

Call for Applications: Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Post-doc researcher to investigate the effect of healthcare clown interventions on migrant children and aid workers in Lesvos, Greece.

Emergency Smile Research Project 2025-2027

RED NOSES International is looking for an experienced researcher who can lead this innovative research project during a 3-year time frame (2025-2027). Interested candidates are invited to apply.

About RED NOSES

RED NOSES International is an artistic organisation bringing humour and laughter to people in need of joy. Through interactive artistic interventions, training and partnerships, advocacy and research, RED NOSES clowns aim to improve the emotional well-being, social inclusion, and creative empowerment of their audiences. By engaging with different groups of people through different artistic formats, the RED NOSES artists cultivate human connection and transform emotions through playful interactions, igniting feelings of joy, hope, self-expression and creativity through humour.

In 2013, RED NOSES International developed an emergency response programme called Emergency Smile (ES). This programme is a holistic intervention which aims to promote emotional well-being, increase social inclusion, and address the psychosocial needs of vulnerable people in crisis settings. Emergency Smile allows RED NOSES to go beyond the borders of its eleven partner countries, sending specially trained healthcare clowns to areas of crisis in cooperation with international aid organisations already working on the ground. Emergency Smile missions consist in bringing an international team of clowns to crisis settings to support children and their families to better deal with their stressful context and envision a better future. Clowns engage with children through parades, during which they call children and families and interact with them in a joyful way; clown shows, where they perform with magic tricks, acrobatics, storytelling and slapstick in front of children and families; and Circus Smile, a five-day clown camp during which children learn juggling

and magic tricks, and perform in front of their families in a final show. Emergency Smile also has a specific workshop for workers in crisis settings; the Humour Relief Workshop teaches aid workers and community leaders how to deal with stress and improve their relationships within the team through humour and its coping mechanism.

To find out more about RED NOSES Emergency Smile activities, formats and their impact on the participants, please read these [2019](#) and [2023](#) evaluation reports.

Why is RED NOSES in Lesvos?

Greece, a major entry point for migrants into Europe, especially the Aegean Islands¹, has seen a surge in refugee arrivals in 2024, with Lesvos hosting the highest number². Refugees, often facing severe trauma, have significant mental health needs³, particularly children⁴⁵. Studies indicate a high prevalence of mental health disorders among young refugees, with some reporting up to 87% experiencing anxiety, depression, and other symptoms⁶⁷⁸⁹. Consequently, there is an urgent need for interventions that support both the mental and physical health of young refugees, focusing on reducing symptoms and building resilience.

Aid workers also experience high stress and burnout¹⁰¹¹, necessitating improved working conditions and psychosocial support.

Arts for health in migration settings

The arts have been increasingly recognized for improving health and well-being¹², especially in crisis contexts. Art-based interventions provide a safe space for expression, helping displaced persons process emotions and reduce isolation. Studies show such artistic activities can alleviate post-traumatic stress in refugee children and build resilience¹³. For caregivers and aid workers, art-based

¹ [Greece | International Rescue Committee \(IRC\)](#).

² [NSP Eastern Aegean 20.02 | PDF \(scribd.com\)](#).

³ Sleijpen, M., Mooren, T., Kleber, R. J., & Boeije, H. R. (2017). Lives on hold: A qualitative study of young refugees' resilience strategies. *Childhood*, 24(3), 348-365.

⁴ Giannakopoulos, G., & Anagnostopoulos, D. C. (2016). Child health, the refugees crisis, and economic recession in Greece. *The Lancet*, 387(10025), 1271.

⁵ Oberg, C., & Sharma, H. (2023). Post-traumatic stress disorder in unaccompanied refugee minors: Prevalence, contributing and protective factors, and effective interventions: A scoping review. *Children*, 10(6), 941.

⁶ Vossoughi, N., Jackson, Y., Gusler, S., & Stone, K. (2018). Mental health outcomes for youth living in refugee camps: A review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 19(5), 528-542.

⁷ Hermans, M. P., Kooistra, J., Cannegieter, S. C., Rosendaal, F. R., Mook-Kanamori, D. O., & Nemeth, B. (2017). Healthcare and disease burden among refugees in long-stay refugee camps at Lesbos, Greece. *European Journal of Epidemiology*, 32, 851-854. doi:10.1007/s10654-017-0269-4.

