

Mobile

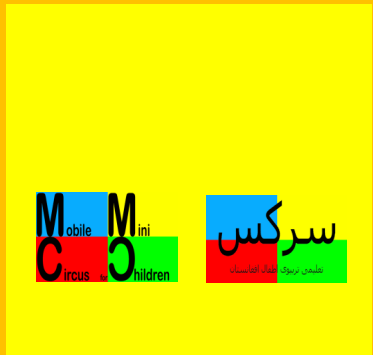
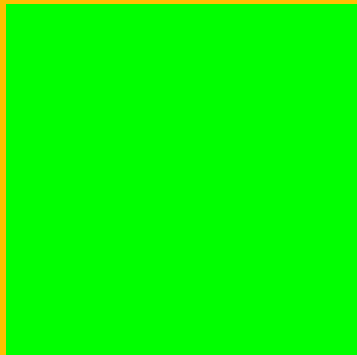
Mini

Circus for

Children



[www.AfghanMMCC.org](http://www.AfghanMMCC.org)



**Cheerful  
Pedagogy**



**Social Circus**



**Children  
Shura**



**Children  
Media**

**Outreach  
programs**



**Rural Area  
Capacity  
Center**



**Educational  
Shows**



**Festivals  
and big  
Events**

# Letter from the Directors



When MMCC, Mobile Mini Circus for Children, started its activities in 2002, less than one million Afghan children attended schools and there were hardly any school buildings and infrastructure. While NGOs and government programs focused on delivering the basics to the Afghan population such as food, shelter, security and education, MMCC in the same period specialized in developing and introducing soft values that brings children together and create joyful communities.

Since 2002 MMCC and its local partner AECC, Afghan Educational Children Circus, has performed and made workshops for more than **2.7 million children** in 25 provinces all over Afghanistan. The combination of entertaining and essential educational messages such as health, landmine awareness, peace and back to school/importance of education, delivered by professional Afghan artists in a pure local context, has proved to pave the road for cultural activities even in parts of the country where music, singing and other forms of artistic expression have been suppressed or forgotten for decades.

Each year MMCC and AECC bring together children from across the country for numerous big events such as festivals and children assemblies. When children play, practice and perform together, they become much more than just representatives of their background, region or ethnicity. They become friends, active members of a joyful family and advocates for national unity.

Circus and especially social circus as developed in the frame of MMCC/AECC in the past 10 years, is much more than physical art. It is about using the amazing capacities of circus as a tool to make positive social change for children.

Afghanistan has reached a critical juncture. As the international community moves away from direct control of Afghanistan's institutions, the need has never been greater for Afghans to take control of their own destinies. Over the past decade, the children and youngsters at MMCC/AECC have developed the capacity to lead young people across Afghanistan. Their voices are the voices of Afghanistan's future.

Berit Muhlhausen & David Mason





# General Information

## 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. MMCC is the supervising umbrella organization under which AECC operates. Activities, however, are run jointly and cooperatively. Both organizations are registered with the Afghan Ministry of Economy

## History and Goals

Established in 2002, MMCC/AECC has grown into a countrywide education program focusing on teaching children to lead. 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 fun education throughout Afghanistan.

## National Urban Capacity Center

The MMCC/AECC'S flagship urban capacity center, the Children's Culture House, is located in Kabul. It gives 120 permanent students, both boys and girls, the space to learn and develop their skills on a daily basis. This main center is the place where new ideas and pedagogical methods are developed.

## Provinces

Mobility is key to the success for the MMCC/AECC as so many of Afghanistan's children live in the countryside. Its professional adult artists tour and perform for children across the country. In its Bamyan centre, the methods developed in Kabul are modified for rural areas. Colourful containers full of equipment (Funtainers) are supplementing MMCC/AECC's presence in rural areas.





## Cheerful Pedagogy

At the MMCC/AECC, teaching is considered a creative art in itself. Our approach relies less on text-based methods and more on what we call cheerful pedagogy: guiding children through an experience of learning with their senses. Play is essential: it increases a child's social skills such as trust, communication, and cooperation. MMCC/AECC's pedagogic approach involves many group activities and games like partner-acrobatics and creation of complex human pyramids.

### Let children take the lead

Rather than telling children what to do, MMCC/AECC believes in their inherent power and wisdom. We provide organizational frames designed to help children take responsibility, blossom and grow.

### Community Engagement

Through weekly mother meetings and close contact with families and local community stakeholders, MMCC/AECC has developed an in-depth understanding of building trust in local communities.

This engagement among more facilitates girls' participation, stage performances and even travel to other regions of the country.

**75% of all activities  
are run and taught  
by Children**







# Social Circus

The transformative power of circus connects education, physical art and social development. Social Circus is more than teaching circus skills. It is a tool for transformation, discipline, creativity and artistic expression.

In its modern form, circus has gone beyond mere entertainment: At the MMCC/AECC games and circus arts are a tools for teaching social skills, overcoming trauma and developing essential capacities and the ability to take responsibility.

