

# BALLOON CIRCUS ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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Unforgettable play days and workshops

## Balloon Circus brings uplifting entertainment to disadvantaged children encouraging creative play in a nurturing yet stimulating environment

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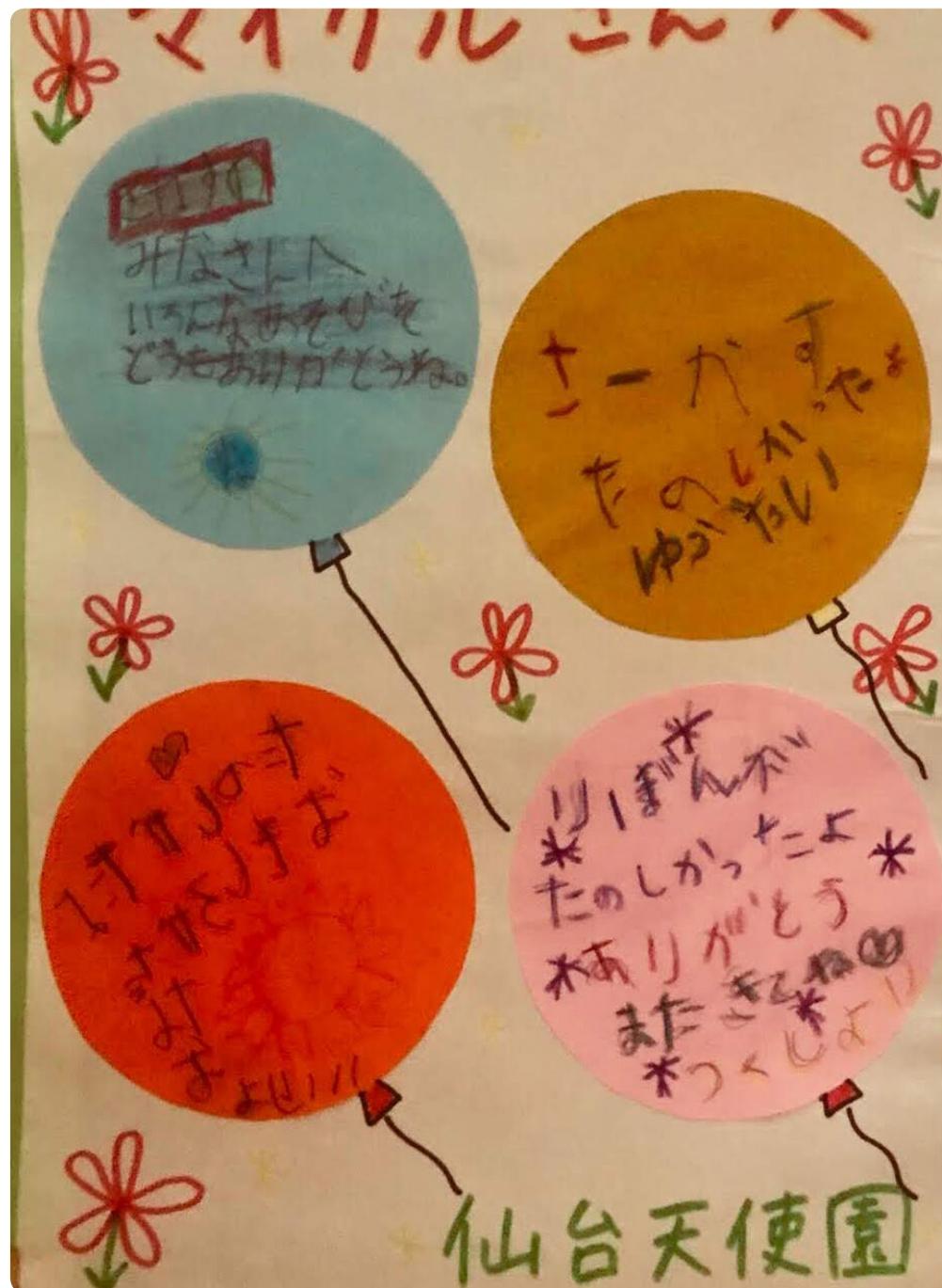
Our workshops provide the children we visit with opportunities to learn new skills through balloons and interactive circus sessions.