⁸ "Mercy Corps and Norwegian Refugee Council (2016): [Don't Forget Us: Voices of Young Refugees and Migrants in Greece](#).

⁹ Médecins Sans Frontières. (2018). [MSF activity update—March 2018](#).

¹⁰ UNHCR (2016), [Staff Well-Being and Mental Health in UNHCR Survey Report 2016](#).

¹¹ Connorton, E., Perry, M. J., Hemenway, D., & Miller, M. (2011). Occupational trauma and mental illness—combat, peacekeeping, or relief work and the national co-morbidity survey replication. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 53(12), 1360-1363.

¹² Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019). [What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review](#). World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe.

¹³ Rowe, C., Watson-Ormond, R., English, L., Rubesin, H., Marshall, A., Linton, K., ... & Eng, E. (2017). Evaluating art therapy to heal the effects of trauma among refugee youth: The Burma art therapy program evaluation. *Health promotion practice*, 18(1), 26-33.

interventions reduce stress and anxiety and improve interactions with those they care for¹⁴. [The World Health Organization](#) emphasizes investing in arts for mental well-being in humanitarian settings, highlighting the positive impacts of RED NOSES' interventions in Lesvos. Clowning, in particular, has shown benefits for mental and physical health¹⁶, creating safe spaces for emotional expression and fostering resilience in children. While research on its impact on aid workers is limited, existing evidence suggests arts engagement improves well-being and reduces burnout¹⁷. This research aims to provide evidence-based proof of the arts' impact on mental health and well-being in humanitarian settings.

In Lesvos, RED NOSES has been working regularly with a number of organisations providing shelter and support to people on the move – children and their families, single men and unaccompanied minors. The activities of RED NOSES in the island started in 2019 and have been developing constantly since, adapting to political and policy changes, finding every year a suitable solution to continue providing access to artistic humorous activities to those who need them the most.

Research Project Overview

The Emergency Smile Research Project aims to assess the effect of clowning activities on:

1. The emotional well-being of displaced children, including unaccompanied minors in Lesvos.
2. The emotional well-being and stress level of aid workers in Lesvos.

The project seeks to fill a gap in the literature regarding the impact of arts on health in humanitarian settings and provide a basis for strategic policy decisions aimed at improving the living conditions of people involved in forced migration.

This research will employ a mixed-method approach and will take place over three years (between 2025 and 2027), in parallel with the RED NOSES artistic activities for people involved in migration in Lesvos, Greece. Considering the challenges to operate within Closed Controlled Access Centres due to changes in the Greek legislation, RED NOSES has started to look beyond the centres, collaborating with several grassroot organisations that provide support to migrants and their families outside them. This research will take place in some of the structures of the organisations with whom RED NOSES collaborates regularly¹⁸, such as Parea, When We Band Together, Iliaktida and Because We Carry. This means that the data collection with children will take place in the structures and spaces of some of the above-mentioned organisations.

¹⁴ Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019), Ibid.

¹⁵ RED NOSES International, [Final Evaluation Emergency Smile Greece 2018–2019](#).

¹⁶ Sridharan, K., & Sivaramakrishnan, G. (2016). Therapeutic clowns in pediatrics: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *European journal of pediatrics*, 175, 1353-1360.

¹⁷ Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019), Ibid.

¹⁸ Depending on the artistic activities' schedule and the availability of the study groups in those structures.

Objectives of the Lead Researcher Position

RED NOSES is looking for an experienced researcher who can fulfil the following objectives:

- 1- To conduct qualitative and quantitative research on the impact of clowning activities on the emotional well-being of displaced children and on the well-being and stress level of aid workers.
- 2- To produce evidence-based findings that will contribute to the academic literature and inform policy-making.
- 3- To collaborate closely with RED NOSES International and its partners to ensure the successful implementation of the research project.

The researcher will collect data through rigorous qualitative and quantitative data collection methods involving control groups or pretest and posttest measures, to allow for comparison of the levels of wellbeing between the different groups, or before and after the artistic interventions of the clowns.

Research questions and proposed methods

1 Research question 1

What is the immediate effect of clowning activities on children's wellbeing in Lesvos, including Unaccompanied Minors¹⁹? Does this effect depend on the country of origin, gender, and age, and duration of stay in the camp?

