay on a longer run with them as an impact is the inspiration of how appreciated they felt while learning with us. I think good memories of being appreciated, having fun learning, being the “star”, and especially our role model, where we present a human being able to cope with emotions, being able to learn while having fun etc. is a strong memory that will help them make good decisions about themselves in the future. But this is only my opinion and what I hope for.

RED NOSES Head of Mission

As the Head of Mission mentions, these more ambitious ideas about the role of the positive memories in the lives of children have yet to be confirmed. Further research would be needed to fully understand the effect of happy memories with the clowns on the children in crisis in Greece.

New Activities and Games

After the happy memories, the most popular long-term impact mentioned by aid workers and RED NOSES reports is that children got **ideas for new games and activities** from the clowns, which they were likely to repeat. One clown also expressed that the hope that the children would pass these new games on to others:

“ *I hope that the idea of “paying it forward” [will last after the mission]: taking a simple game or exercise or magic trick they learned, and sharing it with their [peers] with the same joy and patience that we shared with them.*

RED NOSES clown

No follow-up visits were paid to children who experienced Circus Smile workshops through Emergency Smile Greece. Still, a recent evaluation of Emergency Smile in Palestine found that five months after a Circus Smile workshop, children did in fact report that they continued to teach the tricks and skills they had learned to others.^{vi}



Confidence

Another idea brought up by several clowns and one aid worker is that the children will benefit from a long-term gain in self-confidence after the clown visit. One clown explains how this may happen through a reduction in isolation:



I am sure that for some of the kids, the experience of achieving something TOGETHER will leave an important feeling/image/understanding for the future, the feeling of not being alone and apart from the rest of the world, but being part of the whole. The feeling of being accepted and appreciated, heard, seen, loved and celebrated the way they are is a strong step towards self-confidence. And confidence in themselves is a great source of energy and light. Sure there are some games probably, some tools we taught them but generally I guess it is this [which will last] – trust and inner source.

RED NOSES clown

The importance of increasing the confidence of children in crisis seems obvious. One Australian study has shown that high self-esteem is a significant predictor of the long-term well-being of resettled refugee youth.^{vii} The anecdotes mentioned in the previous section, which suggested that children do gain confidence through participating in Circus Smile, may raise the hope that this confidence will last after the mission ends. It must be recalled, however, that there was also a sizable minority of aid workers who did not claim to observe any increase in confidence even during the clown's visit, and that confidence was not mentioned in interviews and focus group discussions with aid workers. Overall, the effects on confidence through Emergency Smile both during Circus Smile and after the mission as a whole are yet to be fully determined.





Limit to Long-Term Effects

There is much yet to be understood about the long-term effects of Emergency Smile.

One clown wrote that:

“ I think that in order for something to change permanently in their lives, these children need every day someone who would do this kind of positive work with them because the reality of the camp is very sad.

RED NOSES clown

More Supportive Environment for Children

The primary way Emergency Smile Greece aimed to have a long-term effect on the environment for displaced children is through the impact on aid workers – through the cooperation during artistic formats, and especially through the **Humour Relief Workshops**.

Strengthened Connections with Colleagues

The greatest impact of the Humour Relief Workshop, according to the surveys, was the **unique opportunity for aid workers to connect with one another**. For example, one aid worker mentioned that the workshop helped new volunteers connect with longer-term volunteers, bridging the gap and bringing them closer together. Another described the most relevant part of the workshop as the connection through music:



I liked singing together. I felt connected with the group.

Aid worker

It is unclear how long this effect lasts. Three months after a Humour Relief Workshop, aid workers did not mention in their focus group discussion that their relationships with one another had changed. But in the survey, one aid worker did indicate that they would continue to use the strategies to connect with people, writing that the most relevant part of the workshop had been learning “*new, easy ways to connect with new people*”.





Better Interactions with Children

The majority of participants mentioned the games and exercises taught during the workshop as the takeaway that they will continue to use in their daily work. **Continuing to play games with the children** was the primary long-term change aid workers thought they would get from the workshop. The aid workers were less much less likely to say they learned how to use humour with children. This suggests that the aid workers do not see a strong connection between the games they learned and the use of humour to connect with children.

Improved Skills and Understanding in Dealing with Emotions

It is not as clear whether the Humour Relief Workshops effectively help aid workers to develop understanding and skills that help them to better manage their emotions and understand the emotions of children. A few aid workers did mention that they felt the workshop addressed how to cope with their emotions through, for example, **breathing and trust in themselves**. Most aid workers, though, understood the workshops as rather being about connecting with their colleagues and learning new activities and games.