We want to awaken the inner performer and empower the children to sharpen their physical, mental and social skills. As experienced, conscientious and talented performers we want to share our knowledge and skills to affect social change.

For the last four years Balloon Circus has been working directly with underprivileged children at a grassroots level. We reach as many children as possible to provide them with something that can be forgotten in the face of adversity – a child's right to play.

We work alongside other charities, complimenting the amazing work already taking place.

**As always, a big thank you to our sponsors, donors, friends and family who support our work.**





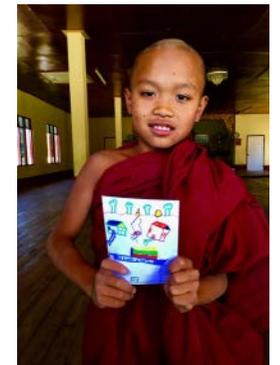
## Director's report

2017-2018 proved another great year for us at Balloon Circus

We had an fantastic summer of fundraising, with our Street Kids vs Street Artists Exhibition. The exhibition was held at Somerset House and covered by the Big Issue Magazine. A huge thanks to all those involved; the children from our last tour who drew the postcards to the famous artists who donated pieces, and all those who supported us buying hundreds of postcard packs.



Congratulations to the lucky winners who have bagged themselves some truly rare pieces of art.





Balloon Circus inspires smiles and laughter through a memorable and exciting experience

## SOUTH AFRICA

We kicked off our South African leg of the tour with our new workshop leader - Maya, who is 18 and came to gain work and life experience while supporting Balloon Circus' work. Our first show back in Cape Town gave us the best surprise: our initial visit two years ago inspired the children to join a circus club and since then they have weekly training as a regular activity.

Our SA tour brought us to all the SOS children's villages throughout the country, covering a staggering 2,000 miles by bus through some pretty hairy areas but we were looked after as always.



We taught over 900 children in Port Elizabeth, the wilds of Mthatha, Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg, Rustenburg, Pretoria and up to Nelspruit in the Kruger. None of the children had experienced anything like circus before. They were brilliant, quick learners who had a lot of fun trying everything. They certainly appreciated having international visitors as they don't get many volunteers.

## NEPAL

Our next leg was Nepal and into unknown territory for Balloon Circus, with trepidation for new and hard travel experiences.

After the roads in SA being quite good we really were back in Asia. Not one road is finished and there are only tourist buses in a few tourist areas so we were getting down with real local travel. Our average journey time was 14 hours but once you get past the dust and dirt billowing in through the windows you are mesmerised by the spectacular backdrop of the Himalayas, visible from nearly every winding turn in the roads.

We visited the SOS villages throughout Kathmandu, Pokhara, Lumbini, Bharatpur and way out west to Dhanghadi, Surkhet and Nepalganj to teach over 1,000 children.

The children of Nepal have had it hard; being orphaned, abandoned, the devastating 2015 earthquake and the Tibetan refugees escaping persecution from China. However, their future is brighter, they have a safe home to learn, play and be children again. Visits like ours create new, positive experiences. We had so much fun with them, their smiles said it all.



