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**UP SOCCER ALUM LAUNCHES FIRST SOCCER PROGRAM FOR GIRLS IN  
DARFURI REFUGEE CAMPS**

PORTLAND, OR – 14 OCTOBER 2013 – Rachael Rapinoe, graduate of University of Portland and former Pilots soccer teammate, will join i-ACT, CA-based nonprofit, on an upcoming trip to Darfuri refugee camps in eastern Chad. Over the last year, Rapinoe has helped create the core curriculum for the first ever Darfuri refugee soccer academy for girls and boys ages 6-13, Darfur United Soccer Academy. Last year, i-ACT won the Peace and Sport NGO of the Year award in 2012 for its work with the Darfur United (DU) men's team. Now, they are expanding their work to include the Academy.

Rachael Rapinoe, owner of Rapinoe Soccer Camps and retired professional women's soccer player who lives in Northeast Portland, will be Darfur United's first Coach Ambassador. Rapinoe will train the first four Darfuri coaches, two of whom will be women. Rapinoe describes her passion for the initiative: "I've spent my entire life learning and trying to master the beautiful game of futbol, and now I am lucky enough to share this knowledge with others. I have coached at many levels, from youth to universities, trying to instill positivity, inspiration and encouragement in all players of all ages."

The refugee-led Soccer Academy will serve 2,000 youth in its first refugee camp, eventually expanding to all 12 Darfuri refugee camps spanning the Chad-Sudan border. The Darfur refugees fled from ethnic violence in their home country of Sudan and have been living in the refugee camps for ten years. There are very few programs that address trauma and psycho-social support. This groundbreaking program helps fill this void by offering the first organized sports program for girls and boys in the refugee camps. Darfur United not only provides a safe place for the children to play, but it fosters self-esteem, builds unity, and serves as a vehicle for peace.

Having traveled to the refugee camps more than a dozen times since 2005, one of i-ACT's greatest strengths is the ability to constantly connect and communicate with the refugees to include their valuable perspective, input and feedback in program development. The call for the Darfur United Soccer Academy was driven by refugee voices. During a Darfur United team training, a young woman watching the training asked i-ACT's Director, Gabriel Stauring: "when will it be our turn?" As a result of this demand from girls in the refugee camps, i-ACT has been working with DU Coach Ambassadors and its Athletic Trainer to create a soccer curriculum that will promote the participation of girls with skills, scrimmages, and health and hygiene guidelines that the Darfuri coaches can build upon.

The Rapinoe and the i-ACT team departs on October 19th from Los Angeles and will arrive at their first refugee camp on October 26th. Rapinoe will be available for interviews while visiting the camps. She will also be posting blogs, videos, and photos at [www.darfurunited.com](http://www.darfurunited.com).

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*Darfur United*, a project of i-ACT, is an all-refugee soccer team and youth academy made up of Darfuri refugees living in refugee camps in Eastern Chad. Not only is Darfur United an opportunity for the refugees to represent their people and play, it is also a movement – a movement to bring hope, inspiration, and joy to the displaced people of Darfur. [www.darfurunited.com](http://www.darfurunited.com)

*i-ACT*, based in the Los Angeles area, empowers individuals within communities, institutions, and governments to take personal responsibility to act on behalf of those affected by genocide, mass atrocities, and crimes against humanity. i-ACT is a global team dedicated to putting a face on the numbers of dead, dying, and displaced while creating mutually enriching relationships between those in danger and those willing and able to act, fostering a new culture of participation. [www.iactivism.org](http://www.iactivism.org)