1.1 Proposed methods

Quantitative methods:

- Quasi-experimental research with children aged 8-17 speaking Farsi and Arabic. A control group is foreseen, where a selected group of children fill out the survey and do the drawing task when no clowns are present. Proposed tools:
 - Wellbeing: WHO 5-item wellbeing scale (WHO-5; Bech, 2004)

Qualitative methods:

- Creative methods such as drawing tasks with children aged 8-17 speaking Farsi and Arabic, followed by brief interviews about the content and meaning of the drawings. The researcher can suggest alternative creative methods.
- Interviews and/or focus groups with children.
- Surveys and/or interviews with parents.
- For unaccompanied minors: Surveys, interviews and/or focus groups with aid workers.

¹⁹ Please note that research with Unaccompanied Minors is subject to legal consent.

2 Research question 2

What are the immediate and mid-term effects of clowning activities on aid workers' emotional well-being and stress levels?

2.1 Proposed methods

Quantitative methods:

- A survey will be administered to the participants to the Humour Relief workshops before and after the workshop, to measure changes over time (Pretest-posttest design). Alternatively, a survey will be administered to a group of aid workers who do not participate in the Humour Workshop, and at the same time to the participants to the workshop, to analyse differences in value (quasi-experimental design). Proposed tools:
 - Wellbeing: WHO 5-item wellbeing scale (WHO-5; Bech, 2004).
 - Validated stress scale.

Quantitative methods:

- Interviews and/or focus groups with aid workers.

Key Responsibilities and Deliverables:

1 Research Design and Implementation:

- Develop a detailed research proposal and data collection plan, to be submitted for ethical approval (*deadline 31 March 2025*).
- Conduct desk reviews, interviews, focus groups, and surveys (including child-friendly surveys).
- Collect and analyze data from children, parents, and aid workers.
- Implement a control study for rigorous data collection.

2 Fieldwork:

- Research will primarily be conducted in Lesvos, although some remote work is possible.
- Work with local grassroots organizations and partners to facilitate data collection.
- Train and supervise research assistants/translators in data collection methods and ethical considerations.

3 Data Analysis and Reporting:

- Conduct preliminary and final data analysis.
- Prepare and submit biannual progress reports to RED NOSES International (*deadline May and November each year*).
- Draft and publish academic papers in peer-reviewed academic journals based on the research findings (*first manuscript expected during 2026*).

4 Ethical Compliance

- Ensure all research activities comply with international ethical standards, particularly when working with vulnerable populations.
- Obtain informed consent and assent from all participants.
- Maintain confidentiality and anonymity of participants' data.

- Abide by the RED NOSES Safeguarding Policy.

5 Stakeholder Engagement:

- Liaise with local authorities, NGOs, and other stakeholders to facilitate research activities.
- Engage with community members to foster trust and ensure high participation rates.
- Present findings to stakeholders to support advocacy, policy-making, and fundraising activities.

6 Reporting:

- The researcher will submit biannual progress reports detailing the methodologies employed, preliminary findings, and any challenges encountered. These reports will be reviewed by RED NOSES Research and Learning Department to ensure alignment with the project's goals and to make necessary adjustments. Additionally, the researcher will participate in regular online check-in meetings with the RED NOSES Research and Learning Department to discuss ongoing progress, provide updates, and receive feedback.

Timeline

Year 1: Project setup, stakeholder engagement, and initial data collection.

Researcher onboarding process

During the first half of the year, the researcher will get acquainted with the work of RED NOSES Emergency Smile, its mission and its work ethics. There will be a strong and comprehensive induction process with the ES team, to make sure the researcher and the team become acquainted with each other and comfortable working together. This will require some field missions to Lesvos to accompany the clowns and observe how they work with the activities' participants, and how a mission works.

Desk review

The researcher will look at the main documents supporting ES, such as existing mission reports, and reports of previous evaluation activities with children and aid workers. RED NOSES will put at the researcher's disposal all material necessary to get an all-round overview of our mission, aim, activities and impact.

Stakeholder engagement

The researcher will start getting to know the context of Lesvos and the constellations of grassroots and international organisations the ES team works with. This will require fieldwork in Lesvos and networking with all ES partners in the field.