## JAPAN

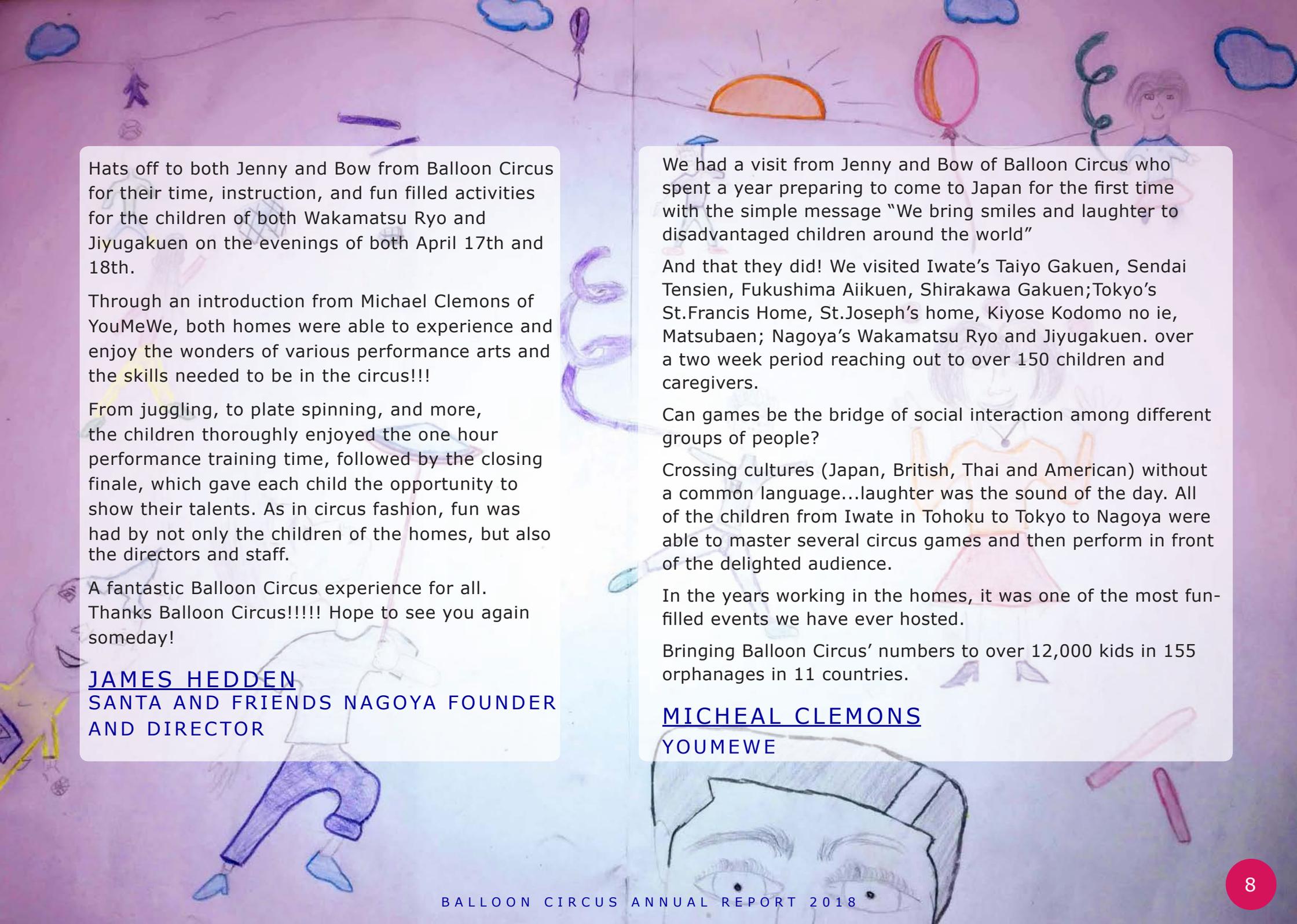
We were very excited this year to apply and be successful in receiving our first official grant to fund our tour of children's homes in Japan from the Sasakawa Foundation, which promotes "Making a difference in UK - Japan relations".

You Me We is a foundation helping 30 homes around Japan. They are associated with another foundation Santa and Friends Nagoya (SFN) who also help out with homes in Nagoya support 280 children's homes around the country. Balloon Circus had approached You Me We homes about visiting Japan and were invited to visit as many homes as we could reach in the allotted time of our visit. Both organisations were extremely supportive during our visits, helping with transport and translating the workshops for us.

