iACT’s Impact toward the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals “are a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.”

iACT’s programs may not have been borne out of an intentional response to any of the “UN SDGs,” as they’re also referred to, but they certainly address a good handful of them, namely: zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, and decent work and economic growth.

Our early childhood development program, Little Ripples, provides quality education for refugee girls and boys ages three to five. The curriculum was co-created by education experts and the refugee beneficiary community, with the goal of offering a preschool education that could be considered high quality in any of the world’s contexts. The program encourages decent work and female employment, especially in places where female empowerment is uncommon; therefore, not only do the women on the Little Ripples staff go through our human rights and leadership curriculum, LEAD with EMPATHY, and learn how women have the same universal human rights as men, 100% of the Little Ripples refugee staff is made up of women. This staff includes cooks for the Little Ripples meal program, which feeds all Little Ripples students and employees a daily meal, as iACT believes that minimizing hunger is necessary for achieving good health and well-being, and that when a child feels zero hunger, she has a higher chance of flourishing in school.

Little Ripples is not the only iACT project that fosters the empowerment of women and girls. Refugees United Soccer Academy is iACT’s youth sports program, and one of its many focuses is gender equality. The Academy continues to give nearly all girls living in the refugee camps in which the Academy operates their very first opportunity to play soccer. For most of the girls attending the Academy, the reason they had never played soccer before was not lack of desire, but not enough community understanding that girls could play soccer and that it is not a sport belonging to boys and men. Additionally, half of the coaching staff is female, and the women and men work as a team of equals and receive the same amount of pay.

The Academy coaches do not just engage in soccer training, but they also pass on education about health and wellness. As health experts advised us that the washing of hands is one of the most basic yet important habits that people could practice to prevent the spread of illness, and as a result build up good health and well-being in a community, both the Refugees United Soccer Academy and Little Ripples give daily lessons about handwashing and proper hygiene. Moreover, daily mindfulness practices are incorporated into all of iACT’s programs that have curricula (including Little Ripples, Refugees United Soccer Academy, and Darfur United, an all-refugee men’s soccer team), since good health and well-being can only be experienced when a person is thriving socialemotionally, mentally, and physically.

While the curricula that our refugee teachers and coaches utilize is informed by iACT training, the refugee camp-based programs are led and run by the refugees themselves, and not by any other iACT staff or any other organization. With this unique principle of equipping the refugees to have ownership over a program at the same time they are the program’s beneficiaries, our staff in the refugee camps have decent work and are enabled to experiment with their own solutions to problems they see. A case in
point is Donkey Ripples, an iACT project that was initiated by our refugee staff to help ensure the capital sustainability of Little Ripples. In short, by providing refugee families with donkey-and-plow sets, their farm yields are increased, and some of this surplus goes into funding Little Ripples. As this also means that additional resources are going into the community economy, Donkey Ripples aids in the latter portion of the Sustainable Development Goal of *decent work and economic growth*. It is also an illustration of how iACT’s beneficiary empowerment and ownership model is growing, by way of the leadership of our refugee staff.

This true cooperation and joint action that our entire team participates in is what drives our programs toward the goal of effecting long-term change. Through the relationships and partnerships we have with our refugee friends, we play our distinctive part to help, in the words of the United Nations, “improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations.”

For more information on iACT’s programs, please visit our website at: [iact.global](http://iact.global).
You can read about the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals [here](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/).