



MAGIC FOR SMILES – NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2019

Humanitarian magician – Jamie Jibberish

Update:

- Approaching its third year of operation [Magic for Smiles \(MFS\)](#) has now conducted over 260 shows mostly in Lebanon, an increase of 50 shows in the last 6 months. The initiative has also diversified geographically into the far south of Lebanon and the far north of Bekaa thus now covering most of Lebanon.
- A further 24 organisations (plus 8 private events or festivals) have now cooperated with MFS bringing the total to over 118 organisations (plus 32 private events or festivals) to date in addition to 4 fundraising outlets. Champions among organisations for regular or integrated work are the exciting minority but more are planned, though so far are frustrated by funding cuts to children's programmes.
- Fundraising events and registration as a UK charity have been in process during this period.
- Lebanon still has around 1 million (1 in 4 persons) as registered Syrian refugees of whom over 20% are estimated to be under the age of 11, in addition to up to 500,000 Palestinians. Neighbouring countries have high Syrian refugee population as well – Turkey 2.7 million, Jordan 0.7 million and Iraq about 250,000 as well as displaced people.

Increasing benefits of magic:

- MFS sets out to provide entertainment and de-stressing to deprived kids in Lebanon and elsewhere.
- In itself this contributes to psychosocial support especially within unstructured or recreational interventions, but also has potential through structured activities and with the incorporation of messaging. Benefits are cited below, although naturally the more repeated exposure to magic the better.

Joy, Happiness & De-stressing: Syrians live in scattered informal tented settlements, rent crowded accommodation in towns and Palestinians live in grossly overcrowded camps established 70 years ago, and there are many deprived Lebanese children. The need for creating happiness and de-stressing cannot be underestimated.



Mixed children from Sabra, Joint Christian Committee



Centre for Syrians in Ouzi - Borderless NGO



Syrian camp, Qaa N. Bekaa – Terres des Hommes – I



Open day for refugee & other kids Beirut Game Lebanon

Rabbits: While less fashionable with western audiences, the rabbit out of a hat is almost always the favourite trick with these refugee and other deprived children. With special needs people, it is also very important to strengthen the sense of touch which this trick offers.



Special needs people - Faith & Light Mansouria



El Marj camp for Syrians - Tahaddi



Burj el Barajneh Palestinian camp school for Syrians - PWHO

Enhanced concentration and cognitive skills: Exposing traumatized or stressed out children, often with little institutionalization, to magic is so fulfilling. The impact is obvious as concentration levels are heightened often more than in the classroom (if they have one) and the children try to analyse the tricks sometimes for weeks and months to come.



Burj el Barajneh Palestinian camp - Nadjeh



Tented camp for Syrians – El Marj – Tahaddi

Imagination: The sense of wonder on the children's faces is moving to see – that what seems impossible is in fact possible!



School for Syrians, Sidon – Horizons for Education

Teamwork: Some tricks lend themselves to messaging especially around cooperation. This trick finishes with all the separate ropes tied together as if by magic denoting the need to depend on and love each other.



School for Syrians – Beit el Muhabba, Wadi Zeini

Interaction: Undeniably magic shows elicit exceptional levels of interaction, sometimes making the event hard to control. At the same time the shows provide an opportunity for otherwise withdrawn children to engage with the magician and peers in a way that might not otherwise be possible.



Shabriha centre for Syrians, Palestinians, Lebanese near Tyre - PARD



School for Children with Special Needs (Lebanese), far south near Israeli border

Self-confidence: Magic tuition is a wonderful way to boost self-confidence and motivation. It is used quite extensively in the medical field now, especially for occupational therapy. MFS would conduct a lot more tuition but it is limited by practicalities and learning environment there being such high numbers of children



10-13 year old children from Sabra – Joint Christian Committee

Private events and festivals: A small but important part of MFS are private parties and festivals to help subsidise the humanitarian work



Christmas Fair in Kaslik



Saint Georges Hospital, Beirut

Fundraising: MFS remains self-funded supplemented by fees where possible and crowdfunding. However, during this period three fundraising events were held in the UK with considerable success in themselves as well as triggering online donations.



Speaking at Exeter University Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies

Looking ahead

Key expectations and plans for the coming six months include registration as a UK charity, subsequent grant applications, expansion into the region via Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, and consolidation through close partnerships in Lebanon.

Sincere thanks to all for any support and interest in Magic for Smiles to date. And incase convenient, here is the crowdfunding [link](#) – still live for business!

Established in early 2016, Magic for Smiles was set up to provide magic entertainment and experience for and with vulnerable children, especially but not only refugees, in Lebanon and in due course the region. It is run by Jamie Balfour-Paul using the stage name Jamie Jibberish due to extensive use of nonsense or magic language.