There are currently 39,000 children living in home. Most aren't orphans but placed there because of financial or mental instability in their families. We visited ten homes where they aren't allowed many outside visitors so we were the first international performers to come in and teach skills like these.

Both organisations said that they had seen the benefits of our visits in such a short time. We would love to visit again and extend our workshops to other areas to reach all of the disadvantaged children in homes in Japan developing a sustainable circus/physical theatre culture. We would also love to play a role in realizing the value of alternative entertainment in the community. We have been invited back by both foundations, so we need to find funding to keep this moving forward.





Hats off to both Jenny and Bow from Balloon Circus for their time, instruction, and fun filled activities for the children of both Wakamatsu Ryo and Jiyugakuen on the evenings of both April 17th and 18th.

Through an introduction from Michael Clemons of YouMeWe, both homes were able to experience and enjoy the wonders of various performance arts and the skills needed to be in the circus!!!

From juggling, to plate spinning, and more, the children thoroughly enjoyed the one hour performance training time, followed by the closing finale, which gave each child the opportunity to show their talents. As in circus fashion, fun was had by not only the children of the homes, but also the directors and staff.

A fantastic Balloon Circus experience for all. Thanks Balloon Circus!!!! Hope to see you again someday!

**JAMES HEDDEN**  
SANTA AND FRIENDS NAGOYA FOUNDER  
AND DIRECTOR

We had a visit from Jenny and Bow of Balloon Circus who spent a year preparing to come to Japan for the first time with the simple message "We bring smiles and laughter to disadvantaged children around the world"

And that they did! We visited Iwate's Taiyo Gakuen, Sendai Tensien, Fukushima Aikuen, Shirakawa Gakuen; Tokyo's St. Francis Home, St. Joseph's home, Kiyose Kodomo no ie, Matsubaen; Nagoya's Wakamatsu Ryo and Jiyugakuen. over a two week period reaching out to over 150 children and caregivers.

Can games be the bridge of social interaction among different groups of people?

Crossing cultures (Japan, British, Thai and American) without a common language...laughter was the sound of the day. All of the children from Iwate in Tohoku to Tokyo to Nagoya were able to master several circus games and then perform in front of the delighted audience.

In the years working in the homes, it was one of the most fun-filled events we have ever hosted.

Bringing Balloon Circus' numbers to over 12,000 kids in 155 orphanages in 11 countries.

**MICHEAL CLEMONS**  
YOUMEWE

## Ballon Circus Director

Jenny Alexander

## Members of the board

Michelle Harrison

Kate Walmsley

Miranda Wilkinson

## Workshop Leaders

Jenny Alexander

Somsak Thongrot

Maya Byrne

## Beneficiaries per program

South Africa - 8 homes visited

Nepal - 9 homes visited

Japan - 10 homes visited

**Balloon Circus reached more than 1900 children on the 2018 tour.**

## Why circus skills?

**“Try things you never imagined trying, achieve things you didn’t expect to achieve, and learn things that you will never forget.”**

Taking part in circus activities is a highly enjoyable way to develop important skills that apply to all walks of life, in an atmosphere of fun.

Circus talent requires concentration and confidence. The workshops offer genuine learning experiences that really help to develop individuals.

Here’s how:

- Circus skills build confidence and self-esteem and are inclusive of all abilities.
- Circus skills develop teamwork.
- Circus skills involve both the left and right side of the body and the brain to greatly improve learning abilities.
- Circus skills help people to deal with fear, react to the unexpected and plunge into the next challenge with confidence.

## Short term objectives

- Bring the children together through circus.
- To bring laughter and joy to the children.
- Provide an opportunity for children to work with and learn from an international performer.

## Long term objectives

- Extend workshops to other areas.
- Develop a sustainable circus/physical theatre culture.
- Play a role in realizing the value of alternative entertainment in the community.

