



THE ROLE OF PROJECT PLAY ON THE GROUND

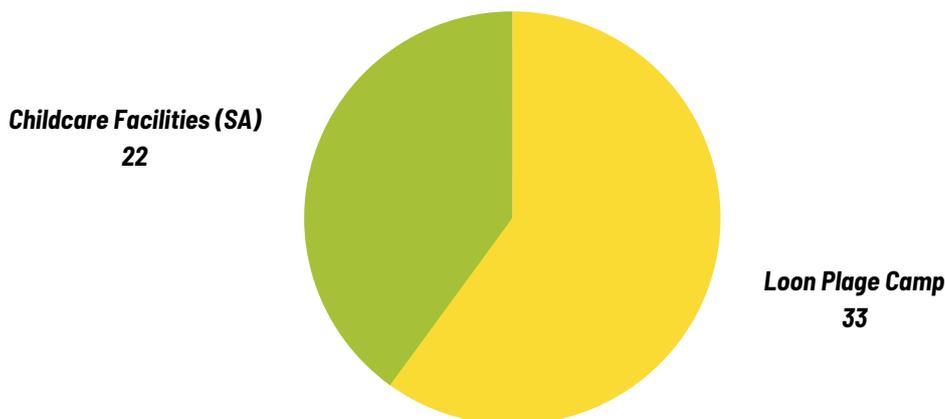
In February, Project Play delivered **35 play sessions** and educational activities for displaced children at the Loon-Plage camp in Dunkirk, and in the independent childcare facilities (les structures accueillantes - SA) at Maison Marie Skobtsova, Maison Sesame and Secours Catholique de Calais, which runs a regular day care center for women and children.

At each session, we collect data from the ground to raise awareness of the vulnerabilities of the children we work with. We also aim to highlight the significant differences between the children living in the camp and those in SA, regarding their access to basic needs and the upholding of their fundamental rights.

The childcare facilities, although still facing certain limitations, are able to provide children with a safe space and ensure the fulfilment of their basic needs. In Loon-Plage, the state does not provide any assistance to displaced people in terms of access to healthcare, water, food or material distribution. This non-intervention exacerbates already precarious living conditions, renders displaced people dependent on the services of charitable associations and has direct repercussions for the wellbeing of the children living in the camp.

This month, we had 35 sessions and worked with 55 different children - 33 in Loon-Plage and 22 in childcare facilities.

*Please note: Project Play does not encounter all the children who live in Loon-Plage, so this data represents a small sample of the children exposed to the difficult living conditions in the camp. **The true numbers will be higher.***



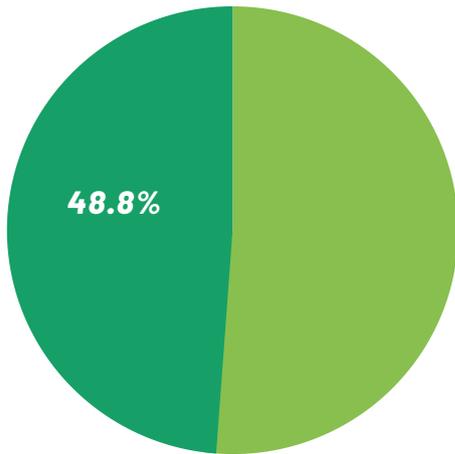
Number of children who participated in our sessions in February 2022.



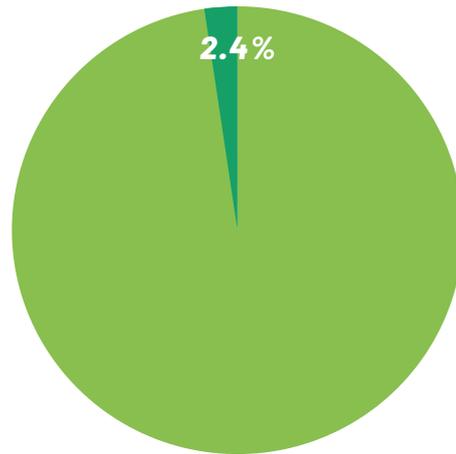
ACCESS TO HYGIENE - A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

At each session, we observe and record the number of children with **dirty faces** and **dirty teeth**.

