



Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation
Post tour report 2023





1. Please summarise your project with reference to the initial proposal, indicating any changes made to your original application

Balloon Circus, with the support of You Me We Foundation, planned to visit children’s homes in Japan to teach circus workshops and balloons. The project aimed to use performing arts and play to support the physical and social development of children in difficult circumstances, increase their confidence, well-being and expand their experiences by learning new skills and supporting creative exploration.

The project broke new ground by offering a new experience to children who had not received any external visitors in the last three years due to COVID restrictions. It also provided a form of escape and a platform for young people to express themselves and share their experiences.

Originally we tried to book in 2022 but with ongoing restrictions for travel to Japan until the beginning of 2023, and the fact the homes were not receiving any outside visitors, we were only able to reach them in March 2023.

We planned to visit eight children’s homes in ten days. We had two cancellations because of Covid restrictions whilst we were there but we still managed to visit and teach six workshops around the country between Nagoya and Iwate.

2. To what extent was your project breaking new ground? What aspects of it were new and/or significant?

Balloon Circus took our cultural Arts program in March, to Japan, where we brought children circus and balloon workshops. This program was a unique opportunity for the children to enjoy a different cultural experience and learn new skills while having fun.

During the program, the children had the chance to work with professional circus performers from Britain and Thailand, teaching them various circus skills such as juggling, plate spinning, poi and diablo.

Our team of experienced educators were with the children every step of the way to ensure their safety and provide an enriching experience. We believe that this program was not only a memorable experience, but also an opportunity for them to develop important life skills such as teamwork, adaptability, and cultural awareness.

The program was open to children of all ages, their carers and the local community. We encouraged as many as possible to take advantage of this exciting opportunity and give each child a unique and unforgettable experience.

We visited three new homes and three homes we went to last time but there was only one child who had seen us before, so for all of them it was the first time to take part in a circus and balloon workshop.

3. How was your project executed? Did it proceed to plan? Did you achieve your objectives? If it was an event, please attach the programme and full publicity. If it was a trip/visit, please attach the itinerary

We were very excited to apply again and be successful in receiving our second grant to fund another tour of children’s homes in Japan from Sasakawa Foundation.

Balloon Circus had approached You Me We homes for the second time about visiting more Children’s homes and were invited to visit some from last time with some added new ones.

You Me We are a foundation helping 30 homes around Japan and associated with another foundation Santa and Friends Nagoya who also help out with homes in Nagoya. Both were extremely helpful organising our visits, helping with organising invitations to the homes, transport and translating at the workshops for us.

We planned to visit eight children’s homes in one week. We were only able to visit for ten days due to increased costs, especially air travel. Also covid restrictions within the homes meant we had two cancellations whilst we were there so we could only visit and teach six workshops around the country. We did manage to fit in a foster home who invited all their extended family and supporters. We had a great opportunity to teach not only the children but participants aged all the way up to eighty which they all loved and it became a real community event.

The activities that the children enjoyed included:

- Juggling
- Poi
- Diablo
- Plate spinning
- Hula hoop
- Flower sticks and
- Balloon modelling.

All children participated in the workshops and every child got up on stage to perform their new skills afterwards.

A circus pack was left in each place for the children to keep.

Itinerary

We held six of eight planned workshops.

03/03/23	Nagasaki (cancelled)
04/03/23	Koyama Home, Chiba
04/03/23	Onchoen Home, Funabashi
05/03/23	Youkikai Foster Home, Nagoya
05/03/23	Wakamastu Ryo, Nagoya
06/03/23	St Farancis, Tokyo (cancelled)
07/03/23	Taiyo Gakuen, Iwate
08/03/23	Sendai Tenshien, Miyagi



4. What were the principal outcomes of the project? Its initial results? The expected lasting impact?

Our primary focus was on promoting good health and wellbeing, which is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 3. We also aimed to teach critical thinking skills, and provide alternative play to their normal activities.

For vulnerable young people, especially those who have experienced conflict or trauma, circus workshops can be a form of escape, overcoming hardship, where they share their experiences and express their emotions. Circus skills can be used to teach life skills, including perseverance, teamwork, trust and positive risk-taking. Young people can apply these life skills outside of the circus – which can help make them more employable and taking part in workshops can give a sense of self-worth while boosting their confidence, in turn they can continue making a positive difference in the world.

During our tour, we engaged the children in various activities that included circus workshops and balloon modelling. We spent time teaching them different skills and sharing our experiences, with the aim of increasing their confidence levels. We monitored their progress by asking simple questions.

We are proud to report that our outcomes were excellent, with a significant percentage of children showing an increase in their confidence levels. The children had fun and made lasting memories, while also learning new skills that they can use in their everyday lives.