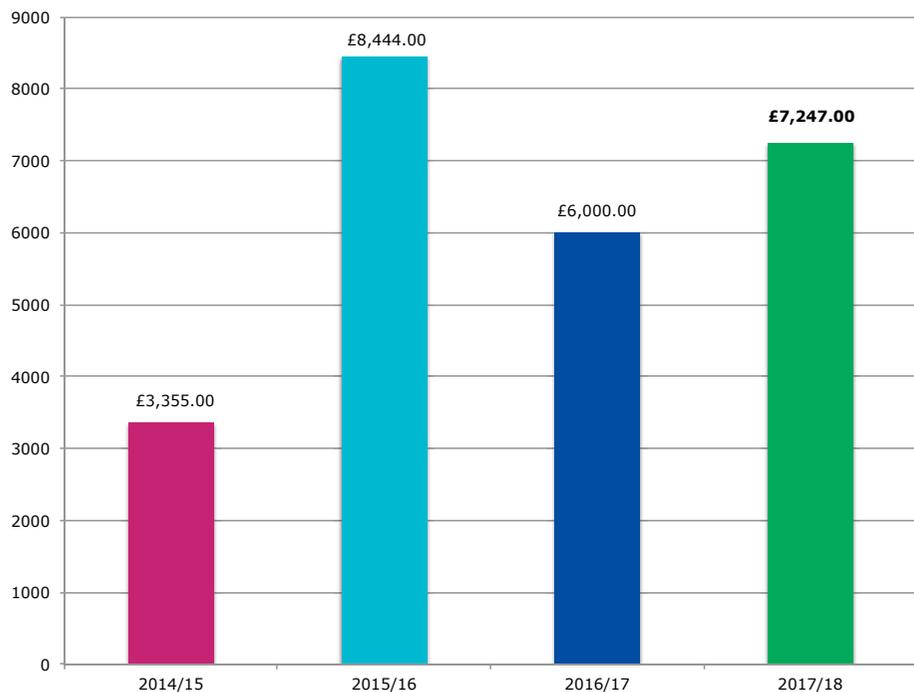


### Circus skills workshop

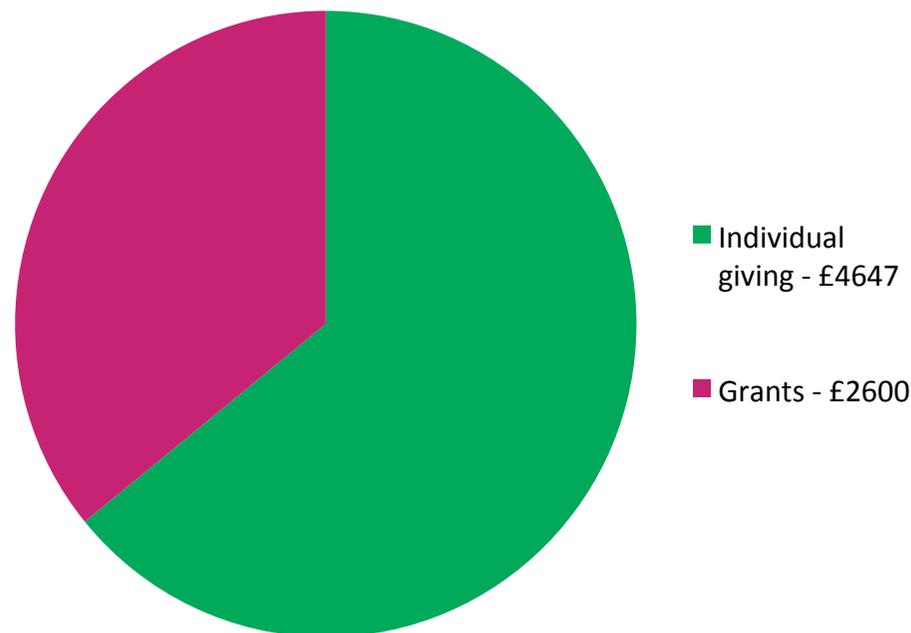
- Balloon modelling
- Diabolo
- Hula hoop
- Juggling balls & rings
- Plate Spinning
- Poi spinning
- Flower sticks
- Gymnastic ribbons & scarves