## Educational Performances

Educational Entertaining performances are central to MMCC/AECC's methodology. A typical performance last for up to one hour and always include one or more educational shows about essential themes such as hygiene, Peace, or traffic safety. Partnering with MACCA/UNOPS, for example, has produced performances geared toward teaching and protecting children from the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance, in ways they can easily and much better understand.

## Workshops

Workshops on different circus skills such as juggling, acrobatics, theatre and painting are a crucial part of Social Circus work. They teach children new ways of thinking and playing while expanding their creative horizons. At the end of a workshop, the MMCC/AECC team assists the children to make a full show for their school or local community members. In addition, children attend in- depth training programs at the MMCC/AECC'S capacity centers.



**2.7 million live audiences in  
25 provinces since 2002**



# Vulnerable Children

Where every child is acknowledged, a community can blossom. A primary target group and main concern of the MMCC/AECC are the challenged children and youth including orphans, handicapped, street working- and internally displaced children living in refugee camps. These are the most vulnerable in society.

Through comprehensive outreach programs, children from all different backgrounds are involved in the activities.

## Outreach

In one of MMCC/AECCs larger outreach programs, children from IDP camps first visit the Kabul capacity center where they are introduced to the world of social circus. Afterward, a group of MMCC/AECC trainers visits the camps regularly with circus and media equipment to teach children how to play, juggle, perform, interact and express themselves through photo, radio and video productions.

Some of the best camp children become part of a trainer program and network supporting them to continue and sustain the activities in the camp.

## Selected Facts and Figures from 2011:

- 128 Landmine Awareness shows, reaching an audience of 69,418 people in rural areas
- 366 Circus, Painting, Theatre, Singing, Radio and Shura workshops in schools
- 61 children performances for 82,202 audience
- 60 workshops for disabled and IDP children
- 76 Mine Risk Teacher Trainings







# Children Media

The MMCC/AECC has pioneered a program that puts children in the lead of media production and execution. The children create their own radio programs, they design their own websites and produce magazines, documentaries and films. As a result, many former MMCC/AECC children are now earning their living in the Afghan radio and televisions as announcers and producers.

## MMCC/AECC's Media activities include:

- Radio, Video and Photo
- Children Magazines
- Multimedia and Web
- Children Film Academy
- Media Festivals
- Cinema for Children



## Children's Cinema

With the construction of the first Afghan children mini-cinema in its Kabul center, the MMCC/AECC aims at developing a new child-friendly film-culture. In Afghanistan, movies and cinema have a generally negative reputation as being only for adult men. At the MMCC/AECC Film Academy, children are trained to be producers, actors, editors and creative directors of their own films.





# Children Shura and Voices

Shura is the traditional Afghan form of democracy, a gathering of the community in which problems are discussed and resolved.

MMCC/AECC organizes Children's Shura (Shura-e-Atfal) activities in schools, camps and local communities across Afghanistan as well as an annual National Shura in Kabul. Through Shura classes and meetings, the children learn to organize and structure debates, discuss issues of their concern and in the process increase their ability to actively participate in and lead civil society.

## Voices

The Voices activities follow up on the capacities and awareness developed through the Children's Shura. The Voices methodology is designed to address the issues raised in the Shura by the children and help them document it and find practical solutions. The Children's Voices activities show participants how each and every-one of them has the capacity to address issues in their immediate environment.

## Issues raised by the National Shura-e-Atfal:

- Eliminating child labour
- No places for children to play
- Lack of educated teachers in the schools
- Families hindering girls education
- Dealing with drug addicted fathers
- Teaching practical lessons, not only on a blackboard
- Lack of respect for the disabled
- Lack of an ombudsman dealing with children's problems





## Advanced Circus Arts

For the most talented children, the MMCC/AECC offers high-level circus training covering activities like juggling, acrobatics, wheel cir, fire spinning and Chinese stick. With support and capacity building by nearly 100 international professionals and volunteers from all over the world, the young performers learn to combine theatre, comedy, singing and magic, interweaving high level circus arts with compelling narratives.

**MMCC is Member of:**



**MMCC/AECC has initiated and is currently hosting:**



### International performance tours

To date, some of the MMCC/AECC top performers have presented the best of Afghanistan on tour in places like Denmark and Germany (2005), Japan (2006) and Italy (2010), where they were greeted by high officials including the Italian President.

Through the advanced program, MMCC/AECC ultimately hopes to establish the first ever Afghan National Circus, exposing Afghanistan's talented artists to the international performing arts community.





## Festivals and big Events

Each year MMCC/AECC initiates and organizes a number of festivals and big events. These include the annual Juggling Championship with participating children from across the country and Theatre, Circus, and Media Festivals conducted in several regions ending with a final performance or presentation for the local community. As a result of increased children film activities a Children's Film festival has now been added to the annual events.

