


RED NOSES
CLOWNDOCTORS
International



RED NOSES is one of the largest leading healthcare clown organisations in the world. Founded in Austria in 1994, RED NOSES is a non-profit foundation on a mission to share the power of laughter through the art of clowning.

Today, RED NOSES partner offices operate in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Jordan, Lithuania, Palestine, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Across these numerous locations, RED NOSES healthcare clowns work together with vulnerable audiences such as children in hospitals, elderly people in geriatric facilities, people in rehabilitation centres and children with disabilities.

In 2013, RED NOSES International developed an emergency response programme called Emergency Smile. This programme is a holistic intervention which aims to promote emotional well-being, greater social inclusion, and address the psychosocial needs of vulnerable people in crisis settings. Emergency Smile allows RED NOSES to go beyond the borders of its eleven partner countries sending specially trained healthcare clowns to areas of crisis in cooperation with international aid organisations already working on the ground.

Art and humour have the potential to help develop compassionate and person-centred care for all, and RED NOSES is on a mission to share the restorative power of laughter with those who need it most.



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The power of art and humour in a turbulent world

As multiple crises continue to unfold throughout the world, it's evident that humour, joy, and human connection are needed now more than ever. The turmoil of recent years has triggered a global mental health crisis. Evidence suggests that art and humour are vital tools when it comes to strengthening the resilience of human beings in the face of stress and trauma.

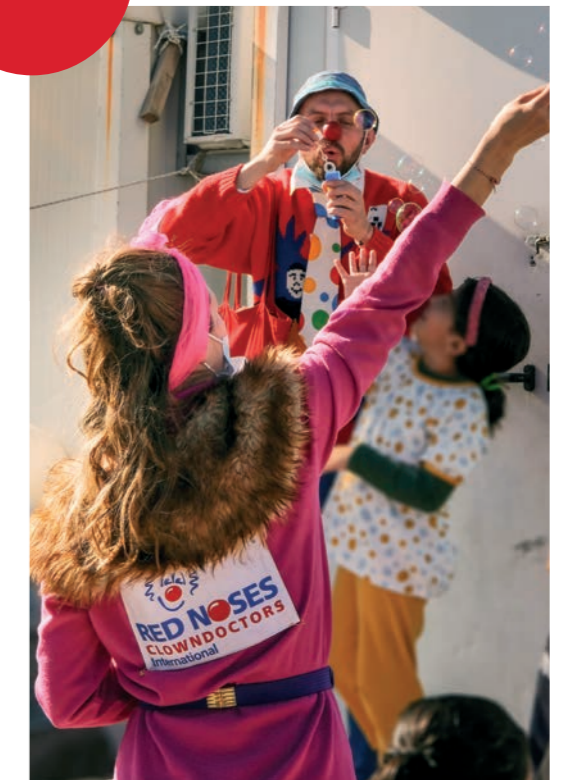
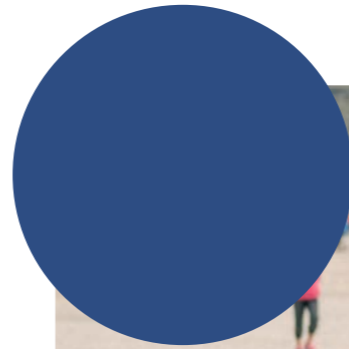
Art can and should exist in places of crisis and hardship. It should be present in the most unexpected areas of our life. Art goes beyond medical treatment and survival. It makes us human.

For more than 25 years, RED NOSES has been working in the healthcare sector with professionally trained artists in Europe and beyond. Thanks to more than 400 hours of rigorous training and over 100 hospital visits throughout several years of preparation, RED NOSES artists learn a vast range of skills, like music, performance, acrobatics, improvisation, as well as tools on how to work in delicate environments such as the healthcare sector.

At the same time, RED NOSES collaborates closely with institutions and partner organisations in an effort to co-create interventions that have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the people we encounter. Once the basic needs of people are met with the support of aid organisations on the ground, our Emergency Smile programme provides psychosocial support to people deeply affected by crisis, and encourages moments of connection and happiness among those involved.

As one of the leading healthcare clown organisation in the world, RED NOSES also strives to be a reliable partner in the humanitarian aid sector. RED NOSES will continue working tirelessly to improve the mental and emotional well-being of people living in crisis settings wherever we are needed.