Recommendations

These 28 recommendations are taken from the aid workers, children, clowns, and heads of missions who were involved with Emergency Smile Greece.

Some suggestions were explicitly given through interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and reports. Others were implicit insofar as a particular challenge was highlighted, and the evaluator inferred the corresponding action point.

Strategic Direction

Aid workers in Samos called on RNI to take a greater leadership role in efforts on the island, for example, in training volunteers to work with children.

1. > Consider how to transition to a more strategic, long-term role in crisis areas in Greece.

Planning Missions

Coordinate with Artistic Organizations

If other artistic organizations are already working a lot with the children, RNI is not really increasing children's access to humour, creativity, and imagination.

2. > Communicate with other clown organizations and artistic NGOs operating in Greece to coordinate the provision of artistic and creative opportunities to children in crisis.

Contacts

Heads of Missions have reported some problems with their primary contacts in partner organizations. In one case, the contact was not the correct person to organize the visit in terms of the organizational hierarchy, which led to conflict at the start of the mission. In other cases, the contact did not communicate internally to others, so that preparations are not adequately made for the team.

3. > Ensure that the contact person with the partner organization is the most appropriate person, in terms of:
- Their authority within the organization
 - How well-placed they are to communicate schedules and plans to the aid workers on the ground

Schedules

Seeing too many partners for a short period of time risks making the mission too superficial.

4. > Stay longer in one place; find the best partners working with the most vulnerable and appropriate target groups and set up longer interventions with them.

Ensure Appropriate Space

One of the most common challenges found in each mission was the lack of an appropriate space for the clowns to work.

5. > Plan spaces in advance – avoid heat (make sure there is shade), have enough space, avoid open spaces where children come and go.

Target Groups

Adolescents

Work with adolescents (12–18) was consistently reported by heads of missions and clowns as particularly valuable. Even the show, which may seem too childish, actually worked best with this age group, according to the clowns, as they can grasp more subtleties of the humour.

6. > Continue to plan interventions with 12-18 year olds.

Parents and Adults

On Samos, aid workers reported that there are many activities for children and very few for adults, especially young adults:



They take drugs because there is nothing to occupy their time, except coming to play checkers for 6 hours a days.

Aid worker, Samos

Some clowns reported that parents are also interested in joining the activities and joining part of them. Aid workers reported struggling with the conflict of working with children when their parents do not know where they are.

7. > Consider developing formats for adults and parents.

Diversity

Aid workers pointed out the importance of making sure that target groups are inclusive, particularly ethnically. If there is a majority of just one ethnicity, then others will not come.

8. > Work with partners to ensure that they connect RED NOSES with groups that are inclusive of gender and ethnicity, for example through the use of quotas.

Preparation Week

Clarity of roles

Sometimes roles were unclear, particularly of the artistic responsible and within the International office.

9. > Clearly communicate roles and responsibilities of the mission team and within the office.

Provide Information

Teams found information about the intervention area and conditions given before missions extremely helpful. For example, one team was happy about receiving links to videos and articles about the situation in the camps to be visited. Other teams complained about not having enough information about the conditions on the ground.

10. > Provide a printed handout for mission teams that lists key information, such as emergency numbers, how many refugees and migrants are currently there, and the location of the each intervention area, including how many kilometres it is from the team's accommodation.

Revise Preparation Week Schedule

Several clowns expressed that they would prefer to have less time during the prep week working on the show, and more time preparing for Circus Smile and Humour Workshops.

- 11. > Reconsider the proportion of time spent preparing for the show compared to other formats.

Show

Writing the Show

The majority of preparation time is used for creating and rehearsing the show, and the clowns often reported feeling tension that it is not ready when they begin the mission.

- 12. > Create a database of show ideas.
- 13. > Learn a basic structure for the show at the general training in February.

Adaptability

- 14. > Plan for the different environments in which the show will need to be performed (e.g. indoors, outdoors)

Crowd Control

The Head of Mission is sometimes the only person available to help control the audience. This can lead to situations where the Head of Mission is alone in a closed room with a large group of children, which is against common child protection guidelines.

- 15. > Arrange for a volunteer to help with the crowd.

Parade

Interaction

- 16. > Design parades to be interactive, so that the crowd acts as participants, not just observers, making the parade a moving spectacle that is different from an icebreaker show.

Sharing Ideas

- 17. > Share songs and ideas developed on earlier missions for the parade.

Intensive Smile

Communication

- 18. > Communicate with the partner (e.g. MSF) to find out where the clowns should be and avoid moving from place to place, as this can create confusion if the children follow the clowns. For example, it may be preferable to stay in the waiting room.

Circus Smile

Effective Group Sizes

One challenge that arose in almost every mission was that the team found themselves with large groups of children and found it difficult or impossible to do Circus Smile.