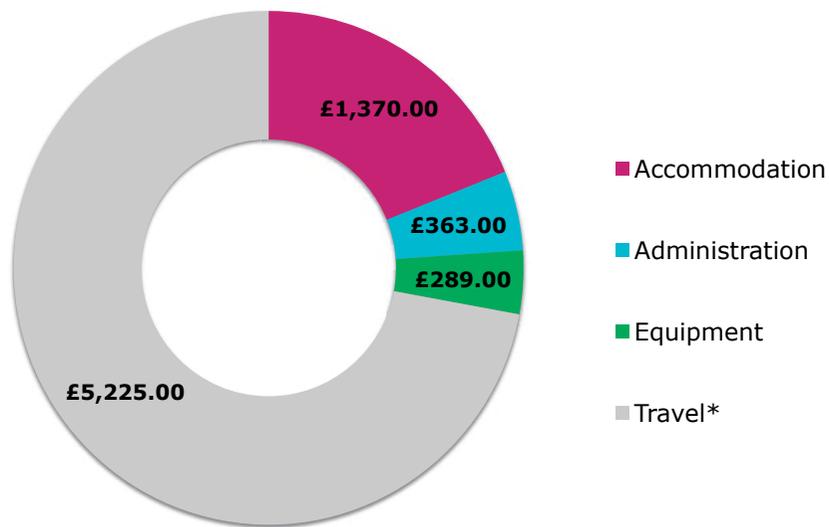
Balloon Circus income 2014-2018

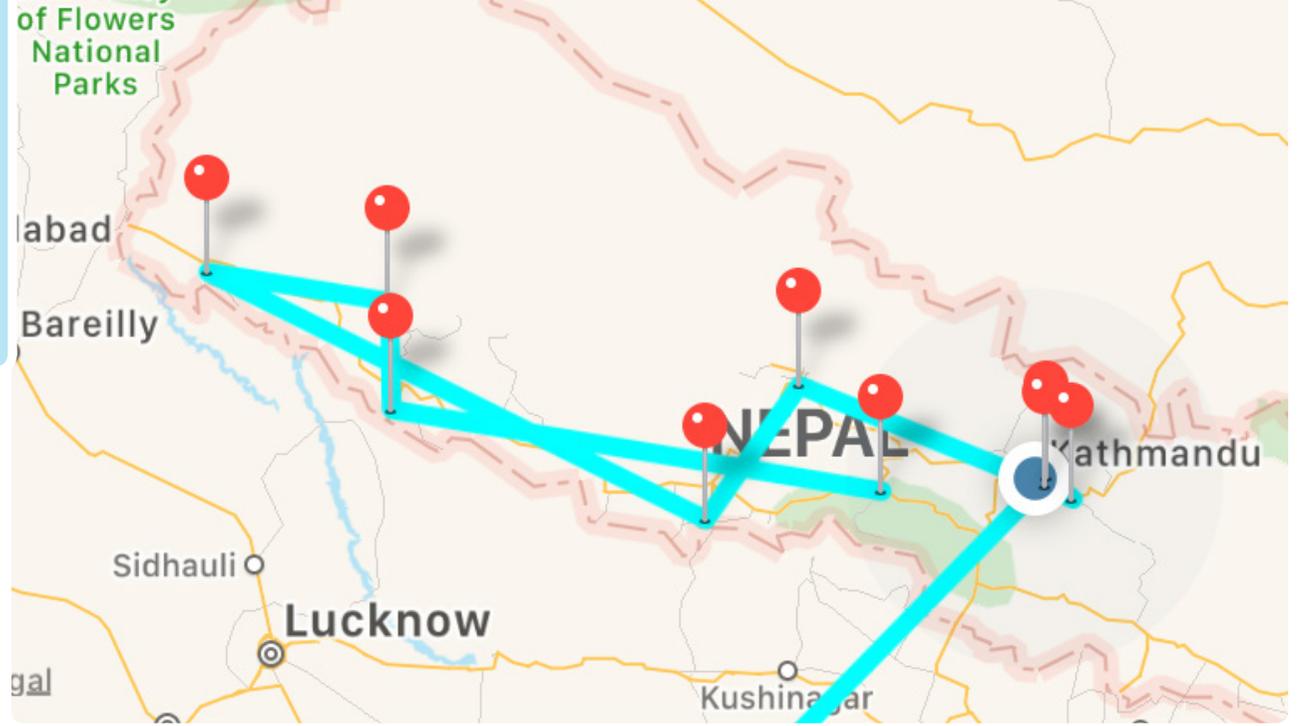