Natalie Porias
RED NOSES CEO





More than 400 RED NOSES healthcare clowns visit hundreds of children in hospitals, coma and rehabilitation wards every day.

Healthcare clowns and the art of clowning

RED NOSES programmes focus on the scientifically proven health benefits of art and humour as a complementary measure in healthcare interventions. The programmes further serve to support the conviction that every child has the fundamental right to leisure and play (UNCRC).

Healthcare clowns contribute to the empowerment and mental health improvement of vulnerable groups. They are professionally trained to support, encourage, and connect with people by recognising their needs, acknowledging their presence, and engaging with them on an individual level. Through the safe space created by the playful and emotionally honest encounters with clowns, children and adults often feel empowered and safe to express difficult or unpleasant emotions. Clowning also encourages flexibility and creative problem solving. People of any background can relate and connect with the figure of the clown, a light-hearted and emotional character who constantly faces challenges of all kinds. The clown's ability to turn failures into personal victories and to communicate with a simple smile are their most valuable gifts.

In crisis contexts, where words cannot fully grasp the complexities and realities of conflict and displacement, the arts give children and other vulnerable groups a different means of expression. Art allows children to explore memories and emotions in a safe space, where they can move freely and feel in control of the situation, giving them a sense of agency and empowerment.

There is a robust body of literature on the positive impact of creative interventions in emergency contexts. Art therapy has been shown to not only mitigate the post-traumatic stress of refugee children, but also to encourage "post-traumatic growth" by improving feelings of self-worth, increasing resilience, and promoting bonding within the group.

One of the main characteristics of the art of clowning, and art therapy in general, is its capacity to bypass linguistic, cultural and cognitive barriers.

If you want to learn more about the work of RED NOSES and all of our programmes, please visit www.rednoses.org



