

Summary:

- Entering the end of its second year, Magic for Smiles (MFS) has in the last four months more than doubled the number of organisations with which it has worked - from 40 to almost 90 - and increased the number of shows by around thirds - from over 100 to 165.
- December a seasonal peak for humanitarian and private parties and public events but growth in this initiative to promote humanitarian magic is however firmly established, although challenges of course remain.
- Progress is still in the face of limited self or crowdfunding to supplement funds collected - from fees where feasible and from private and public events.

MFS developing concept:

- MFS sets out to provide entertainment and de-stressing to deprived kids in Lebanon and elsewhere.
- It also believes magic has additional benefits and during the period with every show evaluated, the most common benefits cited are increased concentration levels, cognitive skills, imagination and creativity, and levels of interaction - the more repeated exposure to magic the better although this is not conditional.
- MFS continues to be based in Lebanon as it has around 1 in 4 persons as a refugee with over 1 million registered (over 20% under the age of 11) - with registration stopped in 2015 the number may be double.

The period was characterized by the end of the summer coinciding with the end of cycles for some NGOs, an extension to Greece, and the subsequent interim and build up to the many Christmas events. Across Lebanon shows in Arabic were conducted with mainly new partners and some pre-existing.

Beirut: In response to demand, the majority of shows (16) were conducted in Beirut. A good example are the shows conducted with Solidarity- التضامن, in Shatilla camp for 10,000 registered Palestinians but the population may be nearer 20,000 with entry of Syrian refugees and others:

Syrian children at Solidarity Shatilla



Remaining 130 kids at Solidarity, Shatilla



North Lebanon: tends to be the most deprived in terms of refugee response and a number of shows were conducted across old and new organisations integrating Syrians with Lebanese in the Akaar region right up to the Syrian border. For example, both the Italian NGO AVSI and the Akkar Network for Development (AND)

AND Christmas event, Wadi Khalid



AVSI end of cycle event, Rahbeh



South Lebanon: work was conducted in Palestinian camps in Tyre and in what are called "Gatherings" of Palestinian (and Syrian) refugees outside formal camp settings such as in Shabiriha in a centre run by PARD.

AND Christmas event, Wadi Khalid



AVSI end of cycle event, Rahbeh



Bekaa: A large number of shows were conducted in the Bekaa Valley given the majority of Syrian refugees are located there - for examples in Bar Elias in برنامج بصمات التعليمي - Basamat Education Program, and in Merij with the self-help Gharsah team - فريق غرسة

Basamat school Bar Elias Bar Elias - 250 Syrian kids



Gharsa self-help school El Merij - 120 Syrian kids



Closer to Christmas, some partners focused on seasonal celebrations, for example the Mob-Art programme run by LOYAC Lebanon near Zahle which believes that art and music are central to kids development.

Loyac Mob-Art centre near Zahle - 120 6-10 year old kids



Greece: Around 10,000 refugee asylum seekers are crammed onto the islands, MFS conducted three shows with Iraqi, Afghan and Syrian refugees on Leros island for the Yellow Days Festival, and similar groups of children and youth in Athens - in Khora House, Velos Youth Centre and City Plaza Hotel which became non-operational and now houses hundreds of refugees.

Basamat school Bar Elias Bar Elias – 250 Syrian kids



Private shows and public events: though limited in scale, these serve to subsidise the humanitarian work and peaked in December. Featured here are festivals in Antelias and Badaro in Beirut and private parties/events.

Antelias festival



Badaro festival



Private party and public event



Hotel Dieu hospital Christmas party



Looking ahead – priorities include fundraising to increase scale and capacity, formalized research capacity given the university lined up now has no funding or greenlight, and expanded marketing – to this end a major international TV network is expected to cover the initiative, and a number of key feature articles should be published.

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.