This month, we found that almost one in two children had a dirty face during our sessions at Loon-Plage, compared to only 2.4% of those we worked with in SA:

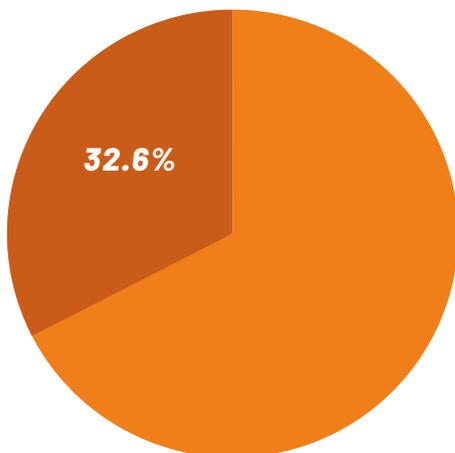


Percentage of children seen with a dirty face in Loon-Plage

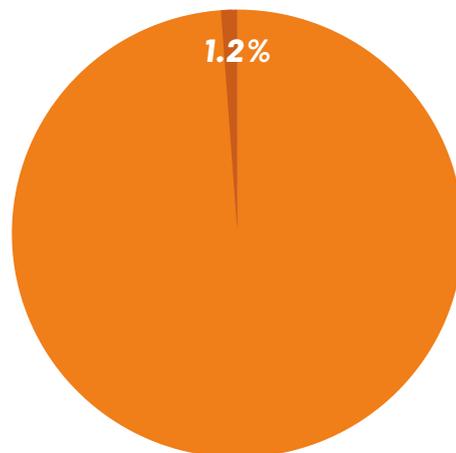


Percentage of children seen with a dirty face in SA

Furthermore, we observed that 32.6% of children on session in Loon-Plage had dirty or rotting teeth, while this was the case for only 1.2% of the children in SA:



Percentage of children seen with dirty teeth in Loon-Plage



Percentage of children seen with dirty teeth in SA

This data takes into account the total number of children present, as well as the frequency of individual attendance at our sessions over the course of the month.

In Loon-Plage, we observed children with dirty faces and dirty teeth 63 and 42 times respectively, meaning that from day-to-day, children were unable to wash. The lack of sanitation facilities at the camp means that there is irregular and limited access to water, and these statistics illustrate the direct impact that this has on children's hygiene. It is vital to also highlight the lack of toilets in the camp, which forces people to go outside, without any sanitation or disposal system. **This not only has health and hygiene implications, but is degrading, and offers people no privacy or dignity.**

In contrast, the children we work with in SA have daily access to sanitary and hygiene facilities that allow them to wash and use the toilet. The impact of this is clearly seen - of the children we worked with in February, more than 97% of them had clean faces and clean teeth, a stark contrast to the numbers observed in Loon-Plage.



THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

It is the responsibility of the State, the councils of Grande-Synthe and Loon-Plage, and the Dunkirk Urban Community (CUD) to meet the needs of the 200 people living in the camp through the installation a water point and sanitation facilities. Article 210-1 of the French Environment Code stipulates the right to access safe drinking water for food and hygiene.¹ These are fundamental human rights; derived from the right to an adequate standard of living mandated in Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and recognised by the UN General Assembly in 2010.^{2,3} Furthermore, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) states that, under international human rights law, all states must: *'work towards universal access to water and sanitation for all, without discrimination, while giving priority to those most in need'*.⁴

Governments and public authorities are thus obligated to take action to ensure that the basic human rights of displaced children are upheld, that their dignity is preserved and that they have access to water and sanitation facilities.



LIVING CONDITIONS IN LOON-PLAGE - A DIRECT THREAT TO THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN

The lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities prevents children in Loon-Plage from maintaining standards of hygiene and health, as evidenced by the statistics gathered throughout this month. The stark contrast between the ability of children in the camp and those in SA to remain clean illustrates the impact had by the simple provision of sanitation facilities and a safe living space. **State inaction in this regard prevents the upholding of the fundamental human rights of access to clean water and sanitation, with significant risks to health and hygiene.**

Furthermore, the reality of the camp poses a direct threat to physical safety. From the 18th to the 22nd of February, two storms hit the North of France in quick succession, bringing with them winds exceeding 100km/h. The people living in the Loon-Plage camp, including children, had to endure these dangerous conditions from within tents and makeshift shelters, with no escape from the threat of falling trees, flying debris or the destruction of their living space, while shelter was being organised by the public authorities. **The provision of unconditional shelter in northern France would protect displaced people from further physical danger in situations such as this.**

Compounding this physical threat is the very real impact on mental health. Living in informal and precarious living sites has a resounding psychological toll on children and their parents; day in and day out, they face an unrelenting fear of police violence, lack of food and shelter and constant uncertainty about their future. **This psychological harassment has an unnecessary and avoidable effect on vulnerable people. The provision of shelter in key locations would offer stability and a degree of security for those in already tenuous situations.**



OUR DEMANDS

The living conditions in Loon-Plage pose a direct threat to health, physical safety and mental well-being. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (**UNCRC**) mandates that state parties provide all children living under their jurisdiction with:

“A standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development”.⁵

We demand that this obligation is upheld by the French government, and call on the state to provide safe, stable and unconditional shelter in key locations for displaced people in northern France, to prevent further harm and eliminate avoidable risk.