



the OBJECTIVES:

- 1 **Create comprehensive soccer programs** in all twelve Darfuri refugee camps in eastern Chad.
- 2 **Promote leadership**, education, and healthy living through participation in the Academy.
- 3 **Develop and advance** the representative men's and women's Darfur United teams.
- 4 **Provide Darfuri refugees the opportunity to connect** with the world and form lasting and meaningful relationships with communities—sharing the love for the most popular sport on earth.

In what seemed like an impossible journey, an all-refugee soccer team from Darfur traveled from isolated camps on the Chad-Sudan border to participate in the 2012 Viva World Cup in Iraqi Kurdistan. After hearing about Darfur United, one refugee leader said: "Now we are a part of the world."

Through the power of community, **i-ACT** (a California based non-profit) coordinated the creation of the team and its participation in the international competition. It was an unforgettable experience for all involved. It served as a vehicle for awareness and support for the refugee community that has lived through unspeakable horrors and been forced in to a less than complete life in remote camps.

Building on this experience, i-ACT is supporting Darfuri refugees in the creation and sustaining of the **Darfur United Soccer Academy**.

the CHALLENGE

There are approximately 280,000 refugees living in twelve camps that dot the border between Chad and Sudan. The camps are in a remote, isolated region that is, for the most part, lawless. Many of the programs deemed "non-essential" were stopped in the camps because of the dangers associated with the area, such as rebel activity and banditry that targeted aid workers. There is little in the way of sustained, organized, and comprehensive sports programs. Malnutrition is pervasive throughout the camps due to a decade's worth of refugees receiving the same limited food rations. It is a population that has experienced extreme trauma which has been largely unaddressed.



the OPPORTUNITY

Darfuris love soccer. With soccer balls rarely being available, the children make their own from rags, plastics, and string. They juggle, kick them back and forth, and organize games in their dirt, sand, and rocks fields. The refugees talk about their need and wish for better sports programs and education at every chance they get. They also express their great hope to connect with the outside world, beyond the camps that one refugee called, "an open prison."

i-ACT has been traveling to the camps since 2005 and has established deep and productive relationships with the refugee community, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and the aid organizations that provide services. i-ACT has been involved in innovative programs to support education and the connection of people across continents. Through years of working on Darfur advocacy and awareness, i-ACT has created and motivated a community of people in the U.S. and around the world that cares about its friends in the camps.

the IMPACT

The Darfur United Soccer Academy will offer a safe place for children and youth to gather and participate in a healthy and enriching activity that teaches lessons that apply on and off the field. Play is recognized as one of the best forms of therapy. Offering the opportunity and means to participate in a positive, organized, and sustained activity can have a huge impact on individuals and the entire community.

Volunteer professional coaches from the United States and England will travel regularly to the camps and train refugee coaches and managers to implement programs that promote growth for players and the teams. The Academy will also serve as the training ground from where Darfur United players will rise to then compete in tournaments anywhere in the world.

Darfur United, the Academy and the team, serves as a vehicle for awareness and support for populations that have been largely ignored. Connections and friendships develop easier and stronger through the power of a common love for a game that is engaging and fun. The Academy will bring much needed equipment and support for training facilities. It will also bring expertise related to fitness, nutrition, and injury prevention.

The girls in the camps have special and difficult challenges of their own. They have few opportunities and take on most of the burdens and responsibilities. Having the Darfur United Academy as a place where boys and girls can develop as players and leaders will have an impact that will ripple through all of the camps, and beyond.



The twelve refugee camps in Eastern Chad.



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