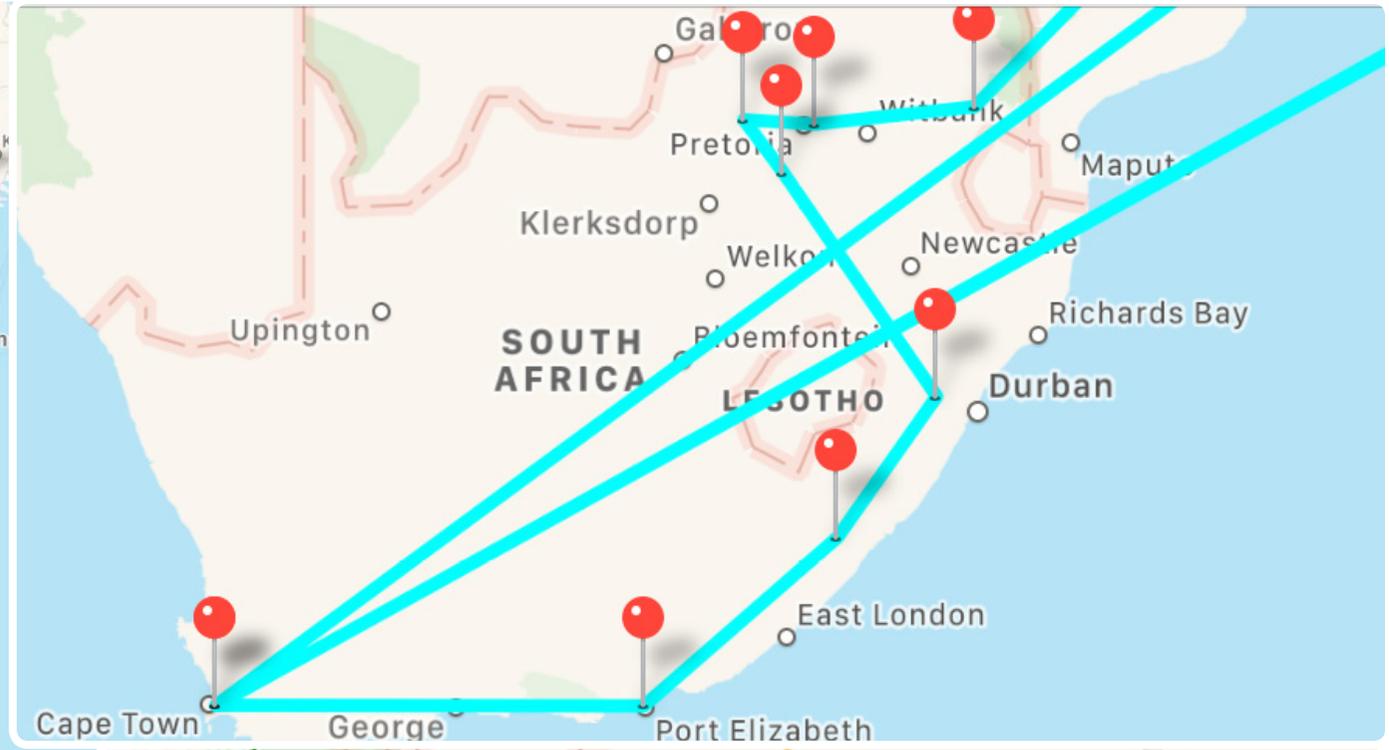
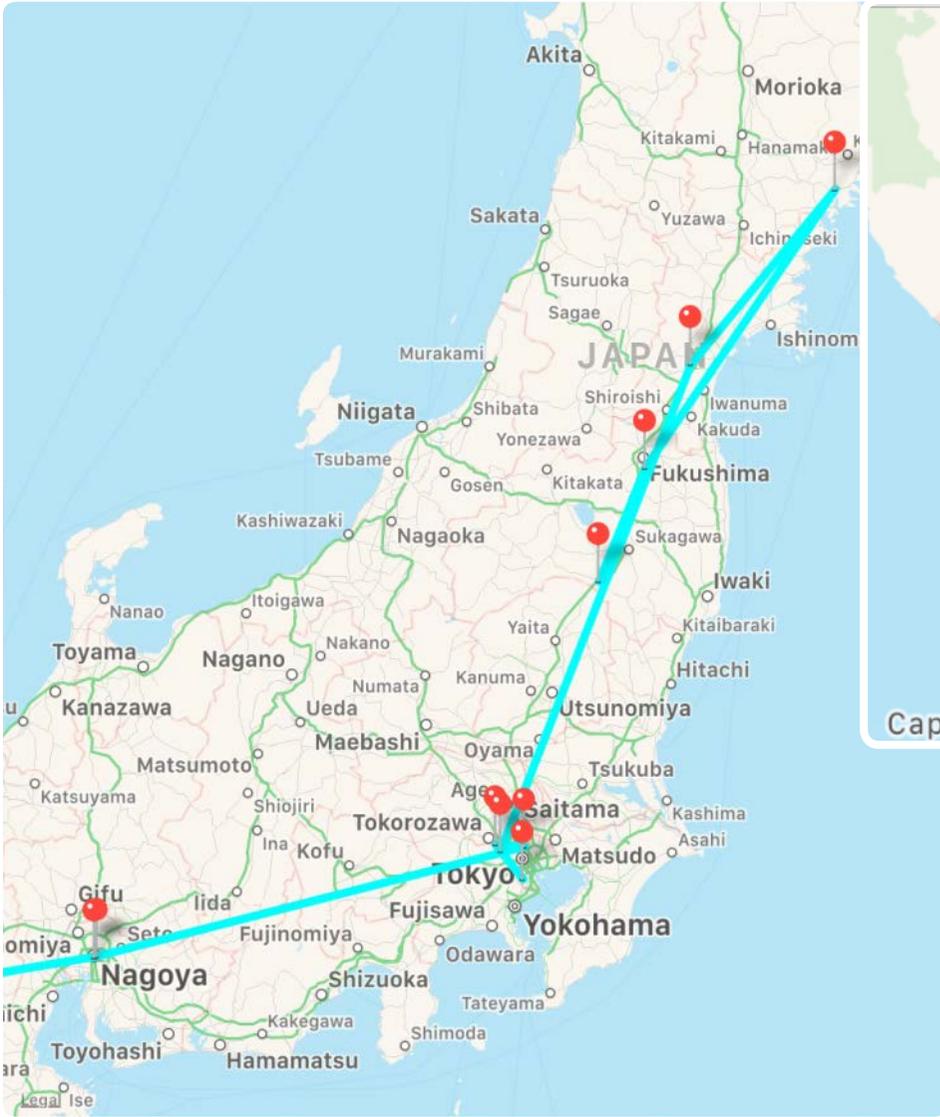


Income split 2017-18



Spending split 2017-18





BALLOON CIRCUS TO DATE

155 orphanages in 11 countries  
teaching around 12000 children