### Annual Events organized by MMCC/AECC:

- Juggling Championship (Kabul)
- Theatre Festival (several regions)
- Media Festivals (several regions)
- National Shura-e-Atfal (Kabul)
- Children's Film Festival (coming soon)







## Colours and Creative Environments

Colours and Innovative visual designs are essential parts of MMCC/AECC's philosophy. In its centres, the four MMCC/AECC colours (bright red, green, blue and yellow) are utilized for all kinds of decorations.

The colourful environments developed at MMCC/AECC centres are since used as templates for inspiring more NGOs and institutions and for organizing children in schools to transform often colourless educational environments into places for cheerful learning.



### Funtainers

Starting in Bamyan in 2008, MMCC/AECC has developed a very cost effective system for establishing semi-permanent bases for more activities in rural areas by modifying shipping containers into colourful multifunctional rehearsal and performance spaces. Equipped with circus-, media- and play equipment, the Funtainers serve as a base for children in local communities to meet and practice activities on their own with only very little practical support of adults.





## From Circus Kid to Staff

Ahmad was 10 years old, when he joined the circus. He lived near to the Kabul MMCC Centre, when it opened in 2003. Jumping and making somersaults all day, he soon became the best in acrobatic.

In 2005 and 2006, when MMCC had its first tours abroad, Ahmad performed in Europe and Japan. Two years later, when MMCC started activities in Bamyan, Ahmad and his family were already there as they had moved back to the land and house they had to flee many years before due to ethnical conflicts in the region. Ahmad became trainer and immediately started coaching the new Bamyan MMCC-children in acrobatic. In the school holidays he went back and front for the big performances; to upgrade his skills and keep the contact with his circus friends in Kabul.

When Ahmad graduated from school in 2011, he became the first circus kid, who is now employed full time to teach and inspire thousands of more Afghan children. In 2012 he moved back to Kabul, where he is responsible for the boys part of what will hopefully one day become Afghanistan's National Circus. From beginning to new beginning, Ahmad embodies the core philosophy of the MMCC.

### Trainers and Young Staff

**In MMCC/AECC the children get responsibility as they grow and improve. In its comprehensive trainer system, the children can move from Trainer to Junior- and Young staff conditioned they attend and complete their school.**







# Volunteers

Since the beginning in 2002, MMCC/AECC has experienced many ways of creative support by enthusiastic volunteers. Performers like Will Murray and Zach Warren came to give juggling and magic workshops. Famous personalities like the author Jon Krakauer have financially supported the circus several years in a row. Couples have donated their wedding money and families decided to fund parts of the daily children's lunch, while others sent juggling equipment. There are as many ways of supporting MMCC/AECC, as there are people out there.

## How you can help:

You can support the MMCC/AECC by: organizing fundraising events, becoming a volunteer teacher, donating, writing articles, organize screenings for our movies...: Contact us to see how you can help!

[Circus@AfghanMMCC.org](mailto:Circus@AfghanMMCC.org)

## A Rickshaw to spread the MMCC/AECC spirit

Adnan and Annika formed the Rickshaw Circus and rode 8000km from Kabul to Istanbul in a motorized Rickshaw to raise awareness for the MMCC.

"The MMCC inspires creative thinking. Volunteering there for seven months made us look at the world in a different way, to re-evaluate what is possible and what can be done with a little bit creativity". The end result was the Rickshaw Circus, the perfect embodiment of the MMCC's core values: a Circus on wheels that is Afghan, Mobile, and of course Mini.

"On our tour from Kabul to Istanbul we visited organizations working with disadvantaged children in Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, where we spread the word on the MMCC. Everywhere we came, we encountered a great potential for MMCC'S Social Circus approach to enrich the work of other organizations," Adnan and Annika say.





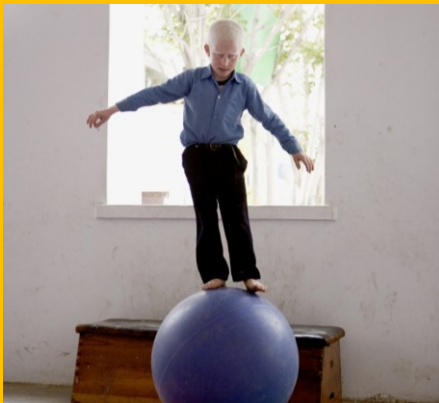


# Donors and Partners

MMCC/AECC is fortunate to have the generous support of many individuals and partner organizations each year. The annual budget varies year to year, based on fundraising results and agreements with donors and partners. On average, the operating budget is \$500,000USD, covering equipment costs, salaries, rental properties, travel expenses, and lunch for the children, among much other expenditure.

## The three main income sources are:

- **Projects** funded by donors and partners
- **Service Contracts** such as selling a certain number of educational shows or workshops for a fixed price
- **Donations** from individuals and foundations





### Contact us:

Email address: [Circus@AfghanMMCC.org](mailto:Circus@AfghanMMCC.org)  
Berit Muhlhausen: +93(0)700-229975  
David Mason: +93(0)700-280140  
Hamid Ruhan: +93(0)700-229987  
Shirkhan Ahmadzai: +93(0)799-010986  
Skype Name: AfghanMMCC

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