In conclusion, we are delighted with the outcome of our tour, and we are confident that we made a positive impact on the lives of these children. We thank you for your support, which made this tour possible.

Case study

Name: Tora Age: 11

Issue why they want us: No activities like this normally

Learnt new skills: Remembered spinning plates and diablo, learnt juggling and poi

Impact: Remembered us and waited for 5 years for us to come back, he came out and spun plate straight away

How I feel: Highlight of the whole trip as it was the only one we had taught for a second time.

Quotes

“ **How are we going to have fun with this?** ”
(Age 5)

He tried everything and came up to show all the skills.

“ **I remember you. I’ve been waiting for you to come back.** ”
(Age 11)

He picked up plate and spun it straight away.

Testimonials

We met Balloon Circus in 2018 where we travelled the country together from Nagoya to Tokyo to Tohoku teaching children in orphanages.

Everyone from the most stoic principal to the littlest of children thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We looked forward to them coming back ever since.

We had the pleasure to meet again in 2023 and the highlight was an eleven year old who remembered us from 2018 and wondered when they would be back.

The children do not remember the birthday presents or Christmas but they do remember the adults that come into their lives to make them feel important. They especially remember when they come back again and again.

MICHAEL CLEMONS, YOU ME WE

If appropriate, include number of participants/audience numbers/ attendees.

Overall, we reached approximately 150 children including carers and the extended community.

5. Finally, what are your plans for the future and how will the continuity of your project be guaranteed?

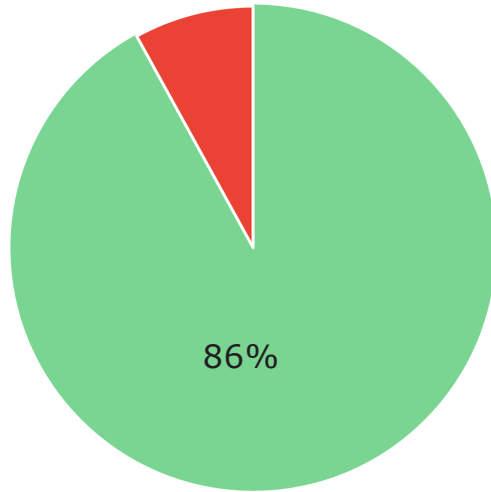
The project was executed with the help of You Me We homes and Santa and Friends Nagoya, who helped in organizing the visits, invitations, transport, and translation at the workshops.

Despite the challenges, the project achieved its objectives and provided a positive impact on the children and the participants. We have left a circus pack in each place which we hope will be used by the children and carers. We have asked them to carry on playing with them and will ask for feedback regularly.

We have also been invited back next year again when hopefully more places will be able to have us as the restrictions will be lifted.



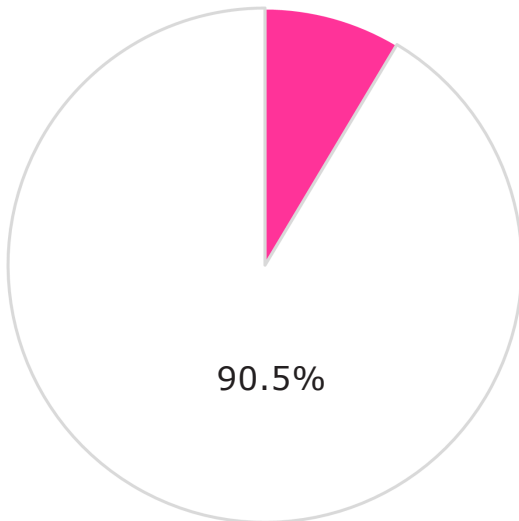
Feelings before the workshop



■ Excited before the workshop ■ Anxious before the workshop

94 participants

Circus skills experience

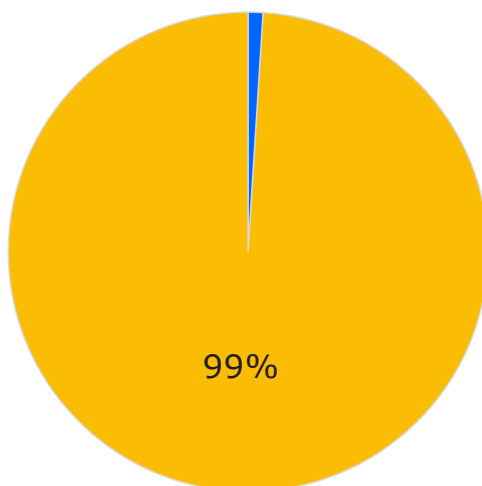


■ Experience of circus skills □ No experience of circus skills

100% of participants said they learnt a new skill

100% of participants said they loved the workshop

Awareness of Balloon Circus before the workshops



■ Knew BC ■ Didn't know BC

100% of participants said they would come back to a Balloon Circus workshop