Years of expertise:
10+



Countries of operation:
11+



Team members:
45+



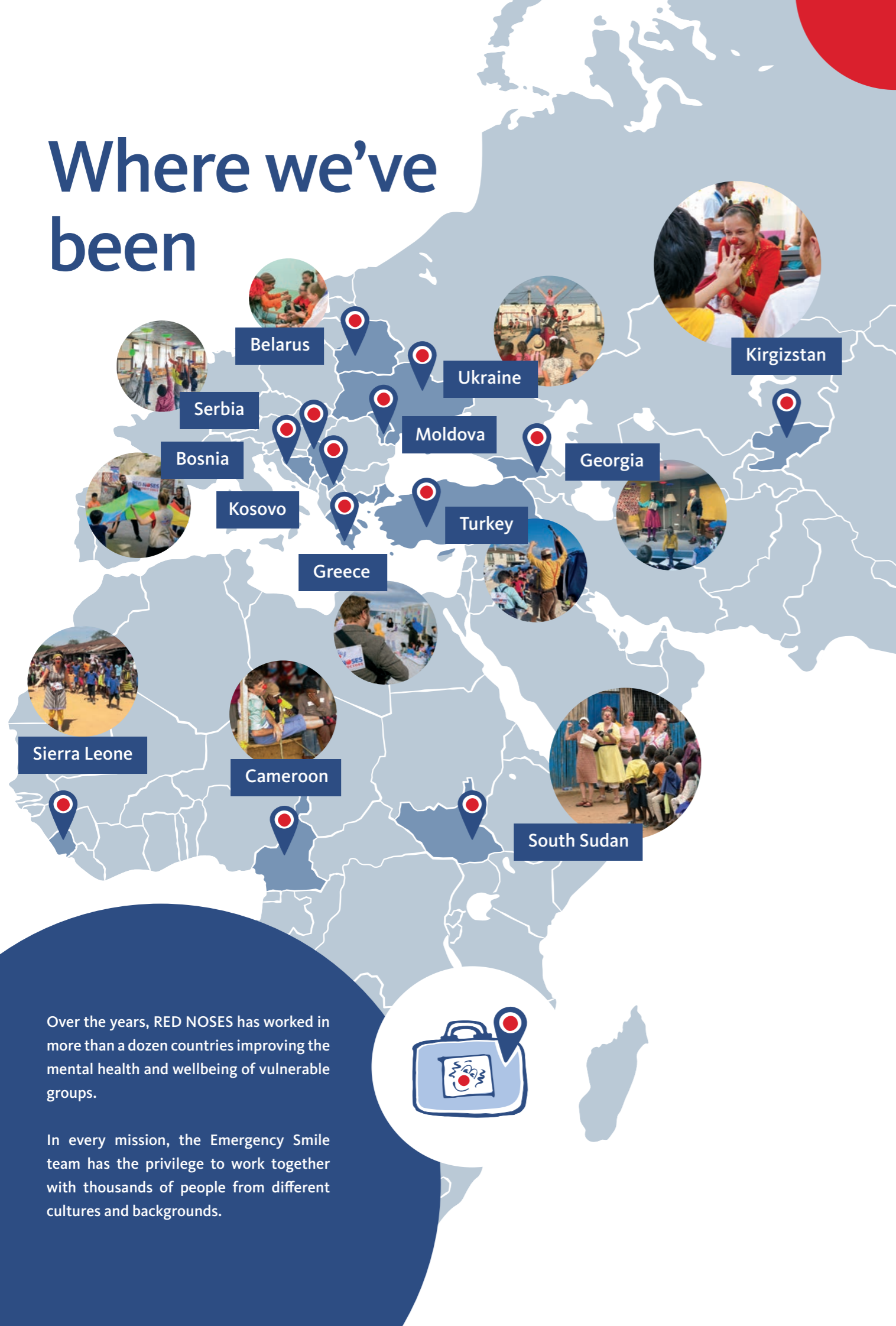
Number of missions:
Over 50



Number of partners:
Over 30

Emergency Smile at a glance

Where we've been



Over the years, RED NOSES has worked in more than a dozen countries improving the mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups.

In every mission, the Emergency Smile team has the privilege to work together with thousands of people from different cultures and backgrounds.



How we work: our formats



In a typical Emergency Smile mission, three to four healthcare clowns, and one Head of Mission, get to connect with different kinds of vulnerable audiences in a variety of formats such as workshops, parades and shows. The standard mission consists of two parts. One week of preparation, where the international team gets to meet, rehearse and learn, and a second part, lasting around three weeks, working on the ground. Both the number of team members and the length of the mission can vary according to the needs of the people they'll be supporting.

Circus Smile

Circus Smile is a circus workshop for children that takes place for several days in a row. When possible, the workshop ends with a final show where children perform for their caregivers and aid workers. Working together with the clowns, the children learn different circus skills, such as juggling, acrobatics, magic tricks, dancing and much more. By working with small groups, clowns are able to create special connections with each of the children participating in the workshop, and in return,

the children shift their focus from a difficult situation to learn something new. Their creativity and problem-solving skills are increased, and the children feel seen, included, and empowered.

Furthermore, as a result of the involvement of aid workers, and (where possible) family members, in the sessions, the relationship between all the participants is improved, leaving behind much more than just a new-learned skill.



Co-creation potential!

If your organisation is working with a specific audience we haven't considered yet, or you're running some activities where you would like to get the clowns involved, please let us know! We'd love to create something together.

Musical Parades

Clowns rarely go unseen, but with the addition of music they become like a magnet of joy for everyone in their path.

During musical parades, the team plays music on the move, collecting people as they go. Every parade looks different according to the situation. Parades can be very short, with the sole intention of collecting people for a clown show. Alternatively, they can cover a long distance with small performances taking place in between. They can also be an opportunity to visit people and create intimate and personalised interactions with them.

The music, laughter, and voices of everyone singing along spread happiness to every corner. Parades are also an amazing spanning tool. Very often, thanks to the parades, clowns get to meet people who wouldn't normally be able to participate or have access to their artistic interventions, such as people with disabilities, infants and the elderly.

Shows

Every mission is unique. Therefore, every team that goes to a new mission creates a special show adapted for the specific needs of the group that they will encounter. The uniqueness of the shows also comes from the different characters of the clowns and the relationships they create throughout the mission. The character of the clown constantly faces personal challenges and failures, making them relatable to almost everyone. Through the show, the audience gets to meet the clowns, and discover some of the props and skills they may later come across during the Circus Smile workshops.

The clowns, in a playful way, introduce topics that can later be used by aid workers as discussion points or as a way to reflect on current situations that the audience is facing. The show creates a space for joy and laughter, demonstrating that there are no failures or challenges that cannot be overcome, and helps the audience to reconnect with their emotions and each other.

