

In March, Project Play delivered 45 **play sessions and educational activities** for displaced children at the camp in Loon-Plage, near 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 centre 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 fulfillment 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 delivered 45 sessions and worked with 180 different children - 143 in Loon-Plage and 35 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.



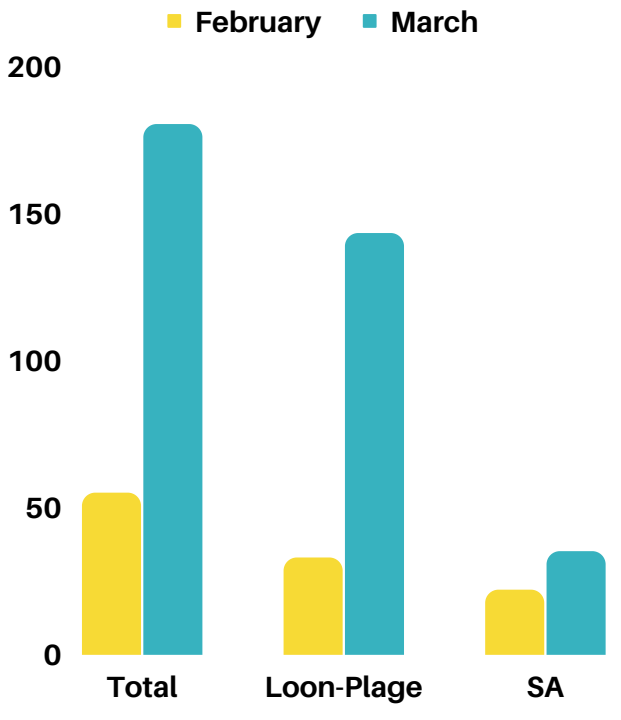
A child displaying their artwork in the camp at Loon-Plage, in close proximity to a busy distribution point.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

The number of children at our sessions throughout March was significantly higher than in February.

Figure One:
Monthly Totals of Children Present at Sessions

This month, we worked with 180 different children in total, 125 more than in February. In Loon-Plage, we worked with 143 children, 110 more than in February. In SA, 35 children attended our sessions, 13 more than last month. This indicates a marked increase in the number of families present in Calais and Dunkirk, and particularly in the camp in Loon-Plage.



Despite this, access to hygiene for the children attending our sessions at Loon-Plage remains limited. In February, our Monthly Advocacy Report focused on the lack of sanitation facilities in the camp, which prevents those living there from exercising their right to access safe drinking water and sanitation. The situation remains unresolved, and our data continues to reflect the impact of this.

■ February ■ March

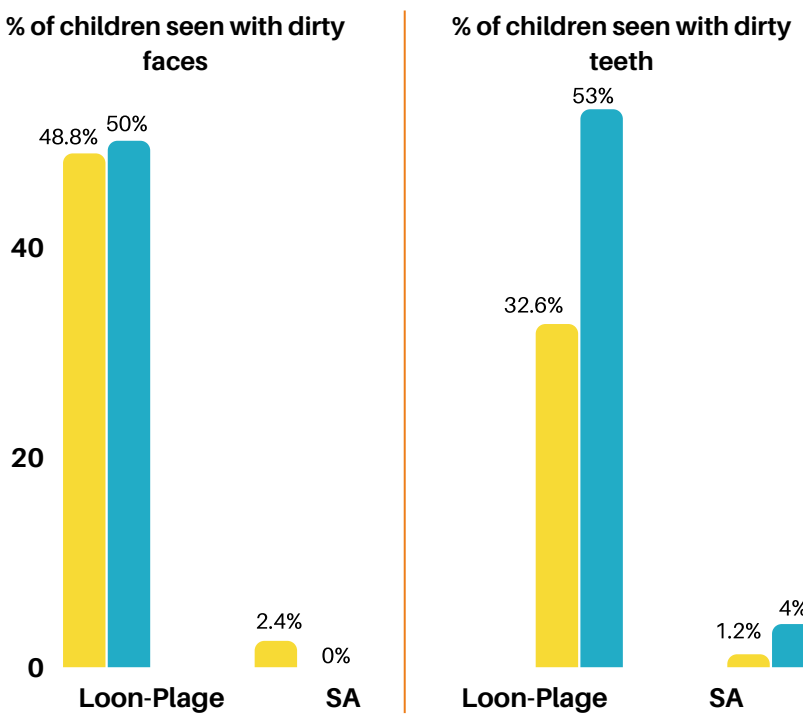


Figure Two:
Monthly Hygiene Data

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 March, 53% of the children we worked with in Loon-Plage had dirty teeth, an increase of 20.4% from February. In SA, although the number of children with dirty teeth was lower, at 4%, this is still an increase of 1.2% from February. The number of children with dirty faces remains consistent between the two months, at 50% of children in Loon-Plage and 0% for those in SA.

Once again, there is a vast disparity between the hygiene of the children living in the camp at Loon-Plage and those living in SA, illustrating that access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities - fundamental human rights - have a resounding effect in improving health and hygiene for children.

Therefore, the continued absence of state services to provide access to clean water for those living in the settlement in Loon-Plage has a clear and direct effect on children's hygiene. However, this is not the only fundamental human right that children in the camp are deprived of.



CONSTANT INSECURITY IN THE LOON-PLAGE CAMP

This month, Project Play has observed a number of factors that contribute to a **state of insecurity** for the children living in the camp in Loon-Plage, including the presence of dangerous objects, the frequent occurrence of traumatic events and an unsafe environment.