- 19. > Ensure partners already work with a restricted number of children of about the same age, so that the clowns are not left with the responsibility of dividing the children and deciding who gets to participate. Schools are ideal partners, as they have set schedules and fixed groups divided by age.
- 20. > Organize a safe, closed space with a volunteer or guard to watch that more children do not come inside.

Group Management

Clowns on every mission emphasized the importance of setting strict rules and boundaries with the children. Without rules there is too much chaos for anyone to enjoy themselves.

- 21. > Enforce clear and strict rules. For example, set up a special quieting behaviour at the beginning, like a special clap that all the children agree they will be quiet when they hear.

Language

One aid worker who observed Circus Smile suggested that the clowns should be more careful with their English, and use more basic words and direct objects and images to show what they are talking about, as most of the children do not speak English very well. A Head of Mission added that, ***“minors are more vulnerable for language – if they do not understand, they can get into anxiety.”***

- 22. > Organize for a translator (with a loud voice). Consider payment for translators.

- 23. > Use simple English

Age Appropriateness

Some teens who took part in Circus Smile and were interviewed afterwards felt that the activities were not age-appropriate for them; they felt the activities were more geared towards younger children. “**We’re not babies!**” one teen complained. On the other hand, one clown mentioned that they need more circus material for young children, as the props currently used are only appropriate for older children.

- 24. > Review the Circus Smile activities and establish ideal options for different ages. Pedagogical experts can also provide input

Humour Workshops

Increase Frequency

Aid workers who participated in humour workshops felt that there would be benefits to doing more of them, and several clowns agreed in their reports.

- 25. > Provide multiple workshops to the same participants, in particular working with the coordinators from one region, since there is a high turnover of volunteers

Communication

Participants were often unsure what the humour workshop would be about.

- 26. > Provide clear communication to the partner about the content and objectives of the humour workshop

Resources

- 27. > Leave behind a leaflet that lists strategies for working with children, or create an accessible online database.

Content

- 28. > Review the content of Humour Workshops to ensure that their targeted impact is in line with the RED NOSES mission and Framework of Change.



Annex One: Programme Objectives

Emergency Smile 2019: Targets

Objectives

1. Displaced children have greater emotional well-being
2. Environment for displaced children is more supportive

Expected Outcomes

1. Children enjoy more positive emotions
2. Children feel more confident
3. Children have more opportunities to explore their humour, creativity, and imagination
4. Adults enjoy more positive emotions
5. Adults reconnect to their emotions
6. Aid workers enjoy more positive emotions

Outputs

1. # of 4, or 5-day Circus Smile workshops
2. # of days children interacting with clowns (any format)
3. # of children interacted with clowns
4. # of Humour Relief Workshops conducted
5. # of staff participated in workshop

Annex Two: Locations Visited

North Aegean Islands: Lesbos and Samos

Most of the 26,800 refugees and migrants on the Aegean islands are from Afghanistan (39%), Syria (14%), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (10%). This number includes 22% women and 35% children, of which almost 6 out of 10 are younger than 12 years old.^{viii}

On Lesbos reside 10,300 refugees and migrants – five times the estimated capacity of 2,150.^{ix}

RED NOSES worked with displaced children residing primarily in three locations:

- **Moria Reception and Identification Centre:** Hosts 8,500 people. This camp is a former military base managed by state authorities and it is difficult to get access to enter. Housing consists of a combination of containers and makeshift tents.
- **Kara Tepe:** Hosts 1,300 people, of which 700 are children. This accommodation site is restricted to vulnerable people or families. It is a clean and relatively welcoming space, managed by the local municipality in coordination with UNHCR.
- **Olive Grove:** An overflow area from Moria, where around 1,000 people constructed shelter for themselves in an olive grove, using tents, pallets, blankets, sleeping bags and some other available materials. Some basic services for residents in the olive grove are provided by two NGOs: Movement on the Ground and Refugees for Refugees.

On Samos reside 4,197 refugees and migrants – six times the estimated capacity of 700.

There is one official residential site:

- **Vathy Reception and Identification Centre:** Hosts 2,676 people,^x living very closely beside one another, mostly in light summer tents. No NGOs are allowed access inside.

Mainland Greece: Central Macedonia and A

Living conditions in the mainland of Greece are superior to the islands, as facilities do not deal with the same overcrowding that plagues the island reception centres. The psychological strain of an unclear future and lack of child-friendly activities, however, is still a threat to the wellbeing of displaced children in these areas. Most of the information given here below on

the physical and psychological conditions for each location is taken from RED NOSES reports, as there is much less information available about these camps and hotels in the general media.