Humour Relief Workshops

Healthcare clowns are artists that have been professionally trained to work in sensitive environments. Clowns can play an important role in helping aid workers deal with stress and process the challenging situations they face daily.

The Humour Relief Workshop is a workshop designed for aid workers, medical staff and volunteers working in crisis settings. Humour Relief Workshops can also be organised for groups of parents, women, or unaccompanied men.

The participants are provided with knowledge on how humour can create powerful emotional connections between people, enhance and stimulate social interactions, and reduce stress and anxiety, thus fostering a better professional environment. The workshop also focuses on using humour as a tool to improve working relationships.

Before each workshop, a questionnaire is shared, so the artists can adapt the exercises to the specific needs of the participants. By the end of each workshop, the participants should have learned new coping strategies for stress and feel energised and more connected to their fellow team members.

Throughout the years, RED NOSES has provided Humour Relief Workshops to major humanitarian aid organisations such as Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), SOS Children's Villages, Save the Children, Concordia Social Projects, Terre des hommes & Moldova for Peace among many others.

Artistic interventions in healthcare context

The team of Emergency Smile is composed of approximately 40 healthcare clowns from international locations. These clowns all work nationally with

children in hospitals throughout complex medical interventions as well as in rehabilitation centres and with children with disabilities.

In the context of Emergency Smile missions, RED NOSES professional clowns have had the opportunity to support different aid organisations during medical interventions. For example, RED NOSES accompanied Doctors Without Borders (MSF) during their vaccination campaigns and in their clinics, as well as other healthcare workers in refugee reception centre medical facilities.

Community celebration

While the primary audience of Emergency Smile missions is children living in crisis settings, one of the goals of the missions is to come into contact with the whole community. As a result, the Emergency Smile team has been increasingly working with groups of women, mothers, single men, and the elderly, by adapting the interventions to the needs of different audiences. The Emergency Smile team has also been included in a number of community celebrations. Moments like these offer a morale boost and have the potential to enhance the emotional wellbeing of people affected by crisis. It is always an honour for our team to be part of them.





Who we reach

Children

RED NOSES healthcare clowns encourage children to become creative partners in their play experience by engaging them in artistic interaction. In this way, children are able to reconnect with positive emotions and their environment is transformed into a more supportive place where their feelings are respected, and potentially traumatic situations can be reduced.

By participating in enjoyable and accessible activities, children and youth living in crisis situations learn new strategies to cope with adversities. As soon as RED NOSES clowns appear, the air fills with joy and children become children again, carefree and happy. Children and youth living in crisis situations can experience an empathic and mindful human connection. They feel more included by acquiring new ways of participating, expressing themselves and interacting with others.

By learning new skills and gaining confidence to perform in front of friends and caregivers, children feel empowered, relationships are strengthened, and they develop a newfound feeling of belonging.

Unaccompanied minors

In 2021, Emergency Smile missions began to focus on working with unaccompanied minors (UAMs). UAMs are defined by the UNHCR as children under 18 years of age who are separated from both parents or from their previous legal or primary caregiver. Being in constant process of resettlement, having language barriers and a lack of understanding of the asylum processes makes them a particularly vulnerable subgroup of refugees. They therefore, require specific support and care.

Families and communities

Over the years, the Emergency Smile programme has been found to have a positive impact on people regardless of their age. Community building and empowerment are some of the beneficial outcomes of the Emergency Smile programme. This is why the programme aims to create more celebratory moments that bring people together through humour and self-expression.

Emergency Smile missions have positively impacted the atmosphere of the environments the teams work in. They provide a platform for empowerment processes across key multipliers of the community as well as a space for the community to celebrate being together.

Some years ago, RED NOSES started working closer with other organisations on the ground to not only meet the basic needs of UAMs, but also support their emotional and mental wellbeing.

The skills and knowledge of RED NOSES healthcare clowns are directed to engage UAMs in circus skill activities in an effort to help them develop abilities such as persistence and self-confidence, and experience a feeling of achievement and control over their own situation.

Humanitarian aid workers

RED NOSES employs an integrated and sustainable approach that not only focuses on children, but also seeks to support medical staff and aid workers in their daily work.

Humour has the potential to create powerful emotional connections between people and enhance social interactions. It also plays a vital role in reducing stress and anxiety, encouraging a more harmonious working environment.

Children with disabilities

Another vulnerable subgroup that Emergency Smile teams work with is children with disabilities living in crisis settings.