Our ground team frequently encountered razor blades, broken glass, tin lids, screws, cigarettes and barbed wire in the living site at Loon-Plage, and on one occasion observed a small child playing with discarded cigarettes. The children living here are exposed to **dangerous objects** such as these on a daily basis; near the tents where they live, in the places where they play and close to where we deliver our sessions.

Furthermore, due to low temperatures and the scarcity of firewood, people are forced to make fires with whatever materials they can find. In March, Project Play teams witnessed uncontrolled fires in the camp on three occasions. These situations represent a real danger for the occupants of the informal settlement, especially as the nature of the camp limits possible access for emergency service vehicles. Uncontrolled fires are particularly dangerous for children, who often play near burning litter, inhaling fumes from toxic plastic waste and risking burns from open flames.



Left: Children playing on a road in active use by HGVs and other vehicles.

Above: A child playing on a mound of dirt and discarded litter, including hazardous objects, in front of a busy road.

The constant presence of many adults in the camp, whether volunteers from associations, law enforcement officials, journalists or people living in the camp, renders it an **unsuitable environment** for children - they are constantly exposed to the presence of strangers, and often witness physical and verbal interactions between adults unsuitable for their age. Finally, the unabating flow of vehicles travelling through the camp, often at speed, is a direct threat to **physical safety** and means that children have **no consistent safe space** in which to exist and play.



THE HEIGHTENED INSECURITY OF "SECURITISATION" AND EVICTION

On the 10th of March 2022, the displaced people living in Loon-Plage had to face new hostile measures with the installation of **concrete blocks** at the entrance of the camp, blocking vehicular access.

These measures hinder the work of the associations operating in the living site, providing challenges for food distribution and the installation of water points, as well as limiting access to health care, basic materials and services inside the settlement. They also rendered people's lives more difficult, forcing those within the camp to walk long distances and scramble over concrete blocks to access vital services.



Concrete barriers installed on the 10th March, decorated by people living in the camp.

Associations continued to work as close as possible to the entrance of the living site, however, this area was close to a road regularly used for industrial lorries and HGVs, creating constant insecurity for both adults and children. We regularly saw children **climbing the blocks and crossing the road** to reach essential services - one girl went to look for her parents near the barrier, and tried to cross the road by herself.

The so-called **"zero point of fixation"** policy means that people often face 'securitisation' action such as this, as well as regular evictions from their living sites, the destruction of tents and the seizure of personal belongings. These operations are not free from violence, and are a source of psychological and physical exhaustion for people who have to evacuate quickly and face losing essential belongings. Evictions exert severe stress on children, preventing them from accessing their basic needs, and systematically destroy what little stability they and their families may have.

On the 31st March 2022, the people living in the camp at Loon-Plage faced eviction from the site. This was the second eviction of the month, with a previous operation having occurred on the 3rd March, and was more severe in scale, forcing people to abandon the site and relocate permanently. Coinciding with severe weather conditions, this operation forced people to be outside in **wind, rain and freezing temperatures** whilst facing the loss of tents, sleeping bags and warm clothes.

By merit of the scale of the eviction, associations had to overcome significant challenges to respond to the situation quickly and ensure that people had access to food and shelter. We witnessed a number of children on the day of the eviction and those following who did not have adequate clothing to stay warm in tents in wind and snow.

Not only does this risk the physical health and safety of children, but it exposes them to a further source of psychological stress. The impact of this is evident - this month, we have observed many children reacting to car alarms, screaming when helicopters fly past and commenting on a fear that the police are coming. On one occasion, when a drone approached the camp, some children commented *"they're watching us"*, in reference to the police. Finally, some children regularly play 'the police' by pretending to shoot and fight each other. It is clear that children living in the camp at Loon-Plage have been **exposed to scenes of violence from state authorities**, and are fearful of police.



Police erecting 2m barriers as part of the eviction operation on 31st March.

Children have the right to be protected from **"all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation"**, according to **Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC).¹ The French government has a responsibility to protect children from all forms of violence, and must not be the perpetrators of it, as is the case with evictions. We condemn these operations and the effect that it has on children, families and people living in the camps in Calais and Dunkirk.

CONCLUSION

State authorities do not allow exiled children living on French territory to exercise their fundamental rights. The precarious and insecure living conditions of displaced families are a direct result of the migration policies established by the State and have a direct impact on children, depriving them of a secure environment in which they can live and develop, far from the stress and instability of the camp. As enshrined in the UNCRC, the French state is obligated to provide all children under its jurisdiction with **"a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development"**.¹

Informal settlements also deprive children of leisure and play. The issuance of General Comment No. 17 by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reinforces the necessity of play in child development, and sets out the legal, financial and technical obligations of States Parties to ensure and implement the right to play.² Therefore, it is essential for children to be able to develop in an environment that allows for playful and recreational activities and it is France's duty to ensure this.

OUR DEMANDS

We call for the implementation of dignified, unconditional and uninterrupted reception centres in key locations for displaced people on the French/UK border. These centres must provide dignified living conditions in order to create a safe environment for play-based development for children and their families. Such centres should include sufficient sleeping space, cooking facilities, bathrooms and sanitary facilities for the number of people accommodated.

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19 and 27: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

2. UNCRC: General Comment No.17, 1st February 2013: "The Committee reaffirms that the right to play is a fundamental and vital aspect of childhood enjoyment, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development".