In Northern Greece (Central Macedonia), RED NOSES visited two camps and three hotels.

- **Volvi (Loutra Neas Apollonias):** Hosts 1,000 people, including 160 children.^{xi} One large building for school classes is provided, as well as a big common space for other activities. Located in a remote setting, far from towns (62 km from Thessaloniki).
- **Katio Milia:** Hosts 300 people, including 35–60% children.^{xii} The displaced people are mostly from Syria (63%) as well as Iraq (20%), Afghanistan (8%), and Palestine (4%).^{xiii} The site is concrete, fenced, and guarded by police. The displaced people live in iron containers of 10 m² each, with no shady or green place to play outside. There is one larger container (28 m²) for activities.
- **Afanos Hotel:** Hosts male unaccompanied minors, 15–17 years old, mostly from Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. Caregivers spend time with them and lead activities in their free time, such as painting and photography.
- **Giannitsa Hotel:** Hosts male unaccompanied minors, 16–17 years old, all from Afghanistan. Located in a remote spot 7 km outside of the city of Giannitsa (50 km northwest of Thessaloniki). There is a lack of pictures in the hotel, just cold stone and a tennis table. There is a yard for playing football, but no shade, so no one goes outside due to the heat.
- **Orfeas Hotel:** Hosts male unaccompanied minors, 16–18 years old, all from Africa. Located in Polykastro (60 km northwest of Thessaloniki). According to IOM representatives, the minors here were, at least during the month of July, particularly detached, uninterested in participating in activities, and low in energy.

In Southern Greece (Attica), RED NOSES visited one camp and two hotels.

- **Malakasa:** Hosts 1,276 people, including 36% children, from Afghanistan (50%), Syria (26%), Iraq (17%), and Iran (6%).^{xiv} Located near a train station which goes to Athens. Children have school classes every day even in summer. There are many non-profit organizations providing activities for children, including music lessons, circus classes, and cinema. There is a shady place for children to play and a playground with a sandbox and jungle gym.
- **Edelweiss Hotel:** Hosts 45 male unaccompanied minors, 16–18 years old, all from Afghanistan. Located in Livanates, a somewhat remote town 150 km northwest of Athens. There is a creative common space available for use, and outside there is a garden and place for sports. Classes are provided for the children, including photography and dance lessons.
- **Marathon Hotel:** Hosts male unaccompanied minors. Located in Nea Makri, 25 km north-east of Athens.

- i** These totals are inflated through double counting, as there has been no effort to determine who participated in both a Parade and Circus Smile, or both a Parade and a Show, etc.
- ii** UNHCR. Fact sheet > Greece / 1–31 August 2019.
<<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71310>>
- iii** Bjertrup, P.J., Bouhenia, M., Mayaud, P., Perrin, C., Ben Farhat J., Blanchet, K. (2018) A life in waiting: Refugees’ mental health and narratives of social suffering after European Union border closures in March 2016. *Social Science & Medicine*, 53–60.
- iv** Lustig, S., Ellis, B.H., Kia-Keating, M., & Keane, T. (2004) Review of Child and Adolescent Refugee Mental Health. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 43(1), 24–36.
- v** No surveys or interviews were conducted with aid workers on Malakasa in Athens, so no data is available on their opinion regarding Emergency Smile’s impact.
- vi** García, B., Avellan, M., & Musa, R. 2019. EVALUATION REPORT “Promote wellbeing and mental health for vulnerable groups in Palestine.”
- vii** Correa-Velez, I., Gifford, S., McMichael, C. (2015). The persistence of predictors of wellbeing among refugee youth eight years after resettlement in Melbourne, Australia. *Social Science & Medicine* 142, 163–168.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.08.017>>
- viii** UNHCR Aegean Islands Weekly Snapshot, 09–15 September 2019.
<<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71359>>
- ix** The rest of the figures in this section are taken from the UNHCR Fact Sheet > Greece/1–31 August 2019. <<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71310>>
- x** Site Management Support: Site Profiles, August–September 2018
<<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/66038>>
- xi** According to representatives from IOM.
- xii** 35 % is listed in Site Management Support: Site Profiles, August–September 2018
<<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/66038>>. 60 % is listed in the RNI Head of Mission report.
- xiii** Site Management Support: Site Profiles, August–September 2018
<<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/66038>>
- xiv** Site Management Support: Site Profiles, August–September 2018
<<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/66038>>

www.rednoses.eu



RED NOSES Clowndoctors International

Wattgasse 48, 1170 Vienna, Austria

T: +43 1 318 03 13 - 66

F: +43 1 318 03 13 - 20

E: smile@rednoses.eu