A further focus of the missions is to make sure that the artistic interventions are adapted to accommodate the diverse needs of all the different groups the team comes into contact with. Emergency Smile teams have previously had the privilege to work with children with disabilities on different missions, providing a safe space for them to enjoy artistic activities in a way adapted to their specific needs.

The psychological burden of working with very vulnerable groups has a strong impact on the mental health of aid workers. By offering tailor-made workshops and sharing knowledge on the healing benefits of humour and its applications, professionals in the field can find new ways of connecting with participants, and use the new tools to improve their own psychosocial well-being and resilience in the face of their demanding work environments.

Work in the field

Lesvos: Working with Unaccompanied minors

Emergency Smile teams have had the opportunity to work with unaccompanied minors (UAMs) from seven to 18 years old on numerous occasions. The teams have gained a lot of experience on how to work with this particularly vulnerable target group. It is evident that major psychological vulnerabilities accompany the experiences of UAMs, including lack of parental care, substance abuse and symptoms of depression.

The critical period of identity formation of any UAM may be threatened by the transitional nature of their experience, caused by frequent uprooting, a lack of stability and the need to cope with life-endangering situations.

The clowns act as positive role models and make the children feel seen and accepted. By learning new skills, children start believing in themselves and feel empowered to persist and try new things. The Emergency Smile team also invites the aid workers to participate alongside the children in order to create a more supportive environment and help them strengthen their relationships.

“The Sunday that you came to us, we were all happy. The children enjoyed it, interacted with you and learned so many tricks! We thank you for the pleasant day you gave on Sunday to the unaccompanied minors, and to all of us! Happiness, hope and optimism filled our hearts again! Thanks for everything!”

Maria, social worker from the Iliaktida's unaccompanied minors house in Lesvos, Greece.

Moldova



Since the conflict in Ukraine escalated, Moldova, a country of only four million people, has received more than half a million refugees, of which over a hundred thousand have chosen to stay. The Emergency Smile team, in cooperation with the organisations Concordia and Moldova for Peace, worked near the conflict zone for over three weeks, providing psychosocial support to Ukrainian children and, on this occasion, their mothers.

As the weeks went by, the mothers continued to attend and participate in the workshops. The team therefore had the idea to involve them in the final performance. On the last day of the mission, there was a beautiful show in the community centre, the highlight of which was the mother's performing for their children. The children were speechless and everybody was full of positive emotions. It was the best ending for a very demanding, but altogether wonderful mission.

Christopher Bailey, the Arts and Health Lead at the World Health Organization (WHO) joined the team for this part of the mission, and it was an absolute privilege. He was constantly acknowledging the positive impact of the work taking place, and the joy that was experienced by those facing such difficult circumstances.

Serbia and Kosovo

According to UNHCR, as of August 2021, Serbia hosts over five thousand refugees from more than 50 countries. This resulted in a very active mission for the Emergency Smile team who was constantly on the move, sharing moments of lightness, hope and joy with children and families from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

The team had a very successful cooperation with the Swiss non-profit organisation “Terre des Hommes” in their day centre. The facility provides food, play, and art classes for children living in the streets, as well as legal and social guidance for their parents. The team performed a show and then held several days of Circus Smile workshops that ended with a beautiful final performance, where the children got to show their newly learned skills to their caregivers. The overwhelming success of the collaboration with Terre des Hommes led to a deeply moving Humour Relief Workshop with the staff.

the kids and their mothers. Everyone was able to learn more about how to work inclusively and get the space to develop the skills they learned.

At the end of the three weeks, the children were able to make a presentation in front of over 200 people. Families and field workers were there to watch the children with disabilities, and other kids from the camp, dance and do acrobatics with scarves and ribbons. The children were incredibly talented, and seeing the entire community cheering them on, was the highlight of the mission.

South Sudan: Children with disabilities

South Sudan is a young country that, since their independence in 2011, has been marked by internal conflict, forcing the displacement of more than four million people. The Mangateen camp, located in the northwest outskirts of Juba, the country's capital, hosts around 14,000 internally displaced people who found refuge after the ongoing conflicts in the country. It is in this camp, with the collaboration of the organisation Light for the World, that the Emergency Smile team had the privilege to conduct a successful mission focused on children with disabilities.

