What is Social Circus?

There is no simple definition for Social Circus. The word ‘circus’ is only half of the story. On the social side, Social Circus is a means to any number of ends: transformation, discipline, creativity, artistic expression...these are part of the power of Social Circus. But teaching circus arts is only the first step. As a communicative tool, Social Circus offers an innovative vehicle for education and empowerment. In its modern form, circus has gone beyond mere entertainment and embraced a variety of social development goals. As contemporary circus troupes like Cirque de Soleil have shown the world, circus arts can carry a message, performances can teach valuable life lessons as well as raise awareness of issues specific societies face.

At the same time, child psychologists have recognized circus arts as a powerful technique to access and release the creative potential of young people traumatized by war and displacement. Social Circus has steadily gained a reputation as an essential tool to remedy the scars left by conflict.

Who are MMCC and AECC?

The Mobile Mini-Circus for Children (MMCC) and its local partner, the Afghan Educational Children’s Circus (AECC), together form a cooperative International/Afghan non-profit organization dedicated to empowering young people.

Established in 2002, MMCC/AECC has grown into a countrywide education and empowerment program focusing on teaching children to lead. At its flagship center in Kabul’s Karte Se district, the Children’s Culture House, 120 permanent students, both boys and girls, have the space to learn and develop their skills on a daily basis. Those skills include media training and developing educational capacities as well as circus arts. MMCC/AECC’s basic philosophy is that children know best how to communicate with other children. The goal is to give children the tools they need so they can themselves develop creative and novel ways of spreading information throughout Afghanistan. Subsequently, 75% of all activities at MMCC/AECC are now run and taught by the children themselves, supervised by adults.

Achievements include:

• Performing and running workshops for more than two million children in many provinces across Afghanistan
• Reaching a wider audience through regular appearances on Afghan television
• Promoting Circus, Theatre, Music and Singing with an emphasis on developing performances that spread vital lessons and information for Afghan children
• Children’s Media in which the children themselves create radio and video programs designed to deal with specific issues Afghans face as well as publishing a magazine
• Children’s Shura: each year MMCC/AECC brings together children from around Afghanistan to discuss local issues and find solutions to their problems, proving that children can also engage in the rebuilding of Afghanistan
• Educational Winter program for 350 children, including reading, writing and Quranic studies
• Activities for and with disabled children
• Activities for children in IDP/Refugee Camps

How Does it Work?

There are as many ways of applying the basic principals of Social Circus as there are tools with which to play. Performances are central to MMCC/AECC’s methodology and are often coordinated with other NGOs to help spread a specific message. Partnering with MACCA/UNOPS, for example, has produced performances geared toward teaching and protecting young people from the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance, in a way children can easily understand.

This sensitivity to local issues, and maintaining independence from all political, religious and ethnic interests, has opened many doors for MMCC/AECC, allowing it to bring cultural activities to parts of Afghanistan where music, singing, and other forms of
artistic expression have been suppressed or forgotten for decades.

Organizational Structure

MMCC is the umbrella organization under which AECC operates. Activities, however, are run jointly and cooperatively. Both organizations are registered with the Afghan Ministry of Economy and activities are run in close cooperation with the Ministries of Education and Culture.

Financing the Future

MMCC/AECC has been fortunate to have the generous support of many individuals and organizations over the years. The annual budget varies year to year, based on fundraising results and agreements with donors. On average, the operating budget is $500,000 USD, covering equipment costs, salaries, rental properties, travel expenses, and lunch for the children, among many other expenditures. Additionally, crucial to the MMCC/AECC’s finances are its partnerships with existing NGOs.

In 2012, the goal is to sustain these activities while also increasing emphasis on projects that have proven successful, such as the Children’s Shura and the Media Arts program. MMCC/AECC also hopes to establish the first ever Afghan National Circus, exposing Afghanistan’s talented artists to the international performing arts community. Please contact the organizers to discuss how best you can help the MMCC/AECC achieve its goals.

Selected Facts and Figures from 2011:

- 61 Children’s Performances in different provinces for a total audience of 82,202
- 245 Radio Programs produced by our children
- 35 larger events for 24,794 audiences
- 20 workshops for and with disabled children
- 366 Circus, Painting, Theatre, Singing, Radio and Shura workshops
- 128 Landmine Awareness shows, reaching an audience of 69,418 people in rural areas
- 76 Mine Risk teacher training sessions by our staff

Contact us:

David Mason: +93-(0)700 280140
Berit Mulhausen: +93 (0)700 229 975
Hamid Ruhan: +93 (0)700 229 987
Sherkhan Ahmadzai: +93 (0)799 010 986
Email: circus@afghanMMCC.org
Skype: AfghanMMCC

Follow us:

www.AfghanMMCC.org
www.Facebook.com/MMCCinternational
www.youtube.com/AfghanMMCC

Join our e-mail list:

www.afghanmmcc.org/subscribe

To Donate:

Kabul Bank, Main Branch
Acc. name: Mobile Mini Circus 4 Children (MMCC)
Account number: 1001201125534
SWIFT: KABUAFKA

www.AfghanMMCC.org

Social Circus for Change
AFGHANISTAN

Circus, Education, Media, and Fun