Research proposal and data collection plan

The researcher will start creating a detailed research proposal by looking at the opportunities and challenges for carrying out research, also based on previous findings and input from RED NOSES International. The research proposal will have to be approved by an independent ethical board.

Data collection

According to the activity plan of the ES missions, the research will start the data collection with children and aid workers during the second half of the year. For the data collection, the support of

one or more research assistants will be required. The research assistant(s) will be trained by the researcher in conducting data collection with this specific audience groups such as children and adults living and working in crisis settings. Translation procedures and methods will also be covered in the training.

Year 2: Continued data collection and preliminary analysis.

The second year will be completely dedicated to data collection and preliminary data analysis.

Data collection in Lesvos will take place both when the clowns are not working in the island, as well as during or immediately after the clowns' activities, to compare the effect of the clowning activities on the participants' wellbeing during the two periods and monitor any relevant change.

Preliminary analysis will be carried out regularly in between the data collection periods, to ensure a regular understanding of the impact of the clowns and monitor the impact of the activities.

Preliminary manuscript. In the eventuality that enough data is already collected during the first and second year, the researcher will draft a first manuscript to be published in an academic journal. The topic of the paper and the selection of the academic journal for publication will be agreed with the RED NOSES Research and Learning Department.

Year 3: Final data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings.

Data collection, analysis and dissemination. Data collection in Lesvos will continue throughout the research project, according to the ES activities in the field. Data will be collected both during the ES activities and when activities do not take place, to be able to compare people's levels of wellbeing before and after the clowning activities. During the final phase of the project, the researcher will carry out the data analysis and draft one or more academic papers based on the findings of the research. The publication will be submitted for consideration to some internationally relevant academic journals, to be chosen together with RED NOSES according to their specific focus. By the end of the project, at least one paper will be submitted, and if possible, published in a peer-reviewed academic journal and ready to be shared internationally.

Required Qualifications

- PhD in Psychology or another relevant field.
- Strong background in both qualitative and quantitative research methods including pre-posttest design, randomized control trials or quasi-experimental design.
- Readiness and availability to commit over a 3-year period (2025 to 2027).
- Readiness and availability to spend extended research periods in Lesvos.
- At least 5 years of experience in conducting research in volatile and dynamic field settings.
- Previous experience working with displaced populations and with children.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including an outgoing personality and resourcefulness.
- Flexibility and adaptability to adjust to changing field conditions and programme schedule.
- Strong ethical consideration and adherence to safeguarding policies.

- Willingness to collaborate closely with the Emergency Smile mission management team.
- Fluent speaking and writing in English, fluency in another relevant language (e.g. Greek, Farsi, Arabic) a plus.
- Previous publications in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Preferred qualifications:

- Experience in art-based interventions or therapeutic approaches.
- Background in creative research methods with children.

Compensation:

This position is subject to funding availability. We expect to have final confirmation by December 2024.

The remuneration for this freelance position is 48000 Euros per year (all taxes included) for a duration of three years. This amount is intended to cover the researcher's time, travel (including travel to and from Lesvos), accommodation, and any other incidental costs that may arise during any phase of the assessment. Any and all costs and expenses exceeding this amount and which might be incurred by the contractor(s) due, for example, to an event of force majeure or otherwise, are to be borne solely and exclusively by the contractor(s), except for fees for research assistants/translators in the field, which will be covered separately by RED NOSES International.

How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit the following documents to research@rednoses.org (you can also write us should you require clarifications) with the object "Expression of interest - Emergency Smile Research Project" **no later than the 20th of October 2024.**

- A cover letter outlining their qualifications and motivation for applying.
- A detailed CV, including a list of publications.
- Contact information for three professional references.

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Note on diversity and inclusion

RED NOSES International is committed to ensuring diversity and inclusion in its workforce. We encourage applications from all qualified individuals, including those from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Applications from women are strongly encouraged.

Note on safeguarding

RED NOSES recognises the utmost importance of keeping children and vulnerable persons safe and ensuring that they are protected from maltreatment or anything that is detrimental to their health and development, within our organisation as well as with our partners. We do not tolerate any form of child abuse, exploitation, neglect or violation of a child's and vulnerable person's privacy and rights.