Due to the school break that was taking place at the time, the team managed to establish intensive contact and exchange with the Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIF) from Light for the world,



“The amount of connection you created will feed me for the rest of the year. When I saw you work with the kids, I felt hope for their future”.

Officer from Terre des Hommes



Our impact

"The RED NOSES Clowns have brought so much joy and laughter into the camp the past seven weeks. During Circus Smile I saw kids gain confidence and feel empowered through the skills they were learning. I got to see kids that have been robbed of their childhood have a chance to just be kids again. they could let go of their worries and fears and just play. The clowns have made a lasting impact on the children of Mavrovouni Camp".

Laura Rensberger, Head of Education, Eurorelief, Lesvos

"I've never seen the kids laughing so much and being that happy and engaged. In a humanitarian context, it is easy to forget that this is as important as providing for material needs, or even more important. Giving the children the chance of being children again is something they all need and deserve".

Silvia Liberi, Warehouse and Distribution Coordinator at Refugees 4 Refugees, Lesvos, Greece

Research and evaluation

RED NOSES embraces the value of learning and evaluation as a path to achieving better results and a greater impact. Our evaluation strategy prioritises instant integration of learnings and utilisation of results. Different participatory developmental evaluation processes are implemented to constantly aid the development of our programmes, by informing decision-makers, facilitating collective and individual reflection, identifying areas of improvement, and building capacity, resulting in a highly professional orientation towards excellence.

Emergency Smile is an ever-changing and developing programme, as we are constantly seeking to increase and solidify our long-term impact.

Continuous assessment provides us with an opportunity to understand the outcomes of our interventions in crisis situations, which are often complex, dynamic and sensitive environments.

RED NOSES research and evaluation department, in cooperation with the programme leaders, evaluate every step of the work conducted, from how partnerships are established, interactions with children are made and processes are set up. Each team member is involved in the evaluation process, and it's also our goal to further involve participants in the future.

The Emergency Smile programme embraces the value of continuous learning and evidence-based evaluation as a path to achieve better results. But, most of all, the programme focuses on increasing the overall wellbeing of children, their support systems, and the communities they interact with.



Creating safe spaces:

The RED NOSES safeguarding policy

At RED NOSES, establishing and maintaining safe and nurturing environments for children and vulnerable adults is our priority. We achieve this by allowing participants to enjoy the highest quality professional clowning in all our programmes and the countries we work in.

Children and vulnerable adults in healthcare, social institutions or those affected by crisis, face special risks and are more prone to become victims of violence, abuse or neglect. As an organisation working in close contact with these target groups, RED NOSES aims to increase awareness of the importance of keeping children and vulnerable adults out of harm's way and safe from any form of abuse.

RED NOSES recognises the importance of keeping children and vulnerable adults safe, ensuring that they are protected from maltreatment or any kind of violence that is detrimental to their health and development. Within our organisation, as well as with our partners, we do not tolerate any form of child abuse, exploitation, neglect or violation of a child's or vulnerable person's privacy and rights.

RED NOSES has developed an unwavering safeguarding policy that must be followed by all our staff, international teams, and external partners. These guidelines, influenced by two of RED NOSES' seven core values: respect and accountability, aim to minimise the risk of violence and abuse within our organisation's work. To enforce this policy, and personally take care of any question or complaint,

we have a designated Safeguarding Officer who can be reached by phone, email or through our website: www.rednoses.org/what-we-do/safeguarding

RED NOSES is also member of the Keeping Children Safe (KCS) network. We believe it is a significant place to learn, exchange and connect on safeguarding mechanisms and to learn from the latest trends and research papers in order to keep children, all vulnerable persons and our staff safe. At RED NOSES, the voices of children and vulnerable adults, regardless of origin, gender or religion, will always be taken into consideration when it comes to the creation of measures affecting them to ensure both their safety and development.



Imprint

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RED NOSES is an artistic organisation bringing humour and laughter to people in need of joy. For 25 years, RED NOSES has been making a difference for patients, families and medical staff in countless health and care facilities in Europe and beyond.

RED NOSES International (RNI) empowers vulnerable audiences, such as children in hospitals, people in geriatric centres, patients in rehabilitation centres, youth with mental and multiple disabilities, refugees and other displaced persons.

The figure of the clown is extremely human and touches individuals deeply by bringing them relief and hope in moments where they cannot connect to their positive emotions.

RNI is based in Vienna, Austria, and is the headquarters for the largest clown doctor group in the world.

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