

# MOBILE MINI CIRCUS FOR CHILDREN (MMCC) IN AFGHANISTAN



Empowering young leaders is an important part of **creating safe spaces and building positive change**. Founded in 2002, the **Mobile Mini-Circus for Children (MMCC)** has expanded into a countrywide education program focusing on teaching children to lead.

The aftermath of August 2021 has necessitated MMCC to **decentralise their approach by giving leaders at various centres the autonomy to make decisions and design programs based on different community needs**. This has allowed MMCC programming to reach more displaced populations and rural communities. In areas where a full centre is not developed, colourful containers with circus arts equipment called "Funtainers" are used



**Social circus** is a unique psycho-social intervention, often seen as a “catalyst for change”, that encourages youth empowerment because it creates resilience by building social support, self-confidence, and interpersonal trust through circus art skills and community building

MMCC believes that children are **best placed to communicate with other children**. Their overall aim is to provide children with the **tools required to develop creative ways of spreading engaging education** throughout Afghanistan.

“Social circus” is a subset of circus art that doubles as a psycho-social intervention as it aims to teach essential social, personal, and community building skills through the practice of conventional circus activities. This practice has been applied in conflict or post-conflict zones in order to help youth overcome trauma while also growing their abilities to cope, to be responsible, and to be creative.



Through its centres across the country MMCC has reached over 4 million children

*“Our goal is to see the children be free, learn while playing, working hard, learning to compete, be focused on winning and persevering. Every person that practices then is encouraged to aim higher.” - Mohammad Azam\**

Through its activities, MMCC has created impact by:



Empowering and Encouraging Youth Leadership



Inclusion & Integration of Displaced Communities



Trust and Community Building



Inclusive and safe spaces for young girls and women

With a long history of working in IDP camps, MMCC has been successful increasing girls' access to empowerment activities up to a certain age (12 years). Through active centers in 12 provinces in Afghanistan, **MMCC advocates for the need to empower young children with freedom, inclusion and equality.**

Their programs have an everlasting impact on children.



*Samuel Hall's assessment of MMCC's approach and impact on youth empowerment and belonging in displacement settings serves to show the international community that supporting community-based programs matters now more than ever before. MMCC shows the world that Afghans are not without agency. MMCC proves that participatory, trauma-informed, and locally-driven initiatives that work despite and within their constraints are the most powerful tool for children, families, and communities in conflict settings."*

- Insights from Samuel Hall's pro-bono evaluation of the MMCC Programme in Afghanistan



*The only entertainment that's left is the circus - still allowed here - to bring smiles and happiness to people who have suffered for so long. It's important that we can pave the ground for the development of these programmes countrywide, as it's the only activity that is allowed to remain."*

- Bilal Azizi\*

#### The MMCC Afghanistan Has:



Empowered young sports leaders



Created a holistic environment for children to learn



Built a respectful and safe environment for young girls and women



Inculcated leadership through workshops/skills training

With



25 youth team leaders [ages 20-30]



and 6 young women.

#### Making The Circus Thrive - What can humanitarian organisations do to support MMCC?



Allocate funds for resources and infrastructure



Create opportunities for localised community gatherings



Capacity Building



Ensure participation and inclusion of young girls and women



*"The MMCC is a reflection of what children in Afghanistan need today - as the country that is suffering its most urgent humanitarian crisis as of the fall of Kabul in August 2021 and lacking in resources for both education and entertainment. It is also a reflection of what could have, should have been in Afghanistan for the last 20 years, and the potential of what could be in the future, if supported."*

- Insights from Samuel Hall's pro-bono evaluation of the MMCC Programme in Afghanistan



MMCC was **founded in 2002** - previously, MMCC used to operate from a main flagship urban centre in Kabul, the Children's Culture House, where permanent students were in attendance and development of pedagogical methods took place.

MMCC has been **successful in increasing girls (up till age 12) access to empowerment activities** like workshops, community engagement and interactive games. Through training children in various circus arts through their centres in Kabul, **MMCC advocates for the need to empower young children with freedom, inclusion and equality.** Their programs have an everlasting impact on children.

After the fall of Kabul in August 2021, there has been varied impact on MMCC activities depending on the location and leadership. **Within this context of restricted movement and activity, children engaging in MMCC programming have reportedly improved their behaviour, which families attribute to them learning in a positive environment vs. being idle at home.**



*"Our program has a 100% impact on the children. They are often feeling weak mentally and psychologically. They come here and it lifts their spirit up. We have called it a social circus for this reason.*

*When our children juggle, they do away with their stress, and seem to be better in their lives. They can speak more easily than others. It keeps them calm. Every day in these areas there used to be fights, they would hit each other, and to a large extent, we have calmed this down.*

*We see the newcomers taking things from each other, but we have to teach them. We teach them to be calmer, kinder to girls... they're more disciplined and that does away with the more savage habits that they may have. You could not have imagined that it's possible to calm them, but we can." -- Parisha\**

## ABOUT SAMUEL HALL

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes, and designs policies in contexts of migration and displacement. Our approach is ethical, academically rigorous, and based on first-hand experience of complex and fragile settings.

Our research connects the voices of communities to changemakers for more inclusive societies. With offices in Afghanistan, Germany, Kenya, and Tunisia and a presence in Somalia, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates, we are based in the regions we study. For more information, please visit [www.samuelhall.org](http://www.samuelhall.org).



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